

Learning report Tanzania 2005 Evaluation of ICT projects within Livelihoods and Education

As part of IICD's Country Programme in Tanzania, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities were implemented in 2001. Dr. Magdalena Ngaiza assists the partner organisations in the annual monitoring of satisfaction with and impact on end users of the Country Programme. As such, she supports IICD's partners to collect and analyse questionnaires from project partners, end users and participants of trainings and seminars. In 2005 a total of 323 questionnaires were completed in the sectors of livelihoods and education. The results were discussed amongst the project partners during a Focus Group meeting in November 2005. This report reflects on the learning points of the data and analysis discussed during this meeting.

Evaluation results

As the M&E system has been in place for some years now, the results of projects and trainings over the years can be compared. The data showed a general improvement in gender balance and increased satisfaction rates of end users for all projects. For most projects, over 80% of respondents claim to have reached their personal goals, supported by remarks in the questionnaire like:

"Instead of travelling all the way to Mwanza, I managed to communicate with people on the internet" (end user of a livelihoods project)

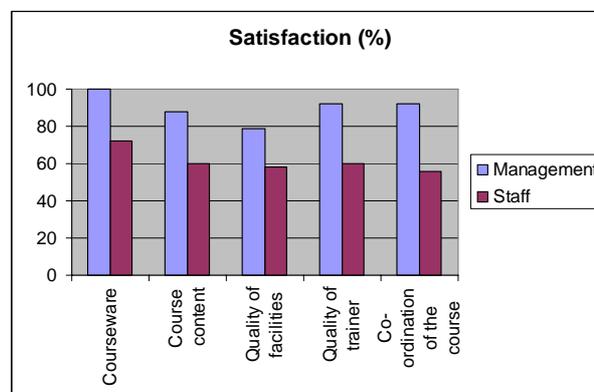
"I can now prepare teaching materials and keep my student records using the computer" (end user of an education project).

Impact has been diminishing somewhat in the livelihoods sector since 2003 (awareness has come down from 89% in 2003, to 69% in 2005), which may have something to do with the maturity of the projects. Over time, awareness of respondents is known to diminish a little in all sectors: in the case of new projects, end user awareness can take big leaps, as opposed to less excitement and awareness once people grow more accustomed to the project.

Challenges within Capacity Development

An interesting result coming from the data analysis on capacity development courses provided to project partners is the difference in satisfaction levels of managers and directors and staff members.

This probes the question as to what extend the same training courses were relevant for different people. Are trainings, which are often given to mixed groups of people, reaching their goals? How can training partners and project



partners make the most of the trainings given or followed? And more in general: what would be the most logical approach to get the maximum impact and catalytic effect of training. For example, looking at who should be invited and how trainings should be approached.

When organising trainings it needs to be taken into consideration that some participants are more likely to *share their knowledge* after training than others. This is especially, but not solely, important when it comes to train-the-trainer-settings where the objective for participants is to train others. Reasons for participants to not share their gained knowledge can be a lack of individual didactic and organisational skills: having the knowledge does not mean you can disseminate what you have learned! Further, the organisation might not dispose of resources for knowledge sharing. Fortunately, many participants do share their gained knowledge because they feel a sense of duty after finishing the course. It also gives them opportunity to build on their curriculum vitae.

Another challenge for trainers often is the variety of *backgrounds of the participants*, for example in age, culture, the position in their organisation or the level of experience or education. The question that the participants needed to answer was if the advantages of mixed groups outweighed the difficulties and how to cope with these difficulties. An important positive aspect of mixed groups is that mixed groups give participants the opportunity to really learn something new from each other. On the other hand it is a fact that staff can feel intimidated by higher level attendees (or the other way around: managers can hold themselves back in front of lower level, and sometimes faster learning, employees). In the end a lot depends on the organisational culture in the group that is trained. You cannot change organisational culture overnight, but team spirit in the training group can help a lot. Also, mixing technical staff and

managers may not always be a good idea, as their objective for participation is often so different. Whereas managers may require additional tools to support decision making, technical staff want to gain technical skills.

Suggestions made for organising trainings to maximise the catalytic effects and impact are:

- Conduct a training needs assessment to be able to offer the most relevant course possible (who is your target group? what do they see as the objectives? what should the content consist of?);
- Adjust the training materials to the needs of the group being trained;
- Train-the-trainer courses should include parts on how to didactically train others and how to organise a training activity;
- Participants of train-the-trainer courses should be assessed before the training: not everybody is capable of being a trainer; and,
- In invitations, objectives of the training can already be made clear.

End-users, target groups and goals

Another interesting learning point deals with end-users and target groups. Are the projects reaching their target group? If not, how does a project deal with that? For instance, for one of the agriculture projects only 48% of respondents claimed to work for an institution that was working in agriculture. This could indicate that the project is not reaching its intended target group.

Representatives of all projects agreed that at least 80% of end-users consist of their actual target group. The remaining 20% were considered indirect end-users: people that were also using the project, but that do not belong to the intended target group. This does not need to pose a problem as long as indirect end-users were not taking up the "space" of direct users in the project. In the case of one of the agriculture projects, apart from the farmers using the services and computers, many local businessmen and organisations are also using them. This creates a lively

community-centre atmosphere and a small but steady influx of money paid for the services.

The projects use different strategies to make sure they capture the intended targets. The strategies include training, mobilising youth, forming farmer groups and responding to user specific needs or interests. Project owners claim that it is the end users who make the project relevant, not the presence of computers.

All project owners were asked to give an estimate for the number of end users, those people using the information from the projects actively and directly, and beneficiaries. Beneficiaries being people that do not use the project themselves, but that benefit passively from the information from the project. Some projects find it difficult to exactly determine these groups. Who exactly is the end user? Is it the person behind the computer in a government office, or the person using the information provided by that person? Project owners came to the conclusion that there are now *almost 500.000 end users of the projects in Tanzania*. On top of that, there is a large group of over 500.000 beneficiaries, often family- or community members of the end users. This means that altogether; *projects in Tanzania are now reaching over one million people*.

Follow up

The system for Monitoring and Evaluation is meant for learning from the results of the data and the experiences from other projects. The ideas generated during the Focus Group meetings will help the projects improve themselves. Now that the Tanzania Country Programme has gained a substantial mass, as of 2006 the projects will start working in smaller sector specific Focus Groups to discuss the data. At the end of the year, all these sector groups will convene again in a large Focus Group session to exchange their experiences.

More information

For information about IICD and Monitoring & Evaluation, visit www.iicd.org/evaluation or contact us at information@iicd.org. The online M&E system can be viewed at <http://www.survey.iicd.org>.

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