Management Summary Learning Report
Mali 2006 – Project formulation and livelihoods projects

This report presents the results and conclusions from the M&E activities in Mali during 2006 and will help to derive lessons for the ICT projects in Mali, but also for IICD or non-IICD ICT projects in other countries. During 2006, questionnaires were collected among project teams of projects in formulation and end users of the livelihoods opportunities projects, the results of the data analysis, carried out by the M&E partner of SEC-Mali, were discussed during two separate focus group meetings.

Project formulation
To monitor the effectiveness of (IICD) support and services for projects in formulation, twenty one questionnaires were collected among team members of ten different organisations from potential livelihoods projects in formulation. The ideas for these projects were selected during the Roundtable on Livelihoods, organised in September 2005.

Support from IICD
Respondents stated that the projects in formulation are pertinent with respect to the Roundtable and with the objectives and aims of their organisations. The support and advice from IICD was strongly appreciated by all the project teams, although respondents were somewhat less positive about the quality of the information provided and the IICD support for searching (additional) financial resources for the projects.

Involvement of different stakeholders
The involvement of stakeholders in the project formulation phase is considered very good and all respondents are aware that the success of the project highly depends on their own active participation throughout the process. However, the mobilisation of decision-makers of the host organisations is still relatively weak and their responsibility for the entire process is not strongly felt. This could be improved when the responsibilities, rights and obligations are clearly defined for all stakeholders before the start of project formulation. It was also suggested during the focus group meeting that support from consultants throughout the process can strengthen the capacities of the host organisations and decision-makers; and additional training for decision-makers, in for example leadership skills, might also motivate them to take an active role in the project.

Lively discussion during the focus group

Good communication throughout the whole process between all stakeholders (host organisations, consultants and IICD) is crucial and requires continuous consultation between these stakeholders, but also within the host organisation, where the delegated person of the host organisation must periodically inform decision-makers how project formulation progresses.

Livelihoods opportunities projects
This section gives a brief summary of the lessons learnt from the livelihoods projects in Mali. The questionnaires were filled in by 73 end users of these projects. The data were mainly gathered from 2 livelihoods projects ("Soleil Artnet" and "Système d'information du Mandé"). The objective of the Soleil Artnet project is revitalising artistic creation in Mali by training young artists in the use of graphics software and facilitating their access to ICT tools, in order to give them an opportunity to increase their knowledge base, their artistic output and even their
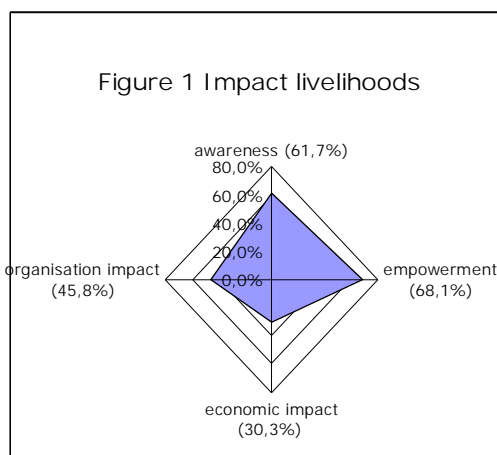
incomes. The objective of Système d'information du Mandé is to install a communication system for information sharing between the different structures of the organisation, to connect the members of the farmers organisation in the villages with the implementing organisation in the capital to share relevant information for farmers, ultimately to increase farmers' capacities.

User satisfaction
The information services are highly appreciated by the respondents, but to encourage people to really use the network developed by the Système d'information system, more time needs to be invested in content development, collecting information and prioritising the information per sector. Working together with other organisations to collect and share more data is one of the ways to achieve this. More than 90% of the participants of the project Système d'information and more than 80% of the Soleil Artnet participants have achieved their objectives by participating in the project. Some of the reasons why people have achieved their objectives were: "the speed with which I can now access information and use communication, and now I can develop brochures and format pictures with Illustrator".

Impact
Overall impact is relatively high for both projects (see also figure 1), with empowerment having the highest score, followed by awareness. It is generally seen that economic and sector impact increase over time, while awareness and empowerment often score the highest during the first years of implementation. Participants of the focus group meeting consider empowerment as the most important type of impact. To strengthen empowerment, not only training is mentioned as an important means, but also the exchange of information and experiences between actors is considered crucial. For the

Figure 1 Impact livelihoods

project Système d'information du Mandé a common platform for training activities with other donors already exists in one of the regions of Mali (Koulikoro) and this turns out to be very effective for strengthening capacities and maximising the existing potential within the region. It would therefore be a good idea to replicate this idea also in other regions of Mali. It was also suggested that the artists from the Soleil Artnet project should be encouraged to take a more active role within the society, so that the community can benefit optimally from the artists' talents and to make the general public more aware of the potential of art for all aspects of live.

Conclusion and follow up
The focus group meeting has created more awareness among the project teams about the impact of the projects for the broader society and how team members could help to increase impact of the projects. In 2007, data collection will continue and focus group meetings for end users will be organised with the support of the M&E partner in Mali. During these meetings, end users have the opportunity to reflect upon the results, and discuss upon the lessons learnt, ultimately to improve the project.