

Using ICT in the Governance Sector

IICD has been supporting ICT projects within the governance sector for over a decade. Working with local governmental and non-governmental partners, our support has been aimed at improving the ability of national and local government to deliver services to the community as well as working with civil society and grassroots organisations to help strengthen local and regional participation in the public sphere. Through a combination of different ICT tools, we are currently supporting 18 Governance projects, reaching around 19,000 civil servants and community organisations and a further 450,000 citizens from across society.

Strengthening the heart of society

At the heart of efforts to achieve sustainable, equitable development, and prevent a number of the wider social, economic or environmental problems that face vulnerable or excluded communities, is the need for informed engagement of all the different groups and members of society. It is within this environment that contributions can be adequately made and the rich diversity of social demands can be represented and met.

Broadly referred to as "Good Governance", IICD's support is targeted at:

- effective public sector management;
- accountability among all designated representative bodies;
- legitimacy in both leadership and decision-making through improved participation and consent;
- access to information and transparency.

Our work with both local government and civil society emphasises the implementation of technologies that are best suited to these aims, as well as a continuing ability to work with and develop the technologies. Technology is not the purpose of IICD's support, though we believe ICT is a necessary tool in helping to achieve wider developmental goals.

IICD's Governance programmes can be described as having two main focal areas.



IICD supports five governance projects in Ecuador

First, we have been supporting **e-government** projects that aim to improve the ability of national and local governments to deliver services to the community. Second, we have been working with grassroots organisations on a number of **e-participation** projects, to help strengthen local and regional participation in the public sphere. In this second category, there has been an emphasis on strengthening leadership and decision-making skills, which has seen us supporting a number of projects that look to enhance these skills for, amongst others, women and youth.

This factsheet will briefly introduce some of the ways we have been working in both areas. First, we look at an e-government



project in Kinondoni district of Dar-es-Salam in Tanzania, and then two e-participation projects in Ecuador.

E-government in Kinondoni District

The United Nations has defined e-government as "A government that applies ICT to transform its internal and external relationships" (United Nations, 2003). ICT allows a government's internal and external communications to gain speed, precision, simplicity, outreach and networking capacity, leading to reduced costs and increased effectiveness. ICT can increase the efficiency of an organisation's work by automating existing processes; it can improve these processes by introducing changes; and it can even enable a fundamental rethinking of the processes.

While the ultimate target group of any project working to improve government processes is society at large, the principal targets of the "District Computerisation Kinondoni" project in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania – which began in 2000 – are the municipality staff, who directly interact with the information and data. The project was initially designed to address three main services: education, health and birth, marriage and death registration. Over the years it has moved on to include record keeping, transparency on taxations (tax collection and expenditure, budgeting) information sharing among different departments, and quick solutions on land titles.

In line with IICD's programme methodology, the Kinondoni project was the outcome of a Roundtable workshop held in 1998 with key stakeholders in the governance sector. A study prior to the roundtable had identified a number of issues, which at the time of project formulation resulted in the Kinondoni project.

A key issue was limited transparency due to a lack of information. With no free flow of and access to information, the municipality could neither make the right decisions nor monitor relevant developments. This crippled and impaired their long-term vision, and resulted in an inefficient use of resources.



Focus group meeting for the Kinondoni District Computerisation project, Tanzania

Is the project working?

The impact of the project has been measured since 2003, giving a good image of the development of the project over time. During the five-year period until 2008, the project collected questionnaires from 180 municipal staff.

The questionnaires asked users to respond on a 7-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) and then divided these statements into 5 categories: awareness, empowerment, impact on the organisation, economic impact and negative impact. The data collected also looked at the profile of the users, as well as their satisfaction with and use of the project.

Out of all the indicators, *organisational impact* is of most significance in relation to this project, as it has positively increased over the years. It includes dealing with the impact on the decentralisation process, report writing, transparency of the government and improvement of municipal services. Most notable is that the real impact on the organisation has been an extended, gradual process.

The positive impact on the organisation has also been supported by claims from municipal staff that the complaints by citizens had decreased due to effective use of ICT. This was further clarified by one user who said: "*The project does away with corruption issues, it shortens work, it keeps memory for a long time and it reduces the use of stationary*".



Thanks to the implementation of a GIS system – implemented to accurately gather land title data – citizens also no longer need to wait to get an overview of the land rent or plots of land in the municipality. Information is now readily accessible.

The municipal website now has a “suggestion box” and all counsellors now have their own e-mail address so citizens can send their ideas, questions and suggestions. One Kinondoni resident asked his counsellor for extra rubbish collections in his neighbourhood, by including digital pictures to illustrate the level of litter gathering in his street.

A model for future initiatives

The Kinondoni project still has many challenges to overcome, but it has recently begun to serve as a model for the successful application of ICT, developed from the “bottom” up. In the long term, such an approach is essential in achieving decentralisation on a large scale. Over the past two years, other municipalities have organised study visits to Kinondoni, aimed at establishing a basis from which to set up their own ICT implementation strategies. In 2007, an ICT workshop in the region of Mwanza, focussed on knowledge sharing and lessons-learned from the Kinondoni experience, along with other ICT projects. In October 2007, Veronica Igoko, the ICT coordinator of Kinondoni, shared the Kinondoni story during the workshop on e-Government for Local Authorities in Nairobi, Kenya. The project has also been mentioned as an example of the Tanzania e-Government efforts, including in a video conference organised by the World Bank.

E-participation for an inclusive society

From reducing the risks of famine, to protecting the environment, to reducing social exclusion for disadvantaged or marginalised communities, more and more organisations are realising that if any, let alone rapid, social and economic progress is to be made and sustained, then community participation must be enhanced. Furthermore, that decision-making must be

informed by all layers in the community, which necessarily involves improving the processes that can enable this participation. There are a number of areas in which IICD has been using ICT to help improve this area of civil governance. Primarily working with grassroots organisations and local NGOs, IICD’s main goals have been to:

- Improve access to information about the national and international issues which affect people’s lives;
- Improve the capacity of individuals or groups to engage and contribute to dialogue and debate at a national level i.e. through accessing the internet or use of web 2.0 tools;
- Strengthen institutional capacity within both local governmental and non-governmental bodies in rural and isolated areas;
- Improving ICT skills related to digital content creation;
- Enhance the quality and effectiveness of digital materials.

Engaging with ICTs can have an immeasurable affect on people’s ability to relate and respond to information. Moreover, in an age where in many societies information is being created, accessed and responded to instantaneously, it follows that if unengaged, those who are excluded will immediately lose out; disconnected and unable to have an effect on crucial moments in the decision making process.



Homepage of ciudadaniainformada.com



Strengthening local participation in the national news arena

The organisation 'Participación Ciudadana' tries to involve Ecuadorian civil society in processes of social transformation. For this to occur it is vital that citizens are informed properly and impartially. The IICD project has been supporting a website called 'Ciudadanía Informada' with a national focus but produced by regional news agencies. These agencies are based in the provinces of Azuay, Guayas, Imbabura and Orellana, and hope to counterbalance the centralistic, urban bias in Ecuadorian journalism.

The newspaper is published on the web site of Participación Ciudadana www.ciudadaniainformada.com and focuses on political, juridical, legislative, electoral, citizenry, and Latin American matters. To complement the information provided and to allow for a deepening of analyses the project also accommodates the publication of blogs, electronic forums and interactive graphics.

The ICT project has been effective on a number of recognisable fronts. The web 2.0 tools that have been embraced by the project have enabled the project to target their activities more effectively. This is largely the result of the inherent interactive nature of these tools: weekly surveys, forums, a comment space for each news item, and various Audio/Visual applications. These tools make analysis far easier, and therefore easier to adapt content to meet demand. The high numbers of comments on message boards and the increasing number of visitors to the website as well as the remarkably high responses to online surveys are invaluable indicators for the evaluation of project.

Use of ICTs to highlight the external debt situation of Ecuador

IICD has been working with Jubileo 2000 since 2007 to employ ICTs in order to enhance awareness-raising activities and to disseminate information with regard to the consequences of the current national debt situation. Further, it has been supporting efforts to engage specific social organisations more directly - notably those that are part of

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the National Debt Committee – to strengthen their political impact in order to effectively address the debt problem in Ecuador.

Jubileo 2000 has mobilised itself, focussing its efforts on an improved website, and the production of educational CD ROMs. These two combined initiatives have enabled them to actively engage their social partners, who are using the website as a pooling resource for their goals and activities, as well as taking the CD ROMs to professional colleges and high schools and larger national events

The use of ICT within this project has proven vital in disseminating information, which would not have taken place on such a scale with the formerly limited funding and technological resources that were at hand. The project has expanded in a number of ways - including the development of a Wikipedia page on the Ecuadorian debt situation in Spanish - and is now in receipt of further external funding from additional parties, including Intermón Oxfam.

An outline has been received from Jubileo with ideas for a second project phase. The project wants to put more emphasis on the effects of the foreign debt charge on Ecuadorian women and also on the way the debt situation affects daily life in Ecuador.

For further details about our work in the governance sector or more general information about IICD's work, visit our website: www.iicd.org.

