

## IN-country networking at IICD Maximising the development impact of ICTs

Jamaican partners exchanging experiences and developing strategies through e-discussions. Influencing ICT policies in Uganda. And documentaries in Bolivia and Burkina Faso on the uses of ICTs in development. These are random examples of IN-country activities, that IICD and its partners developed over the last years. Through these activities, partners can reduce their isolation, learn from each other and explore opportunities for synergies. The IN-country networks are also springboards for sharing practical experiences more widely within the country or region, and among the international community.

*"The idea of networking is very important as it allows stakeholders to consult and learn from each other at low cost"*  
**Hon. Daudi Migereko, Uganda Minister of State for Energy at the IN workshop in Uganda (July 2003)**

The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) assists developing countries to realise locally owned sustainable development by harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs). We use two strategic approaches to achieve our mission: Country Programmes and Thematic Networking.

### Deepening impact

When our Country Programmes began to expand, partners indicated that finding information on the status and impact of local ICT-enabled initiatives was difficult. Without opportunities to learn from other experiences, informed decision-making was problematic. Over and over again, the wheel was being reinvented and thus, scarce resources – be it human, financial and/or knowledge-wise – were being wasted. As one of our Jamaican project partners so aptly described: *"In Jamaica, many 'ICT4D' buses are driving - but no one knows how many, who's driving those buses, in which directions they are going and whether there are alternative routes - or shortcuts - to be taken."* Partners thus identified an urgent need to set up effective tools and platforms where local ICT for development (ICT4D) plans, progress, results and experiences can be discussed and assessed.



Therefore, IICD acknowledged local Information exchange and Networking (IN) as a means of deepening the impact of its Country Programmes.

### What's IN a name?

IICD has committed itself to support the so-called IN-country networking strategies that aim to strengthen local communities of practice on ICT-enabled development issues. These communities serve as platforms where people come together to exchange knowledge and experiences. Here, lessons are being documented and disseminated. The networks may also aim to set a wider ICT-enabled development agenda. To achieve this, two overall objectives were formulated:

- Sharing country-specific information, knowledge, methodologies and lessons learned on ICT-enabled development;
- Raising awareness and influencing policy and development processes – by communicating relevant content to local public, private and civil society policy makers and their advisors.

### Building knowledge

Each IN-country network has developed various knowledge sharing and communication tools, known as 'building blocks'. These are combined and implemented in various ways to suit local needs and situations. Some building blocks are:

**Face-to-face meetings** Workshops, seminars and meetings, where people physically meet and talk. These meetings bring the community together and provide opportunities for sharing lessons, networking and staying up-to-date.

**Content development** Documenting local lessons on the uses of ICTs in development – such as project experiences or workshop results – are key to ensuring that people learn from experiences elsewhere. The content developed is used in a



variety of knowledge products, such as electronic and hard copy publications.

**ICT4D website** The local communities can develop websites to raise awareness and promote knowledge sharing on the potential of and barriers to the uses of ICTs in development. News, research, events, ICT Stories and other information may be highlighted here.

**ICT4D newsletter** An important communication tool is a local newsletter – available in print, via e-mail and/or web – depending on local needs. The newsletter focuses on the local ICT4D scene, fostering local content development, and local network building and awareness.

**E-discussions** To avoid the costs of face-to-face meetings, electronic discussions are a useful additional way of sharing experiences and 'meeting' other likeminded people. E-discussions support ongoing information exchange and discussion among ICT for development communities. They can be open or closed, hosted locally or internationally.

**Media, awareness raising and lobbying** Reaching out from the networks to inform and influence policy makers and others is essential. This calls for the repackaging and presentation of

lessons and content into easy-to-read forms that appeal to non-specialists – brochures, newspaper articles, radio interviews, documentaries, etc. It also means finding ways to work with policy makers and the media.

**Research** Often raised questions concern the actual impact and usefulness of ICTs for development. One way to answer these questions is to do practical research around local projects.

**Cross-country IN** Sharing of experiences across countries is an important knowledge sharing mechanism to strengthen the local IN networks. Cross-country IN activities are: IN workshops, 'peer assist' trajectories and skills development programmes.

#### More information

For additional information, please visit our website: [www.iicd.org](http://www.iicd.org) or contact IICD at [information@iicd.org](mailto:information@iicd.org). Don't forget to visit the websites of our IN-country partners for the latest updates:

- Bolivia:** [www.ticbolivia.net](http://www.ticbolivia.net)
- Burkina Faso:** [www.burkina-ntic.org](http://www.burkina-ntic.org)
- Ecuador:** [www.infodesarrollo.ec](http://www.infodesarrollo.ec)
- Ghana:** [www.ginks.org](http://www.ginks.org)  
[www.icconnectghana.org](http://www.icconnectghana.org)
- Jamaica** [www.ict4djamaica.org](http://www.ict4djamaica.org)
- Mali:** [www.mali-ntic.com](http://www.mali-ntic.com)
- Tanzania:** [www.swopnet.or.tz](http://www.swopnet.or.tz)
- Uganda:** [www.i-network.or.ug](http://www.i-network.or.ug)
- Zambia:** [www.ebrain.org.zm](http://www.ebrain.org.zm)

*The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) assists developing countries to realise locally owned sustainable development by harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs). IICD realises its mission through two strategic approaches. First, Country Programmes bring local organisations together and help them to formulate and execute ICT-supported development policies and projects. The approach aims to strengthen local institutional capacities to develop and manage Country Programmes, which are currently being implemented in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Second, Thematic Networks link local and international partners working in similar areas, connecting local knowledge with global knowledge and promoting South-South and South-North exchanges. Thematic Networking focuses on sectors and themes like education, health, governance, the environment, livelihood opportunities (especially agriculture), and training. These efforts are supported by various information and communication activities provided by IICD or its partners. IICD is an independent non-profit foundation, established by the Netherlands Ministry for Development Cooperation in 1997. Its core funders include the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGIS), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).*

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