Management Summary Learning Report
Zambia 2006 – livelihoods projects, project formulation and implementation

In 2006, the first questionnaires among end-users of the livelihoods opportunities projects were collected as well as questionnaires on project formulation and implementation by the local M&E partner: Travaillant vers une Economie Liberale (TEL). Two focus group meetings were organised in 2006 in order to reflect upon the lessons learnt during project formulation & implementation over time, as well as those for the livelihoods projects over the last year.

Livelihoods projects
A total of 124 questionnaires were collected in 2006 among end-users from the livelihoods opportunities projects by the local M&E partner in close collaboration with the project partners.

User satisfaction with services
The rate of satisfaction with the different services delivered ranged from 45% to 66% of respondents being strongly and partially satisfied. The rates attributed to training, cost of the service and technical support were lower than 50%. One of the respondents therefore stated that: "the project should therefore continue to capacities its members to ensure effectiveness of the project".

Impact on end-users
The impact of the projects on end-users was measured using three components: whether end-users are more aware of the benefits of ICT (awareness), whether people feel empowered (empowerment) and whether it impacts their lives economically (economic impact).
It was found that more than half of the respondents were positive about awareness, followed by empowerment and economic impact (see also figure 1). Participants of the focus group meeting indicated that improvement in economic impact among end-users would be manifested as "increased awareness, provision of high quality services and products due to value adding and fair prices for the same services and products".

This can be done by providing more training to target communities on how to access and use (market) information, and by improving the way information is packaged, like providing information in local languages and producing hard copies for stakeholders who have no access to electronic facilities. Finally, cases to show what ICT can do to improve livelihoods opportunities to the target group should be developed and shared.

Figure 1: Impact observed on end-users
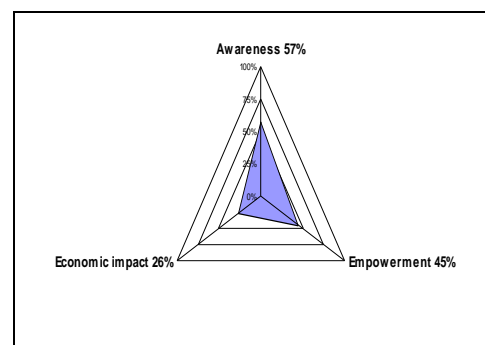
Reaching end-users
Participants at the focus group meeting also provided suggestions on how to better reach end-users: like increasing awareness among end-users, by having local leaders behind it and linking awareness-raising activities more with events and within (social) institutions.

Project formulation

In Zambia, four roundtable workshops have taken place over time: one national roundtable, and the other three on livelihoods opportunities, education and health. The first period of project formulation took more than two years, whereas the second and third periods of project formulation went much faster. 47 Questionnaires are being collected among 18 potential projects in 2006. A substantial part of these questionnaires were collected from the potential health projects.

Involvement of beneficiaries

Although at least 42% of the respondents were now assertive about the involvement of beneficiaries in project formulation, which is much higher than in 2004 (33%), still over 30% of respondents were negative about the involvement of beneficiaries in formulation in 2006. Most of these negative answers came from respondents residing in the capital city (see also figure 2). During the focus group meeting, this topic was therefore discussed for a second time.

Involvement of decision-makers

During the focus group meeting, it was also discussed why and how decision-makers should be involved in the projects and although everybody agreed that it was considered crucial to involve decision-makers from the formulation stage, i.e, from the round table workshop, onwards since it ensures that implementation takes place, in practice decision-makers often send delegates to these workshops. It was further discussed that decision-makers should be the final authority within the project and representing the project at higher levels, while project managers should also exercise a certain level of autonomy. Issues arising in projects must be incorporated into existing meetings within the organisation, like the monthly review.

Project implementation

Eighteen questionnaires were filled in by respondents from 8 different projects under implementation. Most questionnaires came from projects in tourism, trade, agriculture and information and communication.

Figure 2: Involvement of beneficiaries in project formulation
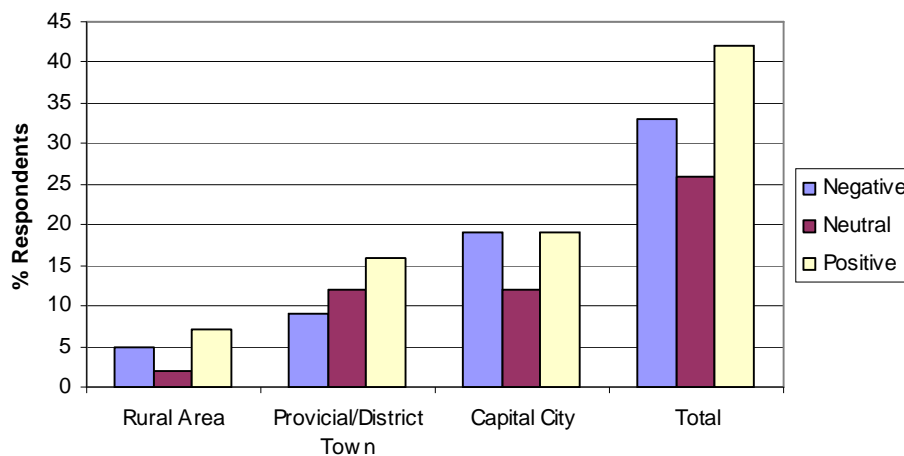
Participants raised a critical issue: "At what point can a project involve beneficiaries in the formulation process?" It was agreed that the ideal situation was to have a significant sample of beneficiaries consulted in the project formulation at all stages. For more ideas, see also the Evaluation Report Zambia 2004, where specific actions to involve them were formulated for each of these stages.

Women, ICT and social change

For projects in implementation, only one third of the respondents were females. Since women are of core relevance to social change and they are strongly participating in the livelihoods and education sector, IICD has chosen to strive for gender equality as a guiding principle. Therefore this topic was discussed during the focus group meeting.

The main impeding factors for participation of women are the customs and traditions, attitudes of both men and women and self-confidence of women. The actions needed to reduce gender imbalance that both men and women came up with, were promoting education for women and allow them to compete with men, encourage cooking for (young) men, and make people understand that marriage is not everything. Lobbying to the government to implement the 30% women representation in leadership may finally also contribute to more gender balance.

Satisfaction with internal resources

Regarding project implementation, more respondents than in 2005, were either positive or neutral about the human resources within the organisation to implement the project. Also in 2006, all respondents were positive about the level of financial resources and facilities within the institution to implement the project.

An area for further attention, however, is the publicity in local media, since respondents considered this as to be done too little. Also, the time being used for project implementation is considered too long.

Lessons learnt from project formulation and implementation in Zambia over time

✓ Involving beneficiaries turns out to be crucial for effective policy formulation and project team members therefore agree that beneficiaries should be consulted at all stages of the project formulation process.
✓ The involvement of decision-makers is crucial to have the needed support and legitimacy for projects, therefore project team members have formulated ideas on how to ensure adequate involvement of decision-makers.
✓ Previous focus group meetings taught us that the period of project formulation should not take too long and therefore this period has been reduced considerably over time.

✓ Attention needs to be paid to the profile of project team members, since most project teams are still dominated by men, although women are also drivers of social change and are heavily represented in the sectors livelihoods and education.
✓ More publicity of the projects in the local media is considered necessary by project team members.
✓ After having observed a relatively low level of satisfaction by project team members with the internal resources (human and financial resources and facilities) for project implementation in 2005, project team members have suggested ways of improving this. The data in 2006 do indicate increased levels of satisfaction with the internal resources.

Brainstorming ideas during the focus group

Follow-up

In 2006, the first end-user data have been collected for projects in implementation. In 2007 this will also be done for other projects and in the coming period, the first end-user focus group meeting will be organised. End-user focus group meetings are organised at the venue of the project where end-users of the projects will be interpreting the results to learn from it, to formulate recommendations to further improve the project and provide lessons for other projects.

Monitoring and evaluation for learning
IICD's unique approach

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is high on the agenda of many development organisations, including that of the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD). While most NGOs introduced M&E as a tool to measure results and provide accountability, IICD introduced M&E for the purpose of learning. This section describes the added value of M&E for learning.

> "Monitoring and Evaluation is not there to spy on you, but to mirror your development trails."
> - Mr. Casius Chuma, evaluation partner Zambia

M&E as part of an integrated approach

To understand the added value of M&E it is important to realise that it is a part of IICD's country programmes. A country programme comprises roundtable workshops, capacity development, knowledge sharing and networking, plus monitoring and evaluation.

Programmes support local partners in the South in their efforts to implement ICT as a tool for development in various sectors.

Creating a learning environment

Evaluation is therefore not just for the benefit of development partners or IICD, but end-users too. M&E helps to widen the impact of ICT for development. When an evaluation is carried out, IICD and its partners in the countries focus on creating a learning environment, ultimately to improve the end-user's social and economic position.

The 'why' behind the data

IICD does not carry out all the monitoring and evaluation activities itself. Most of the tasks on the ground are performed by an independent local Monitoring and Evaluation partner. An important task of this partner is to collect quantitative data using a questionnaire especially designed for this purpose. These questionnaires are collected at the level of the end-users of the projects, participants of courses and seminars, and project team members themselves.

When the data has been collected it is analysed and the findings are compiled in a learning report. The local M&E partner presents the findings to the project partners from the different sectors at the focus group meetings which often lead to lively discussions. Quantitative data are interesting, but you still need the 'why' behind the data. Therefore, focus group meetings during which partner organisations and IICD jointly interpret the data are crucial. During these meetings the actual knowledge sharing and exchange of experiences takes place amongst all the partners in a country.

The realisation that you are not the only one struggling with an issue is in itself a valuable learning point!

More information

For more learning reports and additional information on M&E, please visit our website www.iicd.org/evaluation. Our online M&E system can also be viewed at http://demosurvey.iicd.org.