Summary Ecuador Learning Report 2009
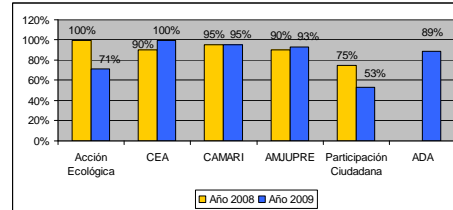# Impact of the Country Programme

This is a summary of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of Ecuador's Country Programme 2009. The evaluations are based on a series of questionnaires which have been distributed among the end users of the projects, the analysis of the data obtained by the questionnaires and the Focal Countries, where project managers discuss the results of the analysis. The following evaluation is the original paper by Martha Nuñez with no modifications. Martha Nuñez is the Manager for Monitoring and Evaluation in Ecuador. In 2003, 530 questionnaires were obtained from the different projects.

Impact of the projects on end users

The following lines present come of the conclusions of the evaluation of the different projects in 2009, establishing a comparison with those of 2008.
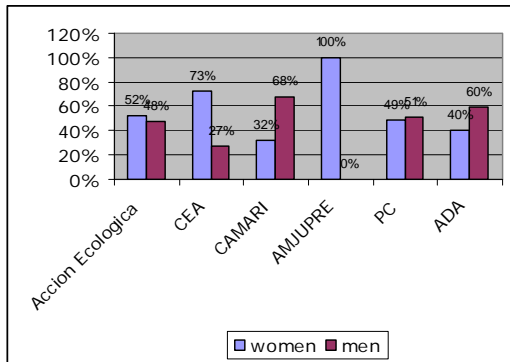
In terms of **users' profile**, there is no gender balance in some of the projects: sometimes more women have answered the questionnaires, whereas other times more men have. This can be a matter of chance or it might reflect the fact that different projects are targeting different social actors. We must highlight that the AMJUPRE project is only targeting women.

Regarding the users' residence, there has been a change concerning Agricultural Projects when compared to 2008 -the number of users from the rural sector has increased, particularly in the CAMARI project.

The fact that many **goals are being achieved** is a very positive one; however, in some cases, such as the projects Acción Ecológica and Participación Ciudadana, these achievements have been less than in 2008.
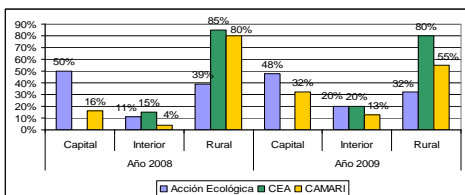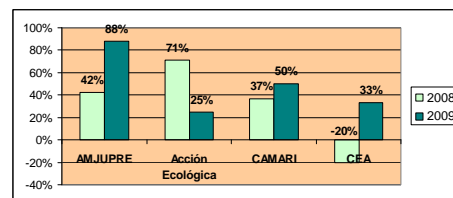

In general terms, the level of **satisfaction concerning the services** provided by the projects has also decreased. The same goes for the quality and accuracy of printed and electronic information. In the CEA project, users have been less satisfied with electronic information and more satisfied with printed information and the quality of the information.

It is worth noting that capacity-building outcomes are less valued than in 2008, with the exception of the AMJPURE project. However, the capacity building process gets a positive mark, as shown later on (in the questionnaires used for this purpose). On the other hand, the level of satisfaction relating to technical assistance increased in 2009.

Another service we have focused on this year is mobile phones. Interestingly, for those projects making use of this medium, user-satisfaction has increased in the last year and users talk to each other about the usefulness of mobile phones.


During the meeting of the Focus Group the use of mobile phones and its impact on the projects was considered: the way they work, advantages and disadvantages when compared to other tools, results achieved and impacts. Among the comments and suggestions it is worth mentioning that the mobile phone is a high potential tool for

improving access to information and connectivity; that they can even replace computers thanks to their portability and versatility; in spite of this, they still have reception and cost related problems in rural areas; notwithstanding the limitations, it is very useful as a working tool in projects based on plain communication (calls for meetings, etc.), but which can also include information updates through the Internet, submitting information to networks and others.

As regards the **impacts**, results depend upon the project. Both CAMARI and Participación Ciudadana have had a less significant impact this year; AMJUPRE and Acción Ecológica have achieved better outcomes in all indicators used to measure impact; CEA has attained the same results in awareness raising and better outcomes on gender, but a smaller impact on empowerment, economic issues and in the sector itself. The ADA project, which is assessed for the first time, has shown highly positive results, especially when it comes to awareness raising.
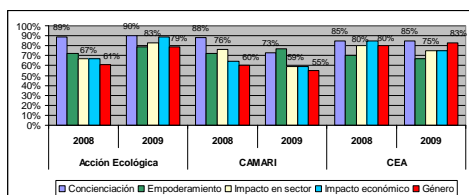
Legend: Awareness, empowerment, impact on the sector, economic impact, gender
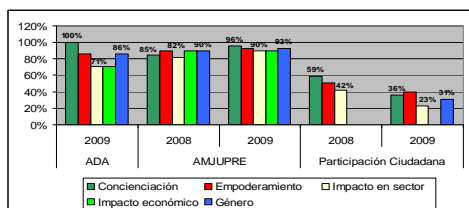
Legend: Awareness, empowerment, impact on the sector, economic impact, gender

It is also remarkable that in several aspects, which might be important for the projects, the results have been less positive than in 2008. For example: in the profits made as a consequence of a better use of natural resources or through selling their products or the respect of citizens' participation in the public debate so that their voices can be heard.

Rural users have also shown a lower degree of satisfaction concerning several services, and they believe the economic impact of the project on the sector is less significant than urban users.

In this context, it is important to promote dialogue and reflection among the Focal Group and the project teams about: a) The possible reasons for

the different opinions concerning users' satisfaction and; b) the decrease in rural users or rural respondents; c) whether urban users are those which make use of the information, provide the services for the project and work with the communities as information mediators, and in doing so try to find out how the project has benefited from these user-mediators; d) Finally, what could or should the project do in order to achieve better results among rural users.

The reason for the lesser impact on rural areas is thought to be a connectivity problem. It is the mediators that contribute to making information accessible, even if that takes some time. Therefore, info-centres should be promoted, emphasizing the necessity of generating a culture which makes use of information and technology. One of the ways to achieve this could involve capacity-building through people of the same community, as they are the best positioned to raise awareness on the optimal use of the tools according to their needs and reality.

In terms of the possible negative impacts of the projects, most of the questions only deal with the issue of finding a job in another organisation. While looking for a new job might be perceived as a reasonable personal objective, it can have a negative impact on the organization, resulting in a loss of human resources.

The Focal Group also addressed this issue and tried to bring into consideration the positive and negative impacts of Information and Communication for Development of staff rotation at an individual, organisational, project, outcomes and country level. The conclusion is that people's mobility depends on different factors and that personal improvement is reasonable and positive. It is also highlighted that rotation is not always negative, as new people can always bring along new and fresh ideas. It is important for organisations to guarantee continuity of actions included in the projects by means of takeover processes, more specifically when it comes to project coordinators. Along these lines, it is also necessary to reinforce the organisation's capacity, socialising knowledge and repeatedly providing training and capacity-building within the organisation. The projects have trained and prepared leaders who have given continuity to the processes in different areas and in doing so have greatly contributed to the community. Those who received ITCs training have also continued working in some capacity in the same field at other institutions.

The Focal Group reflected on the way the projects were generally perceived by users. After several years, a decrease in users' satisfaction and in the number of impacts generated by the project might

be considered a natural effect. However, it is important to identify the causes for this decrease, sharing experiences from the different projects, putting forward different methods and actions to change that trend and improve. This exercise could be implemented at several levels:

IICD's support: Focusing on the financial aspects and insisting on the need for the organisations to identify new projects or strategic allies to continue with those projects. As there is evidence that projects with no funding have not been involved on the evaluation process, an online evaluation was suggested as a way of keeping in contact.

Project management: Some organizations saw changes in their management and coordinators which had an impact on the project. It is therefore necessary to improve communication during the transition processes both inside the organization and with the different donors. One of the projects remarked that they had to leverage the tools they used in order to obtain the desired results when new users joined the project. As a positive example, one of the projects highlights the female users' commitment to repeat what they have learnt, as co-facilitators of the following projects. The high level of cooperation and solidarity among women and members of the community has also been pointed out.

External factors: The elections are a remarkable example which affected some organisations and projects in different ways, especially those who worked in the monitoring or whose members and users where candidates. People also mentioned other political and economic challenges. In order to face them, the options include seeking support from other organisations and indentify those issues which grab the attentions of the users so that they can defend the project or organisation should it be necessary.

Change/innovation: Users respond in different ways to innovation and change. On the one hand, acceptance and, on the other, criticism and even complaints. In any case, it is mentioned that users make the best evaluations of the user-friendliness of websites. Moreover, it is suggested to grant the organisations access to the databases of focal groups and questionnaires delivered to users, so that they can follow up on the results of the projects in order to amend and improve all necessary aspects.

Users: It is important to come close to people, be in direct contact with them through email for instance, and know about their needs in order to react to any innovation in the best way possible to achieve better outcomes. By keeping in contact with the users it will be possible to find out which information contained in a webpage is the most

interesting for them; at what time they are online, how many people visit this particular page and so on, so that necessary modifications can be carried out and updated. The fact that some users are very dispersed or far away and the new users joining the processes call for organising levelling courses and creating tools to guarantee optimal attention is being paid to users.

Capacity development

Only three projects have been analysed. A very high level of almost unanimous satisfaction is worth noting. All the projects consider that they have fulfilled their objectives. The number of users participating in capacity building is also significant (78%), compared to 2008 when most trainees where members of the projects' teams.
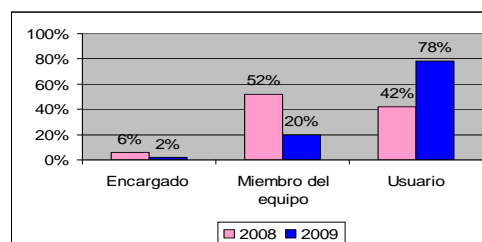

Legend: Manager, Member of the team, User

There are a series of issues related to capacity development which have been raised in several evaluation questionnaires and which should be examined during 2010, in order to maintain continuous improvement.
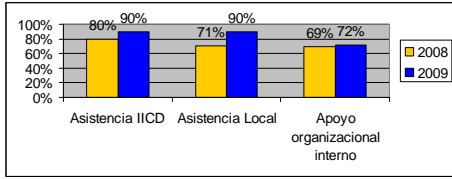
Project implementation

In general terms, results have been very positive. It is very important to point out that there are no differences between the projects in terms of criteria. Most specifically, there are no differences regarding the assistance received by the IICD, which has obtained better results than the previous year. This might be due to the fact that there has been better maintained and stronger contact. Moreover, taking into account the results from previous years, a positive trend can be observed.
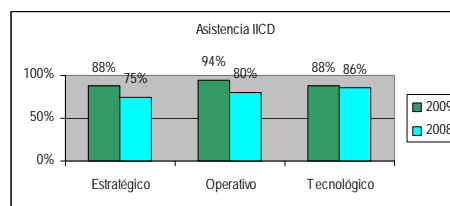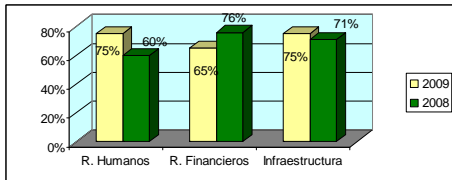

Legend: Strategic, Operational, Technological

Results regarding Local assistance are also better, this being the area with the highest improvement.

Although internal organisational support is the area with the lowest value rate, on average it has also improved. Answers on this issue reflect concerns related to the financial resources which were available for this project in 2009.

Another satisfactory result is the fact that respondents are less resistant to change, particularly within the organisations. In any case, it would be interesting to analyse the reason why the respondents perceive that the implementation process of the project was longer than required.
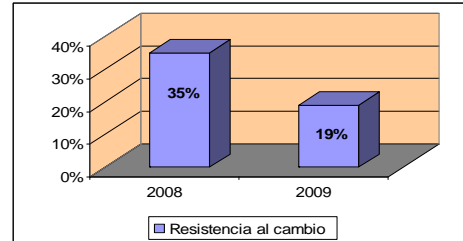
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IICD was established by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996. Our core funders include the Dutch Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGIS) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). For more information, please visit www.iicd.org.