

# ICT-LED SOCIAL INNOVATION PROCESS 2011

*Feedback, evaluation and lessons learned*



## CONNECT 4 CHANGE

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# ICT-led Social Innovation Process 2011

Lessons learned 2011

## Working together in Connect4Change in 2011

Co-creation of programmes in ICT for health, education and economic development has been the starting point for the Connect 4 Change (C4C) alliance and put into practise in 2011. IICD, Cordaid, Edukans and ICCO in collaboration with AKVO, Text2Change and partner organisations united for the design and implementation of ICT4Development programmes. This so-called *ICT-led social innovation process* started in 2011 in Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Peru, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The *ICT-based Social Innovation Process* enables diverse stakeholders to set priorities for strengthening the sectors they have an interest in, shape their sector's development path, and design how their organisations will use ICT tools to empower their staff and their beneficiaries to create positive change. From its inception, IICD has thus always regarded ICT as tools whose power can be harnessed by people in developing countries to shape their own development rather than technology being a goal.

ICT4D programmes normally focus on the transfer of specific new or innovative technologies to developing countries. C4C employs a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach to address structural problems and innovate social sectors such as education, health and agriculture. Driven by user needs and powered by local networks of passionate individuals and organisations, the approach facilitates the co-creation of ICT-enabled solutions that are appropriate to the local contexts.

It has been an exciting first year of collaboration where we got to know each other better and went through this joint ICT-led social innovation process. This approach materialised in each Connect4Change supported country in:

- a sector-based Round Table,
- a Solution Design Workshop, and
- joint programme formulation.

By December 2011, 72 projects in ICT for health, -education and -economic development were formulated.

The ICT-led social innovation process is also leading in the C4C Learning Agenda. To enable monitoring and evaluation of the process, over 900 feedback questionnaires are collected among partner organisations. At the end of 2011 partners gathered for a national ICT4D Learning Workshop to validate the findings and to look forward. This report is based upon these outcomes and lessons learned.

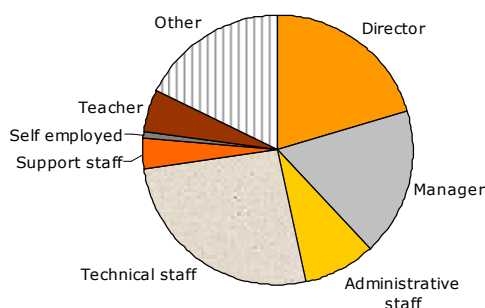
## 1. Evaluation Round Table workshop: Demystifying ICT4D

Round Tables functioned as the kick-off of the Connect4Change programme per country and per sector. A Round Table aims to raise awareness about ICT4D, to identify the key areas in which better information and communication can effectively contribute to the development of the sector, and to identify and prioritise project ideas.

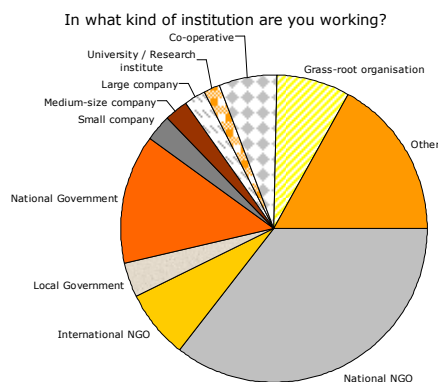
### Participants

One of the guiding principles of the Round Table is the involvement of a variety of stakeholders. Round Table questionnaires show that participants did not only represent a variety of institutes, but they also held different types of positions: from directors, managers, to technical- and support staff.

What is your position in your institution?



90% of the participants believed that attendees at the workshop were a good representation of key sectors of the economy (public private sector, public sector, NGOs and beneficiaries). 29% of the participants agreed when asked whether the hosting organisation had mobilised decision-makers and agents of change during the formulation process as a whole and 56% agreed partly. About 25% of the participants still missed important stakeholders.



During the Round Table process, we deem it important that also future 'end users' of technology solutions are present. This explains the number of teachers that joined the workshops, and the end-users in health and economic development (nurses, doctors or farmers) that can be found in the large category 'other'. They were invited to bring in their view on the sector and the information and communication challenges they experience in their daily (work)life.

Many participants valued the inclusion of beneficiaries in the whole formulation process (42% of respondents). Nevertheless, some of them are of the opinion that they should be involved more from the beginning of implementation onwards: *'For implementation the support of end users is necessary since they are the ones that make the project, who the project is about. Now that partners are moving into implementation there is a need for internet connection, training of end users and sensitization of local leaders, training in skills at all school-levels, implementation of the server and other ICT tools, ICT for marking sheets... ICT makes things so simple and is really needed, also in the classroom.'*

C4C also aims to involve men and women equally in all their activities. From our experience we know that especially in the ICT-sector, one has to pay special attention to maintain a gender balance. From the respondents' data we see that about 37% of the participants was female. One sees a similar trend in the other activities of 2011. Although this is not an equal number of participants, this does reflect the situation on the ground. Specific requests during the invitation process, and attention for suitability of women in solution design, should continue to promote involvement of both men and women in our programmes.

Furthermore, we are looking for representatives from urban and rural areas to ensure sufficient outreach to the rural areas, where ICT can often play a major role to reach out, as a tool to broaden communities' outreach and scope of influence. 57% of the participants in the Round Table were from rural areas.

### Satisfaction

82% of the participants agreed they achieved the objectives of the workshop. 93% of the partners indicated that the project idea coming from the roundtable was a good start for the project formulation: *'The Round table process provided valuable information and helped in demystifying the whole formulation process.'*

Satisfaction in terms of facilitation and methodologies was 80%. About 91% of the participants had the feeling their needs were heard and 74% found that all participants were involved in decision-making. Hardly anyone experienced the composition of the participants as intimidating. Some of the participants indicated later on that they had been somewhat overwhelmed by the number of topics that were addressed: *'At the beginning there was so much information: from Edukans, from IICD. It was after the Solution Design Workshop that the whole idea of ICT4E became clearer, also like the project activities, as well as insight in the role of ICT.'*

Some of the participants felt that within the given time-frame, they could have gone through more topics. However, not everyone felt that all themes of importance were covered during the workshop. Some participants mentioned that maybe the Round Table was too short. Participants indicate that if they would join this process another time, they would better understand the environment they entered in: *'I felt a little bit overwhelmed by*

*the Round Table and next time I would make an in-depth literature review of how ICT has been used in the health sector to prepare myself;*

*'I would make a pre-assessment where I want to focus my project. For that I really need to be aware of the day-to-day tasks from teachers and school administrators. I would also spend more time to identify community benefits. Organisations need to understand better the (school) environment they enter in. There is a risk that otherwise the project becomes an external element that was brought into the school.'; 'Some of us were not prepared for decision-making. Not all organisations sent the right representatives for that.'*

In some countries researchers undertook a preliminary investigation of sector challenges to prepare the gathering: 'We loved the way the pre-research was done, and the information it provided us to feed our project formulation'. Those that felt that only a limited range of ICT-technologies was covered during the workshop, were then introduced to a variety of technology-solutions during the Solution Design Workshop.

The Round Table Process aims to identify sector challenges, and to raise ICT4D awareness. The outcomes of the questionnaire illustrate that most of the participants believe that the Round Table did contribute to sector- and ICT4D-awareness.



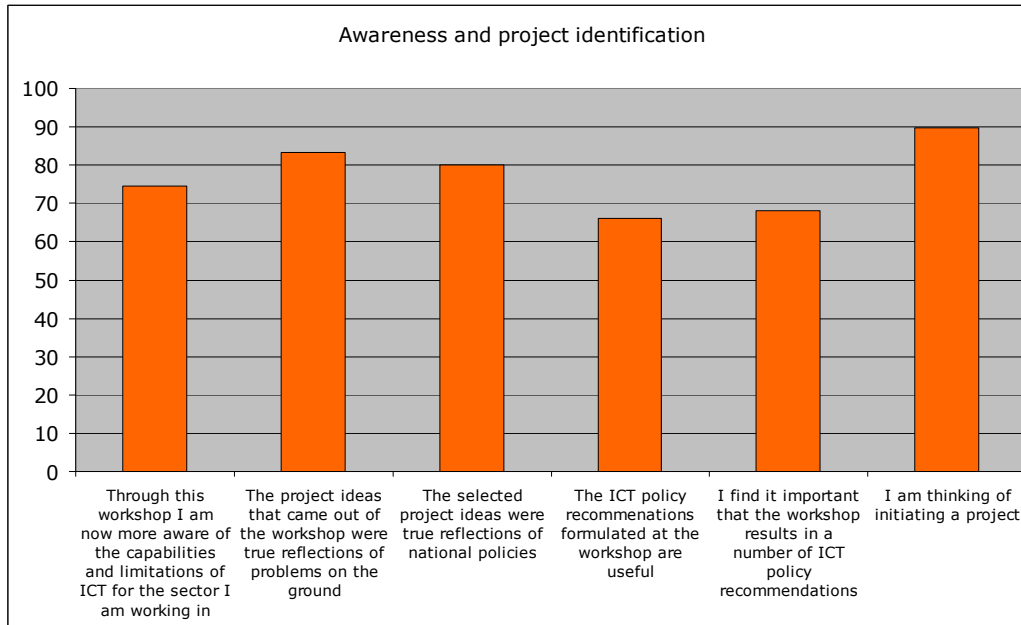
*Scenario-planning, Round Table for the Education Sector in Peru, 2011*

## Relevance

Participants indicate they are more aware of ICT in the sectors, and believe the project ideas that they identified, were true reflections of problems on the ground.

During several workshops, participants explicitly mentioned that the sector challenges and problems that were identified during the Round Table Workshop were guiding in the process of proposal writing and eventually led to the start of projects. At the end of the Round Table, 90% of the participants thought of initiating a project. During the Round Table partners became inspired about ICT4D, and many ideas were generated: *'I came in blank but we got to better understand the work of others: the presentations helped us to understand the work of partners, the work in projects better'*

The role of the Round Table in creating ICT policy recommendations is not as highly valued (65%) as we might have expected. Possibly the Round Table only gave an initial view on where the sector as a whole can play a role in ICT4D policy influencing. Looking at the figure above, it seems that the Round Table as such had a larger spin-off effect for initiating projects, where-as policy influence to partners is a later worry. Nevertheless, the presence of relevant ministries is considered very important. A quote from Kenya: *'Government ministries being involved in the roundtable was a curtail issue since it helped make projects to be in line with the policy.'*



### Role of Connect4Change

What has been an interesting finding during the ICT4D Learning Workshops is that partners really valued the intensive collaboration of the past year. 'Engagement of IICD staff and great involvement of all stakeholders' is seen as stimulating to the creation of a real partnership, and to creating shared ownership for successful project design: *'It was easy to talk about the project but harder to write it down coherently in a project proposal'*

Therefore, partners really appreciated and were surprised by the continuous support and guidance. In most cases, partners present proposals and start collaboration with northern agencies only after funding is granted: *'The continuous support of consultants. This was not a one-time affair, but we received continuous support (reminding and motivating).'*

*'The level of transparency, participation and flexibility was a surprise for us. The asking for ideas, sharing them, lead to new ideas: 1+1=3'; 'We received guidance by donor from the beginning, instead of from implementation only. This process coaches and involves the partners in formulating.'*

The process not only stimulate partners, it also contributes to mutual ownership: *'Writing the proposal specifically integrating donor ideas and partner ideas made us to come up with common ground.'* ; *'Tout le monde est impliqué; tout le monde est dans le bain; ça évite des risques et a créé une appropriation des deux cotés.'*

It was not only the support from Connect4Change members that was appreciated: it was the whole peer-process, networking and collaboration with other partners during the project design:

*'Usually when there is a call for proposals we are competitors, but from the start this was different and not viewed as a competition. Instead there was a focus on complementarity.'*; *'I felt like sharing instead of competing, it gave me a sense of belonging: The peer review process was very special. We were advised and supported and were allowed to make mistakes. We felt free to share the proposals 'as raw as they were'. Our organisations are now together in one programme so we work less single-handedly. We are meeting different ways of working and learn about that.'*

The preparation and exchange visits from Kenyan officials to educational projects in Zambia for education also worked well: to visualise opportunities for ICT in education, and to encounter best practises as inspiration for the ICT4Education programme in Kenya. In several countries, in-country exchange visits were also arranged.

### Roles of C4C alliance partners

In almost all ICT4D Learning Workshops partners brought forward that the role division between the C4C-members is unclear. During the learning workshops this was brought up in the majority (not all) of the countries, the report in Bolivia mentioning that as follows:

*'There is insufficient information about the roles of the individual consortium members. We signed an agreement or contact with an institution, but we are working with a whole consortium and there are no clear individual roles of each of these institutions.'*

Most of the times this role division became clearer over time, but this is an issue that needs continuous attention within C4C. This issue and that is also on the agenda of the Consortium in 2012. Partners in Bolivia appreciated that failures in coordination were admitted, amongst others, during the Learning Workshops, and indicated that this openness from both sides, creates trust. The positive side of so many different inputs, from more strategic, sector-based advice to more technical is that partners saw their project proposals evolve.

It was recognised that this participatory process helped partners to 'get into the ICT mood'. Partners were surprised by 'the vast possibilities of integrating ICT in social development' and 'How underutilised ICT is in social development and in other field despite its large potential'. The process also helped demystify the idea that ICT is only for technical people.

During the formulation process as a whole it has been surprising to partners how their mindset changed towards "I am capable" and "ICT is not complicated". In that sense, the possibilities for integration of ICT were surpassing expectations: partners indicate they see more possibilities and demand for ICT than expected. In that sense, the awareness raising of the possible role of ICT4D has had its effects.

One can conclude that the process itself has been capacitating and raised awareness on ICT4D. Constant feedback was at first a big effort, but had been very much appreciated at the end as a learning process:

*'The last year was a learning process for us: capacity development starting at the proposal phase, this is unique. My proposal is now more comprehensive than before.'*; *'Although the Consortium of C4C is still new, their communication to us was well-coordinated. Each of them was valuable to use based on our own ideas and new views.'*

The complex involvement of C4C organisations also created some frustration: *'Some proposals had to be re-written six times which provided a lot of work: We had to work with comments from so many different people.'*; *'We had to deliver things within a tight deadline, not realising that we too have other commitments'*.

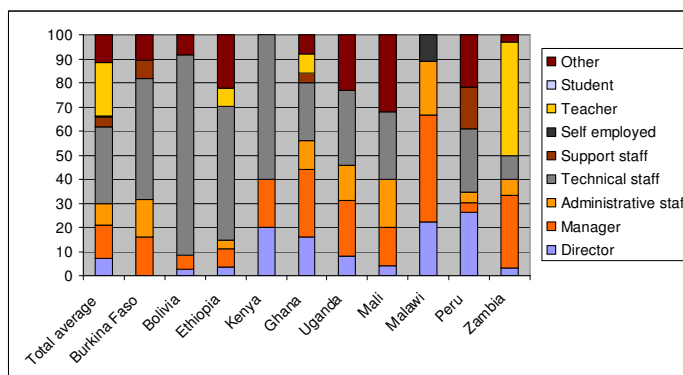
## 2. Evaluation Solution Design Workshops

The Round Table Workshop generated project ideas... but how to design your more concrete ICT-solutions, that are well-linked to the work of your organisation and the identified sector challenges? To make the next step from formulating project ideas to project proposals, partners gathered in Solution Design Workshops. IICD's technical advisors and local technical consultants facilitated these workshops. In a number of countries, consortium partner Text to Change assisted in explaining and advising on mobile solutions.

The workshops were hands-on and included examples of sector-appropriate technical solutions through practical demonstrations and exchanges with the more experienced organisations. They also included advice and training in ICT solutions, human resource requirements, identification of competence- and capacity development needs and technical plans.

### Participants

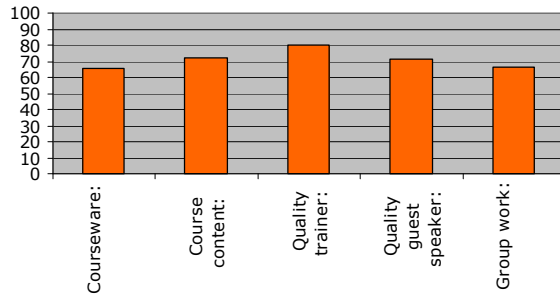
On average, 25% of the respondents were project users, 25% were project managers and 50% were members of the project teams. This provided in a good mix of decision makers and implementing staff



required for effective implementation of ICT.

With 32%, the female participation is low again needs to be addressed in the future. This also reflects in the low appreciation of gender aspects (40%) in the training of access to the training for women.

The participation of 65% participants from rural areas contributes to the focus on ICT for rural areas in the C4C program.

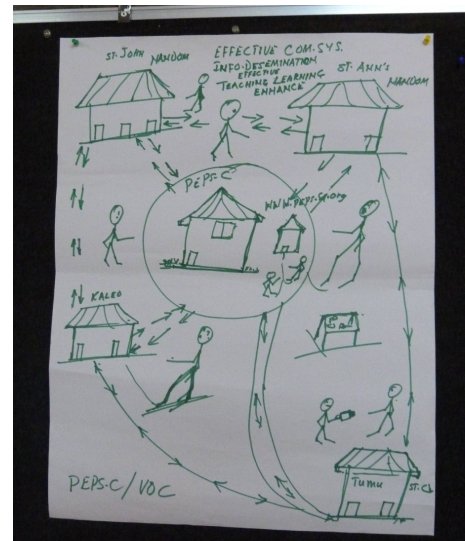
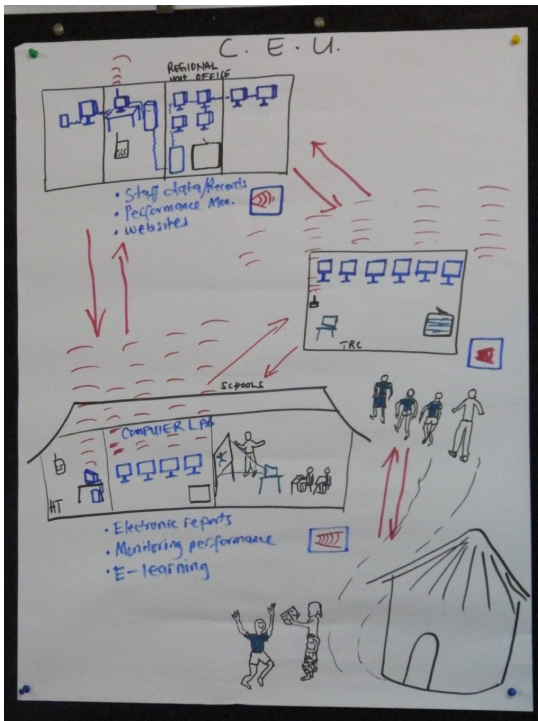


### Satisfaction

The satisfaction levels of participants with the solution design workshops were very high: they were all above 90%. When we select the respondents that indicated 'strongly satisfied', the following table indicates that the quality of trainers, content and guest speaker was mostly valued, with a bit lower satisfaction levels for courseware and group work.

By many partners the workshop was experienced as a turning point in the formulation process:

*'In this workshop everything comes together, we got a clear picture. Local consultants helped to bring everything together from the Round Table, the Solution Design Workshop, the feedback and to move beyond the original identifications of existing solutions, offering a variety of tools where we could choose from.'* *'The technical solutions offered to us are amazing, like the possibility of tele-conferencing.'* *'The presentation of Text2Change was very inspiring and the use of social media to promote and improve our organisational performance.'* *'After the pilot / initial project proposals we continued to work more on impact, since we were introduced to a variety of tools. This helped us especially in the concept stage where we identified people we want to work with, as well as in the communities, and the information gaps that exist in that information flow.'*



Information flows, drawn at a Solution Design Workshop in Ghana in 2011

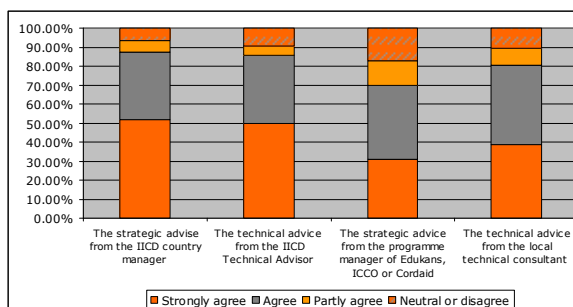


### 3. Evaluation Project formulation support

The year 2011 was all about project formulation in Connect4Change. This formulation process started with the Round Table Workshop to assist partners in project identification and the Solution Design Workshops to address technology solutions and ICT competences. These workshops are combined with one-to-one coaching and advice on strategic, technical and financial aspects of the proposals. In addition, advice was provided on the alignment and integration of ICT in the partner's institutional programs. Therefore the support is provided by C4C staff of IICD, Text to Change, Cordaid, ICCO and Edukans. This was complemented by advice from local consultants on technical aspects.

#### Satisfaction

The appreciation of technical advice by staff of Connect4Change and local consultants, is indicated in the following figure. Strategic and technical advice from country- and programme managers was very much appreciated. During the Learning Workshops partners in all countries have repeatedly mentioned how much they valued the technical advice: mostly, since this was the surprising and 'new' thing to their work.



To several partners it has been very valuable:

*'That in-house skills were made explicit during a visit of the IICDs Technical Advisor: skills we were before not even aware of.'* But also; *'Technical people should at least visit projects twice to identify whether there are available resources (communication tools, human resources etc.) and to determine what a viable budget for the project is.'*

The experience gained during this ICT-led social innovation process, has already inspired some partners in project activities outside the C4C programme:

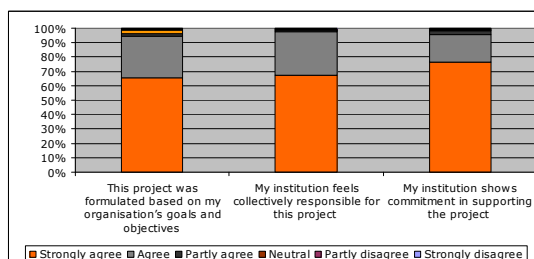
*'Working in partnerships has also helped a lot to implement generated ideas from the Round Table and Solution Design Workshop outside the C4C programme (i.e. Huduma for LEC). The SDW has also been useful for the educational programmes in the ICCO-Alliance: LEC organised a similar workshop for those organisations that did not move into C4C. The experience gained during this process made LEC move faster in formulating projects in ICCO Alliance as well and helped them to improve the quality of their proposals.'*

In moving forward partners indicated there is a strong need for a lot of support in basic steps to take in implementation. The intensive support of 2011 has been valued and there is a wish for continuation of that. By peer-collaboration, C4C has also been asked whether the local consultants can still be around during the implementation phase. There is a clear need for improving basic ICT skills and more ICT-training within organisations, projects and on end user level:

*'A needs assessment should be done by various organisations with involvement of C4C partners to enable proper planning of requisite capacity building'; 'Involve people with adequate ICT background in the various project teams and formulation processes to ensure smooth take off of projects.'; 'My only comment is that it will still be very necessary to put much emphasis on capacity building for project teams and also identify community ICT resource persons/volunteers to enhance their ownership of the project.'*

#### Institutional integration

An essential part of ICT4D projects is that they are in line with the development goals of the organisation. Technology can never be an end in itself, but should be a facilitator, or even an accelerator towards achieving development goals.



Project teams do see their projects as an integrated part of the whole

organisation. Over 90% of the partners indicated that the project is based on organisational objectives. They also feel high levels of responsibility and commitment to the project (see graph).

In many countries partners discussed institutional integration, ranging from the need for sustainability to management involvement. Both partners and C4C-members have been advised to promote commitment of specific staff within the organisation to be directly responsible for heading the project and attending all meetings that will lead to the smooth implantation of the project. This, partners said, will prevent the situation where some organisations have presented different people at the workshops: *'We should have had a formal way of circulating the information from these processes to our teams'*. And; *'Next time we would use the Round Table to put together the project team.'*

RWECCO in Uganda recognised the importance of non-technical participants in determining the sector problems, that there were also people involved in the whole process *'that were not purely ICT. That way the link from the problem analysis to the ICT solutions was ensured.'* There is also some concern with others in that area: *'Language problems between IT people/non-IT people'* were one of the concerns of project partners in Zambia. Management and directors in Kenya responded surprised: The ICT recruits were young and the Directors were doubtful if they could handle the task at hand. But they saw they were.

### Administration and funding issues

Many partners listed administrative and financial guidelines and schedules by C4C as a challenge. The C4C Consortium is asked to ensure that partners are not concerned about budget transfers. Most partners indicate that they were able to recruit IT-personnel nice in time for the project implementation, but few indicate that project planning started late, and as a result ICT officers, who are key to the project, came late. A number of partners indicate that they should have more often been able to give input in workshop designs, planning, project templates and funding:

*'Communication between partners in the new consortium went well, except the administrative part.'*; *'There was no possibility to negotiate the terms of the C4C contract'*; *'The roundtable processes was meant to facilitate quick development and approval of project project proposals. But then the approval process took a long time. This has affected the implementation plan in terms of time lines. Nevertheless, the project team is working hard to meet the time line. Thank you.'* And; *'There is need to expedite implementation since the lapse from formulation has been very long.'*

The Round Table by some created too high expectations: partners indicate that eventually there was less budget available than expected. From Mali: *'Redesigning of projects to fit into the adjusted budgets by C4C has been a difficult process for organisations.'*

The issue of (financial) sustainability is an urgent one, and was addressed during most ICT4D Learning Workshops and will remain on the agenda the coming years. Therefore, on request of partner organisations, sustainability has been discussed for a full day during the learning workshops in Bolivia and Kenya: *'It's further worrying to leave the sustainability of the project hanging. Will it be just like any other project dying immediately after the project life? Let's joggle our minds and improve that in future during project development.'*

### End-user involvement and gender

One of the slogans that came out of the ICT4D Learning Workshop in Tanzania was: *'How to make the end user happy'*. The involvement of end-users in solution-design has been a new, and much valued, approach. 90% of the partners indicate that beneficiaries were involved in decision-making. Still, partners indicated continuous involvement of the target group is pivotal for successful implementation of the projects: *'I realise now how huge the demand is for ICT interventions in the grassroots area. I wish to suggest that beneficiaries of the project be involved as soon as possible for the smooth start of the project.'*

Since this is considered important, partners want to look together on how to put more effort in end-user involvement in particular in rural areas. This can be realised by organising future training activities at end user level: *'Think of community resource persons that identify well with the community. These could provide the project team with the situation on the ground as they get the time to interact with the community members.'* *'We need to understand the user needs; see what you have and try to inter-marry the two'*.

As indicated in the beginning of this report, the issue of involving women is a constant challenge within ICT4D. 90% of the project teams however perceive that the content of the project is being developed taking in the viewpoints of men and women. 83% thinks



Burkina Faso,  
Solution Design  
Workshop 2011

the projects will change the role of women for the better. Still, one of the partners recommends: *'Identify more innovative ways to involve and incorporate women in the project.'*

### Learning, sharing, lobbying and networking

As part of the Learning Agenda, ICT4D Learning Workshop will take place annually. The feedback on the first round of workshops, is that it a nice forum to share concerns, and that it is in line with the acknowledgement of partners there is a need to cooperate, and to bring project teams together at workshops. Partners indicate that in order to stay on top of this it is important to continue with coordination and sharing of experiences among partners:

*'More networking and coordination amongst partners after the workshops is needed - we were working closely together in the beginning (RT, SDW) but when we started formulation we focussed so much on our own projects again' and; '...constants reviews in the process of implementation is needed to share experiences and challenges for improvement and for replication of best practise from one area to the other: we need to plan and focus for extension to other part or districts. This is a motivation factor.'*

Other requests in the area of promotion of knowledge sharing are to create mechanisms to develop a supra-institutional memory and document practices so that we learn and also plan a lot of sensitisation for the stakeholders to understand the project. For this, there should be a capacity to accept feedback and to share responsibility for programme implementation. The peer review process also helped to identify areas for shared lobby and advocacy. Issues dealing with how to work with government properly and efficiently were brought up at all Learning workshops.