

## **IICD's theory of Social Change**

### **Background**

IICD was founded on the assumption that ICT's are not only a viable tool for development, but also that technology development cannot be stopped anyway, so this introduction can better be focused on development as soon as possible - this is also known as bridging the digital divide. Because of almost no experience in the field with ICT for development, it's important to start experiments that can show lessons learned and impact.

### **Goals and assumptions**

The mission of IICD is to assist developing countries use ICT as a strategic tool for sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

IICD strategy is based on the belief that ICT can alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development by:

- A. Direct poverty alleviation - by changing people's lives through the access to information. This information can create awareness, empowerment and economic opportunities.
- B. Building civil society - by strengthening and improving the quality of organisations and sector wide initiatives, to empower them to participate in decision making processes and linking them to other stakeholders.
- C. Influencing the political enabling environment by making them aware of the opportunities of ICT and facilitate policy processes. IICD assumes that these decision-makers on national and international level are necessary for introducing large scale ICT for development projects and programmes. These projects and programmes should contribute to direct poverty alleviation (see A).

### **IICD's assumptions**

#### ***Guiding principles – overarching assumptions***

If sustainable development wants IICD strongly believes that each activity should be built upon certain principles. The following guiding principles are the underlying assumptions of all the interventions of IICD:

*Demand responsiveness* – activities must respond to local demands and offer opportunities for development that are workable in the local context. For IICD, this means working with partners that are themselves demand-responsive and with processes that are both participatory and representative. IICD cannot expect to reach a broad group of individual end-users in its direct activities. It can do so, however, by working with organisations that represent the poor.

*Local ownership* - sustainability requires that the local actors participating in an activity are ultimately responsible for its results. That means that IICD is a facilitator, catalyst and broker, not an implementer. IICD owns a methodology and supporting processes

*Multi-stakeholder involvement* - multi-stakeholder participation is central to sustainable ICTs for development at the national level. IICD firmly supports that local private, public and non-profit sectors all have a comparative advantage that can help fuel the MSP. Respectively, this often means: innovation, enabling environment and socio-economic development impact.

*Learning by doing* - Though IICD's general pattern is "bottom-up" this means a move from projects to programmes to policies. This does not mean political bottom up. Rather, in some cases, projects originate in Ministries and central government agencies. Further, IICD is at times asked to directly participate in policy processes by governing bodies. The important element to note is that we always work from a base of project experience and learning.

*Gender equality* - Women are prominent stakeholders in the social change process as they comprise the larger percentage of disadvantaged groups. Therefore special attention must be paid to addressing women's needs to ensure that opportunities offered by ICT for development are taken towards gender equality.

## **Strategies**

IICD doesn't only promote learning by doing with its partners, but also applies that to her own organisation and strategy development. Therefore, has IICD adapted its theory of change, based on her in-country experiences. Our experiences over the last 6 years support that:

- ICT for development shouldn't focus on the ICT as goal but as a mean;
- Practical projects – containing infrastructure, training and content - of ICTs to development sectors are key to demonstrating viability and development impact;
- A critical mass of such practical applications is important as a means to draw substantive evidence of this impact;
- Capacity development plays a central role to ensure that project owners have sufficient ICT-related capacities to implement their self-defined activities;
- A local knowledge sharing and learning function (M&E) stimulate improving practitioners performance and at the same time, ensure that the critical mass of experiences catches the eye of policymakers;
- All activities implemented in a country should be interrelated and form a network to be able to learn from each other join forces influencing policy;
- Policy-makers see practical experiences as informative material to facilitate the inclusion of ICTs in sector policies, and as possible activities for nation-wide scaling;
- National and sector policies are often very technology driven and need input to make the policies for development and sector related;
- Policy-makers see practical experiences as informative material to facilitate the inclusion of ICTs in sector policies, and as possible activities for nation-wide scaling.
- For IICD and its local partners an enabling environment is needed to have a successful reach its goals. This enabling environment means a supportive political environment as well as sufficient infrastructure.
- **One important precondition to the start of IICD's methodologies is our relationships with local intermediaries. IICD does not attempt to set-up direct relationships with individual end-users, however, we work with local partner organisations that represent the poor. In most cases, this means local governing bodies, local NGOs and CBOs as well as the more centralised government sector. The success of IICD's mission is dependent on the pro-poor representativeness of these intermediaries. Given this, their identification and vetting is a key part of the process.**
- **A Country Programme passes through different stages with different needs and IICD should change its role accordingly from catalyst to adviser and broker.**
- **Complementarily, a strong means to build demand-responsiveness in an ICT for development activity is to ensure that it is embedded or anchored within a development sector. Combined, this often means intermediary organisations from the local public and non-profit sectors that associate with the 'consumers' – policy-makers, doctors, teachers, farmers.**

## **Future**

IICD's strategic aims within the framework 2006 – 2010 are again an organic adaptation of the theory of social change and focuses on:

1. Embedding: applying experience to sector and national policies
2. Harvesting: translating experience into reusable lessons and accountability
3. Leveraging: taking all experiences to new programmes through partnerships

Within the theory IICD has chosen to also use these strategic aims as high-level interventions within the theory of social change.

### **1. Embedding**

In IICD's experience, projects that make use of ICT as a tool to support sector development have a solid demonstration effect. That is, they inspire others to follow suit and develop their own similar ICT projects and activities. This exercise has been ultimately useful in demonstrating the value of ICTs as a tool for development in terms of their ability to empower and have an economic impact on the activity's target beneficiaries such as health officers, farmers, teachers and students. However, demonstration projects alone will not be sufficient to change the development landscape in a sustainable manner. IICD assumes that only through an active and dynamic link between (successful) ICT projects and policymakers, there will be a build upon existing experiences, to make ICT4D sustainable.

### **2. Harvesting**

A unique learning environment has been catalysed in the countries in which IICD works, in which the evaluation process is entirely locally owned and operated. What remain both a challenge and a priority for IICD at present is the harvesting of results for accountability purposes to our strategic partners and learning for local partners. There is significant pressure from the development community to furnish proof about the impact of ICTs on development. This pressure is shared by IICD, which is speeding up the process of bringing these results out in a more accountable fashion. The learning is already there; now it is about evidence. IICD assumes that through active translation and analysis of the results it will be better able to show evidence of the impact poverty alleviation and sustainable development is convincing and of good quality. This evidence should then facilitate the awareness raising of decision makers.

In short IICD assumes:

- Demonstrating viability and development impact through practical applications of ICTs to development sectors is key;
- That through targeted publications you can share lessons where others can learn from to start or improve ICT4D activities;
- A critical mass of practical applications is important as a means to draw substantive evidence of this impact.

### 3. Leveraging

When the pilot projects are positive they should be embedded and applied sector. To be able to do so an enabling environment needs to be created to make sure that the experiences are translated into reusable lessons and accountability.

- Sector programmes should be containing complementary projects
- In order for policy makers to start supporting and implementing large scale ICT4D programmes they first need to be aware of the realistic opportunities of ICT4D.