

External Review of the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas

Draft Report

Volume II: Appendices

June 2005

Appendices

Appendix I List of Acronyms	1
Appendix II Terms of Reference	3
Appendix I Biographies of Team Members	14
Appendix II List of Documents Consulted	16
Appendix III List of People Interviewed	20
Appendix IV Case Studies of Five ICA Projects	24

Appendix I List of Acronyms

CAATEC	Comisión Asesora de Alta Tecnología
CAFTA	Central American Free Trade Agreement
CCMD	Canadian Center for Management Development
CFS	Computers For Schools
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIVIC	Caribbean Virtual ICT Community
CKLN	Caribbean Knowledge Learning Network
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DOT-Force	G-8 Digital Opportunities Task Force
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EU	European Union
FAC	Foreign Affairs Canada
FIPA	Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas
FOMIN-IADB	El Fondo Multilateral de Inversiones, Inter-American Development Bank
FUNREDES	Fundación Redes y Desarrollo
HAB	Hemispheric Advisory Board
IC	Industry Canada
ICA	Institute for Connectivity in the A
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technologies for Development
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ITAFE	IT Access For Everyone
JSWG	Joint Summit Working Group
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
OAS	Organization of American States
OSILAC	Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
PCR	Project Completion Reports
PPB	Program and Partnership Branch
RedGEALC	Red de Gobierno electrónico de América Latina y el Caribe (Network of E-Government Leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean)
SEP	Social and Economic Policy
SFP	Secretaría de la Función Pública

SIECA	Secretaría de Integración Económica Centroamericana
SMEs	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
VMN	Virtual Mentoring Network
WB	World Bank
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society

Appendix II Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

ICT4D External Reviews: Acacia, Pan Asia, Pan Americas, ICA Draft, June 18, 2004

1. Background

PI External Reviews are independent assessments of the Centre's work. They focus on the performance of individual Program Initiatives. They are important for purposes of accountability, guidance for future programming and learning for improvement.

The first complete set of external reviews were conducted in 1999, in preparation for the CSPF 2000-05. They were a collaborative effort of Programs Management and the Evaluation Unit. Twelve PIs were evaluated by teams of 2 external reviewers. A total of 17 consultants acted as reviewers; some of them were in charge of evaluating more than one PI. The reviews provided insights and recommendations for strengthening the Centre's programming. Comments for improvement of the external review process referred to the tight timeframe of the exercise and to the "desk" character of the evaluation, since it lacked visits to projects in the field.

In 2003/2004, 11 SEE and ENRM programs were reviewed. Building on the feedback from the previous set, they included field work but, unfortunately, they were again undertaken initially within a very tight timeline. Comments on this set of reviews included:

- the need to extend the timeframe, particularly towards the end when draft and final versions of the review reports are reviewed and approved;
- the importance of having someone with program evaluation experience as part of the review team; the difficulties of having "teams" of evaluators who were geographically dispersed and had not previously worked together;
- the importance of clear, concise and consistent documentation for presentation to SMC and the Board of Governors, particularly the 5-7 page briefs of each report, which need to include information on programs as well as on their results;
- the importance of the common quality assessment of the reports and presentation of all reports (unsatisfactory or satisfactory) to the Board of Governors;
- the need to have a dedicated team (Evaluation Unit, PPB Management, and Grants Administration Division) assigned to the management of the reviews;
- the need to build in time for the reviews into the work plans of program teams and PPB Management.

The coming review will look at 2 program initiatives (PIs) and 2 corporate project in the Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) program area. PPB Management judges that evaluating Corporate Projects is also important, given the significant program resources allocated to them. Each of the programs will have been implementing their prospectus for approximately 3 years at the time of the review, although Acacia and PAN Asia are in their second phase as a PI.

Program	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Acacia	Oct					March
Pan Asia	Oct					March
Pan Americas	Oct					March
ICA		Jan				March

2. Purpose and Uses of the External Reviews

Purpose of the External Reviews

The Centre has begun the process of doing external reviews of PIs and Corporate Projects as it transitions from CSPF III (2000-2005) to CSPF IV (2005-2010). PPB management has pledged time and money to the process and is committed to using the findings from these reviews in a number of important ways.

The basic purpose of the external reviews is to improve program effectiveness.

Improving program effectiveness has learning and accountability dimensions. At the Centre, responsibility for program-level learning and program improvement rests primarily with program staff and managers (i.e., PI teams, Team Leaders, Corporate Project staff and managers, and DPAs). Accountability at the program level rests primarily with program managers (i.e., TLs, Corporate Project managers, and DPAs). IDRC is accountable not only for effective use of resources but also for seeking and using information to improve performance.

External reviews are one source of such information. They provide an independent, informed view about how programs are performing, the extent to which they meet their objectives, and the results and effectiveness of programs. They supplement the information available from other forms of evaluation and feedback on program effectiveness and results. They form an important element of accountability, as indicated by the Auditor General's Office during the 2002 special review of IDRC. Used in conjunction with other evaluation findings, external reviews can improve the credibility of information about performance, verify internal findings, promote dialogue about program effectiveness, and inform decisions about current and future programming.

PPB management is committed to using the external reviews in the following ways:

2.1 Accountability for Program Results

Accountability for program effectiveness rests ultimately with PPB Management. The DPA Reports to the Board of Governors are central to the Centre's system for program accountability, and a key instrument for reporting on program effectiveness. DPAs need to present evaluative information on program performance and results in their reports to the BOG. The external reviews are one important input into this. Other evaluation information from program and project levels will also inform the conclusions and recommendations in the DPA's reporting to the Board. The Board of Governors will review and discuss the available PI and Corporate Project external reviews at their October 2005 meeting. In preparation for that, the reviews will be presented to SMC. As part of program managers' accountability for program results and for use of the review findings for program improvement, the reports to the Board on the external reviews will include a synthesis report by the DPA for ICT4D which will identify and analyze the major cross-cutting issues for the program area as well as the way the findings were used to inform decision-making.

2.2 Informing Management Decisions aimed at Future Programming Directions

The external reviews will be used by PPB Management as input into decisions about future programming directions in the next CSPF as it is implemented. The reviews will not be the sole input into these decisions, nor will decisions about continuation or termination of PIs and Corporate Projects be determined by the reviews; the reviews will be considered along with other evaluative and strategic information in planning the Centre's future program architecture.

At this stage of the evolution of the ICT4D program area, the major issues identified by the DPA include:

- whether to organize programs regionally or thematically;
- how to link externally and internally funded programs and projects more effectively;
- how to support global initiatives to have maximum influence;
- how to integrate new priorities as they emerge both inside and outside the Centre.

Decision-making within the program area cannot cease while the external reviews are being conducted but all efforts will be made to ensure that findings are available in a timely manner to support that decision-making.

2.3 Providing Input for Program Learning and Improvement

The external reviews will provide information and reflection from which PI and Corporate Project teams and managers can learn in order to improve programs. Although the reviews may provide some information on themes or issues, what is learned will primarily relate to how programs can support ICT4D research more effectively and efficiently. Program teams will explicitly state how they considered and used the findings from the external reviews in their prospecti which are to be presented to the Board of Governors in March 2006.

3. Review Objectives and Questions

3.1 Evaluation Issues and Questions

3.1.1 Objectives:

- 1) Assess the extent to which the program is meeting its objectives and aims, as set out in its prospectus [or program document in the case of corporate projects], and identify any evolution in program objectives;
- 2) Document the results of the program (i.e. outputs, reach and outcomes) and analyze their influence;
- 3) Offer reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the program's thematic approach and strategies in relation to the current state of the field(s) in which the program is active;
- 4) Assess the composition and functioning of the program team as it relates to its ability to meet the program's objectives over the course of implementing this prospectus.

3.1.2 Review questions:

For objective 1 – Assess the extent to which the program is meeting its objectives and aims, as set out in its prospectus, and identify any evolution in objectives:

- 1.1 Describe and assess the progress of the program towards reaching its objectives;
- 1.2 Identify any evolution in program objectives and/or in interpretation of program objectives, and any adaptations that the program is making to changing contexts, opportunities and constraints;
- 1.3 Comment on how the program is undertaking any actions that it proposed in its prospectus to take as a result of comments made in the previous external review.
- 1.4 Document how the program is undertaking and using evaluation in its work.

For objective 2 – Document results of the program (i.e. outputs, reach, and outcomes):

2.1 Review the program's outputs to date ("outputs" include, but are not limited to, research reports and publications, websites and electronic lists produced, conferences, workshops and their proceedings, etc.); and comment on their type and quality ("quality" to be based on consideration of their scientific merit as assessed in relation to the relevant disciplines/fields, their relevance and appropriateness given the intended audience(s) and user(s), and context(s), and the purposes and objectives of the program);

2.2 Describe and analyze the influence of the program through its **outcomes** to date ("outcomes" as defined in the prospectus, e.g. the program's contribution to changing the actions, behaviours and relationships of the program's partners); the program's **reach** ("reach" defined as how actors interacted with and were affected by their interaction with the activities and/or results of the program); the **strategies** which contributed to the program's outcomes; and any **constraining or facilitating factors (internal to the program, external to the program but internal to IDRC, and external to IDRC)**. This should take into account, but need not be limited to, the following:

- 1) the effectiveness of the program at promoting the dissemination and utilization of research results;
- 2) the contributions of the program to building or strengthening capacities of researchers and institutions;
- 3) the contributions of the program to influencing policies and/or technologies. In influencing public policy, this could mean:
 - Expanded policy capacities -- improving researcher capacities to conduct and create use for policy relevant research.
 - Broadened policy horizons -- increasing both the availability of knowledge, as well as the comprehensiveness of this knowledge;
 - Affected policy regimes -- the actual use of research in the development of new laws, regulations or structures.);
- 4) any contributions of the program to a greater understanding and consideration (amongst program partners and within the field of research) of inclusion of gendered perspectives in research and research processes;
- 5) any changes in relationships, actions or behaviours of project partners and other project stakeholders (individual, organizations, groups, etc.), including any relationships that the program effected which contributed to development results (e.g., formation of networks, involvement of stakeholders, collaboration among researchers, etc.).
- 6) any other outcomes observed.

For objective 3 – Offer reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the program’s thematic approach and strategies in relation to the current state of the field(s) in which the program is active:

3.1 Comment, based on the evidence, on the extent to which the thematic focus and strategies of the program are consistent with the development goals and objectives it seeks to bring about (strategies including, but not limited to, project modalities (e.g. networks, regional projects, etc.); type and size of projects; types of partnerships (e.g. Canadian, other donor); etc.).

3.2 Identify how and to whom the work supported by the program is relevant.

3.3 Comment on how the work of the program relates to the state-of-the-art in the field(s) in which the program is relevant.

For objective 4 – Assess the composition and functioning of the program team as it relates to its ability to meet its objectives over the course of implementing this prospectus.

4.1 Document changes in team composition and configuration and assess the influence of those changes on the implementation and outcomes of the program.

4.2 Comment on the perceptions of team members and partners on the strengths and weaknesses of its functioning as well as their viewpoint on where the programming is headed.

4. Methodology

A common review framework and methodology will be used for all PIs and Corporate Projects, in order to facilitate the use and management of the reviews. The same TORs will be applied to all PIs and Corporate Projects, although specific aspects can be added if requested by the DPA or Vice President. The methodological details will be determined through discussion among the program teams, the Evaluation Unit, the evaluation firm, and the reviewers and DPA?.

These are program reviews. They will look beyond individual projects, focusing on how the PI or Corporate Project, as a whole, is performing. The review will draw from both program and project level data sources, and seek to triangulate the data from multiple sources. These will include:

- 1) Program Area documentation: including, DPA presentations and reports, program area meeting notes, PR documents, other key documents recommended by the DPA;
- 2) Review of program and project documentation: including, at a minimum, (i) the prospectus, Board presentations and minutes, workplans, PI/Corporate Project progress reports, evaluation reports, meeting minutes; (ii) all project abstracts; (iii) PCRs; (iv) the report from the previous external review, if any; and (v) other key documents recommended by the team;
- 3) Interviews with program team members and senior managers;
- 4) Interviews with a sample of project leaders/Survey of project leaders;

- 5) In-depth case studies of a sample of projects (can include projects and RSPs). This will entail:
 - (i) review of key project documents (including Project Approval Document, progress and final reports received, publications and other outputs, trip reports, etc.);
 - (ii) interviews with the relevant program staff;
 - (iii) interviews with project researchers and other participants, and those said to or expected to have been influenced by the project; the latter will be done through travel to visit field sites of the projects.

For the in-depth case studies, 2-6 projects will be selected. The sampling strategy will be purposeful; the specific strategy will be determined in consultation with TLs/ Corporate Project managers, the Evaluation Unit and the consulting firm, but will be either typical case sampling (to illustrate what is considered normal) from within each of the programs' main areas of work, or maximum variation sampling (purposefully selecting a wide range of cases in order to examine variations within different contexts and to identify important common patterns across cases). The sampling could be stratified in order to cover the range of facets of each programs' work.

Using data collected from each of the above sources, the reviewers will address the review questions on (1) progress towards meeting program objectives; (2) program results; (3) strengths and weaknesses of the program's thematic approach and strategies in relation to the current state of the field; (4) the composition and functioning of the program team.

The TL of each PI / Corporate Project (and teams, as appropriate) and the EU will meet to discuss details of the methodology including an appropriate sampling strategy for project leaders and for the case studies. They will also discuss a time line for the review, and respective roles in the logistics of and communication on the review and field visits. Details of the methodology and field visits will be determined through discussions among the TL, the EU and reviewers.

The expected outputs of each external review are:

- 1) a report prepared by the review team of no more than 50 pages that responds to the 4 objectives;
- 2) a brief prepared by the EU of no more than 6 pages broken down into the sections below. This brief is intended as an analytical tool for communicating the findings of the external review to the IDRC's Senior Management Committee and Board of Governors, although they will also receive the full text of the external review. Examples of external review briefs can be found at: http://intranet.idrc.ca/en/ev-56892-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.
 - PI/Corporate Project Aims
 - Review Methodology
 - Review Findings
 - Issues for Consideration

5. Reviewers

External evaluators will conduct the reviews. The external reviewers will work in teams of two to three persons to incorporate more than one reviewer's perspective and to ensure coverage of the above criteria. Each team will consist of one reviewer who has program evaluation capabilities and one to two additional reviewers who will be selected on the basis of:

- their knowledge and experience in the field(s) and/or regions of the Program's work (able to comment authoritatively on the work of the PI or Corporate Project);
- their demonstrated experience / ability in performing evaluations at program level;
- their language capabilities;
- their independence of the Centre's present activities (specifically, reviewers cannot be recipients of funds under the PI in question nor anticipating future funds from that PI);
- and, being credible to the program staff and management under review.

The reviewer with program evaluation capabilities will act as lead reviewer and have responsibility for the submission of the final report.

Each program has submitted a list of potential reviewers and have indicated their preferred options. The EU and DPA will review the availability and fit of short-listed reviewers with these criteria in mind. Any links that reviewers have with IDRC will be documented. Former IDRC staff can be considered for cases where there is no direct PI affiliation. Previous PI external reviewers can be considered for this review again, if suitable. The EU will check availability of the candidates, and contract the reviewers once agreement is reached. The EU will confirm the final selections with TLs and with PPB Management.

If appropriate and possible, some reviewers could work on more than one PI review. A balance of Northern and Southern and gender perspectives will be sought.

6. Process and Timeline

PPB Management is the initiator and main client of the external reviews; they and TLs/Corporate Project managers are users of the results. The Evaluation Unit will manage the reviews.

The Evaluation Unit will comment on:

- 1) the review's fulfillment of the terms of reference and of reporting requirements;
- 2) the methodological integrity of the review;
- 3) the review's adherence to evaluation standards for utility, feasibility, accuracy and
- 4) propriety;
- 5) the clarity and organisation of the report.

Team Leaders / Corporate Project managers, with input from their teams / staff as appropriate, should comment on:

- 1) Any of the above;
- 2) accuracy and/or interpretation of the data and analysis;
- 3) comments and suggestions to reviewers intended to improve the report's usefulness for program decision-making and learning for program improvement.

DPA's and the VP-P should comment on:

- 1) Any of the above;
- 2) Comments and suggestions to reviewers intended to improve the report's for the defined primary uses of the external reviews (i.e. fulfilling information needs for accountability for program results; and informing management decisions about future programming directions).

The briefs will be prepared by the EU and reviewed by the EU, DPA, VP, and appropriate TL/Corporate Manager. The EU will ensure that comments are addressed in both the reports and the briefs and will prepare quality assessments of the reports. TLs/Corporate Project managers will prepare comments on intended use and the DPA will use the reports in preparing his analytical synthesis to the BOG.

Timeline

ACTIVITY	DATES
EU, DPA, and VP finalize TORs for reviews (DPA gets input from ICA donors);	By July 9th
EU contacts reviewers	by July 15
IDRC provides program documentation to reviewers	by September 24
IDRC's Evaluation Unit hosts Orientation and Methodology Workshop in Ottawa for reviewers; Strategy session for reviewers.	October 25-26
Reviewers participate in ICT4D all staff meeting in Ottawa, meet with PI/Corporate Project teams and Evaluation Unit; interview team members.	October 27-29
Reviewers meet with TL/Manager and Evaluation Unit and select projects for project leader interviews and for in-depth review	November 1
Reviewers submit preliminary external review workplan to EU. EU shares workplan with DPA and TL.	By November 15
IDRC provides project documentation to reviewers	by November 21
IDRC and reviewers arrange field visits	by December 15
Data collection: i.e. document review, interviews with PI/Corporate Project team members and with project leaders, and visits to field for in-depth studies; Analysis; Report writing	December 15 – April 15/05
Reviewers submit progress report	by March 11/05
Reviewers submit draft reports to EU	by April 22/05
EU submits draft reports to DPA, VP, TL	by April 29/05
DPA, VP, TL, & EU provide comments on reports to EU. EU forwards comments to reviewers.	by May 15/05

ACTIVITY	DATES
Reviewers submit revised final reports to EU	by June 15/05
EU submits final reports & draft briefs to DPA, VP, and TLs	by July 1/05
DPA, VP, EU, and TLs provide feedback on draft briefs to EU	by July 14/05
TL/Manager sends team response to DPA and VP PPB	by August 19/05
EU completes quality assessments of reports & prepares transmittal letter for SMC and Board of Governors	by August 19/05
DPA prepares synthesis analysis for presentation to SMC and Board of Governors	by Sept 16/05
DPA and EU practice presentation to Board of Governors	2-3 days before meeting
DPA and EU present to SMC and Board of Governors	October 2005
EU organizes AAR and interviews. EU reports on process to PPB Management	November 2005

7. Documents to be Provided to External Reviewers

The EU will coordinate with those in IDRC to ensure the documentation is sent to the reviewers.

7.1 Program Area Documentation [DPA]

7.1.1 Program documents:

- 1) Prospectus [PPB M]
- 2) Any PI / Corporate Project evaluations or external reviews, including reports of past reviews [TLs / EU]
- 3) PI / Corporate Project Workplans [PPB M / TLs]
- 4) Any PI / Corporate Project progress reports [TLs]
- 5) PCRs [TLs / GAD]
- 6) Project portfolio (i.e. activities supported during the current CSPF) [TL, GAD]
- 7) Abstracts of all projects funded since the start of the current CSPF cycle
- 8) Minutes of PI Team / Corporate Project staff Meetings [TLs]
- 9) List of PI / Corporate Project outputs [TLs]

Or any other documents the program deems important.

7.1.2 Project documents [for projects to be reviewed in depth]:

- 1) PADs and reports of projects [TLs / Corporate Project managers]
- 2) copies of project outputs available [TLs]
- 3) contact information for project leaders to be interviewed [TLs]
- 4) other relevant information / correspondence available [TLs]

7.2 Quality Assessment

The Evaluation Unit will assess the quality of the final external review reports and will report this information to SMC and the Board of Governors. What follows is the criteria against which quality will be assessed.

RATING	DESCRIPTION
I. Report's adherence to review terms of reference:	
High	Satisfactorily addresses all of the review objectives and questions
Medium	Satisfactorily addresses most of the review objectives and questions
Low	Satisfactorily addresses some of the review objectives and questions
Unacceptable	Satisfactorily addresses few or none of the review objectives and questions
II. Report's reliability (i.e., accuracy - uses evidence to support findings, resonates with information from other sources), and methodological rigour (i.e., feasibility - sound design): [It turned out to be problematic that we used the EU's standards/criteria for assessing the reports, but reported to the Board using "reliability" – we should stick to a single set of criteria, I would say the Unit's criteria]	
High	Usually draws on and presents evidence to support its findings; and uses rigorous and sound methodological approaches
Medium	Sometimes draws on and presents evidence to support its findings; and uses rigorous and sound methodological approaches
Low	Rarely presents or draws on evidence to support its findings; and/or has some methodological weaknesses
Unacceptable	Does not present or draw on evidence to support its findings; and/or has serious methodological weaknesses
III. Report's utility (i.e., appropriate for review users and intended uses)*:	
*based on the definition of use and users at the outset of the study; PPB and team managers' actual use of the review findings will confirm utility	
High	Largely consistent with the review uses
Medium	Somewhat consistent with the review uses
Low	Minimally consistent with the review uses
Unacceptable	Inconsistent with the review uses ¹

Appendix I Biographies of Team Members

Katrina Rojas (Team Coordinator) (Female) is a consultant with the Universalia Management Group, based in Montreal, Canada. Universalia is a firm specialized in project and program evaluation, organizational assessment, and performance management. Katrina has worked in planning, evaluation, governance and other areas of organizational development for the last ten years. Between 1994 and 2001, she lived in Costa Rica and consulted in these areas with civil society organizations involved in children's rights, human rights, women's rights and gender equality, environmental issues, popular education, and community development in Central America. She was a member Fundación Acceso, an NGO that provides capacity building services and conducts research to support civil society organizations in Central America. Since joining Universalia in 2001, she has carried out assignments in monitoring, evaluation, and performance management for Caribbean Development Bank, World Bank, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Department of Foreign Affairs Canada, Television Trust for the Environment, UNCDF, UNIFEM, and the Government of Nicaragua's Program to Support Implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Ms. Rojas holds a Master's in Public and International Affairs from Princeton University.

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Antonio José Junqueira Botelho (Male) is Research Coordinator, "Genesis" Research Unit on Innovation and Entrepreneurship and Adjunct Professor, Department of Industrial Engineering, Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro - PUC Rio. He teaches graduate seminars on Silicon Valley: Entrepreneurship and Innovation; Organizations, Institutions and Learning, and IT & Society. He recently was Senior Advisor to the Intellectual Property Business Office, Center for Science and Technology Dean's Office, PUC Rio (02 / 2003 to 02 / 2004). His current research deals with SMEs, clusters and Internet diffusion; the political economy of the IT industry; governance of university-based local systems of innovation; growth-conditioning factors of new technology-based firms in emerging economies; entrepreneurs and venture capital; SMEs, international trade, IT and regional integration governance and the social impacts of Internet. Dr. Botelho holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from MIT, graduate degrees from Cornell University (MPA) and Université Paris IV (DEA) and was NSF Postdoctoral Minority Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the journals The Journal of Information Technologies and International Development, Perspectives on Global Development and Technology and Science, Technology and Society. He has taught at the Paul H. Nitze School for Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University; Rutgers University, Carleton College and Haverford College; and has been a Visiting Scholar at University of Pennsylvania; Program in Science and Human Values, Department of History of Science, Notre Dame University and The Helen Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame. He's been a consultant to UNESCO, PNUD, UNIDO, ANP, MCT and OECD Development Center.

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José Ignacio Távara (Male) is Professor and Director for Economics at the Catholic University of Peru. He is currently the Coordinator of the Masters' Program in Regulation of Utilities and teaches Industrial Organization (undergraduates) and Regulation and the State (graduate students). He is also the Vice President of the Board of Directors of OSIPTEL, the Peruvian regulator in telecommunications. Dr. Távara holds a Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA; he graduated as Master in Economics at the Catholic University of Peru and as Bachelor of Sciences at the National University of Engineering, Lima. He was the President of the Board of Directors of the Consortium for Social and Economic Research (www.consortio.org), and has worked in the Peruvian public service as a Vice Minister for Communications and as Deputy Ombudsman for Utilities at the Office of the Ombudsman. Formerly a Senior Associate at Saint Antony's College, Oxford University and a Senior Economist at Macroconsult, a Peruvian consulting firm, Dr. Távara has worked as a consultant for business associations, public agencies and multilateral organizations. He has published several articles on topics related to small-scale production and local development, antitrust policies and regulatory reform in Peru.

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Appendix II List of Documents Consulted

- Agenda for Connectivity in the Americas, Plan of action, Edition of March 5, 2003.
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- Bellanet, Webtrends, ICA Website Statistics Report for 01/01/2003 – 01/31/2003.
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- CIIA, Making a Difference? External Views on Canada's International Impact. The Interim Report of The External Voices Project, by Robert Greenhill, January 27, 2005
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Klaus Stoll "How Wi-Fi came to El Chaco" The Journal of Community Informatics, Vol. 1, 2, (2005: 166-172).

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OAS, Industry Canada, ICA, Final Report Central American Workshop, Managua, Nicaragua, September 2004

Appendix III List of People Interviewed

A. ICA and IDRC

- Alioune B. Camara, Senior Program Specialist, IDRC.
- Alicia Richero Program Officer, Pan Americas.
- Angélica Ospina, Program Officer, ICA.
- Ben Petrazzini, Program Officer, ICA
- Carlos Muñante, Senior Program Specialist, ICA
- Randy Zadra, Managing Director, ICA
- Federico Burone, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, IDRC.
- José Manuel Gil, Research Officer, ICA
- Luis Barnola, Senior Program Specialist, ICA
- Nadine Robinson, Manager, Communications ICA
- Richard Fuchs, DPA, ICT4D
- Maureen O'Neil, President, IDRC

B. Other Canadian Government Stakeholders

- Anne Cleminson, IM/IT Development Specialist, America's Branch, CIDA.
- Dana Smith, Summit Implementation, Inter-American Affairs Division, Foreign Affairs Canada. (Member of ICA Working Group)
- Juan Pablo Valdes, Under Secretary (Political), Canadian Embassy, Brazil.
- Renata E. Wielgosz, Director, Inter-American Affairs Division, Foreign Affairs Canada.
- Santiago Reyes-Borda, Member of ICA Working Group, Senior Advisor Latin America and the Caribbean, International Telecommunications Policy and Coordination, Industry Canada.
- Wendy Drukier, former Member of ICA Working Group, Foreign Affairs Canada
- Inès Le Minter, First Secretary (Political), Canadian Embassy, Argentina
- Brian Oak, Canadian Ambassador to Ecuador
- Guillermo Rishchynski, Vice-President Americas Branch, Canadian International Development Agency
- Mary Carman, Chief Information Officer (CIO), Industry Canada
- Marc Lortie, Canadian Ambassador to Spain
- Lise Filiatrault, Counsellor (Cooperation), Canadian Embassy, Cuba

C. Members of the Hemispheric Advisory Board

- Carlos Balen, Member of ICA Hemispheric Advisory Board.
- Clotilde Fonseca (Directora Ejecutiva, Fundación Omar Dengo, Costa Rica), Member of ICA Hemispheric Advisory Board.
- Clovis Baptista (Executive Secretary, CITEL/OAS).
- Danilo Piaggese (Chief Information Technology for Development Division (SDS/ICT), Inter-American Development Bank).
- David Gray (Advisor and Senior Knowledge Management Coordinator, Vice-presidency for Latin America and the Caribbean region).
- Fernando Bracco (Gerente Desarrollo de Negocios, COASIN).
- Javier Elguea (President, Instituto Tecnológico de Teléfonos de México, S.C.).
- K. Dwight Venner (Governor, Eastern Caribbean Central Bank).
- Nancy George (Associate Vice President, Academic Development, Curriculum Development and Evaluation, University of Technology, Jamaica).
- Sheila Downer (Executive Director, SmartLabrador – Newfoundland).
- Tadao Takahashi (Diretor, Sociedade da Informação).

D. Multilateral institutions

- Antonio Ca'Zorzi, Consultant, SDS/ICT Division of the Inter-American Development Bank.
- Cesar Yammal, Information Officer, ISGIF, World Bank.
- Eloy Vidal, Regional Coordinator, LAC, Global Information & Communication Technologies (GICT), Policy Division, The World Bank.
- Rob Stephens, Global Information & Communication Technologies (GICT), Policy Division, The World Bank.

E. Interviews with ICA project leaders and/or participants in ICA initiatives

- Donavon Campbell, Project Coordinator, FOSS, Jamaica.
- Kemly Camacho, Bellanet South and Fundación Acceso, Costa Rica.
- Valerie Gordon, SDN-Jamaica, Project Coordinator, CIVIC.
- Martin Hilbert / João Carlos Ferraz (ECLAC), OSCILAC Project, Chile
- Raquel Isaula, Red de Desarrollo Sostenible (RDS), Honduras

More informal interviews with:

- Gia Gaspard Taylor, International Education and Resource Network, Trinidad and Tobago, member of CIVIC
- Reina Raveles, EDUCONS, Suriname, member of CIVIC.

F.- CASE STUDIES

1.- Wi-Fi Pilots for Development in LAC

- Casual conversations with staff of the Municipality of Barú, the Red Cross and the Fire Department, during the visit to the sites of the Wi-Fi project in Puerto Armuelles.
- César Prieto, Programa e-Panamá.
- Eugenio Costa (Coordinador de TI, Viva Rio), Wi-Fi Project - Brazil Pilot, manager of Maré initiative 2.
- Jacinto Wong, Secretario Adjunto de la Presidencia para la Innovación Gubernamental.
- Katiana Vanderley (Assistente de Projetos Sociais, CDI), Wi-Fi Project, Brazil Pilot, deputy link manager of Maré initiative 1.
- Luís Felipe M. de Moraes (Professor-PESC/COPPE e Coordenador – Lab. De Redes e Alta Velocidade, UFRJ), General Coordinator, Wi-Fi Project - Brazil Pilot.
- Everado de Jesús Palma L, Coordinador Técnico General, Secretaría de la Presidencia para la Innovación Gubernamental, Programa E-Panamá.
- Marcio Silva (Coordinator and Educator, ACB Maré, Rio de Janeiro), Wi-Fi Project, Brazil Pilot, reception site coordinator.
- Maicu Alvarado, coordinador del proyecto Información agraria vía Internet para agricultores del valle Chancay, Huaraz Peru.
- Ricardo Prado Schneider (formerly General Coordinator, CDI, Rio de Janeiro section), Wi-Fi Project – Brazil Pilot, manager of Maré initiative 1 and author of research on computer recycling.

2. Supporting the Development of E-government development in LAC

- Patricio Gutiérrez Gonzáles, Coordinador Gobierno Electrónico, PRYME, Gobierno de Chile)
- Pedro Aramendia (Asesor, Presidencia de la República Oriental del Uruguay)
- Roberto Lopez, Facilitador
- Tomás Campero Fernández (Director, Chile Compra)
- Marcos Ozório de Almeida (Advisor, Secretary of Logistics and IT, Ministry of Planning, Brazil)
- Rafael Parra, Oficina Nacional de Gobierno Electrónico (ONGEI), Lima-Perú
- Miguel A. Porrúa (e-Government Program Coordinator/OAS)
- Orlando Mason (e-Procurement Program Coordinator/OAS)
- Enrique Cossich, Consultor de Gobierno Electrónico, Comisión Presidencial para la Reforma, Modernización y Fortalecimiento del Estado (COPRE), Guatemala.

3. Computers for Schools

- Antoine Chevrier, Head, Development Innovations and Alliances, Department for Integral Development, OAS
- Cecilia Lozada, Project Officer, Department for Integral Development, OAS.
- Kim Hendi, Senior Officer Business Development, Information and Communications Technology Branch, Industry Canada.
- María Isabel Mejía, Computadores para Educar, Colombia.
- Pablo Bernal, Computadores para Educar, Colombia.
- Victoria Martins, Regional Coordinator for CFS.
- Rodrigo Assumpção (Secretary of Logistics and IT, Ministry of Planning, Brazil).CFS project.
- Marcelo Veras, Chile CFS Project.

4. ICT for competitiveness of MSME in Central America

- Álvaro Sarmiento, Coordinador del Proyecto BID/SIECA de Modernización de Aduanas y Pass Fronterizos, Secretaría de Integración Económica Centroamericana (SIECA).
- Clotilde Fonseca, Executive Director, Fundación Omar Dengo.
- Elena Carreras, Fundación Omar Dengo.
- Jose Ignacio Alfaro, Associate Consultant, Costa Rican High Technology Advisory Committee Foundation, (CAATEC).
- María Mercedes Zaghi, Executive Director, Guatemala Development Gateway Foundation.
- Martha Castillo, Vice Minister of Economics, Industry and Trade.
- Paulo Maldonado, Coordinador Académico del Diplomado Centroamericano en Microempresas en la Universidad Rafael Landívar.
- Rafael Mendía, Director de Información e Informática del Consejo Nacional y la Secretaría Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología de Guatemala (CONCYT-SENACYT).
- Ricardo Monge, Executive Director, Costa Rican High Technology Advisory Committee Foundation, (CAATEC).
- Sigfredo Armando Figueroa S, Executive Director, Infocentros, El Salvador.
- Walda Arrecis, Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (IDIES), Universidad Rafael Landívar.
- Walter Sergei, Bank Rural, Guatemala

5. ICA Consultations and Follow-up Consultations – Caribbean

- Daniel Pimienta (Funredes, Dominican Republic)

Appendix IV Case Studies of Five ICA Projects

Introduction

In some of the case studies, the interviewees are referenced with a letter and number, for example "C1-1". This method was devised in order to ensure the confidentiality with the interviewee. The team has kept the relation between the respondents and the codes that have been assigned to each of them.

The following case studies are included:

No.	PROJECT NAME	PROJECT NUMBER	RESPONSIBLE REVIEWER
1	WiFi Pilots for Development in LAC	102177	J. Tavara
2	Supporting the Development of E-government development in LAC (RedGeALC)	101929	A.Botelho
3	Computers for Schools	101920	K.Rojas
4	ICT for Competitiveness of MSMEs in Central America	102322	J. Tavara
5	ICA Consultations and Follow-up Consultations – Caribbean	101461	A. Botelho

C1. Wi-Fi Pilots for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Project objectives

The general objective of this project is to promote social development by implementing local wireless networks using Wi-Fi technology, extending the services from a single access point in a community to the rest of the area, where a larger group of users can also benefit from the same connection without additional recurring costs. More specifically, the project provides equipment and support to isolated communities in order to extend the connectivity from existing access point to the school, health center, government office, etc.

Project activities (stage of the project, processes carried out, monitoring)

Given the pilot nature of the project, ICA researched different solutions and equipment available and requested proposals for evaluation. Three firms submitted proposals for equipment, namely Belnet Communications Inc, Alvarion and EION Inc. As a result of the evaluation process the solution provided by EION was finally chosen.

At the same time some communities were identified where the pilots have been implemented or will be implemented in the following months. According to the materials provided by ICA, wi-fi kits have been installed or will be installed in 10 different countries, namely:

Brasil

The project has been implemented in the Maré complex, an agglomeration of slums or "favelas", that borders a highway linking the city of Rio de Janeiro to its main airport. On the other side of the highway and adjacent to Maré is located the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brasil's largest University. The equipment has been installed and "is fully operational". Another site has been identified in Fortaleza, where the Universidade Federal do Ceará is willing to replicate the experience.

Colombia

There are four Wi-Fi pilots underway in different rural areas of Colombia, which reportedly were carefully chosen taking into account factors such as cultural differences between communities, geographical location and the weather. They are using the connectivity already existent in rural schools (equipment donated by the Computers for Schools Program), extending access to other local institutions (hospitals, police station, etc). Two sites were initially identified, the first one in the Municipal jurisdiction of Apartado (105,000 inhabitants), and the second one in Inza (19,700 inhabitants). In Inza the equipment has already been installed whereas in Apartado the equipment failed and had to be replaced.

Ecuador

Wi-fi pilots in this country have been implemented in three sites: El Chaco, a small town of 6000 inhabitants in the Napo province of Northeastern Ecuador, Lumbaqui, located on the Sucumbios region, and Santa Isabel, located in Projubones. Installation has been completed in all three sites and there are reports that service was "up and running" in El Chaco. There were other proposals to implement new pilots in towns such as Esmeraldas (one of the poorest provinces of Ecuador), and in the communities of Atahualpa and Tena (in the Amazon region).

Panama

Two sites have been chosen in Panama, the first in Puerto Armuelles, in the province of Chiriquí, and the second in Changuinola, in the province of Boca de Toro. The equipment has already been installed and it is "up and running" in both locations

Other pilots will be implemented in Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Venezuela and Uruguay. For instance, there are three sites in Mexico (Tehuacan, Libres and Huahuchinango), four sites in Peru (Huaral, Huarochiri, Morochucos and Jauja), four sites in Argentina (Cordoba, Catamarca, Santa Fe and Palpala), one in Venezuela (Gavidia) and one more in Uruguay (Montevideo). At the same time, an "itinerant" Wi-fi project has been designed -- as an asynchronous communication network -- which would benefit communities without infrastructure that will share a common point of access to internet.

Also in relation with this project, ICA has published four issues of a "Wi-fi for Development" brief in electronic format (both in Spanish and English versions), on topics such as the history of radio communications, last mile connectivity, Wi-fi technology, hot spots, configurations, uses and technical standards, which represent a valuable tool for practitioners and can be of great help in training activities. These briefs were identified as a valuable tool for practitioners and can be very helpful in training activities.

Subscribers to ICA's distribution list reportedly congratulated ICA for translating to a comprehensible language the details and applications of this technology. They were also included in the Newsletter, the Projects Catalogue and ICA's website. Furthermore some copies of the briefs were sent to events that took place in the region and also to the WSIS in Geneva. Besides the briefs, at least two videos have been produced to illustrate the experience of rural communities where Wi-fi technology is being used.

Finally, a number of pictures have been taken by local partners, to illustrate and record the implementation process as well as the use of the facilities by local people. The team has seen pictures of El Chaco and Apartadó (Colombia), Rio de Janeiro (Brasil) and Puerto Armuelles (Panama).

Stakeholders - Sponsors and field partners.

Funding from ICA to Wi-fi related projects amounts to CAD 559,880 so far.¹ Panamericas has contributed with CAD 210,000 through a partnership with the University of California. Even though there are no aggregate records on leverage of external funding for these projects, local organizations have also contributed with some complimentary equipment and labor force².

Field partnerships vary in each country, but they typically involve government organizations, Universities and NGOs. The wi-fi pilots of Rio de Janeiro are perhaps the most successful experience, they are led by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and Coppetec Foundation, a private non-profit organization which is formally responsible for the administration of the projects undertaken by COPPE/UFRJ, and by Viva Rio, a Brazilian NGO which has an ICT citizenship telecentros program for low-income communities called "Estação do Futuro."

In Colombia the partner in Inza and Apartado is the Ministry of Communications, which administers the Universal Access fund, and Fundacion Colombia Multicolor, an NGO in charge of implementing the project in Belen de los Andaquies. Another NGO -- Fundación Chasquinet -- is playing a leading role in Ecuador, in cooperation with the local institutions of the community of El Chaco and ECORAI, a governmental development agency for the Ecuadorian Amazon region.

¹ This amount includes the following projects: Wi-fi: innovation in wireless connectivity, development of a collection of wi-fi briefs targeted to the Latin American region, wi-fi pilots for development and feasibility analysis of wireless technologies in low teledensity areas.

² In northern Peru an NGO is already deploying Wi-fi equipment, with financial support from the universal access fund, an organization of small agricultural producers and other donor agencies. ICA's support is still expected to expand the reach of the project to other communities.

The Canadian Embassy in Ecuador has also played a significant role in the El Chaco pilot. Reportedly the project served to "open eyes of the national regulatory agency (CONATEL) about what could be done with a good partnership." This project was actually promoted bottom-up, driven by the local community and the NGO, with support of the Canadian Embassy and a Canadian private firm as a supplier of the equipment. In fact, the Mayor of El Chaco has continued to meet with the Embassy to seek other ways in which Canada can support their modernization program. On the other hand, the national government was made part of the initiative by the Canadian Ambassador and played a more limited role. It seems that ICA also had a lower profile in this project, and according to one interviewee it did not appear to be the leader in this specific case.

On the other hand the Wi-Fi pilots in Puerto Armuelles and Changinola, Panama, are championed by the Secretaría de la Presidencia para la innovación gubernamental, which runs a large-scale project called "e-Panama". Active players at the local level are the municipal governments, the health centers and the fire stations. Local institutions have contributed with their own equipment to extend the reach of the projects. For instance, the local government of Puerto Armuelles bought 4 PCs that were installed in the municipal library and are now linked to the network, providing services to the library users.

Target audience

The project aims at extending the provision of various services (such as internet, e-mail, net meetings, chat rooms, etc) from single access points to broader areas, where larger groups of users can also benefit from them. In Brazil the direct beneficiaries of the pilots are the residents of the *favelas*. Telecenters with wi-fi access to the internet are becoming focal points and business hubs for the local community, facilitating the provision of a variety of services.

In Panama the beneficiaries are mostly public institutions such as the health centre, the fire stations and the municipal library. Indeed, and to the extent that connectivity enhances the quality of their services the final beneficiaries are the members of the communities. Yet, the benefits on the final users are indirect and depend on the impact that new technologies have on the performance of public institutions.

The audience in El Chaco, Ecuador, is similar to Panama. Yet, the wireless stations connect not only the municipality, the local school and the health center, but also a telecentre which directly benefits other members of the community. It may well be that the presence of an NGO such as Chasquinet, with experience in supporting the strategic use of the available ICT in the social sector, working in particular with telecentres and not only with public schools and health centers, explains this difference. Finally, the pilots in Colombia are expected to connect the local schools and also, in the case of Inza, the city hall, the local hospital and a rural community centre.

Strengths of the project

The wi-fi pilots provide low-cost access to ICT for poor communities. Evidence from the interviews reveals a significant impact in the communities. In the case of the favela Maré in Rio de Janeiro, “the impact on the community was enormous... [it] increased demand and interest for Escola de Informática e Cidadania ... It generated interest even for the courses provided by the NGO which hosts the Escola.”³

More specifically, access to broadband services has been pointed as one of the key achievements of the pilot in this site. Thus, “Wi-Fi brought an amazing gain in quality in Internet access, which led to an increase in the number of users. It forced us to replace and expand our computer equipment.” Furthermore, the same observer stated that “A beauty of the model implemented at the Maré was the fact that it had access to the high-speed very high broad band scientific network Rede Rio. However, if we had to pay for the link, it’d have become economically infeasible”⁴

In rural areas, however, broadband infrastructure is still unavailable so the main impact has been on improved connectivity mainly within the local area. For instance, speaking about the benefits of the pilot in Puerto Armuelles, Panama, a fire fighter noted that “this network provides a second channel of communication among the entities in charge of health care and the prevention of disasters, which is of great help since the telephone lines are often busy.”⁵

Similar statements reveal the extent to which these projects are transforming the rural communities of Ecuador and improving the living conditions of their people. As a member of Fundación Chasquinet put it “For the first time teachers and pupils had access to high quality teaching materials; families could communicate at a low cost with their loved ones working abroad; the mayor and his staff could now access relevant governmental resources; the nurse could get advice from doctors in Quito; and traders could offer their goods outside the local market—just a few examples among many. As one local woman expressed it: ‘I feel like El Chaco is for the first time on the map’”.⁶

³ Interview with C1.1, Rio de Janeiro, February 14, 2005

⁴ Interview with C1.2, IT Coordinator of Viva Rio, Rio de Janeiro, March 31 2005.

⁵ Interview in Puerto Armuelles, Panama, February 1st, 2005. The original quote is “esta red ofrece una segunda línea de comunicaciones entre entidades dedicadas a la atención a la salud y prevención de desastres, lo cual es de gran ayuda en caso de desastres naturales pues las líneas telefónicas se encuentran muchas veces ocupadas.”

⁶ Klaus Stoll “How Wi-Fi came to El Chaco” *The Journal of Community Informatics*, Vol. 1, 2, (2005: 166-172).

A major achievement of this project has been the involvement of local partners which has also leveraged local resources, albeit in small amounts. During the field visit to Puerto Armuelles, Panama, the Deputy Secretary of State for Innovation in Government, pointed out some unexpected impacts such as the addition of new points of access to the Wi-fi network as a result of local initiatives.⁷ Active participation at this level creates better conditions for ICT investment to address local needs.

Linkages with local economies depend on the availability of inputs which is in turn related to the degree of industrialization. Evidence of these linkages was only found in Brazil, where some equipment such as the antennas were purchased from local providers.⁸ In general, however, local partners played an active role setting up the equipment and are expected to perform critical functions related to maintenance and technical support.

One of the main advantages of Wi-fi technology is its low cost, which in principle might facilitate scalability. In urban areas access to broadband networks can be achieved through partnerships with Universities and research centers. For instance, it has been noted that "Rio de Janeiro has many research centers often next to a favela, thus the scalability potential here is very high."⁹ In rural areas, however, scalability might be constrained by bottlenecks in internet access. Projects such as E-link might help alleviate this constraint.

Last but not least, a significant strength of this project results from its networking and learning dimension. Implementation of the pilots brought together different actors who began to learn from each other and develop some positive synergies. Spill over effects are difficult to measure but evidence collected during the interviews suggests they might be substantial. For instance, one of the key actors in the Rio de Janeiro pilot observed that "We learned a great deal with Luis Felipe Moraes of Coppe. We played more the role of developing social interface. We'd developed similar wi-fi projects in Amazon with EU funding, so I learned a lot from this one to apply to the one in the Amazon." Furthermore he stated that "contact with Chile was extremely valuable. It will economize significant costs in the future if a network is developed"

⁷ Interview with C1.3, Panama, February 1, 2005. "Hemos tenido impactos inesperados...El módulo de la biblioteca de Puerto Armuelles se agregó al final, pues no estaba previsto en el plan original. Se autorizó porque el Municipio puso lo suyo (las PC)".

⁸ Interview with C1.4, Rio de Janeiro March 18, 2005. "Comprei todo o equipamento no Brasil mesmo, ainda que fosse quase todo importado. Acelerou o processo de implantação. O equipamento era "tropicalizado" para condições extremas de temperatura, mas teve problemas de humidade. As antenas comprei de uma empresa no Rio Grande do Sul, por ¼ do preço da similar estrangeira."

⁹ Interview with C1.1, Rio de Janeiro, February 14, 2005

Along the same lines, it has been argued that these projects are a means and not an end in themselves, and that one their main effects is to develop new linkages between the University faculty and the local communities. Thus, “A idéia é que o projeto seria um meio, não um fim. Prover recursos, beneficiar professores que atuam nas comunidades, podem se beneficiar dos contatos com a universidade. Uma inclusão digital de relacionamento”.¹⁰

Weaknesses and difficulties

Some minor difficulties have been reported during implementation in urban areas. For instance, “the CDI site at Mare did not have a place to put an antenna, because next door there was a conservative church, which was reluctant to cooperate, so we had to build a tower, a delicate negotiation with the local power forces in the community. It altered a bit the cost of the project.”¹¹

Delinquency can also be a difficult issue both in urban and rural areas. The pilot if Rio de Janeiro has actually suffered from it, in combination with bad weather conditions. Thus, “recently we had a problem with the equipment at the site because the ground wire was stolen and we did not notice, Then the site, which is located in a slow-slung small shopping center building, was hit by lightning during a tropical summer storm and the equipment was ‘fried’”.¹²

Some measures could be helpful to cope with these difficulties, such as a proper location of the facilities and the development of safer designs. Community involvement is certainly crucial, both in urban and rural areas, and can be fostered through specific activities, tailored to meet the local conditions. For instance, training could help develop the skills and capabilities that are required to provide maintenance services and technical support at the local level. It can be a critical tool as well for building up the demand for ICT services among the final users. It must be noted, however, that in some towns such as Puerto Armuelles, Panama, community involvement might be more limited given that the direct users are public employees who work in the fire stations and the health center. Only the recently inaugurated “modulo” at the Municipal library would provide open access to ICT services for the members of the community.

In the case of Rio de Janeiro it has been reported that “one barrier we noted is that most users still have a very rudimentary knowledge of IT. Although we offer specialized courses – Photoshop, WebDesign, at a very basic level—the Estação do Futuro does not have a closed curricula, which responds to community needs”.¹³ Sorj and Guedes have noted in this regard that while phones are “illiterate friendly”, the use of computers and internet require basic educational skills.¹⁴ Most if not all of the Wi-fi pilots have been implemented in poorer areas where the quality of basic education is comparatively low.

¹⁰ Interview with C1.4, Rio de Janeiro March 18, 2005.

¹¹ Interview with C1.1, Rio de Janeiro, February 14, 2005

¹² Interview with C1.2, Rio de Janeiro, March 31, 2005

¹³ Interview with C1.2, Rio de Janeiro, March 31, 2005

¹⁴ Sorj and Guedes (2004).

So it is clear that basic training and education become critical components for the Wi-fi pilots to have a significant impact on local development.

Another difficulty is related to the lack of complimentary but essential equipment for the facilities to operate in a sustainable fashion, and to the budget constraint in general. During our field visit to Puerto Armuelles, Panama, members of the staff in one of the network stations argued that they needed air conditioning equipment, since the temperature was so high during the hot season that it could damage some of the electronic components. Yet, there was concern on the rising costs of electricity in the face of tight constraints in their budget so it wasn't clear how they would solve this problem.

Quality and continuity of service have become critical conditions to develop a broad and sustainable base of clients. Reliance on well-endowed institutions such as the University of Rio de Janeiro can certainly facilitate access to broadband high quality services, but it can also impose some drawbacks with regards to continuity. It has been reported, for instance, that "because COPPE is a university lab, it does not provide service 24 hours per day and 7 days per week. Thus, when we had a technical problem on a Friday afternoon, it would not be repaired until the following Monday."¹⁵

As noted above, broadband services are rarely available in rural areas so that building a significant base of clients might be more difficult. Supply of broadband services is growing very rapidly in the larger urban centres, partly as a result of the expansion of ADSL and coaxial networks which have become more readily accessible in cyber cafes at affordable rates. To the extent that rural inhabitants have tested and enjoyed these services during their visits to the neighbouring cities, it might be more difficult to have them as regular clients, at least for some services such as internet. At the same time, mobile networks are expanding to rural areas and providing new services that might compete narrow band rural telecenters out of the market.

Finally, the Achilles' heel of the project appears to be evaluation and monitoring. By its very nature, pilot projects are implemented as testing devices that lead to informational feedback processes which, in turn, facilitate the correction of initially incorrect models. For these processes to work it is important to have some metrics at the outset, a sort of base line that is taken as a general reference to measure change in some variables. Yet it seems that these base lines have not been constructed so far, even though facilities and equipment are already "up and running" and "fully operational".

In some cases project leaders seem to be aware of the nature of the projects and are taking the initiative. In the case of Colombia, it has been reported that the pilots will be evaluated as of June/July 2002.¹⁶ It is expected that sufficient information will be gathered in order to determine to what extent the model could be replicated and extended to other locations. In another case, an interviewee stated that "ICA's idea was to test the Wi-fi system to estimate costs and test alternative hardware for Internet connectivity... The Cisco and Bridge systems used in the pilot will provide a benchmark. They are comparable."¹⁷ Yet, there was no clear evidence that ICA was monitoring this

¹⁵ Interview with C1.2, Rio de Janeiro, March 31, 2005

¹⁶ Interview with C1.5

¹⁷ Interview with C1.1, Rio de Janeiro, February 14, 2005

evaluation process in a systematic fashion. As another observer put it, "We did not seek out ICA to learn whether they'll go beyond the pilot, because the pilot has not yet been evaluated."¹⁸

Lessons learned/ overall observation

An important lesson is that the more successful pilots so far appear to be those that were embedded within institutional networks and rooted in local communities. Trust and cooperation among the stakeholders are critical ingredients that usually don't emerge spontaneously. Previous experiences working together can certainly be an asset in this regard. As one project leader put it, "all actors knew each other from before. So it was easy to work together." Other interviewee observed that "there is a lot of integration and multi-sectorial collaboration around the pilots."

Scalability is naturally seen as the next logical step, particularly when pilots show clear signs of success. It has been noted that this initiative is closely related with E-Link Americas. Therefore, ICA could benefit supporting case studies to document similar pilots being implemented in other countries of the region.

Yet scalability won't happen unless leadership is strengthened and new actors get involved. Inertia and day to day commitments can delay this outcome. Thus, "future expansion and replication hinges on a catalyzer capable of bringing in other partners. Both CD and Viva Rio could do it, but what is at stake is who can take forward this advanced work. Both have multiple activities in their day to day, no time to do this".¹⁹ Along the same lines, ICA's HAB has made explicit its interest in supporting the Regional WiFi Pilots initiative, helping identify the organizations or institutions that deal with provinces in each country for their support in selecting target communities.

Scalability might require not only the continuing participation of multiple partners, which helps to keep costs under control, but also the addition of new activities such as the production of local content. As one project leader put it "If we could multiply this pilot, with the current partnership model – Government (Rede Rio), University (Coppe/UFRJ) and ONG (Viva Rio or CDI) – and added broad band content produced by the academic community, we would do it. However, if one of the partners was missing, the cost would rise and would scare away customers, who'd move to another service provider or would reduce his/her use."²⁰ Political support seems to be another important condition for scalability. De Moraes notes in this regard that "Formato pode ser replicado imediatamente em outras comunidades. Mas o aspecto político pode retardar o processo."

¹⁸ Interview with C1.2, Rio de Janeiro, March 31, 2005

¹⁹ Interview with C1.1, Rio de Janeiro, February 14, 2005

²⁰ Interview with C1.2, Rio de Janeiro, March 31, 2005.,

Competition from commercial ICT service providers can be both a risk, as noted above for the case of rural areas, and also an opportunity to the extent that it provides incentives for new developments. The following quote illustrates this point: "Three or four new private telecentros emerged, generally LAN houses, which also provide Internet services, even though they do not have all the services the Estação do Futuro has. This competitive movement led us to evolve and invest in our service, because the Estação do Futuro is a commercial business as any other in the community."²¹

In perspective, the future of these experiences might depend on how their leaders take the lead preparing themselves for the provision of new services. It seems that some stakeholders are already looking into the future: "Our future macro project with Luis Felipe Moraes of COPPE is to turn the telecentros into Wi-Fi service providers, making use of the network of community radios (about 600), even with a small reach of 2 kms. The model is to provide a commercial service with a monthly subscription."²²

Finally, ICA could take stock and share these experiences in the meeting that the UN ICT Task Force is organizing with the Wireless Internet Institute. It could certainly take advantage of opportunities for collaborating with them in the implementation of new Pilots. As stated above, evaluation and monitoring are critical functions. A common research agenda could also result from this cooperation.

C.2 Supporting e-Gov Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Background

In the last few years, the Organization of American States (OAS), through the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development's Government Best Practices Unit (IACD / GBPU) and the Trade Unit, has developed with ICA a framework of support in the electronic government area to foster in Latin America and the Caribbean countries the use of existing resources and the exploitation of already proven solutions (Best Practices) in other countries. This initiative promotes the use of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a tool for improving the efficiency and transparency of the public sector in the region.

The implementation of the Project was performed through the E-government Best Practices Forum of the Americas and the E-Government Procurement initiatives. The Project was partially built upon three earlier initiatives: two of a regional nature launched by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States -- the E-government Best Practices Forum of the Americas and the E-Government Procurement initiatives -- and one launched by the Government of Chile.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid

The first one is an initiative through which e-government leaders from the LAC region share with their counterparts the lessons learned in carrying out national e-government projects. The initiative was to be carried out once a month in an interactive on-line format over the Internet. The objective was to provide practical experience and best practices for leaders of E-Government strategies in each of the member states of the OAS and to familiarize them with the plans of their colleagues who share similar responsibilities in other countries.

During 2003, the focus was on organization and process to formulate and implement national E-Government strategies. IACD/OAS and ICA organized a series of E-Government Best Practices Forums in which Chile, Canada and Brazil representatives, shared their experiences at building electronic government with high-level government officials from throughout the Americas. The speakers explored what had to change, how they achieved successful programs, who was responsible, the results and the costs and benefits. In other words, the practical what, how, who and results. OAS, here represented by Miguel Porrúa at IACD, had been approached by Ben Petrazzini to discuss possible areas of cooperation in e-government and, as a result, when OAS designed the online best practices course on basic concepts for the formulation of e-government strategies, they obtained an initially small, but strategic, financial support from ICA. OAS, here represented by Miguel Porrúa at IACD, had been approached by Ben Petrazzini to discuss possible areas of cooperation in e-government. When OAS designed the online best practices course above it solicited and obtained an initially small, but strategic, financial support from ICA.

The latter OAS e-gov initiative had been initially supported by grants from the US Mission to the OAS and the Department of Scholarships of the OAS, before garnering ICA's sponsorship. The three areas of work co-sponsored by ICA were: 1- an Inter-American Seminar that took place in São Paulo, Brazil, in September 2004; 2- the preparation of National Profiles of E-Government Development for a number of countries (15) and 3- the setting up of a website and on-line training to support the activities of the network of institutions participating in the project. The initial contact of ICA and OAS started through this project, represented by Orlando Mason, then at IACD and later at the Trade division. At OAS, the motivation to deal with e-procurement arose from an interest in the topic of corruption reduction. In light of the growing role of technology, the best practices approach was selected to implement it (other activities along this line were E-Government Best Practices Inter-American Forum, E-Government Best Practices Workshops, and the process of elaboration of E-Government Best Practices Data Bases). Following conversations between Ben Petrazzini and Orlando Mason about this initiative, it was agreed that ICA would support national strategy makers and program managers responsible for government procurement modernization by co-sponsoring with the OAS and other parties several activities related to the promotion and development of the government procurement electronic systems.

The third source, which eventually gave birth to The Network of E-Government Leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean (Red GEALC), emerged from the face-to-face Seminar on E-Government that took place in Santiago de Chile, November 17–21, 2003, with the presence of representatives from countries throughout the region. In December 2002, a Chilean government representative participated in a course on e-government strategy organized by the OAS. There he met Miguel Porrúa, OAS office in charge of the e-gov area program. In early 2003, Chile's International Agency for Cooperation (AGCI) had passed a cooperation agreement with OAS to establish a network for capacity building for the area based on Chile's pioneering experience. The government's agency in charge of the area under the Presidency's General Secretariat Ministry (MINSEGPRES) sought the support of OAS with the organization of a seminar and was told to contact ICA, which ultimately supported the participation of a strategic speaker. As a consequence of this cooperation, the first Seminar on E-Government Best Practices was held in November 2003 in Santiago, Chile, with the support of the Chilean Government, through Chile's AGCI and MINSEGPRES. The organization of this seminar counted also with the cooperation of the IACD/OAS (FEMCIDI Program) and ICA.

The next two E-Government Workshops took place in Lima (April 2004) and in Brasilia (May 2004), which led to the Network's consolidation. A regional workshop is scheduled to take place at the beginning of 2005 in the Caribbean to facilitate the incorporation of countries in this region to the Red GeALC. It will also be suitable for preparing the workshop to be held in Canada during the second quarter of next year.

Ultimately, the problem of the non-consolidation a systematic cooperative arrangement to share solutions to e-government arose from the experience with a series of activities around the theme, particularly those resulting from efforts made by regional institutions (OAS and ICA), such as E-Government Best Practices Inter-American Forum, E-Government Best Practices Workshops, and the process of elaboration of E-Government Best Practices Data Bases. That learning was coupled to evidence provided by studies on the topic made by multilateral organizations like the World Bank which showed that just 15 percent of e-gov programs in developing countries met with success. Thus there was a renewed importance for governments in the region to strengthen the possibility of success of their plans and solutions in this area through a systematic collaborative mechanism.

Project objectives

The project's general objective is "to provide e-Government strategy makers and program managers with well-structured opportunities to exchange ideas, information and knowledge among themselves and with experienced strategy makers, as well as with e-government practitioners."

Its more specific objectives outlined in the PAD (101929_PAD) comprise a set of 4 diverse activities that together aim to fulfill the general objective:

- "Seminars and workshops: Organize Latin American and Caribbean Seminars and Workshops on Strategies for e-Government Development to review lessons learned and best practices relevant for LAC governments;

- Training: The initiative aims to develop training opportunities, in particular through Internet-based distance education courses on e-government implementation and problem-solving seminars on specific issue-areas of concern to governments of the region;
- Case studies and reports: Prepare case studies and reports on lessons learned and best practices in the Americas and other regions of the world. This includes reports on central and local E-government development, as well as on specific aspects. Improve and further develop methodologies for the identification, documentation, review, reporting, adaptation and application of best practices;
- E-government portal: Establish during 2003 an e-government portal for key decision makers of the LAC region. The portal aims to provide strategy makers and program managers with well-organized and easily accessible information relevant for policy, strategy, and projects formulation. Among other issues, it is intended to inform on lessons learned and best practices as they apply to key areas of opportunity in E-Government. Other relevant information include that on sequences and stages in e-government implementation, E-Government readiness self assessment tools, policies, strategies, institutional frameworks, laws, national plans and reports on e-government status, ongoing initiatives, key players, events. The portal is also intended to facilitate access to on-line training for E-Government development and access to advisory services for strategy and projects development."

The Project which is under the E-strategies program of ICA has a broad regional focus covering Latin America and the Caribbean, although in its first phase, which is object of this review, it has covered mainly Latin America.

Project activities

There has been a quite broad range of activities, divided between those of ICA and those of its main partner, OAS.

ICA`s main activities to date in pursuance of its own objectives are:

The first Latin American High Level Workshop on the Brazilian Experience in E-Government Development: Lessons Learned and Best Practices (Project Objective 01), was held one year after its tentatively scheduled date, in São Paulo in May 2004 and had 38 participants from 15 countries in Latin America (at this first event there were no participants from the Caribbean) and observers from the region's multilateral organizations.

Project Objective 02: Organize a Latin American High Level Workshop on the Chilean Experience in E-Government Development: Lessons Learned and Best Practices, was tentatively scheduled for Santiago in July 2003. The Chile workshop in November 2003 was attended by 14 participants from 15 countries in the LAC region. It was followed by a workshop in Lima, Peru in April 2004, aimed at consolidating and solving the operational problems posed by the virtual workshop issued from the Santiago workshop, which initially focused on the topic of definition of national strategies.

Project Objective 03 - Organize a Caribbean High Level Workshop on E-Government Development: Lessons learned and best practices for strategy formulation and projects design. Scheduled for Grenada, tentatively in September 2003. It will take place in 2005.

Project Objective 04 - Organize a High Level Workshop on the Canadian Experience in E-Government Development: Lessons Learned and Best Practices, was tentatively scheduled for Ottawa in November 2003.

Project Objective 05 - Prepare case studies of lessons learned and best practices in Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Mexico, and Venezuela. Case studies were developed for Argentina, Brasil (2: Acesa São Paulo and E-gov in Bahia), Mexico (5: E-gov Mexico, E-Sat, Citizen Participation, PIPLA and Tramitanet) and Peru. These cases were published and serve as content for the courses and support activities of the network of e-government leaders.

Project Objective 06 - Organize four Internet-based distance courses and professional specialization programs with governments, academic institutions, and private sector organizations from the Americas region. This objective was achieved in collaboration with OAS. It has developed an online course on e-government (in Spanish). This course, which was done twice, attracted more than 400 registrations (200 in the first edition and 240 in the second) and there are requests for the course to be translated into English and Portuguese. Furthermore, the State of São Paulo, Brazil, is planning to train more than 3,000 public employees with the course²³.

Project Objective 07 - Develop during the first fiscal semester of 2003 the conceptualization of the Inter-American e-government portal, including graphic design, programming of functionalities, and content upload. Establish a support team with a web manager, and assistant web manager, and technical assistance as well as all issues related to the hosting and

As of January 2005, the e-Government Network (Red de Gobierno Electrónico of Latin America and Caribbean or Red GeALC), launched in November 2004, had close to 40 members from almost every country in Latin America (with the exception of Belize, Guyana and Suriname) and one from the Caribbean (Dominican Republic).

ICA` s activities with its principal partner, OAS / IACD, were:

I - E-Government Best Practices Initiative

a) E-government Best Practices Forum of the Americas and On line courses on Basic Tools for the Formulation of Electronic Government Strategies in Spanish

Objectives:

1- Develop an online course to provide strategy makers and program managers with the possibility to learn, discuss and share their experiences about key issues in the development and implementation of E-government Strategies. The course was implemented (see above)

²³ http://www.educoas.org/portal/ineam/cursos/egob1_2004.aspx

http://www.iacd.oas.org/template-spanish/mejores_practicas_cursoegob.htm

http://www.iacd.oas.org/template-spanish/mejores_practicas_foro.htm

2 - Carry out Best Practices Forum of the Americas E-Government, an initiative through which e-government leaders from the LAC region will share with their counterparts the lessons learned in carrying out national e-government projects. The objective is to provide practical experience and best practices for leaders of E-Government strategies in each of the member states of the OAS and to familiarize them with the plans of their colleagues who share similar responsibilities in other countries.

It has run three online forums on e-Government best practices, portraying the experience of Canada, Chile, and Brazil. A bilingual (Spanish and English) Summary Report of Best Practices Forum was published (January 2004), including a CD-ROM with the videos and the resulting exchanges among participants.

b) On-line course: Introduction to the Formulation of Electronic Government Strategies, Caribbean examples and experiences

Objectives:

- 1 - To enable the attendance of Caribbean participants in the English version of the on-line E-Government course, via one hundred fellowships of \$67 CAD each one. The course will include incorporating English based experiences and examples
- 2 - To provide strategy makers and program managers with the possibility to learn, discuss and share their experiences about key issues in the development and implementation of E-government Strategies.
- 3 - To support the participants in identifying opportunities for action, reviewing prerequisites and exchanging ideas on how to go about organize and carry out strategy and programs development.
- 4 - The on line course will be entirely held using the virtual classroom of the Portal of the Americas.
- 5 - The IACD Government Best Practices Unit will be responsible of processing and making available the material on-line.

The course was offered by the IACD/OAS in October 2004, through the Educational Portal of the Americas

c) Horizontal Cooperation Fund (FOCOH)

Objectives:

- 1-To support the exchange of around 40 experts of different electronic government areas, among the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean which form the "GeALC Network", through the funding of air tickets.
- 2-To facilitate the mobility of this experts with the aim of sharing experiences and solutions, through the co-funding of the costs derived from the various technical missions, jointly by the beneficiary country and the expert country.

ICA`s planned activities with its secondary partner, OAS / Trade Unit, were:

II. E-Government Procurement Initiative

Objectives:

1 - Preparation of Governmental Purchases systems profiles, with particular emphasis on the development of the electronic information systems about governmental purchases as an initial stage in the modernization of the purchase systems, once completed the review of the existing process.

National profiles were developed for Argentina and Uruguay and others are being carried out. ICA`s financial contribution amounted to US\$ 31,000.00 for a total cost of US\$ 100,000.00.

2 - Develop an online course about Strategies and Practices for the development of Governmental purchase electronic systems. Two electronic forums on Government Procurement were implemented and most of the preparatory work for the course has been completed with the drafting of the report on "Challenges in the Modernization of Government Procurement Practices for Trade and Development" and of the National Profiles of E-Government Procurement Development and the organization of the Inter-American Seminar and of the Electronic Forum.

3 - Carry out an electronic Forum about Strategies and Practices for the development of Governmental purchase electronic systems. Launched an Inter-American Network of E-Government Procurement. The online course was jointly implemented by ICA and OAS Trade Unit, in cooperation with OAS E-gov Program and the Educational Portal of IACD-OAS. ICA`s support was aimed at co-financing didactic material preparation, tutor capacity building and video making, for an amount of US\$ 25,000.00 out of a total cost of the activity of US\$ 72,000.00.

4 - Carry out a Latin American Seminar-Workshop to be held in Brazil about Strategies and Inter-American Cooperation in the Governmental Purchases: E-Purchases, Transparency, Micro, Small and Medium sized Enterprises, Commerce and Development. An Inter-American Seminar that took place in São Paulo, Brazil, in September 2004. ICA's supported participants' transportation (25 participants) and stipend (50 participants) costs for a sum of US\$ 45,000.00 out of a total activity cost of US\$ 95,000.00.

A summary of ICA's financial involvement in these activities is presented in the table below:

ACTIVITY	ICA Funding CAD \$
I. E-Government Best Practices Initiative	191,231
E-government Best Practices Forum of the Americas, August 2003	49,089
Inter-America E-Gov Training Network: On line courses on Basic Tools for the Formulation of Electronic Government Strategies – in Spanish, 2003	17,211
Workshop on Best Practices in E-gov in Chile, November 2003	19,825
Workshop on Best Practices in E-gov in Brazil, May 2004	17,186
On-line course: Introduction to the Formulation of Electronic Government Strategies, Caribbean examples and experiences, October, 2004	6,700
E-Government Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (Red GeALC) - Network coordinator, web site maintenance and Horizontal Cooperation Fund (FOCOH)	51,220
Best Practices in E-government Online site Award (tentatively June 2005)	30,000
II. E-Government Procurement Initiative	127,500
2 nd . Inter-American Seminar on Strategies for the Development of e-Government Procurement, Brazil, September 2004	45,466
Preparation of national profiles of e-government procurement development (Chile, Brazil and Mexico)	16,820
On-line Course on Strategies for Development of e-Government Procurement and Inter-American Electronic Forum on Government Procurement, 2004-2005	25,366
3 rd . Inter-American Seminar on Strategies for the Development of e-Government Procurement, Santiago de Chile, June 2005	39,848
TOTAL ICA funding up to date (CAD\$):	318,731

Stakeholders and sponsors

As noted earlier, the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States has been a full partner of the project from its beginning. At OAS, due to the project's evolution three units are involved: two in IACD - Development Innovations and Alliances Division and the Department of Development Programs - and the Trade Unit. OAS has played a key role of gatekeeper which has critically assisted ICA's strategic actions in this area. OAS linkage helped ICA extend its contact network in the area. For example, several stakeholders learned of ICA at the November 2003 Santiago workshop.

For OAS, ICA proved to be a like-minded partner which shared its execution-oriented philosophy and it was not a "windy" partner as it often happens in this type of program, but rather a doer.

OAS has also recognized in ICA an organization capable of identifying and leveraging, including financially, new and interesting ideas, for example the first e-gov online course. In sum, ICA is perceived by its principal partner as an organization which takes risks at exploring new topics firm at the center of its agenda: E-Link, W-Fi Pilot, OSCILAC (OAS1). In the e-gov area itself, ICA is betting with OAS on a new legislative team.

OAS also works with ICA in other projects such as CFS and it is exploring participation in E-Link. Finally, OAS recognizes the competence of ICA's team (work, linguistic, cultural) as well as its innovativeness and flexibility. It also recognizes that ICA has evolved over the past few years, diversifying its project portfolio, conquering terrain in the area of ICT4D, gaining greater visibility by association with more visible partners.

National governments have also been active partners, starting with Chile, and including all countries which have hosted seminars and workshops (Brazil, Peru).

Target audience

The main audience is composed of high-level strategy makers and program managers. Different specialized activities are targeted to special groups. For example, the E-procurement Online Course and the Electronic Forum on Modernization Strategies for Government Purchases are targeted to strategy makers and program managers of government purchase electronic systems.

Emerging results and Strengths of the project

Emerging results

At the end of the first phase, it is still hard to make a clear assessment of the project outcomes, much less of its impact, as barely a year has passed since one of its first centerpiece activity, the Brazil workshop held in May 2004. It has nevertheless accomplished some of its main specific objectives:

- 1) It has built up the First Regional Network of e-government leaders in Latin America. This is a very active network, integrated by the top government officials in charge of e-government programs/strategy of each country in the region. The network can be considered as a platform for large number of e-government related activities. (www.redgealc.net). The site even before it was open to the public was already receiving more than 1.500 hits a months by the members of the network. The Network and the Portals are in its early stage of development.
- 2) It has run three online forums on e-Government best practices, portraying the experience of Canada, Chile, and Brazil.
- 3) It has successfully organized two face-to-face workshops, portraying the e-government experience of Chile and Brazil.
- 4) It has developed an online course on e-government (in Spanish).
- 5) A number of case studies on e-government experiences in the LAC region have been developed. The case studies serve as substance for the courses and support activities of the network of e-government leaders.
- 6) It hired (in early 2005) a consultant to acts as the facilitator of the online activities of the First Regional Network of e-government leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean, thus responding to the demand of the project's stakeholders.

Strengths of the project

One major strength cited by several stakeholders is the financing of policy-makers' participation in the project's workshops. The periodic realization of workshops critically assisted in the establishment of a formal network of like-minded stakeholder, albeit with different levels of interest due to varying stages of national e-gov strategy and development. This formal network generated trust and brought greater legitimacy to the stakeholder's virtual exchanges, agenda setting process and knowledge-sourcing referrals

Despite the relatively small volume of resources imparted by ICA either to OAS programs or to individual national governments, all stakeholders and partners alike recognize the important role of these resources as it provides critical means for exchange of knowledge (and generation through case studies and national profiles), visions and experiences. For example, Brazilian stakeholders have noted the value of benchmarking studies for shaping their vision in designing the second stage e-gov strategy for the country. In relation to that it has been noted that ICA's funding assists in shaping the vision and designing the programs to be implemented with own funds and those from other multilateral organizations (IDB loans, OAS technical cooperation).

Another related strength cited by stakeholders has to do with the fact that the agenda of the e-gov network is decided by the stakeholders themselves, allowing them "to discuss what we want." (BRA1)

The combination of online and person-to-person meetings was also cited as a strength of the program. "It should be preserved, because the personal knowledge of stakeholders in the network creates an identity, legitimacy, which fuels collaboration among them." (URU1)

In other words, ICA's cooperation "brings more intangible resources, transfers know-how and brings a relationships network." One example cited in this regard, is the contact that a Brazilian stakeholder helped his Chilean counterpart to make with Brazil's Central Bank, after a Panamanian stakeholder learning of his Chilean network colleague knowledge needs in relation to electronic payments directed him to the Brazilian stakeholder (BRA1). Given the intangible nature of most results of e-gov activity, knowledge is critical to avoid costly misdirected programs. Such knowledge produces learning and thus shapes smaller and more focused programs. In this sense, ICA is "an aggregator of intangible values." (BRA1).

In a similar vein, the Uruguay stakeholder participation in the Santiago workshop and visited *Chile Compras* program, led a visit of his Chilean counterpart to Uruguay. Subsequently, in the Brasilia he made contact with firms developing e-gov systems which were invited to present their solutions. The possibility of discussion created by these meetings was very important for Uruguay. Uruguay also received an important support from ICA to develop an inter-ministerial virtual discussion network in e-gov. This was an area cited by another stakeholder that ought to be supported by ICA (PER1).

The more developed countries in e-gov (which constitute a minority in the group) find the RedGEALC extremely useful personal contacts for developing in greater depth specific themes. Whereas stakeholders from countries with less experience in e-gov value the learning of best practices in other countries, either through the workshops or the online forum. They also value the space for thought. "From this exchange of experiences one gets several things. Someone is working on something and gets so carried away that one does not see what's happening around. This type of personal contact workshop is the best way for one to abstract and learn what's happening around, and learn practices that can be of great benefit."(GUA1)

Another perceived strength of ICA, is its general receptiveness to stakeholders' ideas and ease of communication, even when these are conveyed indirectly through a trusted third-party, the OAS.

Weaknesses and difficulties

One weakness pointed out by some participants is that the group is quite informal. The hiring of a virtual coordinator for the RedGEALC has been judged as quite positive by stakeholders, as it was observed early on that the virtual forums demanded a lot of work, which could not be done by any individual stakeholder alone (as it was the case of Chile at the beginning) and for the debate to occur there was a need for an animator and coordinator. However, the fact that the coordinator does not personally know the stakeholders is seen as a shortcoming to be corrected.

"There is missing a strategy to provide a path." (URU1). Even countries which have developed some components of an e-gov strategy, lack a vision to design a strategy and there ICA can contribute. "For example, in the new government, what will be the e-gov priorities. Before, the focus was given by the programs of multilateral agencies (IDB and World Bank). With leftover resources we developed online services (*trámites electrónicos*) and launched it autonomously." Up to now the design of a strategy was practice-based. Thus a theme that could be picked up by the network is the design, monitoring and evaluation of e-gov strategies.

In this sense, it has been noted a need for a clear goal for the network. For example chose a theme to be pursued in 2005, develop cases, discuss them in a conference and set up monitoring system for the sub-area. Complementary, there is a need to push the countries to pursue a focus, coherently and with continuity.

Some stakeholders also noted the importance of carrying out research on the topic and that they often do not have the time to do it.

Lessons learned and overall observations

When the process of setting up the network of e-gov stakeholders was launched, it was believed that the topics for discussion agenda setting process and the actual structuring of the network could be done online. However, core stakeholders, partners and sponsors involved in this early stage of this network building process soon realized the importance of face to face meetings. ICA's flexibility allowed for the timely organization of the Brazil workshop which consolidated the formal network which was inaugurated in the Lima event a couple of months earlier.

Stakeholders' appreciation of the financing of policy-makers' participation in the project's workshops coupled to the network needs evolution towards more specialized knowledge, led to a demand for greater flexibility in financing experts travel. In response to that, a horizontal cooperation seed fund (FOCOH) was established to fund travel expenses by experts requested by individual national government stakeholders (salaries are paid by forwarding country and stipends by receiving country).

It was interesting to observe that E-gov program stakeholders generally have a limited knowledge of ICA's objectives, mission and scope of activities.

Further, it was noted that despite of its current strength, the Red GEALC benefits have to continuously outweigh its obligations to survive. In this regard, online networking is important, as it allows for more in-depth discussion of topics of common interest, but it does not substitute for actual meetings.

The Canada connection occurred naturally in the program, as Canada is a recognized reference for benchmarking in the area (e.g. Accenture annual rankings)

The programs objectives have been fulfilled in the eyes of the stakeholders, even those who come from countries which received few tangible benefits given their stage of development in the area (Brazil, Chile)

There is a recognition that a natural evolution for the RedGEALC is the creation of specialized sub-networks (e-procurement, state portals, online government services, etc.), to the detriment of the more general themes (e.g. definition of e-gov strategy). Similarly, there will be more focused workshops such as the one on government e-procurement in São Paulo, Brazil, last year. The related challenge here is to maintain a sustainable dynamic around certain themes.

Frequency and intensity of use of the RedGEALC portal has been mixed at best. The fact that the coordinator keeps stakeholders minimally informed has installed a certain lassitude among some of them. Some view its importance as a repository of information and documents, rather than a discussion space, as the virtual forum are little used ("I set up a virtual discussion forum on e-government strategy after the Chile workshop, but it did not advance. No one discusses it there. However the theme continued to be discussed in the workshops."(URU1)). Some competition from more specialized portals (e.g. e-procurement network) was also noted.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation of the program, stakeholders believe that an annual evaluation of the program as a whole suffices

Stakeholders' assessments of the program were all positive and accompanied by a high expectation of continuity. Because, it was noted, most value will be generated in the coming years as knowledge accumulated and information networks will have greater impact.

Yet some observers have noted that ICA's growing "canadianess", particularly in this area given its target audience, may become a liability. Thus a challenge to ICA is to procure financing from other nations in the region as well as to partner with the private sector to make the information society to happen. For example, "e-gov demands financial and human resources, and thus shared solutions. The private sector must be brought in. ICA has to adopt a venture capital strategy with different institutions placing seed capital." (OAS1)

Some suggestions for future activities for ICA include:

- Replicate and customize e-gov strategies and programs in other countries making use of components in databank under construction;
- Contribute similar cooperation to the development of specialized (vertical) e-gov areas in (federation) states, particularly health, public security and education. The latter would have a great impact on youth development.
- Establish linkages with other ICT projects which have a close relationship to e-gov such as rural internet access community centers and development of local content in indigenous languages.
- Continue promoting new topics in the area: inter-operability, digital literacy and public employee training.

C. 3 Computers for Schools: Phase I

Background

Since its inception in 1993, Canada's Computer for Schools (CFS) program has provided more than 500,000 computers to schools, public libraries, and not-for-profit learning organizations throughout Canada. The purpose of the CFS is to help Canadian youths gain greater access to computer technology in a learning environment. The program collects, repairs and refurbishes donated surplus computers from government and private sector sources and distributes them to schools, public libraries and not-for-profit learning organizations throughout Canada.

Based in Industry Canada, CFS is currently being implemented through 55 different models and approaches at sites across the country. The variety of models reflects the partnership dimension of an initiative in which the Canadian Government, the private sector, the non-profit sector and the educational community are involved. A crucial component of many CFS models is to engage and train youth; thus, many of the sites in Canada link up with technical schools or develop their own training programs for at-risk youth. One of the defining features of the Canadian program is that it has been developed as part of a broader, integrated strategy known as "Connecting Canadians, " which includes Schoolnet, the Community Access Program, SMART communities, and other initiatives.

ICA's involvement in CFS initiatives dates at least from 2002, when it funded a case study on the experience of *Computadoras para Educar*, a Colombian program established in 2000 and adapted from Canada's model. This study is available for audiences in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) through ICA's web site.

Due to the constant demand for information on the Canadian model from countries in LAC, Industry Canada approached the ICA about the possibility of transferring the Canada's experience with CFS on a larger scale. The project idea emerged from these informal discussions. The Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development of the OAS subsequently contacted the ICA about a CFS program. The ICA brought these two actors together to launch the CFS Phase I project, which began at the end of 2003. The potential for leveraging CIDA funding to support an IACD-led CFS program for the region emerged in the early stages of implementation.

Project objectives

As originally defined, the project's overall objectives are to provide practitioners from the Latin American and the Caribbean with an overview of key CFS components and assist them in developing business plans to establish a successful and cost-effective CFS national program. The specific objectives outlined in the PAD focus on the pre and post workshop activities for the first knowledge-sharing event in the Southern Cone, namely to:

- "Engage Canadian experts to provide experience and knowledge acquired in relation to the key CFS program components;
- Create a network of practitioners already engaged or to be engaged in developing national business plans to establish a successful and cost-effective CSF national program based on the Canadian model;
- Hold one or two video conferences prior to the workshop for the exchange of experiences and knowledge and to clarify concepts for the preparation of each CFS national initiative;

- Hold a three-day workshop in one of the Southern cone countries for 30 participants to have hands-on experience in relation to the key components of the CFS program;
- Launch a series of post-workshops activities and initiate a more formal process to exchange best practices and resources among members of the network.”²⁴

The project is for the sub-regions of the Southern Cone, Central America and the Caribbean.²⁵ Building on the first year of implementation, in 2004 the IACD-OAS and ICA established an agreement and work program designed: “to replicate, adapt and complement the Canadian CFS model in order to contribute to the use of refurbished computers as tools for capacity building, education and digital inclusion in LAC.” This aim is to be achieved by promoting implementation of sustainable and cost efficient national computer refurbishment initiatives in LAC, creating a dynamic knowledge sharing mechanisms to be used by practitioners and experts, and supporting local leaders and institutions to create partnerships (including with private sector) to replicate, complement and sustain the model.

Project activities

The project’s activities in Phase I have focused on the design and delivery of three workshops that were held in Buenos Aires (March 2004), Managua (September 2004), and Jamaica (February 2005). Each of these workshops included 23 to 38 participants plus a small number of observers.

The final workshop in the Caribbean also included a videoconference with some of the participants from the workshops in Managua and Buenos Aires who reported on their progress to date. All workshops were evaluated through a survey/questionnaire and two of them (Managua, Buenos Aires) also have a video that documents the perceptions of participants. The Virtual Mentoring Network (VMN), with material in English and Spanish, was created as an on-line forum for on-going dialogue and learning among participants from the different workshops.

Several stakeholders note a shift in the workshop program over time. At the final workshop in the series, held in Jamaica, Canadian and other regional experience (e.g. Colombia, Argentina) are shared with participants on equal terms (e.g. similar proportions of the agenda). This type of change reflects what one stakeholder noted as the “organic” evolution of the project. The Project changed in response to the needs and the feedback received from countries, which pointed to the particular relevance of the Latin America experience with such programs.

Phase II of the project contemplates the development of a CFS portal and the hiring of a regional coordinator for the initiative. It also introduces an applied research component on computer recycling that is jointly funded with Pan Americas.

²⁴ 101920 Computers for Schools, Project Approval Document – folder 1.1 (ver 2004-07-21)

²⁵ Mexico and Dominican Republic also participated in the Central American workshop.

Stakeholders and sponsors

The ICA, Industry Canada, and IACD- OAS have collaborated in the implementation of the project since its inception in 2003. Each of these partners has played slightly different roles in the organization of each of the workshops: Industry Canada took the lead on logistics for the Buenos Aires workshop, ICA took it on for the Managua workshop, and IACD-OAS took in on for the Caribbean workshop.

At the end of Phase I, it is the IACD-OAS that is the lead institution for the project. ICA began to channel its support to the CFS regional initiative through the OAS in November 2004, within the parameters of framework agreement and work program. This shift reflected a general decision for "ICA to take a step back and allow regional partners to take the lead, " particularly in projects that have been supported and developed by ICA but have grown to a level where a change in role is warranted.²⁶ ICA has continued to participate in strategic decisions about the general directions of the project and its key activities, as well as play advisory and bridging roles as required (e.g., helping to bring together the other partners).

ICA budgeted an initial amount of \$153,000 for the project. After several budget revisions, the total amount contributed by ICA total \$69, 231.²⁷ Industry Canada \$ 64,000, and the IACD-OAS contributed \$500,000 leveraged from CIDA. The CIDA funds only became available in 2005.

Target audience

The main target audience includes key government institutions (such as Ministry of Education or the ministry/office charged with the connectivity agenda), educational organizations (such as community colleges), NGOs involved in ICTs and education, and private sector companies involved in ICTs. The guidelines for selecting the workshop participants indicate that they should have decision-making authority, as well as the capacities to consolidate alliances and obtain/negotiate necessary political support. The project partners together with Canadian Embassies in each country helped to identify potential participants.

At the end of Phase I, representatives from 32 of the 34 member countries of the OAS had been exposed to the CFS model through these workshops. The ultimate beneficiaries of the project are the children and youth in the schools or community organizations that receive the computers.

Emerging results and strengths of the project

At the end of the first phase, it is difficult to assess the progress towards longer-term project outcomes. Only one year has passed since the first workshop was held in Buenos Aires and it is too early to see the effects for children and youth of the CFS –like initiatives that have begun implementation. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the project outputs – specifically the workshops and the business plans that they help produce—generally provide a foundation for further progress towards outcomes in each country.

²⁶ E-mail correspondence from ICA to Industry Canada, 05/11/2004

²⁷ This reflects the amount actually invested in CFS Phase to cover costs for one of the workshops, funds transferred to Industry Canada for the facilitators, and funding for the facilitator of the CFS Virtual Mentoring Network.

This assessment is based on the following elements.

- Stakeholders and project participants provide positive assessments of the outputs thus far, as reflected in the written and video evaluations of previous events. In our observations, we note that participants leave the workshop with preliminary business plans and visible interest and enthusiasm for developing initiatives in their countries. The evidence from the presentations of participants in earlier workshops suggests that some of them are able to continue the momentum when they get home, albeit progressing at different rates. As one of the participants in the first workshop reports, "thanks to what we learned in the Buenos Aires workshop, we have been able to take the step that was missing in order to make the project of refurbished computers for schools a reality. The business plan helped us to back-up the initiative with concrete data."
- There are also references from participants in the early workshops that illustrate the importance of accessing the details of Canada's experience. As one of the government stakeholders described, the "documents and experience of Canadian Computers for Schools were of utmost importance in order to provide reference models for managerial and operational processes."
- In some of these countries, there are signs of change in the policy and institutional framework that will enable CFS initiatives. Brazil, Guatemala, and Panama are three examples of countries that had taken some steps towards a CFS program but jump-started their initiatives following their participation in the workshops. Brazil, for example, moved very quickly to change legislation, locate space and consolidate partnerships. By February 2005, the Federal Government had launched a Program called "Computers for Inclusion." The Program's Centres for Computer reconditioning, which are independently managed by NGOs, are currently being installed in Rio de Janeiro and Bello Horizonte. In Guatemala, participants went on to establish an alliance of several different organizations (government, NGOs and Microsoft), coordinated further training of a broader stakeholder group, negotiated a donation of 400 computers from Korea, and officially launched the initiative in January 2005.
- There is also anecdotal evidence of new working relationships and partnerships emerging within and among the participating countries. For example, at the end of the Caribbean workshop, Guyana and Suriname developed a joint proposal and business plan for a CFS initiative in their countries. The workshops fostered alliances between multiple stakeholders within each country, as in the case of Guatemala described above. The evaluations and videos also note that some of these stakeholders met for the first time at the workshops. At this stage, it is still unclear whether or not these alliances can be sustained.
- There is an incipient network of people engaged in the implementation of CFS initiatives, although the VMN has had some difficulties in attracting and sustaining the participation of network members after the workshops.

Weaknesses and difficulties

At different points in implementation, the project partners have felt the challenges inherent in bringing together different organizations to work together. This has placed additional demands on the ICA project team to harmonize visions and interests in the project so that the work can move forward. The initial differences in vision complicated the design of the workshops, causing some delay in the implementation of the project. (Originally, the cycle of workshops was to be completed by the end of 2004). These differences, however, did not seem to affect the project's results.

Another challenge noted in evaluative reports and observed after the Jamaica workshop, relates to the use of the VMN as a tool to build on the face-to-face exchange. "The VMN is intended to provide a "one-stop" communications platform for LAC CFS champions to connect with others in the region and draw on the experiences of Canadian and Colombian CFS practitioners as they design business and implementation plans for their region."²⁸ Issues of connectivity, familiarity with the medium, language, and content are cited as factors that may limit the participation of delegates after the workshop. Thus, although the creation of a network and sense of community is a result of the workshops, it is unclear whether or not the VMN helps to sustain this. Phase II includes a web portal and introduces a regional coordinator who will do more active promotion of the Network.

Lessons learned and overall observations

The CFS project illustrates an approach for transferring the experience of one country to another. It has done this by developing a workshop package that starts with Canadian expertise and a Canadian model and adds the experiences of other countries in the region. As one stakeholder noted, this achieved a balance between "promoting a strong, established model and more relevant models."

As a result, the CFS project facilitates the *replication of a model* that is identified as successful in Canada in terms of bridging the digital divide, improving quality of education, and facilitating social inclusion. It is a model that appears to have stimulated the interest of the participants in the CFS process. Despite the differences between contexts, the participants suggest that CFS is relevant to their country needs and feasible to implement. The project also recognized that relevance and feasibility depend on *adaptation of the model* to meet scale, scope, and priority needs in each of the countries. The adaptations emerging take the elements of the Canadian and/or Colombian approach that stakeholders believe to best suit the context for CFS in their country.

CFS also illustrates how ICA can build bridges between its Canadian constituencies and its regional mandate. One stakeholder noted that "ICA played this role well" in the CFS project. One of the ways in which it has done this is through the partnership mechanism. In this case, ICA brought together the partners and facilitated the development of a new working relationship between them. From our observations of the project, it is also evident that the work in partnership may sometimes limit the visibility and development of a separate identity for ICA. (In the delivery of the workshop that we observed, for example, the OAS and Industry Canada tended to be more front and center because they were responsible for facilitating the sessions.)

²⁸ Houck, John. Nicaragua – Virtual Mentoring Network (VMN) Report, October 2004

CFS initiatives draw relationships between technology, education, and social development. One of the lessons learned in Canada is that such initiatives are more likely to be successful if they are linked to broader ICT4D strategies. In fact, the concept of an “integrated” strategy is key in the Canadian experience. While CFS initiatives have the potential to support broader connectivity and digital literacy issues, they also may end up being stand-alone programs. In this regard, ICA can help to link the individual CFS initiatives that are being developed to other regional programs being supported by the Institute, such as the educational portal project. We observed these types of links being made by ICA staff at the workshop.

C. 4 ICT for competitiveness of MSME in Central America

Project objectives

The General Objective of this project is “to enhance the competitiveness of MSMEs in 4 Central American countries, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, through expanding the uses of digital technologies as instruments for developing business skills”. More recently Costa Rica was included as a fifth country, expanding the regional scope of the project. As stated in the PAD, the project has three specific objectives, namely:

- To make a diagnosis of the e-readiness of Central American MSMEs.
- To create awareness and identify the institutional network to implement an ICT training program in each country, and
- To identify the specific business ICT training needs of the MSMEs in each country.

The project is based upon the idea that MSMEs can be a significant engine for growth and jobs. If MSME do not adopt the new technologies in their business strategies, it is very likely that they won't be able to survive as the markets become more open and competitive. Based on these premises, it is stated that ICT training can foster the uses of digital technologies as instruments for development of MSME business skills, thereby enhancing their capacity to compete in the new environment.

Project activities (stage of the project, process carried out, monitoring).

The two main components of the project are i) an assessment of e-readiness of MSMEs, by Comisión Asesora de Alta Tecnología (CAATEC) and ii) design and implementation of training in ICT uses by MSMEs, by Fundación Omar Dengo (FOD). The first component is almost completed. The latest version of the e-readiness assessment report on MSME in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, represents about a 70% degree of completion, according to CAATEC's Executive Director.

This report is based upon surveys conducted by CAATEC in each of the five countries referred to above, with support from Unimer Research International, a consulting firm that specializes in surveys. The samples include 150 MSME in each country. The surveys begun in Nicaragua and Honduras, in August 2004, followed by Guatemala and El Salvador in September, and finally Costa Rica in October 2004. The field work was over and done with by the end of 2004.

Seminars and workshops had been planned in each country to present and discuss the results of the e-readiness assessments report. We have not received information to confirm whether these Seminars have already taken place as planned.

At a broader level some Seminars have been already organized to discuss key issues directly related to the project, such as the potential of ICT to formalize informal MSMEs, to promote exports, to strengthen linkages within value chains and to promote the association of small scale producers. As indicated below, an Ad Hoc Committee of Viceministers in charge of MSME policies has been created, and some of its members as well as other government officials have participated in these Seminars.

Stakeholders – Sponsors (funding and resources) and field partners.

At its current stage of implementation, the leading institution of this project has been the Comisión Asesora de Alta Tecnología, (CAATEC), based in San Jose, Costa Rica. The origin of this project is related to CAATEC's success developing an e-readiness assessment for Costa Rica, which was awarded an infoDev grant. Working as a non profit foundation CAATEC sponsored various events, aimed at raising public awareness on the importance of ICT for the future of the country. In this process it achieved high level visibility and was able to secure support and commitment from key institutions to assess the degree of e-readiness of MSME in other countries.

In November 2002 CAATEC and the Embassy of Korea in Costa Rica co-sponsored the Seminar "Corea, Costa Rica and the knowledge -based economies." Then the government of Korea asked CAATEC to formulate a project proposal to be submitted to the IDB (Korean Trust Fund), which should include not only the assessment component but also networking and training activities in support of MSME. IDB insisted upon involving the Secretaria de Integración Economica Centroamericana (SIECA) – a multilateral organization whose stakeholders are the Ministers in charge of economic integration in Central America – in order to expand the reach of the project to other countries in the region.

Another key institution is Fundación Omar Dengo (FOD), also based in San Jose, Costa Rica, which specializes in education. FOD is reckoned by its institutional knowledge of how learning processes take place, based on a pedagogical and epistemological reflection as well as 18 years of experience in ICT training. FOD has contributed to some aspects of the project's original design and is expected to play a leading role when the training phase is implemented.

The main sources of funding so far have been the IDB and ICA, approximately in equal amounts.²⁹ Available funds have been directed to the e-readiness assessment of MSMEs. It is expected that country governments and multilateral organizations such as the IDB and the World Bank will provide the funds that are required to implement the training phase of the project.

²⁹ As stated in the PAD, ICA would provide CAD\$ 171,000 and the IDB CAD\$ 191,450. A more recent document provided by ICA's Project Officer shows slightly higher figures: CAD\$ 198,860 by ICA and CAD\$ 225,000 by IADB (Korean Trust Fund).

SIECA has also played an important role, as a facilitator for policy makers. The IDB reportedly conditioned its funding to SIECA's participation in the project. An interviewee reported that "SIECA has wanted to serve as a channel of communication for the project to be known by political decision-makers."³⁰ Along the same lines, the Organisation of American States (OAS) has shown commitment in promoting the dissemination of knowledge on ICT among the MSMEs located in the region, and has also provided political support for the project. An Ad Hoc Committee has been set up, which is integrated by the Vice Ministers in charge of MSME policies in each of the five countries. Thus, the project is in the process of leveraging political support from country governments and multilateral organizations.

Target audience

The main target audience of the project at this stage of implementation are country governments and multilateral organizations such as the IDB and the World Bank, which are expected to provide the funds for implementing the training programs for MSMEs. The final beneficiaries of the project are of course the MSME themselves.

Strengths of the project

The main issue in the political agenda of the region is related to the expected effects of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The agreement is as a result of a process of negotiation which is about to end. There is an ongoing discussion on the pros and cons of CAFTA, with an optimistic camp that emphasizes the benefits and a pessimistic one that expects devastating effects, which would trigger social turmoil. A critical issue in this regard is the huge amount of subsidies that the US government provides to its agricultural producers.

In this context the timing of the project could not be better. The key issue in the region's political agenda is how to foster competitiveness in the broader market that will result from CAFTA, and MSME are seen as the most important actors in this regard, given their contribution to the generation of employment.

This is why the project has been a focus of attention and is achieving political support, having the potential for scaling up both within each country and across the region. SIECA's role leveraging support from country governments certainly explains this outcome. As the Coordinator of the Project IDB-SIECA explains, "the project has tried to established itself within the political institutional framework of country governments, which enhances the likelihood of sustainability".³¹ The strength of this project can precisely be found in the political support it is currently building.

Even tough the project is still in its initial stage, it has already raised expectations on its potential benefits. ICT are seen as a good instrument to achieve competitiveness and yet little is known about the e-readiness of MSMEa in the region. In this regard political actors are well

³⁰ "SIECA ha querido servir como canal de comunicación para que el proyecto sea conocido por los tomadores de decisiones políticas". C4.1, personal interview, January 27, Guatemala.

³¹ "El proyecto ha intentado sustentarse en la institucionalidad política gubernamental, lo cual abona a favor de su sustentabilidad." C4.1, personal interview, January 27, Guatemala.

aware that "there is a vacuum of information, which the e-readiness assessments of CAATEC are beginning to fill."³²

Weaknesses and difficulties

One of the main weakness of the Project is the lack of coordination both within and among the countries of the region in terms of policy design and implementation in support of MSMEs. Even in Costa Rica, where the project originated, "there are some 200 programs to support MSME which have lacked articulation."³³ Initiatives like the Ad Hoc Committee of Vice Ministers in charge of promoting MSME, are contributing to overcome this weakness. However, although some country government officials might realize the benefits of cooperation in this area, they also face pressures from their own constituencies and these pressures might increase precisely as a result of intensifying competition within CAFTA.

These are some concerns as well on the agenda setting role performed by multilateral organisations, which is not necessarily based on the real needs of MSME. As an interviewee put it, "there is a supply side bias, donors tell us 'take this medicine' and that's it."³⁴ At the same time, given that the first step of the project has been the development of e-readiness assessments, it is more likely that the current situation of MSMEs is taken as a starting point in designing the training programs. Thus, a more critical stance can be sustained against the supply side bias referred to above.

Along the same lines, a potential weakness of the project is the nature of the relationship with multilateral organizations such as the IDB, which seems to hinge upon the willingness of individual members of their staff to support the project. For instance, the change in the IDB representative and counterpart of the project has apparently weakened the relationship with this organization quite severely, to the extent that disbursements for the project have been delayed and there are no further signs on the willingness of IDB to continue supporting the project. An interviewee reported that "with the changes in the IDB we were left without a counterpart. The project official was gone and the person who replaced her never took real responsibility for the project. From then on, the IDB component fell in a terrible solitude."³⁵

³² "Se tenía un vacío informativo, que el estudio de CAATEC ha permitido llenar " C4.2, personal interview, January 31, 2005, San Jose, Costa Rica.

³³ "En Costa Rica hay alrededor de 200 programas de apoyo a PYMES que han estado desarticulados" C4.2, personal interview, January 31, 2005, San Jose, Costa Rica.

³⁴ "Hay un sesgo de oferta, los donantes nos dicen `tomen esta medicina´...".

³⁵ "Con los cambios en el BID nos quedamos sin interlocutor. La persona desaparece y la persona que lo reemplaza no llega a asumir la responsabilidad por el proyecto. "El componente BID se sumió en una terrible soledad". C4.3 January 31 2005.

This weakness could certainly affect the implementation of the project insofar multilateral organizations such as the IDB are expected to provide the funds to implement the training phase of the project. In fact, it seems that budget constraints will limit the availability of funds from the country governments. As a senior government official stated, "the Achilles heel of the Costa Rican economy is its budget constraint. The political will [to support the project] is there, but it isn't easy to get the funds. The fiscal deficit of the government in 2004 reached 4% of GDP. So we are planning to negotiate a loan with IDB."³⁶ Other country governments face similar constraints, to the extent that "so far the allocation of resources to fund ICT training programs for MSME, is not part of the political agenda."³⁷

On a different note, we also found some weaknesses in the process of articulating the main actors, during the phase of conception and design of the project. It seems there are some tensions between CAATEC and FOD not only with regards to the project, but also on broader issues such as the potential of ICT for reducing poverty, and the privatization of industries such as telecommunications. To FOD, CAATEC has "an euphoric vision" on the potential of ICT. In contrast, claimed a member of FOD staff, "we are more cautious, since we believe that there is no direct relationship between ICT access and development." The same interviewee also stated that there is "an ideological component" in CAATEC's positive stance on privatization.

With regards to the project itself, we recorded some criticism on the way the survey was designed, and claims that "the questionnaire was too long, maybe due to the fact that it is geared to a broader agenda, which is related to other projects." According to this source, the survey includes very few questions on training needs, "from question 76 to question 85, and when you get to question 76 people are too tired to answer."³⁸ Another contentious issue is the scope of the project. It has been claimed that CAATEC proposes to prioritize small and medium-scale firms, leaving aside micro enterprises which FOD claims should not be excluded from the project.

³⁶ "El talón de Aquiles de la economía de Costa Rica es la restricción fiscal. La voluntad política existe, pero no es fácil conseguir el dinero. El déficit presupuestario del gobierno en el 2004 fue cerca del 4% del PBI... Así que pensamos gestionar un crédito del BID." C4.2, personal interview, January 31, 2005, San Jose, Costa Rica.

³⁷ "Aún no forma parte de la agenda política la asignación de recursos y el financiamiento de la capacitación de las PYME en el uso de las TICs." C4.1, SIECA, personal interview, January 27, Guatemala.

³⁸ "La encuesta tiene muy pocas preguntas sobre necesidades de capacitación -- de la 76 a la 85, es decir sólo 9 -- y es muy larga, quizá debido a que responde a una agenda mucho más amplia, relacionada con otros proyectos. Cuando se llega a la pregunta 76 ya la gente está muy cansada." C4.4, FOD, personal interview, Costa Rica, January 31, 2005

A first review of the preliminary version of the e-readiness assessment report raises some methodological questions. For instance, there is an insurmountable information barrier related to the existence of informal unregistered firms, which limits the scope of comparative analyses, both within and across countries. Yet, the report seems to ignore these limitations pretending that the samples are “representative” and thus allow for comparative assessments.³⁹ The authors state that stratification of the sample along the size of the firms was done “in a non proportional way”, in order to have large enough numbers in each size strata (degrees of freedom for statistical purposes), without acknowledging that, almost by definition, there is no information on the shares of micro, small and medium-scale firms in the total production of each sector (including informal production).

Lessons learned/ overall observations.

Overall, however, the report does provide a detailed assessment of e-readiness of MSME in Central America, and certainly represents an important step forward as an input to designing tailor-made programs to foster MSME competitiveness. One of its main conclusions is that MSME have very limited access to ICT and that e-commerce is quite incipient among them. It also concludes that access is related to limited infrastructure, which requires further improvements in regulatory frameworks to stimulate investment. Yet, it is clear that competitiveness results from different processes. As Fajnzylber put it long ago, “it is not only companies which compete in the international market. It is also a field of confrontation between production systems, institutional structures and social organs, in which business is an important element but one integrated in a network or relations with the education system, the technological infrastructure, management-labor relations, the public and private institutional apparatus, the financial system, etc. (Fajnzylber 1988: 22)”.

It is too early to tell whether the optimistic predictions on the outcome of CAFTA will prove right, but it is certainly clear that without policies and programs such as “ICT for competitiveness of MSME in Central America”, it will be more difficult to face the increasing competitive pressures that will very likely ensue. In this sense, the project is filling an important void.

C. 5 ICA Caribbean Consultation

Background

The object of this case study is Project 101461 – Caribbean Roundtable and Pos-Barbados Follow-up. The analysis also briefly takes into account two spin-off projects: 1- and Project 102243. The pos-Barbados Follow-up, mainly the launching and initial operation of CIVIC is treated in the Results section.

³⁹ For instance, it is claimed that “Debido a que la cantidad de empresas incluidas en la muestra para cada sector fue seccionada según el peso relativo del sector en el Producto Interno Bruto de cada país, para hacer análisis por sector es necesario ponderar los resultados obtenidos y así poder hacer inferencias estadísticas en cada caso y en el total.” The fact is that the relative weight of each sector in the economy is based upon data from larger registered firms, and excludes by definition informal unregistered firms (which might have a significant weight in some sectors).

The Project resulted from a convergence of a series of regional consultations launched by ICA to assist in developing its institutional and ICT4D strategies⁴⁰ with "ICT development in the Caribbean" initiative lead by the ITU, with technical support from the CIDA. The ITU initiative aimed to establish a coordinated effort to "Create an enabling environment for ICT investment in the Caribbean" and gained momentum in March 2002 with the adoption of a comprehensive Action Plan to bridge the Digital Divide at the World Telecommunication Development Conference and in April 2002 with a series of consultation meetings on ICT investment in the Caribbean held in Barbados. Those meetings concluded with the proposition of developing a ICT regional strategy to broaden the scope of the process and to impact on ICT regional policies, and to move towards proposing a coordinating mechanism to exchange information and knowledge among the main actors involved in the region, as a step towards regional ICT integration."⁴¹

In the end, ITU and ICA "decided to join efforts in the Caribbean region and organize a seminar for both moving ahead with the ITU lead process of developing a Caribbean ICT action plan and mechanisms to coordinate regional efforts, and, to integrate the views and concerns of a broader range of stakeholders as an input for the Caribbean ICT Action Plan."⁴²

Project objectives

The premise which oriented the setting objectives for the Consultation was that the time was ripe to address ICT matters from a regional perspective. The event was to "provide an opportunity for key actors and experts from the region to meet and to work together towards the formulation of a sustainable regional ICT development approach."⁴³

The project's general objective was to "Bring together senior level experts in connectivity and ICT of the region (active in ICTs for development within the private sector, government sector, CSOs and applied research sector) to help develop the strategic direction for the ICA (within the framework of the Summit of the Americas) and input for CIDA and ITU regional strategies."⁴⁴

Its more specific objectives outlined in the PAD are divided in 4 areas:

- 1) "To gather and exchange information on the current ICT development status in the region: who are the main stakeholders, the successful and failed experiences (and their lessons) and identify potential ICA affiliates;
- 2) To understand from the region's participants what are the priorities, issues and needs in terms of ICT development in the Caribbean, and how they should be addressed. Those will be compiled and drafted as i) a Regional ICT Plan of Action and Recommendations and ii) a Caribbean Declaration of ICT Principles;

⁴⁰ It was just preceded about six months earlier by the Mercosul Consultation (which also included Chile and Bolivia) held in Fortaleza, Brazil, March 14-15, 2002 and it was followed by the Andean Consultation (Lima, March 17-19, 2003) and Central America Consultation (San Salvador, May 14-16, 2003).

⁴¹ File: Caribbean ICT roundtable, Oct 2002 – consultant report.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The Public Document – Caribbean ICT Roundtable, ITU/ICA Caribbean Consultation, Barbados 24-26 September 2004.

⁴⁴ PAD 101461.

- 3) To present the ICA to the Caribbean stakeholders and assess its current priorities, its thematic concentration policies and programs, and
- 4) To constitute a donors /IFI coordination group on ICT in the Caribbean and a stakeholder regional working group that will after the seminar i) propose a continuing mechanism for coordination of regional ICT development; ii) broaden the consultation and seek support for the Caribbean Declaration of ICT Principles; iii) develop a Regional ICT Plan of Action to propose for donors/IFI funding and iv) promote regional interaction of ICT policy, planning, development and management." (PAD 101461)

The Roundtable specific primary objectives, which seemingly were arrived at after roundabout and protracted negotiations among the initial proponents – ITU, CIDA and ICA – were: 1-“Bring together senior level experts in connectivity and ICT of the region (active in ICTs for development within the private sector, government sector, civil society organizations and applied research sector) to help develop a strategic direction for the region, and begin the process of developing a Caribbean ICT Action Plan; 2- To establish a continuing mechanism for coordination & promotion of regional integration of Caribbean ICT policy, planning, development & management and identify the organization(s) to be responsible for its coordination; and 3-To build a framework for a Caribbean ICT Development Strategy to serve as the basis for ICT development action in each state.” (File: Caribbean ICT roundtable, Oct 2002 – consultant report -)

The event’s expected deliverables (outputs) were a “A draft framework for “Caribbean ICT Development Strategy” which identified organizations to coordinate and promote regional integration of Caribbean ICT policy, planning, development & management; identified group, tasks, process, responsibilities, funding, schedule for development of a “ Caribbean ICT Action Plan” to propose for donor/IFI funding and help national and regional strategy development; and set out an agreement to continuing periodic “Caribbean ICT Roundtables” &/or a regional working group.

Project activities⁴⁵

The schematic plan of activities for the event included: pre-event data gathering and information exchange, facilitated working groups, plenary sessions limited to event introduction and discussion on working groups’ conclusions, keynote speeches inserted after/before lunch and dinner and a separate donor coordination meeting.

The Roundtable approach was to make it a working event, with participants heavily involved in small facilitated thematic working groups and plenary sessions for integrating their outputs and setting dynamics.

⁴⁵ This section draws heavily on the project’s internal documents “Yacine Khelladi, Final Consultant Report, contract # 107276 Nov 15th 2002” and “Lessons Learned: ICA Caribbean Roundtable, October 28-31, 2002.”

Invited participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire to identify his/her country specific situation in the ICT sector, some successful or failed ICT experiences/initiatives, as well as views and expectations on the event and its thematic content and the collected information was posted online. Next, prior to the event, a moderated online discussion list, moderated and animated by facilitators, was organized to allow participants to share and update relevant background information, assess the event workgroup themes, and prepare the ground for a fruitful event. The list was scheduled to start in mid August and had the objectives of assessing the objectives and contents of each workgroup and gathering and completing information

The working groups, led by a facilitator in charge of producing a introductory document (one page) for the theme/issue and a set of questions distributed in advance for each group, were distributed in two parts. Part 1 four groups on "Development of Caribbean ICT Development Strategy" discussed 1-ICT Applications & Priorities: governance/ commerce/ education/ health/ culture/ environment/ transportation/ tourism/ disaster management, etc.; 2-ICT Policy & Regulatory Environment; 3-ICT Institutions & Human Resources / ICT Infrastructure & the Role of the Private Sector; 4-ICT Finance & Investment: Caribbean Economic Diversification. Part 2 two groups on "Development of Caribbean ICT Coordination Mechanism" covered 1- Organization(s) & Responsibilities / Resourcing the ICT Coordination Function / ICT Policy, Planning, Development & Coordination and 2-ICT Networking & Knowledge Management / Centres of Excellence / Development of a Caribbean ICT Action Plan. A methodological guide to assist in the conduction of the working groups was produced in coordination with facilitators.

The donors meeting was a full day meeting organized for the donor agencies and international finance institutions, active in the ICT field in the Caribbean with the objectives of: sharing their plans and regional strategies, identify common interest and areas of collaboration, and tentatively set a coordination mechanism. Participants came from the following organizations: CIDA, ICA, ITU, Industry Canada, UNDP, World Bank, OECS, Inter-American Foundation, European Union, Caribbean Development Bank-CDB, USAID, CTA, IACD/OAS; Office of the Prime Minister, Barbados; UWI, Caricom, Barbados Association of NGOs, UNESCO and Minister of Telecommunications, Science, Technology and Industry of St Vincent and the Grenadines; President of the CTU Caribbean Telecommunications Union.

Stakeholders and sponsors

At a meeting on regional ICT development, organized by ITU in Barbados on April 25th ITU, CIDA and THE ICA agreed to look forward to work together for a regional ICT event, starting a negotiation process to define objectives, roles and responsibilities, for the event. The CIDA and the ICA had different perspectives, objectives and target populations for the event: ICA wanted a broad stakeholders consultation on regional ICT priorities, and the CIDA was pushing for a telecommunication regulators and government coordination mechanism in there region. ITU did not have a strong position in the process. "A "public" document was produced to consult a certain number of key stakeholders and the Ad-Hoc Committee, constituted in the meeting held in Barbados on April 27thg 2002, on the objectives and process proposed. The document was also sent for comments to several regional key players by CIDA and the consultant. Few comments were received from the Ad-hoc committee, none from the stakeholders consulted by CIDA, and most from regional key stakeholders contacted by the consultant.

Target audience

The main audience was composed of key actors and experts from the region: 60-65 experts and decision makers from all Caribbean, (government, academia, non for profit, private sector) and 10-15 representatives of donor agencies and international finance institutions. Criteria for participation included an individual's active and current responsibilities in ICT development within a range of sectors, as well as balance and diversity of Caribbean countries and sectors.

Emerging results and Strengths of the project

Strengths

According to a participant in the Roundtable, the event provided a first and unique networking opportunity on ICT4D for diverse stakeholders in the region. Moreover, it generated a first measure an image of the ICT4D community in the Caribbean, one in which the social side and the technological side appeared.

The Barbados roundtable also allowed for the first time one sector of stakeholders to meet stakeholders from another sector: regulators were in the same forum with civil society and started to see who they were, how they thought and what they wanted.

An institutional stakeholder active in the region aptly put the results of Caribbean Consultation: "Part of several other initiatives. Led to CIVIC, which is very good. Led somewhere. Helped convene the community. Laid foundations."

Analysis of participants' responses to evaluation forms revealed that the participants had a very high appreciation of the event, its diverse audience, the contents and its format (interactive and participative), the use of the web pages, the online forum facilitation, the translation efforts and the overall organization. Further feedback indicated that the event brought a new relationship between donors, the private sector, the civil society, and Governments; heralded the advent of cooperation and collaboration among donors and a process of investment for development; the session on structures did invite a lot of interventions. One participant's significantly stated:

"The Roundtable represented a unique opportunity to address issues and set the policy agenda for years to come and those of us who represented Civil Society like me, it was quite interesting to be among the technocrats and professionals who quite often take decisions which influence our lives without allowing us to part of those decisions."

Emerging results

Although the immediate and stated objectives of Consultation were not fully achieved in the expected format, its secondary and indirect consequences, which were then funneled in the post-Barbados phase into the constitution of CIVIC, seem to be quite positive in a baseline perspective.

The Barbados roundtable was successfully organized and reached its objectives in terms of: regional stakeholders participation (quality and diversity), participative and collective discussion of priorities for a Regional ICT Strategy and an Action Plan, network building, and in promoting a shared regional perspective and vision in ICTs for development. Its outputs were short from expected but included a valuable and concerted set of recommendation for a Regional Strategy and an Action Plan, short/medium term proposal of stakeholders organization to move forward and ongoing network of stakeholders. The outputs obtained were closer to a list of recommendations and priorities than a clear Regional ICT strategy or an action Plan. Neither they advanced a structured coordination group term's of reference.

A detailed assessment of the Roundtable's objectives is provided in the table below, prepared by the consultant:

DECLARED OBJECTIVE	EVALUATION
Bring together stakeholders to help develop a strategic direction for the region, and begin the process of developing a Caribbean ICT Action Plan	The participants selection and attendance was quite good, balanced and high level experts and decisions makers, despite the late invitation and the difficulties in balancing sectors, countries and specific interests. Process for developing a Caribbean Action Plan based on building an open debate and a permanent network of stakeholders has been started.
To establish a continuing mechanism for coordination & promotion of regional integration of Caribbean ICT policy, planning, development & management and identify the organization(s) to be responsible for its coordination	This objective pushed by CIDA, and finally accepted by all partners, was, probably too ambitious: for a first roundtable, drafting a strategy and looking who to promote was maybe not achievable, before a real and wide dialogue process was conducted. Looking for recommendations, and building a solid networking process among stakeholders, was a more attainable objective, and that is what was achieved
To build a framework for a Caribbean ICT Development Strategy to serve as the basis for ICT development action in each state	Same as previous
Gather and exchange information on the current ICT development status in the region: who are main stakeholders, the successful and failed experiences (and their lessons)	Much information on the current ICT situation and who are the stakeholders was made available in the process. But, it still needs to be systematized and organized, as the information on projects and experiences.
Understand from the region participants what are the priorities, issues and needs in terms of ICT development in the Caribbean, and how should they be addressed.	This objective, together with the agreement for a permanent networking group, are the most achieved. I output we have: priorities, concerns and needs for action in the Caribbean.

Source: Yacine Khelladi, Final Consultant Report, contract # 107276 Nov 15th 2002.

ICA's programmatic results

The Roundtable also achieved ICA's programmatic consultation objectives of regional stakeholders identification, network building, assessment of needs for the region, elements for strategic planning, and institutional projection. Furthermore, ICA gained in image and wide name recognition, among sectors that it would have been more difficult to reach (governments and regional organizations), identified potential partners and candidates for the Institute network affiliates' and opened the possibility to take major role in the region, as a collaborative networking enabler and a funding agent.

Donors Meeting

The Donors Meeting was also considered successful as an agreement was then reached to constitute a collaborative "donors" network to exchange information and consider collaborative funding of regional actions."

Civic⁴⁶

Finally, a major and lasting result of the Roundtable and an important outcome of the Project was the establishment of the Caribbean ICT Virtual Community - CIVIC. network was launched in the Pos-Barbados phase. In order to continue building and strengthening the network, additional funding (CAN\$ 20,482) was provided in the project framework to finance an on-line regional ICT4D discussion community mechanism, CIVIC

In the period immediately after the Roundtable ICA and partners organized the support for the ICA-Caribbean d-group at the light of the Barbados Roundtable recommendations, until a contract was signed with the Roundtable project's principal consultant, Yacine Kheladi, in view of building up a regional network and supporting actions. This project's main objective was to "Design a moderation and facilitation methodology for the existing virtual group and conduct a discussion with participants to validate it." A secondary objective was to "Coordinate and follow up the technical set up for subgroups, public web site design, etc."

As part of this project, before the end of that year the 5 d-groups were created to support the thematic working groups (TWGs), animated by volunteer facilitators identified in the event, in the areas recommended by the Barbados event⁴⁷: Capacity Building, Content & Applications, Private Sector, Civil Society, and Policy & Regulations. During the period Nov 1-2002 April 27 2003 reached 123 members and the facilitator consultant processed 582 messages, received or processed 99 subscription requests for moderation and added 20 resources added in the web site.

The CIVIC public and D-groups web page ranks #1 among other pages with about 80,800 hits in Google search engine when typing keywords Caribbean + ICT, around April 2003. The "public" web includes some important document as the (a) Barbados Roundtable recommendations, (c) the Barbados Meeting report, (c) the CIVIC chart and (d) the TWG organization document these documents and the subscription requirements, in 3 languages. Some new sub-categories were created in the d-groups: Barbados Roundtable reports and outputs, Pictures, CIVIC organization documents and CIVIC production.

After posting an IDRC Call for proposal, and the discussion that unfolded, the consultant invited interested members to use a d-group TWG and the produced a proposal that was submitted to IDRC. We also know that, on the back stage, many other links and exchanges were motivated by the CIVIC.

Other important results of CIVIC, according to an active stakeholder are first, that it gave a voice for the Caribbean in the ICT4D area and second, that it provided a forum where people could see who was doing what.

⁴⁶This sub-section is based on Yacine Khelladi, Consultant, ICA Caribbean Networking Post Barbados Phase Building up Regional Network and Actions Consultancy Report. Project Number 101768. April 27th 2003.

⁴⁷ Barbados Roundtable Recommendations (English Spanish and French version on the web site) http://www.dgroups.org/groups/icacaribbean/index.cfm?op=main&cat_id=1094

One characteristic of CIVIC is that just a small core of stakeholders take an active part in CIVIC discussions, there is a closer ring of about 30% of subscribers that get involved in a regular basis and the remaining 60% although it does not contribute to the discussions is said to read everything and make use of the knowledge (the knowledge sharing function pointed out by another stakeholder) and contacts generated there. For example, the CARDICIS workshop held in St Lucia last summer was partially a product of CIVIC (and had the participation of several CIVICers), several participants in the CFS workshop held in Jamaica last February learned of it at CIVIC, and it has been an important source of on line information and learning opportunities for some stakeholders who learned about it and participated in the OAS e-government course in CIVIC.

Achievements

All along the process the list was kept alive with news feeds, references, request for information etc. The self introduction of members also proved to be highly appreciated, and way to open new threads of discussion.

A major achievement of CIVIC was the building of a collective position from the CIVIC towards the WSIS process⁴⁸. Other achievements of the pos-Barbados phase by April 2003 were:

- the CIVIC becoming a community with rules and a chart;
- The participation level in the community is acceptable in terms of quantity (around 15% of members are frequent participants, 35% occasional) and high in terms of quality.
- a hub for information on Caribbean ICT issues, in creating links between ideas, projects, institutions and in promoting partnerships;
- the TWG methodology;
- steps to a new kind of virtual organization with a lot of possibilities, and a role to play in the region, in terms of coordination of ICT development;
- a set of regional action ideas concerted with the small group of facilitators, and feedback of members.

Also some partnerships have been started from CIVIC: the IDRC/Roks CFP, the Civil Society Advocacy initiative between Funredes and JSDN.

⁴⁸ A Contribution to the WSIS From the Caribbean ICT Stakeholders Virtual Community (CIVIC) Towards a Vision of a Caribbean Information Society. Final Draft - February 19th 2003.
<http://www.dgroups.org/groups/icacaribbean/docs/WSIS-Caribbean-Final.doc?ois=no>

Project Spin-offs

Later on two ICA project spin-offs from this initiative were the project "Development of the ICT Business Sector in the Caribbean and Latin America (#101834, July 2003), a hands-on training workshop for Caribbean ICT practitioners on the development of business idea, which emerged from the networking and exchange that took place during the Consultation and which was advertised in CIVIC and the project ICTs for Development in the Caribbean (#102243, August 2004) also known as the Caribbean ICT4D Call for Proposals, in which were selected two project proposals for funding- "Caribbean FOSS Human Infrastructure and Network Capacity Development" and "ForCIVIC - Strengthening the Caribbean ICT stakeholders Virtual Community - CIVIC- as a regional mechanism to promote and support the use of ICT for development in the Caribbean", the latter a study of how to establish a quasi-formal organization around the virtual community convened by CIVIC.

Weaknesses and difficulties

Some of the expected outputs were not completely achieved, partly because they may have been overestimated, failing to consider the diversity of participants, interests and sectors represented, and partly because of the delays in the invitation process that limited the time available for the proper pre-event online conduction. Some of these weaknesses partly derived from the fact that the organizing partner institutions had different interest and objectives and there was perhaps not enough time for learning among them to complete into a consensus. This also affected the established operational relationship, including division of labor/roles and responsibilities and commitments.

Participants evaluation of the working group was mixed, some have highly appreciated the opportunity of building a vision together and speaking out their concerns, but the results were not as much elaborated as expected. In the evaluation forms, negative remarks stressed time constraints and the working groups' facilitation.

A few participants contacted by the evaluation team agree that a major weakness of the Roundtable was the language issue.

In the pos-Barbados phase translation was also problem in CIVIC operations. Whereas CIVIC was quite a success the d-groups never really took off. Two facts are relevant to explain the very low level of articulation registered: CIVIC members did not join the TWGs, that never really did operate as planned and the donors network simply did not exist (between January 2003 a end of April 2003, not a single message was posted, the designated facilitator did no perform and the CDB never sent the Donors meeting report to CIVIC).

Lessons learned and overall observations

An assessment of the somewhat mitigated results identified the challenge of putting together a wide variety of participants and interests represented, in light of differences of the ICT sector situation and participants vision each country, the importance of skillful facilitators to deal productively with such multi cultural groups and the critical role pre-event preparation (online).

The recommendations and elements or an Action Plan developed at the Roundtable assisted in the preparation of a Caribbean document for WSIS, thus giving the region an international identity and visibility. Furthermore, the perceived need for an action plan and for harmonizing initiatives and visions at the regional level endured so that CARICOM ended up doing something along these lines, which now has to be integrated into CIVIC thinking.

The TWGs did not succeed in acting as sub-working groups to develop proposals, because of the very low volunteer subscription of CIVIC members which in turn may be due, according to the consultant's report, to:

- Other elements are missing: the process from a mailing list to a mature virtual community (sharing values, vision and interests) has not yet completed, that encourages members to invest their time and knowledge in common ventures;
- Most members are unfamiliar with this new kind of virtual articulation/organization, more delicate and complex than the traditional means;
- The time factor is/was the most critical.. more time may be needed to strengthen the community, its mechanics, and drive a participatory process. Also a short time and complex agenda may have prevented participation of most members already quite busy.

A lesson learned from Consultations unexpected secondary results is the importance of structuring and nurturing dialogue after it has been launched. ICT can powerfully contribute to it as the constitution and working of CIVIC have proven, and the d-groups negative performance too. CIVIC has also revealed the inherent limitations of virtual dialogue among multi-stakeholders, what was also shown to be a barrier in a dialogue among common interest stakeholders (e-gov network). Nurturing dialogue that translates into action requires more than just facilitation or thematic structuring. Stakeholders` agenda items are at different stages (political, organizational) which difficult thematic casing. Trust requires personal and professional recognition which emerges from repeated contacts in which war stories are traded and rules of the game compared and contrasted.

A related issue raised by an active CIVIC stakeholder refers to the fact that a great deal more could be achieved by the CIVIC process if an attempt was made to better understand the culture of its members.

There were some lessons learned from the pos-Babados phase which are endorsed by the evaluation team.

First, the CIVIC process opened the way to have in the mid term some new kind of virtual organization with a lot of possibilities, and a role to play in the region, in terms of coordination of ICT development. However there was a considerable time lag in a subsequent ICA effort to turn this vision into reality. Just this year, almost two years after this diagnostic was pronounced by the project's consultant, the "ForCIVIC - Strengthening the Caribbean ICT stakeholders Virtual Community - CIVIC- as a regional mechanism to promote and support the use of ICT for development in the Caribbean" was funded in the framework of the Caribbean Digital Grants Competition. As a stakeholder put well the importance of this long overdue next step: "Most people do not understand that it [CIVIC] is not an organization and as such there are no real members. It is basically a mailing list. CIVIC as a mailing list does not command the respect that a quasi or legal organization would have." In more general terms, this signals a critical weakness in ICA's strategy: follow-up of projects and related monitoring for learning.

A related weakness identified in this project from which a lesson can be learned for ICA's overall strategy of operations has to do with the issue of lack of political support. As stated by the consultant: "During the whole period (December-April 2003), ICA did not intervene to encourage CIVIC members to participate in building collective proposals... More visibility or signs of strategic/political support and interest from ICA and partners can encourage the CIVIC process of defining collective proposals." Similarly, ICA did not seem to have acted to implement some of the recommendations of the "Caribbean ICT Partners and Financing network", such as setting up an information gateway with all projects and programs supported in the region and the establishment of a collaborative and synergic framework among those actors.

Final considerations

Within the Project's ambitious objectives (and in a way in the overall process of hemispheric consultation), possibly, regional economies of scale objectives were partly undercut (undermined) by regional fragmentation economies of scope and by the diverse and diffuse (and often overambitious) agendas of development agencies⁴⁹. There were multi-level, multi-layered, multiple ICT4D objectives coming from individual nations and an array of regional and multilateral organizations⁵⁰. Moreover, these were generally diffuse, lacking clear cut goals and schedules. Finally, the planning strategy on identifying problems and proposing solutions from the bottom-up (albeit from a selected area "elite" and with a pre-formatted agenda) which was the centerpiece of the Consultation cast a wide net. It was aimed at the whole process, from design to implementation to evaluation. Information overloads, as expected in this case, short circuited knowledge production.

On the one hand, an overarching umbrella perspective which does not allocate a (minimal) division of labor is likely to fail. On the other, the process of distributing and allocating this division of labor may be quite tricky given the linguistic diversity and sovereignty issues involved.

In this regard, the evaluation team can thus conclude that in spite of the detailed planning efforts, and even discounting for last minute pre-implementation failures / snags (definition of list of participants and shorter time available for planned pre-event online discussions), the seemingly frustrating immediate results of the Consultation in regard to its stated objectives were, in a way, announced.

⁴⁹ ICTs for Caribbean development - Development Partners Meeting October 31st, 2002.

⁵⁰ For example, ICA objectives mixed strategy building self-serving ones - identification of regional stakeholders and the identification of key elements for ICA strategic planning and institutional projection in the Caribbean—with regional centered ones -- network building and the assessment of ICT needs of the region. For further examples regarding this point on the multiplicity of objectives see Lessons Learned: ICA Caribbean Roundtable, October 28-31, 2002.

Although it does not fall directly into the purview of this case study analysis to make an in-depth evaluation of the object of the Project itself, we find that such an assessment may throw some light on the broader and mandated assessment of ICA actions and strategy. At times as these of growing uncertainty, shifting markets and rapid technological change, making strategic plans is a hazardous task for organizations, nations and regions alike. In this context, more than ever, it is puerile to ask questions such as that asked by a high-level government and regional organization official at the ICTs for Caribbean Development – Development Partners Meeting held right after the Roundtable: “What is going to be the best technology?” Similarly, one must avoid quick fixes at the implementation end, as stated in a presentation to the Roundtable: “Given the rapidity of change in ICTs, projects must be implemented with celerity to ensure that they can achieve their full effectiveness.” These technological deterministic approaches, as well as those overcommitted to coordination as an end rather than a means, constitute solutions in search of problems.

The difficulty lies that in our present day context, even problems’ definitions and characteristics are rapidly evolving, as they tend to respond to changes in their environment. Therefore, enabling stakeholders to continuously identify and redefine problems seems to be a first step in a strategic framework for dealing with ICT4D in national and sub-regional settings. Enabling goes beyond just facilitation and is less than imposing a template agenda. But it still requires continuous institutional prodding and reinforcement. In this light and in this subject area, consultations ought to be pathways to short destinations with a tool-kit which needs to be constantly replenished. Similarly, the destinations or goals ought to be redefined by stakeholders as they advance, thus calling forth the need for monitoring. The accumulated knowledge extracted from monitoring, will then generate learning for identifying the next signpost (problem) in the desired trajectory. And the collective learning will contribute to focused solutions that manage the environmental uncertainties and risks, rather than struggling to predict and avoid them at the outset.

In the end, we make ours some of the conclusions of the CIVIC consultant about the whole process: “Do Not Force a Process – Facilitate It”