



Title: ICT4D Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development Project

By: Karen Higgs

Report type: Final technical progress report

Date: August 31 2010

Location: South Africa

IDRC Project Number: 105259-001

IDRC Project Title: Same as above

Region: International/global

**Full name of research institution: Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
PO Box 29755, Melville 2109, South Africa**

Research team: Karen Higgs, Anriette Esterhuysen, Karen Banks, Karel Novotny. All are reachable through info@apc.org and Tel. +27 11 726 1692 (South Africa).

*This report is presented as received from project recipient(s). It has not been subjected to peer review or other review processes.

*This work is used with the permission of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Creative Commons Licence Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 2010, APC

Abstract: APC celebrates our twentieth year networking online for social justice and sustainable development in 2010. We are the world's oldest online progressive network. The INSPRO II grant has had and will have a major impact on APC both strategically and institutionally.

We have consolidated an ICT and environmental sustainability network which will become institutionalised into a fourth programme area. This new network held the first workshop run by APC *entirely online*. The new platform adopted will have significant impact on our expenditure and impact on the climate related to travel. We produced a draft guide for NGOs on APC's experience working as a global virtual network and planned for a guide to communicating for influence to be produced next year.

Regarding our institutional capacity, we carried out an assessment of our organisational structure in the context of the 2008-12 strategic plan. All staff have a clearer understanding of how to approach resource mobilisation. Our resource mobilisation strategy was updated and positively evaluated by several senior RM consultants. A long-awaited messaging guide for APC staff and members was produced. Finally but importantly we revised staff consultancy rates and produced new budget templates which will be automated to improve our cost-recovery efficiency.

Keywords: ICT4D, capacity, environment, network, resource mobilisation

Table of Contents

1. Executive summary.....	4
2. Project Activities.....	5
Activity 1: Exploring organisational mechanisms and models for long term sustainability.....	5
Activity 1.1 Assessing APC’s organisational structure in the context of the 2008-12 action plan.....	5
Activity 1.2 Develop new cost sharing models	5
Activity 2: ICTs and climate change and environmental sustainability: research capacity development, research, and programme incubation.....	6
Activity 2.1 Understanding the issue: building research capacity and conducting research to respond to the challenges and opportunities related to ICTs and climate change and ICTs and environmental sustainability (workshop).....	6
Activity 2.2 Implementation of the research strategy.....	8
Activity 2.3 Programme design and activity plan.....	10
Activity 3: Documenting APC as a global virtual organisation.....	10
Activity 4: Implementing resource mobilisation strategy.....	11
Activity 4.1 Resource mobilisation research and monitoring systems and procedures.....	11
Activity 4.2 Building resource mobilisation capacity.....	12
Activity 4.3 APC’s Little Yellow Book.....	12
Activity 4.4 Updating resource mobilisation strategy for the 2009-12 period.....	13
Activity 5: Initial planning for a guide to information dissemination and media relations for non-profit social change organisations.....	13
Activity 5.1 Communicating for influence - Networking stories: a guide for CSOs....	13

1. Executive summary

This one-year project was intended to help APC consolidate the significant achievements of the 'Capacity Building for Institutional Support project (Grant Number 102899-001) supported by IDRC from 2005-7 and known as APC-INSPRO phase I.

From March 1 2009 APC undertook a set of activities to build on those achievements and respond to strategic priorities outlined by the APC membership during the tenth APC council meeting held in November 2007 until 2012 supported again by IDRC and known in this report as INSPRO II. They were:

1. Exploring organisational mechanisms and models for long term sustainability
2. ICTs and climate change and environmental sustainability: research capacity development, research, and programme incubation
3. Documenting APC's experience as a global virtual organisation and development of a guide for non-profit social change organisations
4. Implementation of APC's resource mobilisation strategy
5. Initial planning for a guide to information dissemination and media relations for non-profit social change organisations

All project activities have been completed and here we report on the changes since the first interim report in September 2009.

APC celebrates our twentieth year networking online for social justice and sustainable development in 2010. We are the world's oldest online progressive network. The INSPRO II grant has had and will have a major impact on APC both strategically and institutionally.

Major achievements include the consolidation of an ICT and environmental sustainability network which will very likely become institutionalised into a fourth programme area if approved by APC members at the next council meeting in March 2011. This new network held the first major workshop run by APC *entirely online* in our twenty year history. The new platform that APC adopted thanks to INSPRO II will have significant impact on our own expenditure and impact on the climate related to travel and is a milestone for the organisation. We have produced a draft guide for NGOs on APC's experience working as a global virtual network which will be finalised and published before the end of our anniversary year. We have planned for a guide to communicating for influence to be produced next year.

Regarding our own institutional capacity for which this grant has been so valuable, IDRC sourced us a consultant who facilitated an assessment of our organisational structure in the context of the 2008-12 strategic plan. All staff have a clearer understanding of how to approach resource mobilisation thanks to training. Our resource mobilisation strategy was updated and positively evaluated by several senior RM consultants. A long-awaited messaging guide for APC staff and members was produced for use when talking to potential funders and partners. Finally but importantly we revised staff consultancy rates and produced new budget templates which will be automated to improve our cost-recovery efficiency.

2. Project Activities

Activity 1: Exploring organisational mechanisms and models for long term sustainability

Activity 1.1 Assessing APC's organisational structure in the context of the 2008-12 action plan

Anticipated outcomes: APC staff and board are in position to review various options and make informed plans re. staffing and structure and income generation.

How they will be measured: *Feedback from primary stakeholders: APC staff and board.*

Status: Completed

APC worked with Eloise Burke, an independent consultant funded separately by IDRC, from February 2009 to undertake a study which examines the organisation's current structure and capacity in the context of the 2008-12 action plan. The final report was submitted in September 2009.

Eloise carried out the following activities:

- Reviewed existing relevant documentation including the strategic plan
- Carried out interviews with APC staff and board members (It was decided to limit the people interviewed to those who are very familiar with the workings of APC the organisation as opposed to APC the network)
- a desk survey with APC managers (which found that managers' responsibilities do not overlap)
- Led a resource mobilisation consultation at a face-to-face staff meeting.

During INSPRO II, we also worked with a resource mobilisation specialist, Ellen Sprenger in continuation of a process started during INSPRO I. Ellen periodically advises APC on our resource mobilisation strategy and changes are coordinated by the executive director and the grants administrator.

Activity 1.2 Develop new cost sharing models

Anticipated outcomes: APC uses new budget templates and core costs are effectively covered through project grants.

How they will be measured: *Analysis of budgets and project income versus expenditure. Regular recording of staff's time on inter-departmental work. Ensuring that core costs, where possible, are covered in all new budgets.*

Status: Completed

Staff consultancy rates: The rates were developed and are being used on an ongoing basis. In the longer-term we aim to cover core costs by building them into new budgets. We are beginning to re-cover some costs for staff time. We are not always able to fully cover core costs, even in new project budgets as in many cases the funds committed by the funder are not sufficient to cover all costs. For example, we have calculated that, aside from budgeting

accurately for staff's time, we also need to budget at least 20% to cover operational costs, but most funders are not prepared to cover more than 15% for operational costs. Therefore these costs have to be covered by the organisation through other sources of income.

New budget templates: A draft budget template was tested by staff members, including the executive director. The template is now with the technician who is creating an electronic version connected to the financial system back-end based on staff requirements and comments on the draft. The automated online version of the template will include options for different types of budgets, such as event, research or programme budgets.

APC is working on this with the same technician who very skilfully assisted us in setting up our online payment request system as part of INSPRO I. Based in South Africa where most of our finance team is also based, he understands our needs very well. We envisage a development, testing and modifying period of the automated template of at least three months with a final product ready by October 2010 as unfortunately the technician is not available to start development work until July 2010. The budget template will involve a great deal of development time and APC will need to supplement the budget for it from other sources of income.

Activity 2: ICTs and climate change and environmental sustainability: research capacity development, research, and programme incubation

Activity 2.1 Understanding the issue: building research capacity and conducting research to respond to the challenges and opportunities related to ICTs and climate change and ICTs and environmental sustainability (workshop)

Anticipated outcomes: Research team working on this theme and sharing insights with the rest of the network, Individual members' research plans, APC's research strategy on the topic, Increased understanding of the issue

How they will be measured: *Feedback on the research strategy and feedback from members of the network. Analysis of network activity and outputs, feedback on the research workshop, specific outcomes from the workshop*

Status: Concluded. Spin-off discussions and activities are ongoing.

Replacing face-to-face activities with online synchronous meetings: After considering how best to use available resources, and committed to "putting into practice what we preach", the project team decided to use an interactive online platform for the research capacity building workshop, rather than a face-to-face workshop. Our request to IDRC to reallocate funding to manage this was accepted in August 2009. Substantial effort was invested in the configuration of an open source platform¹ that would allow APC to both run the online workshop, and further develop the platform for future needs of APC, its members and eventually other interested partners².

¹ Based on Moodle in combination with the interactive system Covcell which adds audiovisual, chat and other features to the Moodle framework.

² Open Source solution would allow us to share the platforms without restrictions imposed by most licenses of commercial platforms.

However, despite significant efforts this solution was not stable enough to meet the requirements of the online workshop, nor of the needs of future APC team's and members' meetings. This was a great disappointment to us. However we are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and travel costs and after extensive research and evaluation, the *Illuminate Live!* platform³ was chosen to host the online workshop. The rationale that led to the decision to use *Illuminate Live!* rather than an open source solution was documented.

We negotiated a special NGO deal with *Illuminate* for the year and we are hosting multiple meetings including staff and management meetings using the new platform. The platform is also open to other APC members and projects.

On-line capacity building workshop: The workshop took place online from October 28 to November 5 2009. An agenda, background materials and members research documents were developed and published on the project wiki in preparation for the workshop.

The following member organisations attended: Bytes for All (Bangladesh, Pakistan), StrawberryNet (Romania), Colnodo (Colombia), LaNeta (Mexico), owpsee (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and BlueLink (Bulgaria).

During the workshop, members presented their national research plans. They also discussed national and regional policies related to ICTs and environmental sustainability and climate change as well as the design of a collective campaign and next steps in developing a broader research strategy. Research outcomes, and all details related to the online workshop are available on a wiki that has been created to support the process: greeningit.apc.org and on request to IDRC staff.

Daily workshop reports were posted to the wiki and remain available to all research initiative participants and other people in the APC network who were unable to attend the workshop but may be interested in getting involved in the research at a later date.

Workshop activities, outputs and outcomes: The purpose of the online workshop was to build knowledge and capacity amongst APC members with some experience and interest in ICTS and environmental sustainability, and who had expressed commitment to longer term participation in APC's research network.

The following areas were discussed during the workshop:

1. *The definition of ICTs and environmental sustainability*
What exactly is meant by "ICTs and environmental sustainability" in the context of the GreeningIT network? The differences between e-waste and ICT and climatechange were discussed, and a working definition developed that will be used by the network to inform its activities and define the scope of its interest.
2. *National, regional and global policy environments dealing with ICTs and environmental sustainability*
Here participants were asked to provide a first-base overview of the policy environments in their countries and regions regarding e-waste policy, and policies relevant to ICTs and climate change. Waste management policies, climate change policies, and ICT policies were scanned and national, regional and global agreements relevant to each country considered.
3. *National research plans*

³<http://www.illuminate.com/>

Participating organisations were asked to finalise research frameworks for their national research plans. These were then discussed during an interactive online session, with the resource people and participants giving feedback to their peers. APC will support members in seeking funding for implementation of their national research plans, and in some cases, members may be contracted through the IDRC 2010-2011 Action Research Network initiative to do complementary research.

4. *Vision and mission*

A draft vision and mission for the network was developed for the network.

5. *Collective campaign*

First steps were taken to design a collective campaign as one of the first collaborative projects for the network.

Activity 2.2 Implementation of the research strategy

Anticipated outcomes: APC is able to participate, and play a leading role in the process of enriching current ICT for D policy and practice with awareness of environmental sustainability and the impacts of climate change. APC's issue papers help civil society organisations in the sector to better understand, and respond to these issues.

How they will be measured: *Feedback from primary stakeholders and workshop participants, Review of issue papers, Usage statistics of issue papers.*

Status: *Partly concluded.* Considering the interest and demand from APC members to participate in the the development of research frameworks and capacity building, the very limited funds intended for the production of four issue papers were allocated to resources needed to support the fledgling research network. The knowledge generated through this process, and the clarity developed concerning the scope and focus of issue papers needed, confirmed that the decision was a wise one. Funds have been allocated from internal APC resources to develop these papers in the coming months.

The implementation of the APC-wide research strategy occurred in phases.

Phase I: Call for expressions of interest, collection of background information, selection of research focus and development of APC-wide research action plan document

APC circulated a call for expression of interest in participating in the research initiative within our network – which had prioritised ICTs and environment since 2004. We received an enthusiastic response and preliminary interest from many member organisations. The final list of organisations who formally participated in this first focused research initiative (ICT and climate change research) was consolidated to nine research partners – 3 from Africa, 1 from Asia-Pacific, 2 from Latin America and 3 from Europe (all from Eastern Europe). Two-thirds are from developing countries.

The organisations⁴ are:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. ArabDev (Egypt) | 6. LaNeta (Mexico) |
| 2. BlueLink (Bulgaria) | 7. owpsee - Platform for South-east Europe (Bosnia-Herzegovina) |
| 3. Bytes For All (Pakistan) | 8. PROTEGE QV (Cameroon) |
| 4. Colnodo (Colombia) | 9. StrawberryNet (Romania) |
| 5. Fantsuam Foundation (Nigeria) | |

⁴All organisations are APC members.

A mailing list was set up as the main communication channel for all project activities. Over 230 messages were exchanged on the list between November 2009 and May 2010.

Background information on partners' past and current activities with relevance to the research project has been collected and updated throughout the project. These activities cover a very wide spectrum and range from research into e-waste disposal to employing ICTs in improving food security in changing environments.

Research framework and focus: A series of research templates were developed by the consultant and shared with participating members to guide them through to identification of their primary research focus.⁵

Major milestones of the research process were:

1. Members' individual research priorities identified and mapped
2. Policy environment scanned
3. Ideas about a collective campaign strategy collected
4. Online workshop implemented

Research frameworks were developed under the guidance of the consultant, and presented during the online workshop⁶. The process of consultation, feedback and document refining was intense and participatory, continuing up to the workshop and is continuing. For example, in several cases documents were again revisited and updated in December 2009. These research plans will feed into APC's wider research strategy for the 2010-2012 period.

Collection of background reading and repository of other initiatives on ICT and environmental sustainability: APC collected a list of resources relevant to the research in the area of ICT and environmental sustainability, as well as a list of other initiatives developed in this area. These include a list of initiatives implemented by APC partners and other ICT4D practitioners and environmentalists interested in the impact of ICT on climate⁷.

This repository of resources on the issues of ICT and climate change, environmental sustainability will be made public⁸ and APC will continue to encourage practitioners working in this area to contribute to it, replicate it, use it as their research repository, etc. The response APC received when collecting information about other existing initiatives in the area of ICT and environmental sustainability was very positive. Several researchers are interested in the outcomes of the survey.

Phase II: Implementation of research plans and advocacy strategy

APC will support members in fundraising efforts to resource implementation of national research initiatives and advocacy strategies. There is now significant momentum and enthusiasm amongst the network of researchers and we are confident that resources will be found to support ongoing work, in addition to resources that will be provided through the new IDRC 2010-2011 grant for which we are very appreciative.

⁵ http://greeningit.apc.org/index.php/Main_Page#Plans_and_timing

⁶ http://greeningit.apc.org/index.php/Research_Outcomes

⁷Following groups have been approached to provide feedback on their initiatives:

APC members <<http://www.apc.org/en/members>>, KM4dev, BCO Alliance, GKP partners and users, Kabissa, KictaNet, Nexus for ICTs, Climate Change and Development (www.niccd.org), ITU

⁸<http://www.apc.org/en/resources>

Activity 2.3 Programme design and activity plan

Anticipated outcomes: Coherent action plan that reflects the interests of APC members and partners and that resonates with donors.

How they will be measured: *Successful fundraising to support the action plan in part or in full.*

Status: Concluded

An APC-wide action research plan has been developed for APC's research, advocacy and campaigning work in ICTs and environmental sustainability for the 2010-2012 period. Some of this work will be partly funded through the new IDRC grant *Building research and communications capacity for an open, fair and sustainable networked society: The APC Action Network 2010-12*.

APC's flagship annual report – Global Information Society Watch⁹ 2010 – to be published in December 2010 focusses on ICTs and environmental sustainability and is another means for continuation of research, knowledge sharing, networking and advocacy. The INSPRO II grant has been a prime motivator in encouraging us to select ICTs and the environment as the theme for GISWatch 2010. GISWatch is supported by various donor organisations including the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swedish International Cooperation Agency (Sida).

We have prioritised resource mobilisation for this area work in the current 2009-2012 action plan. Research to date indicates that APC is in a unique specific position to form an action research advocacy network in the area of ICTs and environmental sustainability because APC is:

- a collaborative network, with goals and activities jointly developed, rather than a network set up by one organisation open to others joining it
- a member association calling on the diverse expertise and experience of its members. APC members are grassroots organisations with a long-time record of direct community work, which is a unique asset for their research activities
- a capacity-building hub for APC members (and often partners) with tried and tested experience developing member skills to engage fruitfully and effectively in national, regional and global advocacy interventions.
- focused on ICT4D, with an emphasis on a civil society perspective.

Considering the momentum, interest, commitment and unique positioning of APC in the area of ICTs and environmental sustainability, it is likely that APC will continue to pursue a strategy of developing a new programmatic area for this field of work. A proposal for developing a new programmatic area in ICTs and environmental sustainability will be presented to the full Council of Members during the next council meeting in March 2011.

Activity 3: Documenting APC as a global virtual organisation

Anticipated outcomes: APC network has a deeper understanding of the reality of, and how working in a virtual environment impacts –positively and negatively - on staff, members and interns - and is aware and able to anticipate challenges and respond with

⁹ www.giswatch.org

methodologies and mechanisms designed specifically for the virtual environment; APC partners and the APC network have a deeper understanding of how the virtual environment impacts of relationship and partnership building – thereby enabling both to understand their part in building long term sustainable and effective partnerships; Knowledge sharing and learning amongst a core set of virtual non-profit and social change organisations; and By working with the APC network and a core set of partners in developing the guide developing a detailed proposal and budget and outreach strategy for the guide APC facilitates debate and learning that informs the plan for the guide. Participants will learn from the planning process, and will look forward to participating in the production of the guide and making use of it.

How they will be measured: Feedback from APC members, board and staff, including from ex-staff. Feedback from other networked organisations; Successful resource mobilisation for the project; Feedback from participants (potential case studies) and from other stakeholders, including IDRC, and project partners.

Status: Completed

APC negotiated a six-month extension on this project in order to be able to do justice to this publication's research and production. Given that this is APC's 20th anniversary year we wanted to really take this part of INSPRO forward and not only produce the proposal for the publication but have the text ready for digital publication in the last quarter of the year.

Following a tender process, in January we contracted APC member in Costa Rica Sula Batsu to produce the guide. Sula Batsu is a social enterprise and cooperative based in San Jose which specialises in social research using innovative and participative methodologies and the systematisation and analysis of institutional and group experiences.

They carried out a literature review and interviews with sixty stakeholders including APC members, staff and partners including IDRC. A copy of the guide will be sent to IDRC once it is finalised.

Activity 4: Implementing resource mobilisation strategy

The resource mobilisation strategy is still under review but there are several components of the document that are already being implemented.

Activity 4.1 Resource mobilisation research and monitoring systems and procedures

Anticipated outcomes: More efficient fundraising. APC follows up on more opportunities and has greater success, APC secures significant support for implementation of the 2008-12 strategic action plan.

How they will be measured: Analysis of incoming grants and commissioned projects and the number of proposals that are developed and their relative success/failure, Feedback from primary stakeholders.

Status: Completed and ongoing

In 2009, APC developed and submitted twenty proposals and concept notes. Out of these 6 were approved, 10 were unsuccessful and 4 were pending in May 2010. This was a 30% success rate so far which in today's competitive recession-hit climate is positive. The period August – December 2009 was by far the busiest in terms of resource mobilisation with twelve proposals being sent out to potential funding partners. Registration of an APC branch in South Africa is well on course and we hope to register APC before the end of 2010.

The grants administrator has set up a number of procedures in order to monitor and analyse funding opportunities on an ongoing basis. These include:

- All outgoing proposals are checked for consistency and quality, and the authors are given feedback
- A resource mobilisation update is produced weekly on Fridays to update staff on APC fundraising activities for the week, appraise the team of any potential funding opportunities and share fundraising tools
- A colour coded schedule of funder reports is being developed to facilitate tracking
- A compilation of potential funders has been developed to ensure that the team has access to information at their fingertips. The strategic action plan is used as a guide in researching and tracking potential donor interests
- A fundraising schedule is updated and tracked on a monthly basis to ensure that staff are appraised of their progress and due follow up is carried out
- Every bi-monthly report prepared by management for the board covers resource mobilisation activity in each programme.

Activity 4.2 Building resource mobilisation capacity

Anticipated outcomes: More APC staff are involved in developing proposals and follow up with potential donors.

How they will be measured: *Same as above*

Status: *Completed and ongoing*

In 2009, APC developed and submitted twenty proposals and concept notes respectively, in several cases cross-programme. Reviewing and updating of the resource mobilisation strategy is a collective effort with the board, management and staff actively involved. A proposal development template has been shared with staff – and while programme managers are mainly responsible for resource mobilisation for their programme area, they delegate donor liaison and proposal development to project coordinators when possible.

Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) business planning took place throughout 2009 and early 2010. It is expected that GEM will become a significant revenue stream for APC and will become a separate business unit within APC.

APC is started to actively respond to calls for consulting proposals and that we have secured several contracts.

Activity 4.3 APC's Little Yellow Book

Anticipated outcomes: Improved APC messaging with staff and members feeling more confident to tell others about APC.

How they will be measured: Same as above

Status: Completed

APC began planning of production of this pocket-guide specifically designed to help staff and members talk about APC succinctly and authoritatively, especially to prospective donors, in March 2009, and a draft version was finalised and distributed to staff in February 2010. Known in the network as our *Little Yellow Book*, it describes the APC identity for people who need to represent the organisation, provides core information about APC in quick-consultation format and attempts to address typical questions about APC and ICT – in language appropriate to verbal exchanges.

So far responses from staff especially new staff (the unique structure and diversified nature of APC being a challenge to grasp) indicate that the book will be an important part of our orientation. Chad Lubelsky who manages a major APC project said: "I loved it! As a new person it really helped deepen my understanding of who we are and what we do."

Activity 4.4 Updating resource mobilisation strategy for the 2009-12 period

Anticipated outcomes: APC staff have a clear understanding of how to approach resource mobilisation for the next five years. IDRC, if circumstances permit, is willing to contribute to resourcing APC in ways that are consistent with IDRC policy.

How they will be measured: As above

Status: Completed and ongoing

The resource mobilisation strategy was updated and the staff, management and board were actively involved in reviewing it. An updated resource mobilisation strategy was sent to consultant Ellen Sprenger for review. She commented: "It is strategic and I can see that a lot of thinking went into it. I love how it is very methodical which is very important in an organisation like APC which demands internal coordination, information sharing and centralised quality control."

Ellen provided useful insights which are being incorporated to finalise the strategy. The strategy highlights both addressing staff capacity development in resource mobilisation as well as identifying potential sources of funding. The updated resource mobilisation also includes an action plan that will be spearheaded by the strategic management and fundraising team.

Activity 5: Initial planning for a guide to information dissemination and media relations for non-profit social change organisations

Activity 5.1 Communicating for influence - Networking stories: a guide for CSOs

Anticipated outcomes: By working with a network of partners to develop a detailed proposal and budget and outreach strategy for the guide APC facilitates debate and learning that informs the plan for the guide. Participants will learn from the planning process, and will look forward to participating in the production of the guide and making use of it.

How they will be measured: *Feedback from participants (potential case studies) and from other stakeholders, including IDRC, and project partners.*

Status: Concluded

The specifications for this guide are informed by our thinking and process around the development of the APC Action Research Network. We have developed an initial plan to produce a publication on research communications that will focus on the use of narrative to communicate research for policy influence. The publication will not only include “policy knot stories” from CICEWA and CILAC research, but also chapters on the theory and practice of research communications including the RAPID toolkit.¹⁰

¹⁰ <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/155.pdf>