The E-Society Programme of Apac District, Uganda

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CONTENTS

Abstract

In this article, the authors present and evaluate an e-society strategy in the East African country of Uganda. The programme- based on a participatory approach and the strategic use of digital and analogue ICTs- aims to improve service delivery to the rural citizens of Apac district and strengthen democratic processes and interaction between Civil Society and Local Government. On the meta-level the project aims to develop a practical model for civil society and local government interaction and collaboration towards common e-society goals. The achievements of the project to date are presented and evaluated according to their impact on the quality of service delivery and the quality of democratic processes. On the basis of this article, the authors elicit lessons that can be used to guide similar programmes in rural areas in the developing world.

Introduction

The Information Society has produced a tantalizing array of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) that significantly contribute to development. Access to these technologies is spreading rapidly. In 2005, the number of Internet users in developing countries crossed the 500 million mark, surpassing industrial nations for the first time. By some estimates, more than 75 percent of the world's population now lives within the range of a mobile network. The mobile phone is making headway in even the remotest parts of Africa. Yet the long-heralded promise of ICT remains out of reach for most of the developing world. For the information poor, economic and social gaps are in fact widening both within and between countries.

Among other factors, what characterizes those who have been able to take the greatest and quickest advantage of ICTs is their access to resources. Of course, this has meant that especially the well to do in urban areas in the South did join the information revolution while the majority of e-governance initiatives is taking place in capitals and bigger towns at central level[i]. It also means that those organizations supporting or involved in governance and service delivery in rural areas have lagged considerably in their capacity to use ICT strategically to improve service delivery to their citizens[ii].

Furthermore due to poor interaction at best and downright animosity at worst, coordination between government and NGO initiated service delivery programmes at the rural level is often poor. Recognizing the existence of these weaknesses and seeing the opportunities that improved collaboration in combination with making good use of ICTs could bring, Hivos and IICD, in tandem with Ugandan organisations Wougnet and I-Network, the Local Government (LG)of Apac and the Apac Civil Society Organizations (CSO) decided to pilot an E-society programme[iii] in 2007 in Apac district in Uganda. The aim was and is to test the use of ICTs to catalyze new ways of working and to facilitate improved co-operation between CSOs and LGs[1].

In this article the process through which the key lessons of the E-Society programme has been shaped and the initial results are presented. As the programme is still underway it is too early to make firm statements on its long term impact. E-society is defined for this article as a series of interventions focusing on building long lasting partnerships and social/economical communities in which ICTs play a facilitating role. The article begins by giving insight in the process behind the programme. In section 2 (early 2009) the outcomes will be discussed and evaluated in a larger context and elicit lessons learned from.

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[1] *Heeks (2001) identifies three main domains of e-governance: e-administration: improving government processes, e-services: connecting individual citizens with their government and e-society: building interactions with and within the civil society*

Section 1: Process Model

The E-Society programme aims at strengthening service delivery and democratic governance at local level through LG –CSO collaborative interaction through a joint programme which uses ICTs. When setting out on this path, the authors based their approach on the principles of Good Governance as defined by UNESCAP. The key success factors were to be found in the level of ownership of parties involved, the degree of consensus in decision taking, the level of transparency and accountability of the programme and its' participant and last but not least the level of effectiveness and efficiency with which the programme was implemented.

Box 1: What is good governance? (source: www.unescap.org/pdd)

Good governance has 8 major characteristics (see appendix 1). It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. On the basis of the following selection of these major characteristics the programme outputs will be evaluated at a conceptual level:

- **Participation**: the degree of involvement by stakeholders.
- **Consensus**: how decisions are taken and the degree to which decisions/ rules apply equally to everyone in society (equitable and inclusive)
- **Accountability**: the extent to which actors (local government and CSO's) are responsible to society for what they say and do.
- **Transparency**: the degree of clarity and openness with which decisions are made.
- **Effectiveness** and efficiency: the extent to which limited human and financial resources are applied without unnecessary waste, delay or corruption.

The process that leads to the ultimate definition of the E-Society project is therefore equally important as the delivery of the project itself. The process towards project definition aims to encourage both Civil Society as Local government to break through automatic behaviour towards each other and jointly seek creative and manageable ways to collaborate towards a common goal.

The process model described in this article is therefore the core of the E-Society programme. In section one the model will be presented as a whole and further described per phase: the initiation phase, the development phase and the integration phase. In section two –which will is expected to be published one year from now- this model will be evaluated according to its' immediate effects on the quality of service delivery and the quality of democratic processes based on the characteristics of good governance.
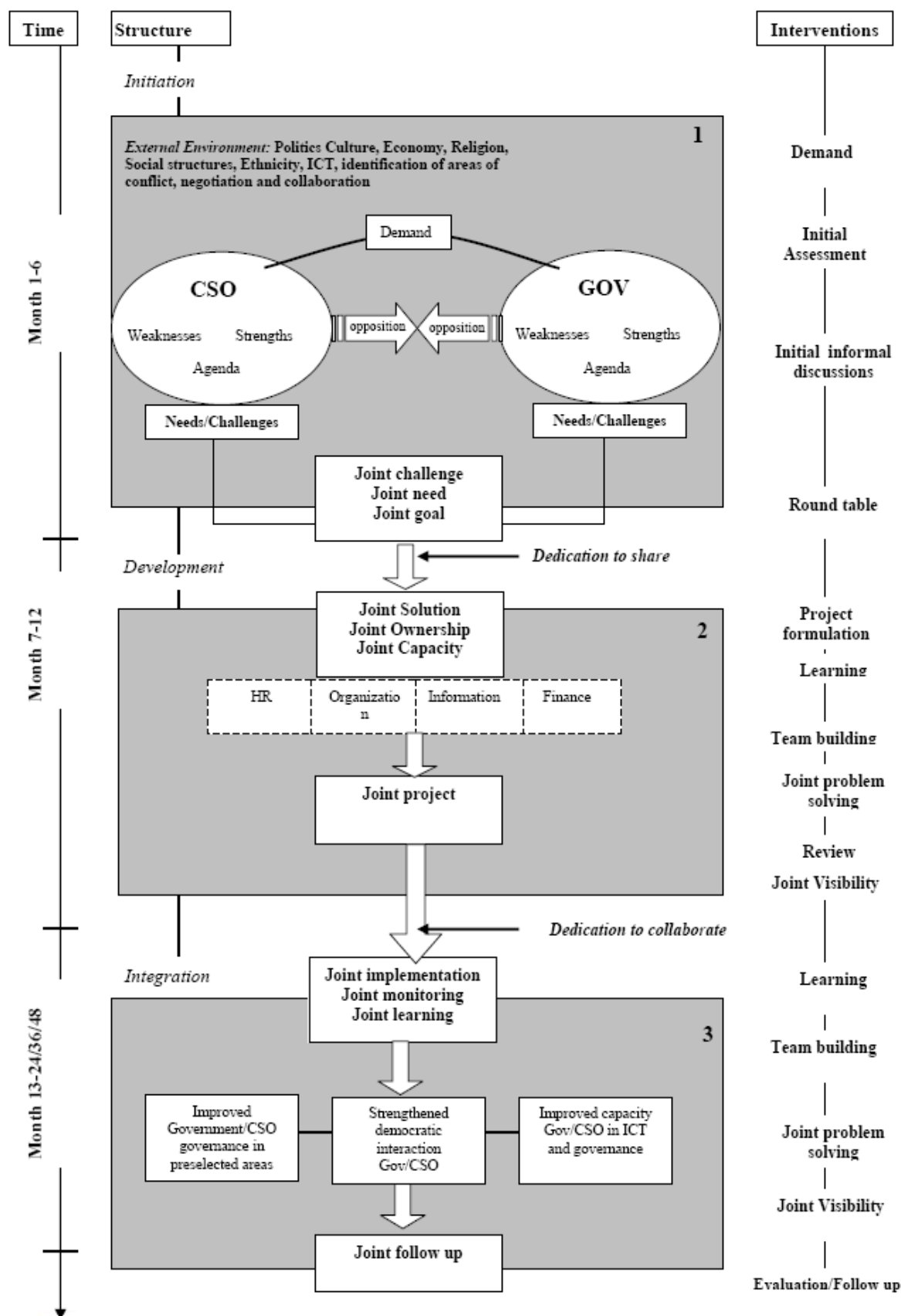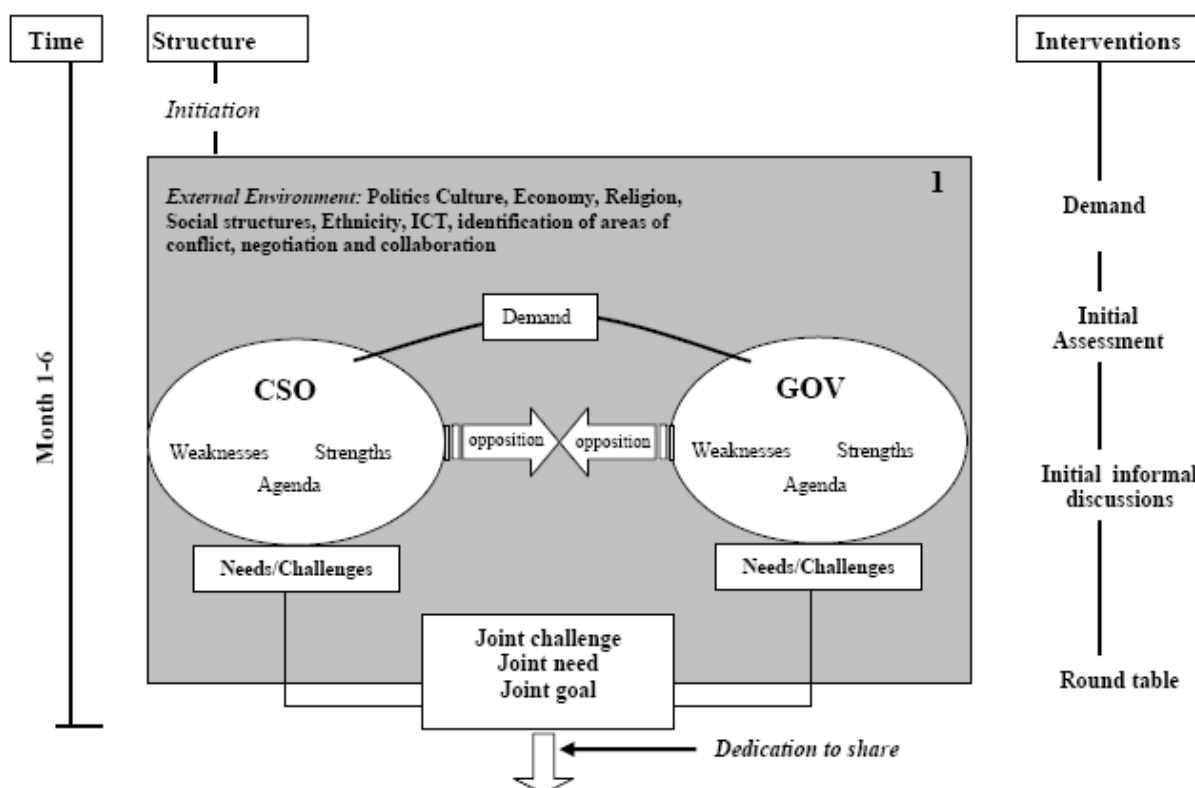
Time | **Structure** | **Interventions**

Initiation

External Environment: Politics Culture, Economy, Religion, Social structures, Ethnicity, ICT, identification of areas of conflict, negotiation and collaboration

1

Month 1-6

Demand

CSO
Weaknesses   Strengths
Agenda

opposition | opposition

GOV
Weaknesses   Strengths
Agenda

Needs/Challenges   Needs/Challenges

Joint challenge
Joint need
Joint goal

Demand

Initial Assessment

Initial informal discussions

Round table

Development

Dedication to share

2

Month 7-12

Joint Solution
Joint Ownership
Joint Capacity

HR | Organization | Information | Finance

Joint project

Project formulation

Learning

Team building

Joint problem solving

Review

Joint Visibility

Dedication to collaborate

Integration

3

Month 13-24/36/48

Joint implementation
Joint monitoring
Joint learning

Improved Government/CSO governance in preselected areas

Strengthened democratic interaction Gov/CSO

Improved capacity Gov/CSO in ICT and governance

Joint follow up

Learning

Team building

Joint problem solving

Joint Visibility

Evaluation/Follow up

Figure 1: Process Model E-Society

The process model as shown in figure 1 is based on a few collaborative principles:

1. There must be a real need for both sides to collaborate.

2. There must be a sufficient level of mutual trust to be able to collaborate. Possible conflict areas should be clear. If there are obstacles which make collaboration cumbersome the conflicts will first need to be addressed first.

3. Parties must have a common long-term vision and a common objective for the programme.

4. Participants must recognize the win-win element of a joint E-Society programme.

5. Parties must jointly develop the basic principles of the E-Society approach and have a workable understanding of ICT applications in a governance setting.

6. The process itself is equally important as the ultimate outputs. The process is not only a sequel of interventions and activities; it is a learning process. Therefore capacity building and learning are integrated from day 1.

7. The process is greatly helped by the participation and leadership of a "champion", an individual or organisation which is well respected and accepted by everyone involved and which is – based on its' enthusiasm – willing to make the extra mile to ensure success.

8. ICTs – be it high digital tech or low tech – can facilitate collaborative processes and is a motivating factor.

The E-Society process consists of three phases: The initiation phase, the development phase and the integration phase. The initiation phase essentially ensures that the abovementioned criteria are met and thus create the framework on which phase two and three can be further developed. Each phase is completed with a milestone – a preset set of conditions or products which make it possible to take a go/no go decision. The bottom line for each milestone is the ability to increase the co-operation.

Phase 1 – Initiation

The ultimate objective of the initiation phase is to bring the two key parties – local government and civil society - together and find ways of working together which allows the parties involved to define a common vision for the future and in support of this vision, to identify joint needs and objectives which can be addressed through the e-society programme. At the same time the process of defining a common vision in itself is a tool to bridge differences between stakeholders.

The initiation phase starts the programme and focuses on an analysis of the current situation taking into account the elements that make up the external environment. By doing so this phase paves the way for an intense co-operation between what may seem to be natural antagonists. In this phase the process contributes to developing shared understanding.

The choice of location plays an important role. IICD and Hivos chose for Apac because the district has a relatively homogenous demography, had been affected by the North Ugandan struggles but was subsequently left out of most of the development efforts going to the North (there was therefore a great sense of need and eagerness to make the best of resources available) and had indicated a need for a programme along these lines[iv]. Furthermore Hivos partner Wougnet was already working in the district and had good relationships both with civil society as local government. The mayor of the town of Apac was extremely enthusiastic and took on the role of champion.

Phase one begins with a demand, a sense of need, for improved governance and openness to strengthen CSO – Government collaboration. This demand should come from the communities, organisations and institutions directly involved – not top down imposed by donor agencies, CSO headquarters in the capital or central government. Once it becomes clear that Civil Society and Local Government recognize a common challenge and need, and once they feel it might be possible to work together, the initial stage of the E-Society process can be started.

The first step is an initial assessment of the internal and external environment in which the stakeholders need to operate. Furthermore the assessment takes into account the weaknesses and strengths of the participating stakeholders and tries to identify as much as possible the different agendas that exist. It is the overlap in agendas that provides room for creating a win-win situation through collaboration. Already at this level efforts must be made to ensure that the parties involved have a sense of ownership by directly involving the stakeholders in the assessment. Potential stakeholders will be more supportive in the future if they have the feeling that they could co-decide on the direction of the process from the very beginning. Furthermore the picture drawn in the initial assessment should reflect a recognizable reality for the parties involved. Involvement of potential stakeholders also helps getting a clear and explicit picture of (possible) conflict areas.

Even though an initial assessment consists of a formal process of analysis of the external and internal environment, it also involves a more informal part. Drinking a glass of beer (or coke) informally with the key stakeholders yields interesting insights in the existing psychology and relationships between the different players. Existing partners or relations may help getting a good feel of the community. And although this knowledge may never be tacit it helps in determining the best strategy for the next phases.

Thus the assessment helps to draw a clear picture of the setting in which the programme will evolve. It should at least reflect on:

- The social economic environment
- The political environment including the role of Government in public life.
- The cultural setting
- The role of religion and the influence of religion on public life
- The capacity of the different stakeholders.
- The role of civil society in/relationship with the community. See also the report of the NGO forum[v]
- The role of government in/ relationship with the community
- An analysis of the ICT setting.
- A risk analysis including possible areas of conflict.

The outcome of the initial assessment is a reference report which clarifies the current status of the district and is distributed amongst and approved by the stakeholders before the next phase.

The initial assessment is developed through a series of consultative meetings with the key stakeholders of Apac. These meetings yielded more than expected: as outcomes one can not only identify the analysis of the current situation (reference report) but also process-oriented outcomes such as:

- An awareness and excitement on the upcoming process

- The start of the process "searching citizen value": the process of identifying and selecting potential users and beneficiaries of the programme and defining their perceived needs and how these needs can be fulfilled.

- An increased awareness on opportunities offered by ICTs, whilst at the same time stakeholders gain a realistic perspective of its' limitations and challenges. The meetings pose an opportunity to bend technology driven motivation towards a motivation that incorporates ICT as a tool with which overarching non technological goals can be achieved more effectively.

- The first joint steps between CSOs and LG towards trust and collaboration

- The start of the process of idea generation and incorporation:

  1. Idea generation: the process of defining a feasible new combination of collaboration, technologies, and strategies not thought of before in that specific context.

  2. "What is in it for me?" the process of building up intrinsic motivation to enable the change and the realisation of the programme starts in this phase.

In the pilot programme Hivos and IICD implemented in Apac, this assessment was done by two Ugandans, one of which worked in Apac as a senior community development advisor for a local organisation called Wougnet. The other was an ICT expert. The mixture of local seniority, and community and technical expertise linked to the level of trust already existing between Wougnet and the local authorities and civil society were crucial elements in establishing the preconditions for the Apac stakeholders to start the roundtable process as described in phase two, the development phase.

It is obvious that success depends on how this process is facilitated. Therefore good inclusive and participatory facilitation of this process is essential. Furthermore the facilitators need to be well aware of the setting in which they operate and have a capacity to find culturally and socially acceptable means to move through possible barriers. The authors recommend that the people performing the initial assessment are qualified national professionals who balance a healthy distance from the community with an ability to instil trust and motivate people very quickly and easily.

The initial assessment is input to the visioning workshop with which this phase is concluded and which results into a common vision for the district, the start of programme formulation and learning. During this 3 day Round Table Workshop (RTW), the participants use 'scenario development (IICD, 2004[vi]) to determine the future of the district in question. The participants begin by discussing their hopes and fears for the development of the district and try to identify the key driving forces that will spur on the districts development in the next 20 years. These driving forces set the stage for the development of a series of scenarios for the future of the district by the participants. This facilitates a more focused discussion on priority areas where ICT could provide most leverage for the development of the district notably in the area of service delivery. A series of opportunities supported by ICTs are then identified for each priority area.

Before discussions can focus towards programme development, participants should have a common vision and a common understanding of what is meant by e-society and in broad terms the opportunities but also the limitations of ICT in the e-society process in the given project. There is no harm in including a reality check to ensure that expectations remain realistic.

As common interests, vision and understanding have been clarified, participants move on to produce programme ideas to work towards this vision, listing the key objectives of the programme and the local organisation responsible for developing the proposal further. The follow-up process is to be coordinated by a group of local stakeholders (the steering-group) and is facilitated by a pre-selected and agreed upon facilitation partner. This can be an NGO, consultants or any other body with which both parties feel comfortable.

After the workshop, the steering-group- with the assistance of the facilitators- turns the programme ideas generated at the meeting into one formal programme proposal.

A Roundtable Workshop can be considered successful when the following conditions have been met:

1. A shared understanding of e-society and the role ICT can play in e-society

2. The definition of a tangible and meaningful common vision

3. The identification of joint needs, challenges and possible areas of conflict in relation to the application of E-Society which need to be addressed – and a willingness to address these.

4. An answer for all stakeholders to the question "What is in it for me?" The process of building up intrinsic motivation for all stakeholders.

5. The explicit expression of a willingness to share ownership of the programme.

6. The installation of a steering group.

7. A planning process defined to ensure project formulation in a reasonable timeframe.

8. A common sense excitement about the things to come – an atmosphere of can do and want to do.

9. Programme formulation capacity leading to a very first draft proposal at the end of this phase

In other words: After phase 1 the road is open to work together on a Dutch "poldermodel[2]" to create good governance, pluriformity and open roads to economic and social opportunities.
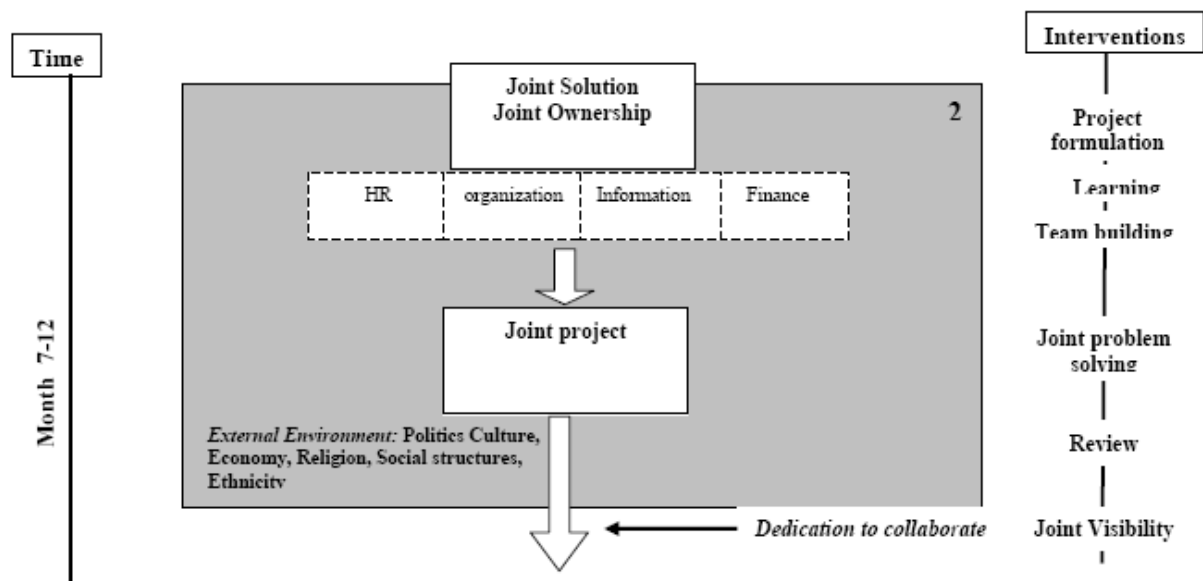
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[2] *The Dutch polder model is characterized by the tri-partite cooperation between employers' organizations, labour unions and the government. These talks are embodied in the Social Economic Council (in Dutch: Sociaal-Economische Raad, SER) which serves as the central forum to discuss labour issues and has a long tradition of consensus, often avoiding strikes. Similar models are in use in Finland, namely the Comprehensive Income Policy Agreement.*

Phase 2 – Development

The objective of phase two is to come to a joint project proposal on the basis of which the stakeholders will work towards their common E-Society goals. Essential elements of this phase are teambuilding, learning and forging the partnership. Through collaborative learning activities – in areas of specific needs but in particular in applied ICTs and in change management - the partnership is being strengthened.

During the development phase it is important to address all issues raised in the initial phase. Strategies to deal with possible challenges and areas of conflict must be developed using the strengths that stakeholders bring to the table (change management).

The project proposal needs to be as straightforward, clear and as structured as possible and in such a way that the local participants – the joint CSO/Government Steering Group- feel strong ownership of the document. Furthermore the project document needs to encourage a "yes, can do feeling". Ambitions should have been translated into manageable tangible objectives that are realistic and achievable. If the problem addressed is too big to handle, it is recommended to divide the problem into more manageable portions, in line with the local capacities available.

Solutions offered, especially in terms of ICT, should reflect reality and should be appropriate for the setting in which they are used. It is important to continuously remind participants that ICT is a tool, not an end.

Besides specific goals and results the project proposal needs to address four core issues related with the implementation of any programme: human resources, organisational structures, information management (including administrative procedures) and finance. There is no one size fits all for how this is organised. Nevertheless a few suggestions can be made:

- A sense of common ownership includes making an equal investment into the project. What the right balance exactly is may differ per setting.

- Develop a good exit strategy not only in terms of finance but also in terms of management, human resources etc.

The role of the "external consultants" in this phase is mainly to facilitate the process and to share their knowledge and experience with the participants. Facilitation should not only include the process side of things but also involves the identification of learning needs and the matching with appropriate expertise to fulfil these needs. Last but not least facilitation includes expectation management. As plans are being developed, expectations and a sense of urgency will arise – it is important to ensure that expectations are in line with reality to avoid huge disappointment (with all its demoralising effects) at a later stage.

Phase 2 – Development

Phase 3 - Integration

The objective of phase three is to jointly implement the project as designed in the previous phase. It is vital especially in the first year of implementation to understand that the programme brings change in action and relationships. Change management is a key success factor, since the programme is used as a tool for development at implementation and organizational level. The pilot in Apac emphasized the need to make small steps as people needed time to incorporate each new idea and action into their working methods and attitudes. Furthermore it is expected that moving forward in small increments – taking time to address smaller and larger issues that may arise before moving on- helps building collaborative relationships for the longer term, beyond the lifecycle of the E-society programme.

Change management will differ from programme to programme but it is important that the overall perspective on the programme does not get lost… Projects in a rural setting tend to focus on implementation details and can lose sight of the long term objectives. To avoid this organizing regular strategic review meetings helps.

Without losing sight of the previous, it is important to keep the momentum in the programme by having quick wins for all stakeholders, especially in the early stages. Ensure that there are a few quick wins in the proposal from which both parties will benefit. These quick wins should as much as possible be visible so that both Government as Civil Society can show their constituencies how their involvement helps them.

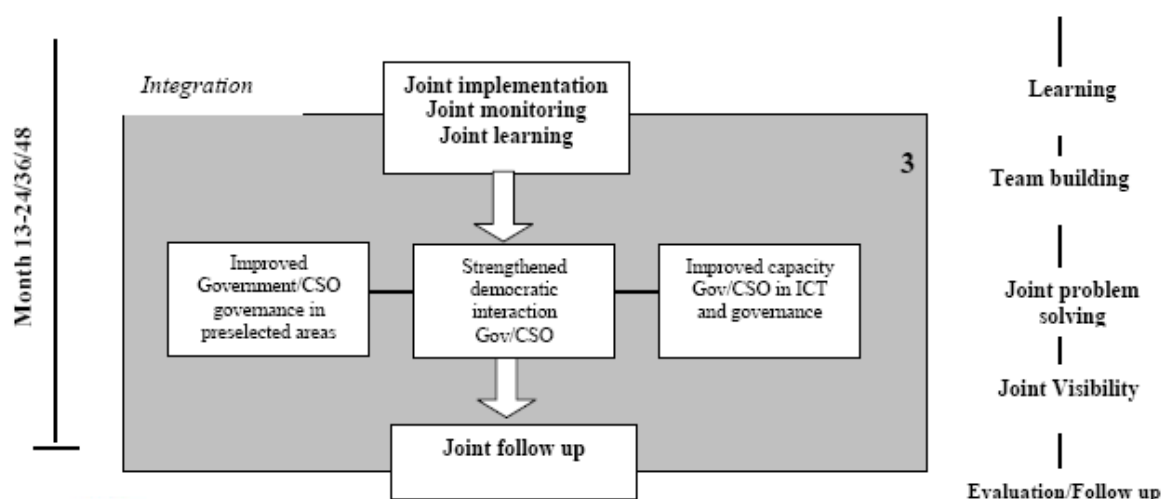**The need for quick wins (QW)**

It is vital to start implementation of parts of the programme as soon as possible. For instance a community centre for the programme can yield into training large numbers of LG and CSO workers together in basic ICT skills and services delivery competences in rural communities and/or providing access to the Internet. The criteria for a quick win should involve time, cost, and results:

Time period: There is a short period of time from identification of the potential QW to implementation/ completion, e.g. a few weeks to a few months.

Cost: The idea is relatively inexpensive and the operational costs fit into a CSO's or LG's budget.

Result: The idea is viewed as positive by all stakeholders; they felt they had a better understanding of the technology involved and hence felt better equipped to make informed decisions.

The role of the "external consultants" in this phase is focussing on facilitation of the implementation process and providing guidance of the process of change.

The ultimate goal of the programme is improved service delivery and improved quality of the democratic process. Again: A "one size fits all" approach will not work. Therefore indicators especially at process level will have to be customized for each situation.

Conclusion

The outputs of the pilot project in Apac in the first nine months are promising and beyond our expectations. For example:

- Community centres have been established in premises of local governments,

- Representatives of civil society organizations and local governments are participating together in training workshops ranging from basic ICT skills to project management skills

- Representatives of civil society organizations and local governments are jointly making content available for the citizens of Apac

- The content is made available through the community centres in user friendly manner

- Change management workshops are implemented again for a "mixed" target group

It is tempting to say that the process started in phase 1 did indeed continue opening the road to effectively work together on a Dutch "poldermodel" to create good governance, pluriformity and open roads to economic opportunities. At least it has reinforced the common assumption that where there is true gain for all involved – i.e. a gain that answers a need – stakeholders can overcome differences to work towards a common goal. The challenge will be to make the critical yet collaborative relationship between originally antagonistic stakeholders into an enduring element of CSO-local government interaction.

In other words:

The short term results are very positive: Things changed in Apac. Civil society and Local government are working together instead of fighting each other. The product of the pilot in the start-up of the project is this improved process and co-operation. Monitoring and Evaluation (amongst others via questionnaires, peer review, feedback sessions and debate) in 2008 will lead to impact measurements in terms of improved service delivery

The year 2008 will be the year which will enable us to analyse if these new ways of doing indeed did lead to the desired outcome: Improved service delivery to the rural citizens of Apac district and strengthening of democratic processes and interaction between Civil Society and Local Government. The annex 1 outlines the major steps for this phase

Annex 1: Introduction to Section 2:

Evaluation of the Pilot

Hypothesis

E-Society, if applied effectively – taking into account local realities- can play a role in improving governance structures and practices, provide bridges between civil society organisations and government and allow for more transparency, a more efficient and effective service delivery to the final recipients (citizens).

This section of the article will summarizes the findings as part of a wider pilot by Hivos and IICD on the opportunities of improved CSO – local government interaction to realize the following aspects of Good Governance:

- Improved access to information services delivered by district government and CSOs to beneficiaries/ citizens

- Improved capacity and opportunity to discuss/debate issues of development with District Government and CSOs with the aim to seek realistic and feasible solutions to common problems.

- Improved knowledge and skills on effective use of ICTs in support of core activities.

- Improved cooperation, trust and common understanding between civil society organizations and local government.

The outputs of the programme at a conceptual level leads to the conclusion that this programme is directed at the eight Good Governance characteristics (www.unescap.org/pdd): participation, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability. The M&E function of the programme has bee founded on measurement of indicators based on these characteristics.

Key Activities

The pilot should lead to the development of a collaborative E-Society model which enables service oriented civil society organizations and local government institutions to develop and implement collaborative e-society programmes with a good potential for success in terms of technology application, good governance and citizen/civil society – government interaction.

There are four underlying assumptions to the research objective:

1   Access to information and services is a key asset to development opportunities.

2   Good governance is a prerequisite for successful development.

3   Civil society and government have dual relationships: on the one hand they can be natural antagonists, on the other hand they do collaborate and interact in various settings.

4   Participation of citizens and civil society are a key element in good governance efforts.

5   The opportunities presented by ICTs are not only about delivering services electronically but also for:

    •   Improving the quality of service delivery

    •   Extending the range and volume of services which are available

    •   Making available certain services previously inaccessible to communities because of their remoteness and/or small population bases.
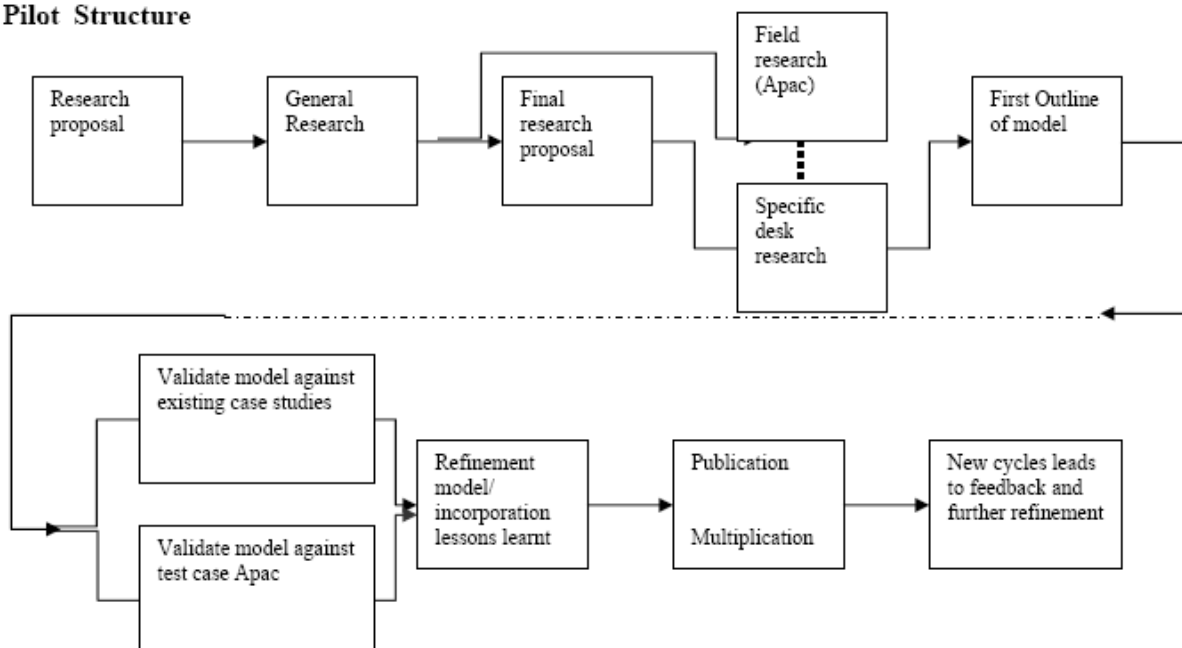
To be able to develop such a model the following questions need to be answered:

Section I: Characteristics

What are the characteristics of collaborative e-society initiatives? Desk research and the pilot programme in Apac did enable us to develop guidelines with respect to the formulation and implementation of the programme, the organizational set-up, the information and financial level. Though we do not believe in a blueprint model we presented the guidelines for the process level (called the process "model": what interventions are needed for formulation and implementation) in the first section of this paper. Other lessons learned can be classified at:

1. Organizational level (the organizational set-up for programme formulation and implementation)

2. Information level

3. The financial level

4. Success and risk factors.

5. What tools and methodologies to apply

Pilot Structure

Annex 2: Authors

Margreet van Doodewaard holds a Bachelors of Education and a Masters of Arts in International Business and has been involved in ICT for development since 1995 when she started working as a teacher of computer science at the Ghanzi Senior Secondary School in Botswana. She headed the Internet and Multimedia division of a Dutch IT company before joining the UNDP as ICT policy expert in Mongolia. In 2003 she became the Regional Advisor on ICT policies and strategies for United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in Bangkok. Since May 2005 Margreet has joined the ICT and Media for development team at Dutch development agency Hivos.

Arjan de Jager studied Physics and Mathematics at the University in Utrecht in the Netherlands. After his studies he worked as lecturer Computer Science in the Netherlands and Zimbabwe. From 1998 to 2008 he worked as Country Manager for the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD - www.iicd.org) in The Hague in the Netherlands. He has been working on ICT projects in Uganda, Tanzania, Mali and Zambia. Recently he joined the Centre for Expertise (HEC - www.hec.nl) as senior advisor responsible for ICT and Policy Development in the public sector.

Annex 3: References

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About Hivos

Hivos, the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (www.hivos.nl), is a Dutch non-governmental organisation inspired by humanist values. Together with local organisations in developing countries, Hivos seeks to contribute to a free, fair and sustainable world in which citizens - women and men - have equal access to the resources and opportunities for their development. And where they can actively and equally participate in decision-making processes that determine their lives, their society and their future.

Hivos believes in the creativity and capacity of individuals. Quality, co-operation and innovation are Hivos' core values. Hivos is committed to the poor and marginalised in Africa, Asia, Latin America and South-east Europe. A sustainable improvement in their conditions is the ultimate benchmark for Hivos' work and efforts. The empowerment of women is an essential concern in all its programmes.

Hivos provides financial and political support for local NGOs. Besides offering finance and advice, Hivos is also active in networking, lobbying and in exchanging knowledge and expertise, not only at international level, but also in the Netherlands.

Besides the Dutch office there are four regional offices, located in Zimbabwe, India, Indonesia and Costa Rica. These regional offices are primarily responsible for contacts with partner organisations, offering them services as advisor, supervisor and coach. The Hivos network embraced about 30 countries and more than 800 partner organisations by the end of 2007.

About IICD

The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD, www.iicd.org) assists developing countries to realise sustainable development by harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The driving force behind IICD's activities is that local 'change agents' themselves identify and develop proposals for realistic ICT applications - local ownership forms the essential basis for sustainable socio-economic development.

Acting as a catalyst, IICD's three-pronged strategy is mainly delivered through a series of integrated Country Programmes. First, IICD facilitates ICT Roundtable Processes in selected developing countries, where local stakeholders identify and formulate ICT-supported policies and projects based on local needs. Second, working with training partners in each country, Capacity Development activities are organised to develop the skills and other capacities identified by the local partners. Third, IICD draws on its global network to provide information and advice to its local partners, also fostering local information exchange networks on the use of ICTs for development.

The best practices and lessons learned are documented and disseminated internationally through a Knowledge Sharing programme. In support of these activities, IICD invests in the development of concrete partnerships with public, private and non-profit organisations, thus mobilising knowledge and resources needed by IICD and its local partners. Country Programmes are currently being implemented in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Ghana, Jamaica, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.