

## **The Involvement of Private Sector in ICT4D**

### **(Public-Private Partnership in ICT4D): the case of Mozambique**

**By**

Xavier Muianga, Feliciano Eduardo and Inocente Mutimucuo

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In the last year's, the introduction of Information Communication and Technology for Development (ICT4D) has been growing in developing countries (e.g., Mozambique, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Botswana and so on). Many international agencies of development, as well as local institutions have been engaged in supporting and implementing ICT4D in these countries. In Mozambique, as one of the developing countries, ICT4D has been the priority of the Mozambican government. Therefore, this study aims at providing a description of current involvement of public and private institutions in partnerships for ICT4D activities. Firstly, the study will present some key concepts and the methodology used in order to collect data for this research. Secondly, it will provide a summary of the findings, and, finally, it will present the conclusions including the challenges and limitations of the expansion of ICT4D in Mozambique.

From the literature reviewed, there are many concepts related to ICT4D. Most of them focalize the application of ICT in basic services such as communication, education, health, governance and in agro-economic activities. The more comprehensive concept of ICT4D is:

*''ICT4D is an initiative aimed at bridging the digital divide (the disparity between technological "have" and "have not" geographic locations or demographic groups) and aiding economic development by ensuring equitable access to up-to-date communication technologies. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) include any communication device -- encompassing radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning''.*

Available online: ([http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9\\_gci922449,00.html](http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9_gci922449,00.html))

Looking at above definition, one would say that ICT4D involves many aspects which need to be considered carefully by public and private institutions that carry out ICT4D. In this way of thinking, one can say that, if ICT is involved for the development, independently of the ICT activities used, ones would say that we are in the presence of ICT4D. According to Dziruni (2007), ICT4D is an area of work that recognizes the enabling nature of technology to the development process. It themselves works as a tool and not as an outcome.

According to DelPHe African partnership workshop, which took place in 2007 at Royal Holloway College, University of, and ICT4D was defined by the Collective African partnership as the following:

ICT4D is the concept of empowerment of citizens with knowledge through the use of Information and Communication Technology Tools. These technologies include computers, network infrastructure, internet and the world-wide-web. This acquisition of knowledge leads to individual wealth acquisition and national prosperity.

Other concepts which emerged from the above mentioned workshop and needed to be understood by the Collective can be presented as follows:

“Public Institution”: is understood as the institution supported primarily through public funds, including state universities and community colleges.

“Private Institution”: Institution not supported primarily by government. These include Non Governmental Institutions.

“Civil Society”: The collective action of civic, service and social organizations and citizens working outside the realm of the state to advance their vision of the common good.

In the following section the methodology used in this study is explained.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This section describes data collection method, the sample and the ethical issues used.

The study used a qualitative data collection by means of a questionnaire with open ended questions. The questionnaire was administered to thirteen institutions in which three of them were private, six public, two international organizations, and tree civil society. All these institutions were contacted and invited to participate. The questionnaire aimed at collecting information regarding the experiences about the involvement of private and public sectors with ICT4D and specifically with the issues such as policies, challenges, limitations, current involvement in ICT4D activities and perceptions towards development. The study took place in Maputo city and Maputo province, Mozambique.

The institutions from the private sector that took part in the study include cellular phone and internet service providers, where as those from the public sector included government ministries, universities, institutions with regulatory functions, international organizations, diplomatic agencies, civil associations. The return rate from the participants was as follows:

- Ten (10) questionnaires were recorded and transcribed.
- Three (3) questionnaires were responded via e-mail.

- Two (2) private and three (3) public sectors did not respond to our request letter and consequently to the questionnaires.

To contact civil society were travel to rural areas around Maputo where are located some associations of countryman's/woman's, communities and farmer that are beneficiaries of ICT4D projects.

### **Sample description**

The study used a convenience sample because of the easiness to reach the participants and because it was located within a range of 150 Km from the city centre. Two criteria were used for the selection of the sample: The participants held key positions in their institutions and had long experience in working with ICT projects. In addition, it was not possible to contact institutions that were located outside Maputo province because it required additional costs.

### **Ethical considerations**

In this study, the researchers took into consideration the following ethical issues:

- A written permission letter to collect data was obtained from the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Eduardo Mondlane University.
- The assurance to protect the rights of the institutions was given by the team in writing.

It was under these circumstances that the institutions accepted to participate in the study.

In the following section the limitations and difficulties are described.

### **Limitations and Difficulties**

Bureaucracy from the institutions was prevalent (this was because after asking permission to the institutions, the researchers had to wait 15 days or more for the answers. In addition, during the interviews some of the participants did not respond fully the questions from the interviewers because they had to get additional permission from a senior person. Some of the institutions did not give feedback to our request letter and consequently did not respond to the questionnaire.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The institutions that accepted to be part of the study all have Internet and use it for communication, to access information, send and receive information, etc. There are two institutions that also use the Internet for educational purpose.

Of all institutions that answered the questionnaires, five are involved in almost all socio-economic areas (as education, health, agriculture, finance, trade, governance, tourism, environment, etc...) two are involved in two or three areas, and the associations of countryman's/woman's, communities and farmer are involved in informal education (adult education), computers basic skills training, small business like telephone and fax, and printing.

Almost every institution has the same perceptions on ICT4D. In fact, all are involved in empowering communities with different kind of technologies for bridging the divide between rural and urban areas. Some institutions hold the view that ICT cannot be regarded as a tool that can produce wealth directly, but it should be regarded as a cross-cutting tool, which can automates activities and services, making them effective. Furthermore, they also said that ICT is a good tool to support the processes, and can transform knowledge into products.

Another interesting funding in this study ICT (specifically communities radios) can be used in resolving conflicts over land, and in resolving conflicts between farmers and agricultural companies. On the other hand, ICT can be used to advise the communities to prevent about diseases very dangerous like cholera and malaria, especially for communities of poor people.

All institutions are involved in partnerships and work in activities related with ICT4D, with a specific the objective of supporting the development of communities (communities of poor populations, schools, associations of countryman's/woman's farmers, and communities, etc. whose primary objective is the eradication of poverty). Outside the ICT4D, these institutions have other partnerships with other institutions in other areas of purposes.

The major challenges that must result in partnerships, all the institutions support strategic partnerships, most of them say that telecommunication companies should be partner of all of them in order to lower the cost of Internet Connectivity in the communities that they implementing ICT4D projects because Internet and energy are more expensive costs that associations and communities have to pay. Related to energy some communities and associations offer some services like computer basic skills training for some local company's employers and the companies pay energy for them. Another challenge that partnership institutions find important is the training of human resources to the area of ICT, especially the training of personnel for the management and maintenance. The communities and associations hold the view that it's difficult to find personnel to makes the maintenance of equipment.

With regard to the benefits that might result from partnerships, some institutions believe that partnerships brings experiences that is represent an added value for partners, while

others argue that partnerships have more value when there is a financial gain. There are some institutions that argue that the partnerships reduce the costs of activities that they are doing in ICT4D, as well as reduce the replication of activities in the same communities.

Almost all institutions are unanimous in saying that in Mozambique there is no partnership broker. In addition, some say that should be no official regulator body of partnership, because it would create problems for working in support of development, it would bureaucratise activities. One of the institution said that there is a regulatory body, and that regulatory body is the government, and uses the existing legislation in the country, as instrument of regulation. All institutions believe that if the government act as the official regulatory body of partnerships, there could be conflicts of interests, excessive intervention and the bureaucratization of the partnerships, and it would not be useful. However, the government delegated that role to the National Institute for Communications.

All institutions admit that the government has done much on the liberalization of policies of trade and investment for growth in the area of ICT4D. The rates for imports of ICT equipment varies from 3% to 7%. However, this is not felt because, on one hand, the equipment of ICT is expensive, and in some cases, there are some problems with interpretation of the Customs Tariff. For example, there is doubt about the duty rate to be applied to CDs of software and CDs of music. The duty rate of CDs of music is 25% and the same rate is applied to the CDs of software. These CDs are not considered as part of computer equipment and the cost of software is high. The customer is not distinguishing these two types of CDs.

Also the institutions agree that the government supports initiatives that emphasize strategic planning of ICT4D. All institutions were unanimous in saying that the government has unconditionally supported the initiatives, has done much in searching partners and donors whose money can be applied in this area. Within the strategic planning of the government, ICT is regarded as a tool to support absolute poverty eradication. This can be proven through the strategic planning of all ministries, especially in the documents of the Ministries of Science and Technology, Education and Culture, the Technical Unit of Informatics Policy, and all other institutions of the government.

In general, all the participants responded that both public and private institutions are engaged in practices of supporting ICT4D. However in Mozambique these institutions that work in supporting ICT4D are still very few.

About limitations, all institutions argue that the development of infrastructure of telecommunications, electricity, human resources and creation of conditions for which the cost of access to ICT is low so that all people have access. The aspects indicated as the challenges, are also indicated as the restrictions of people have access to ICT.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion above the following can be drawn as conclusions:

According to the participants, there is no regulator body responsible for the creation of partnerships, because public, international organizations and private institutions interviewed assumed that do not to need a regulatory body.

The government may not be the direct regulator body because it would raise conflicts of interests, excessive intervention and the bureaucratization of the partnerships.

The Mozambican government has been supporting unconditionally the activities of ICT4D, and their policies aim at empowering communities. In general, ICT appears as one of the priority tools, because it is perceived as being adequate to accelerate the fight against absolute poverty. Therefore, the government is doing its best in the search for partners and donors in this area.

Mozambique is a developing country, in their economic situation, has few companies with financial capacity and which may invest in ICT4D to support communities. Hence, national, public and private institutions that support implementation of ICT4D are very few.

In general, the biggest challenges to the country in the field of ICT are the development of communications infrastructure and reduce their cost of access, the high cost of Internet connectivity is at the top of the list, this hinders the expansion of Internet to rural communities, on other hand, the expansion of electricity network, human resources training in the field of ICT, are some challenge faced to make ICT accessible to the population as all.

## REFERENCES

Dziruni, M. (2007). *Concept of ICT4D as a development issue and the role of legislation*. (online) available at: <http://www.epolafrica.org/events/2007/sadc-johannesburg/content/Concept%20of%20ICT4D%20as%20a%20development%20issue%20and%20the%20role%20of%20legislation%20-%20Muroro%20Dziruni%20-%20EN.ppt>

Online Dictionary. Available at:  
([http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9\\_gci922449,00.html](http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9_gci922449,00.html)).

DelPHe (2007). *ICT4D Collective, Report of Visit of Colleagues from African Partnership*, 2nd – 9th December 2007, London Meeting Report.