

# **Final Technical Report**

## **January 30, 2007**

**CARISNET- 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**

**IDRC Grant Number102243-003**

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# 1 Project Synthesis

## 1.1 Purpose

The project is intended to contribute to the development and impact of ICTs for Development (ICT4D) in the Caribbean through the strengthening of the Caribbean ICT stakeholders Virtual Community (CIVIC), which was initiated following the Caribbean ICT Roundtable, held in Barbados in October 2002.

**Project Goal:** To help establish the CIVIC forum as a mechanism able to build a common vision/perspective on ICTs in the region, promote a Caribbean strategy and foster regional Caribbean-wide actions that address critical development issues.

The beneficiaries of the strengthening of CIVIC would be the countries of the Caribbean region.

The anticipated outcome of the project was to make more effective presence of the Caribbean stakeholders to international meetings in order to draw attention to the peculiar challenges facing the countries and lobby with a coordinated voice for support and resources to address them.

## 1.2 Project Objectives:

- To revitalize and sustain the online existing communication forum with improved communication across the language barriers.
- To promote membership in CIVIC among French and Spanish speaking countries.
- To create a multilingual regional ICT clearinghouse to include resources and documents on ICT related policies, initiatives, skills, resources and funds
- To establish project priority areas and develop collaborative project proposals.
- To promote dialogue between donors and the CIVIC community to identify priority areas for project support and articulate a call for proposals

## 1.3 Planned Activities

### 1. The revitalization of the CIVIC virtual community through active animation

The discussions would not be prescriptive, but a road map/ methodology will be used to guide the initiation of discussions; priorities for thematic groups will be set; timelines for discussions will be established along with an agenda for action which will include documentation of discussion outcomes.

### 2. The raising of awareness among the ICT stakeholders in Spanish and French speaking countries.

This was to be undertaken with a view to having more non English speaking persons join and participate in the CIVIC network. The planned activities included undertaking a baseline survey to determine the demographics of the CIVIC community and monitoring evolving membership of CIVIC to encourage balanced participation by country, language, sector and gender.

Key stakeholders were to be approached in those countries to support the expansion process through active public relations.

### 3. The creation of a regional ICT clearinghouse/database.

This would include:

- a. Description and links to National and regional ICT projects and initiatives

- b. Description and links to National and regional development projects with strong ICT components
- c. Description, full text or links to National and regional ICT related Documents, Studies, Publications, etc,
- d. Agenda section: upcoming activities (workshops, conferences, public events, call for proposals, etc)
- e. Directory of key institutions and experts

The development of the Database would be in consultation with ICA and other potential partners who have related initiatives.

The clearinghouse, accessible through a web site should:

- be easily searchable,
- allow intuitive navigation,
- organized by country, sector, type of resource, type of activity,
- be interactive allowing registered users to enter or modify data,
- contain clear instructions for data formatting and validation

#### **4. Promote dialogue between donors and the CIVIC community to identify priority areas for programme support and articulate a call for proposals.**

This would promote dialogue with interested donors in the development of the appropriate programmes, and in the identification of partners for implementation of those programmes. The donors would be encouraged to share information about project priorities and mechanisms to provide funding for Caribbean ICT projects. Once regional needs and priorities are agreed through the discussion, they would be invited to articulate efforts through a potential Call for Proposals.

### **1.4 Assigned Tasks**

The original assignments were as follows:

Task	Organisation
Project Administration	JSDN
Activity Coordination	Fundación Taigüey
Clearinghouse Content Acquisition	JSDN
Clearinghouse design	DEVNET
Clearinghouse Implementation	FUNREDES
Call for Success stories	DEVNET
Online Facilitation/	Fundación Taigüey
CIVIC Diversity enhancement	FUNREDES
Auto translation	FUNREDES
Dialogue/brokering with donors	FUNREDES
Document and Clearinghouse Translation management	FUNREDES

In January 2006, FUNREDES left the consortium and the following activities were redeployed as follows:

Task	Organisation
Project Administration	JSDN
Activity Coordination	Fundación Taigüey
Clearinghouse Content Acquisition	JSDN
Clearinghouse design	DEVNET
Clearinghouse Implementation/hosting	DEVNET
Call for Case studies	DEVNET

Online Facilitation/ CIVIC Diversity enhancement	Fundación Taigüey AHTIC <sup>1</sup> /JSDN/Taigüey
Translation	Fundación Taigüey
Donors' survey	Fundación Taigüey

## 1.5 Activities Undertaken

### 1.5.1 The Revitalization of CIVIC Virtual Community through Active Animation

This involved the tasks of animation, moderation and discussion facilitation.

The animation of the discussion list involved:

- The permanent and systematic daily input of information for discussion (press/news items, documents and web/project references, etc) of interest for all members, and encouraging other members to do the same.
- the systematic relaying to CIVIC of the various calls for projects, participation, competitions, collaboration, and encouraging members (via individual mails) to do the same)
- The numerous calls for participation in the CIVIC life/structuring discussions. (survey, platform, roadmap, clearinghouse, diversity, CIVIC future, etc)
- the enforcement of the self-introduction of new members in the subscription procedure
- the systematic promotion for prospective members to join in all our regional ICT4D related activities
- calling for working groups and the development of CIVIC positions when discussion dynamic opened that opportunity
- supporting and facilitating the creation of sub working groups on members request and helping in conducting debates
- holding private discussions with a variety of stakeholders, encouraging them to share resources, and explaining how to use CIVIC for their work (research, surveys, regional projects, etc)

Significant effort was made in terms of moderating the list particularly in terms of the following:

- the enforcement of the subscription procedures and other rules
- drawing members attention to the organisation chart rules and inviting proposal for changes where there was disagreement
- ensuring the elimination of systematic cross posting from other general/global mailing list and keeping focus of discussions on ICT for development in the Caribbean
- compiling contributions when many pieces of mail was generated on a particular issue; fine tuning/regulating the pace of contributions (for example letting enough time to all members, with different email reading habits/rhythms, to read contributions),
- systematically editing 80% of members post to convert HTML mails in plain text and delete the chain of replied mails below the answers,
- eliminating attachments and uploading them in the resources section of the web site and inserting correct links in the mails
- helping members with all technical details (subscription, change of email, vacation email messages off, etc)
- systematically redirecting private and personal mails to members

At the outset, the list of discussions to be facilitated was guided by the initial road map (Appendix 1) which was developed. Topics were drawn from previous discussions and interest expressed. They included the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Association Haïtienne pour le développement des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication

- Definition of a mechanism to articulate the collective participation of CIVIC within the CARICOM ICT Steering Committee
- A Meta discussion on the future of CIVIC ("What is CIVIC?"): review of the mission, objectives, structure/organization, chart, moderation rules, etc.
- Other inputs : review of previous discussion that addressed this (as Mike Reid summarized from WGIG discussion group), eventual recommendations from CARDICIS meeting, to be presented by Funredes
- Telecentres. JSDNP (Valerie) and Taigüey (Yacine) are planning to organize a regional workshop of community telecentres / technology centre or community access points by end of March next year.

Additional discussions which arose were held in sub-working groups on the following topics:

- Discussion of a WSIS/WGIG report which resulted in a "CIVIC position document" approved by the constituency in September 2005, and presented at a regional CARICOM/ITU meeting<sup>2</sup>.
- CIVIC Diversity Enhancement (Nov 2006)
- CIVIC Technical Platform (Nov 2006)
- Survey on CIVIC: participative definition of the terms of reference and survey validation (August-December 2006)
- Call for stories: Rubric definition (for scoring) and evaluation of ICT4D stories (Dec 2006-January 2007)

In the conduct of these discussions two modalities were used: one involving the conducting and summarizing of discussions in the main mailing list and the other being the use of sub-working groups or task forces, each one with constituency approved mandate and responsibilities. The process involved the moderator proposing and getting a consensus on the working agenda. The discussion is then started with some questions or drafting initial proposals based on previous inputs. The next iterative steps involve calling for comment/inputs, redrafting outputs and inviting further comments on the new version until an agreement is reached. This methodology was successful to produce the expected outputs to be brought back for further discussion and approval in the main forum.

Initially only the main CIVIC moderator (Y. Khelladi / Taigüey) facilitated the first set of sub discussions (as the DevNet representation mandate at CARICOM, Caribbean telecenters and other) and then other team members (or contracted members) facilitated other discussions following similar pattern: S. Bruno of AHTIC/RDDH<sup>3</sup> (for CIVIC 2.0 platform and diversity) and V. Kissoon /DevNet (survey and call for stories exercise and "What is CIVIC" discussion).

### **1.5.2 The raising of awareness among the ICT stakeholders in Spanish and French speaking countries**

There were difficulties with this component although the initial baseline survey was undertaken. The ongoing monitoring nor the active encouragement of balanced participation by country, language, sector and gender was not fully carried out. The partner initially responsible was FUNREDES and with their departure from the consortium and the project, several activities were left undone. It was only in the latter stages of the project that a strategy to increase the language diversity in CIVIC was developed and a discussion was held on the issue. A decision was taken to have a meeting in Haiti, facilitated by AHTIC, to introduce CIVIC and encourage participation in the network. The activity was carried out in November 2006.

### **1.5.3 The creation of a regional ICT clearinghouse/database**

Prior to the development of the clearinghouse, research was conducted to identify existing database development initiatives that the CIVIC database could be benefit from and perhaps be interconnected to. The findings were documented.

<sup>2</sup> [CIVIC's Comments on the Final WGIG Report of 18 July 2005 / by The Caribbean ICT Virtual Community \(CIVIC\)](http://www.caricom.org/jsp/projects/WGIGsgfinal1.pdf) " and posted on CARICOM web page <http://www.caricom.org/jsp/projects/WGIGsgfinal1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Réseau de Développement Durable d'Haïti, the Haitian equivalent of JSDNP ([www.rddh.org.ht](http://www.rddh.org.ht))

The Clearinghouse was developed, tested and placed online to solicit review and suggestions from CIVIC membership. After incorporation of relevant and appropriate amendments, the design was finalised and the clearinghouse opened for general input.

The Clearinghouse was designed with the following fields:

- a. Institutions
- b. Projects (ICT related projects and initiatives)
- c. Documents (Articles, Studies, Publications, etc.)
- d. Events (workshops, conferences, public events, call for proposals, etc.)
- e. Institutions involved in ICT for Development projects
- f. Marketplace items (calls for proposals, competitions, etc.)
- g.. Editorial Policy
- h. Case Studies

The Editorial Policy is a document which guides the data gathering and validation process. Members were invited to upload information into the relevant fields, but as this was proceeding very slowly, persons were contracted to upload information into the relevant fields. Members continue to be invited to upload information, and particularly their personal information, into the "People" section.

In order to encourage the entries in the Case Studies section, a Call for Case Studies on the application of ICTs for development was made to the CIVIC community and other development organisations in the region. A first and second prize was offered for the best entries. A panel of volunteers from CIVIC formed a working group and developed a rubric by which to judge the case studies. The same panel judged the entries and prizes were awarded based on criteria presented below.

#### **1.5.4 Promote dialogue between donors and the CIVIC community to identify priority areas for programme support and articulate a call for proposals.**

This was originally intended to promote dialogue with interested donors in the development of the appropriate programmes, and in the identification of partners for implementation of those programmes. However, due to the falling out of FUNREDES, the activity was reassigned and scaled down to involve preparation of inventory of donors and the identification of their projects and areas of support in the region.

#### **1.5.5 Additional activities which were undertaken**

As the need was recognised were included:

- Translation of documents and all information on the website
- Establishment of a CARISNET web site ([www.carisnet.org](http://www.carisnet.org)) to upload information on the project and other CIVIC matters of interest. The Clearinghouse is also included on this website.
- Undertaking of a survey on CIVIC to ascertain the profile of the network, and assess the effectiveness of the activities, the usefulness of the forums



## 1.6 Assessment of Objectives Achievement

Specific objective	Achievement assessment
Revitalize the online communication forum and bring basic level of help for communication across the language	<p>Achieved. There is an increased online participation; several discussions facilitated within working groups and on main list.</p> <p>Auto translation should be improved. The discussion on the Platform has generated recommendations for solutions to improved interactivity and user friendliness of the interface</p> <p>The impact and knowledge of CIVIC in the Caribbean is growing, and it is cited as a model of multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanism</p>
Promote multi-stakeholder membership in CIVIC among French and Spanish speaking countries	<p>Good steps taken at end of project, as demonstrated by the meeting in Haiti, but this objective has not been fully achieved. The discussion on Diversity has generated recommendations to further address this.</p> <p>Translation of main documents has been completed</p>
Create a regional ICT clearinghouse	<p>Clearinghouse established; implementation of platform and governance mechanisms; more than 400 entries uploaded to date.</p> <p>Handover to CIVIC expected with CarlSnet 2.</p>
Promote the coordination and strategic collaboration among donors and with the CIVIC community	<p>A survey of donors on the region was undertaken and their respective projects mapped.</p>
Promote the development of collaborative project proposals	<p>Recommendations have been made regarding ICA leading discussions with donors for the establishment of enhanced collaboration in regional ICT4D project funding</p>

## 2 Summary of The Project Outputs

### 2.1 A Strengthened Regional ICT/IS Multi-Stakeholder Networking:

Due to the intervention of the CARISNET Project in terms of the online moderation, discussion animation, and facilitation, the CIVIC discussion forum is today a very active virtual venue for regional multi- ICT4D-stakeholders exchange and collaboration. It is a unique space for a multi-stakeholder dialogue, as we have succeeded in maintaining active exchange between members who work in governments, regional agencies, donors organisations, private businesses, NGOs and universities, from all over the region. Membership, now around 220, includes at least one minister of government, several Government ICT directors, heads of regional agencies, main university researchers and donors involved in funding.

It is to be noted a permanent growth in membership (5-10 new members each month), minimal level of un-subscription (less than 1 a month), and participation levels well above the established norm for virtual communities (Appendix 2)see statistics below in this document). Also, CIVIC is usually among the most active DGroups hosted by Bellanet<sup>4</sup>.

The CIVIC survey (Appendix 3) conducted at the end of 2006 shows overall positive responses of members towards CIVIC; a good level of satisfaction is expressed regarding the organisation, moderation and information shared. Members feel that CIVIC enhances their understanding of regional issues, and has positive impact “behind the scenes” as, by providing regional perspective and experts insight, it influence policies, project design, and promoting collaborative strategies.

### 2.2 CIVIC Working Groups and Discussions Outputs

A number of discussions were facilitated by the CarlSnet team using working group modality, and produced the following documented outputs:

- A “CIVIC position document” based on discussion of a WSIS/WGIG report and approved by the constituency in September 2005 was presented at a regional CARICOM/ITU meeting<sup>5</sup> (Appendix 4).
- DevNet mandate to represent CIVIC at the CARICOM ICT Steering Committee facilitated in January and February 2006. This Mandate that outlines principles and mechanism has been elaborated and approved. It is a very important step as it sets example and precedence in defining a detailed mechanism for a multi-stakeholder network, democratic and participative interaction with a regional policy-making body. It represents probably a unique model of organization based on the network. The document was translated in Spanish and French. This mandate has been renewed in January 2007 for one year since the CARICOM ICT Steering Committee is to be formed. (Appendix 5)
- A Caribbean Telecenter discussion, held in July 2006 that contributed significantly to another regional activity which culminated in a regional workshop, and a project proposal to establish a Caribbean Telecenters Network .
- CIVIC Diversity Enhancement working group report (Nov 2006) which identifies mechanisms for outreach and addressing the linguistic imbalance. (Appendix 6).
- CIVIC Technical Platform working group report (Nov 2006) which suggests options for software(open source which could provide the various utilities required by the group) (Appendix 7)
- Survey on CIVIC: participative definition of the terms of reference and survey validation (August-December 2006(Appendix 3A)
- Call for stories: Rubric definition (for scoring) and evaluation of ICT4D stories (Dec 2006-January 2007) (Appendices 8A, 8B, 9)

<sup>4</sup> see ranking at <http://bellanet.org/dgroups>

<sup>5</sup> [CIVIC's Comments on the Final WGIG Report of 18 July 2005 / by The Caribbean ICT Virtual Community \(CIVIC\)](#) “ and posted on Caricom web page <http://www.caricom.org/jsp/projects/WGIGsgfinal1.pdf>

- “What is CIVIC” discussion (strategic re-definition of CIVIC) – ongoing since Dec 2006 (Appendix 10A, 10B)

The CARISNET team advocated for volunteer leaders to manage groups to transfer knowledge in specific ICT4D activities such as the application of ICTs in HIV/AIDS prevention and management, disaster management; and also on issues related to ICANN. There was reluctance, but in January 2007, the first permanent Caribbean Telecommunications Policy Reform was formed.

### **2.3 Multilingual Efforts and Diversity Expansion**

#### **Automatic translation**

A temporary system was put in place to implement the automatic translation of CIVIC mails. A more efficient and permanent solution envisaged (where translations are inserted in mails) was not implemented as FUNREDES, the partner institution responsible for this part of the project, left the consortium, and was not easily worked out with the Dgroups interface.

#### **Diversity enhancement**

Diversity refers principally to cultural and linguistic diversity, but also to sector and gender.

A diversity baseline survey was carried out. It constituted an actual count and although it was not fully complete, it provided information against which the CIVIC survey findings could be compared. It showed that in terms of demographics at that point in time, (2005), the majority of CIVIC members were native English speaking (77%), male 67%, and mainly Caribbean nationals (65%).

The later CIVIC survey carried out in 2006, which had 20% of the members participating in filling in an online questionnaire showed fairly similar results. The majority of members continue to be native English speaking (69%), male (62%) and mainly Caribbean nationals (64%). The significance of the difference in the percentages cannot be determined as the sample populations were derived in different ways. However, the similarity in percentages (albeit separated by one year) may infer that the 20% sampled in 2006 are a fairly representative sample of the whole CIVIC membership.

Additional results from the second survey also showed that CIVIC.is largely an expert group comprising 27% consultants. The majority of those surveyed have an advanced degree (71%) and mainly comprising persons who are in the upper echelons of their organization (CEO, President, etc.). Almost 70% are involved with International and /or regional issues and approximately 42% are focused on civil society work, while some 35% are focussed on government work.. Some 38% of members are affiliated to NGOs, 18% to business and 11 % to government. (Appendix 3B).

FUNREDES, originally responsible for this component, proposed to link this strategic part of the project with the organisation of the CARDICIS<sup>6</sup> initiative. The CARISNET partners participated in the meeting and made presentations on both the CARISNET project and CIVIC network. However, the workshop and follow-up process did not have any tangible impact on the increasing of diversity in CIVIC.

The working group on diversity enhancement which was convened some time later in the project prepared a report outlining strategies for further enhancement of diversity within CIVIC. One strategy recommended was to organize specific CIVIC promotion meeting in French and Spanish speaking countries. A meeting was organised in Haiti and this “pilot” diversity enhancement meeting has raised awareness – as several additional French speaking members joined CIVIC. The Diversity Working Group report and Haiti meeting reports are appended (Appendix 6,11).

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<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.cardicis.org/>

## **Document and web site translation**

Supported by funding accessed by FUNREDES from the Agence de la Francophonie, work commenced to translate the content on the CarlSnet web site, the clearinghouse interface and numerous other documents from English to French and Spanish. This support later had to be supplemented by additional funds from ICA, as most of the Francophonie funds were withdrawn when FUNREDES left the consortium. See Appendix 12 for a list of the documents translated.

## **2.4 The Caribbean ICT4D Information Clearinghouse,**

### **Clearinghouse Design and implementation**

The study undertaken to guide the design of the database as well as to see which databases already existed and how these could inform the development of a CIVIC database has been documented (Appendix 13). A design document was developed and CIVIC membership consulted on its structure and contents. The design document was then used to implement the clearinghouse (Appendix 14)

An Editorial Policy (Appendix 15) was developed to guide the implementation of the clearinghouse entries, and the database was established to capture information on documents, people, institutions, projects, events, etc. A Public announcement was made on the launch of the clearinghouse.

### **Content**

The team and subcontractors have been actively populating the clearinghouse to which approximately 400 entries have been uploaded ([www.carisnet.org](http://www.carisnet.org)),

## **2.5 ICT4D Caribbean Stories Contest**

The CARISNET consortium agreed that a Call for Case Studies on the application of ICTs for development would encourage the sharing of knowledge and information, and eventually advocacy. The call for case studies was issued in 29 November, 2006 (see Appendix 8A), and a panel of volunteer judges<sup>7</sup> was constituted.

A Rubric was developed to facilitate the assessment (Appended 8B).

There were four submissions – from Guyana, Dominican Republic, Jamaica and the University of the West Indies. SEWA Guyana was awarded first prize and JSDNP from Jamaica was awarded second prize.

The full Call for stories report is annexed to this report (Appendix 9) and all the entries are available on the CarlSnet website. Important lessons from the process were drawn and are presented in the report.

## **2.6 Civic Survey**

This is an additional task, not contemplated in the original project document, that was seen to be important and that FUNREDES initially agreed to conduct. However, following their withdrawal, the consortium called for a working group of CIVIC members that effectively:

- i. Defined the terms of reference for the survey (objective, scope of the survey, key questions to be answered, methodology, etc
- ii. Identified a suitable consultant or team of consultants to undertake the survey. The working group approved its methodology, and data collection process.
- iii. Reviewed the survey outputs and the chart revision proposals and work to prepare a new chart, that will be submitted to CIVIC for discussion and approval

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<sup>7</sup> consisted of Gary Garriot, Simon Fraser, Rudi Daniel, Nidhi Tandon, Nancy George, Hallam Hope and Yacine Khelladi who are all part of the Caribbean ICT Virtual Community.

A competitive call for proposals was issued, and Mr Enrique Piraces was selected. The online survey instrument was administered in French, Spanish and English. The summary findings were as follows:

Participation in the survey was a success, with 20% of the active members involved.

In general, the participants represented a diverse pool of occupations with a wide variety of professional interests. For them, CIVIC has its main value in the opportunity to exchange or access information with emphasis in the Caribbean region and ICT.

The results show how the membership has evolved to include a linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as a tendency toward a balance of gender distribution.

The respondents expressed a positive attitude toward CIVIC, an interest in developing new ideas without abandoning the open structure of the organization, and a demand for improvement of the platform, specifically the inclusion of new tools that facilitate collaboration.

The vast majority of the members surveyed agreed with the work of the moderators, however, a few members criticized what they viewed as conflicts of interest.

In terms of discussion themes, respondents hoped that ICT4Dev and Civil Society would receive greater attention.

Some recommendations include:

- A new platform should be considered which best represented the following characteristics. Flexibility, Interoperability, Ease of use, Support, Management, Security, Performance, System Requirements, Built-in applications, Commerce. An open source solution such as Drupal should be explored.
- Improvement of language diversity should be addressed by the following;
  - 1) CIVIC members should respect simple writing rules to improve the efficiency of the translation, and so make the translation facility more usable
  - 2) Face-to-face meetings should be organized regularly in different countries (like the original one in Barbados) to complement the virtual experience. It was decided in Barbados, but finally has never happened
  - 3) Organize CIVIC meetings in non English-speaking countries in order to encourage more participation from the other linguistic groups and, thus, increase the French and Spanish population of CIVIC.
  - 4) Finally, the suggestion has been made to further the CARDICIS experience in the diversity field, mainly in the following areas
- There should be a discussion and voting on the structure CIVIC should have, as well as whether the community should be involved in projects or the development of advocacy activities. A further discussion on funding should depend on the result of this process.
- In order to foster and promote collaborative work, CIVIC should activate or re-vamp its Thematic Groups.

The full Survey report, appendices and summary of conclusions are in Appendices 3B-E).

## **2.7 CarlSnet Project Web Site**

The public web site ([www.carisnet.org](http://www.carisnet.org)) was developed to upload information on the project and other CIVIC matters of interest. The content (apart from the clearinghouse contents) have been translated into three languages (English, French, Spanish).

## 2.8 Donors Mapping

This activity has been scaled to produce a survey of donor supporting ICT4D projects in the region and the provision of recommendations on a possible collaborative funding mechanism.

This survey (Appendix 16) had the following objectives:

- Identify regional donor funded projects and agencies/donors currently supporting regional ICT4D projects
- Identify their interest in supporting regional collaborative ICT4D projects that would come out of CIVIC membership

Fifty-nine (59) different projects were identified, donor supported, and regional in scope (involving more than one country), and most of them are ongoing.

The report essentially showed that:

- Most of the regional projects are implemented by regional agencies and organisations (including UWI as a regional university), and very few are implemented in partnership by several organisations (regional and collaborative).
- Projects are concentrated in the areas of Telecommunications Policy, regulation and infrastructure, as they were, and are still, accompanying the telecommunications liberalisation process in most of the region. E-government and education, as well as support to private sector (especially SMEs) seem to be the other main areas of interest.
- In the areas of Software industry, ICT for agriculture, health and disaster management, only one regional project or activity, denoting lack of good regional ideas and/or capacity in developing solid ICT4D proposals (and/or a lack of donors' interest in these areas?).
- The IDRC and its programmes (as ICA and telcentre.org) are the most supportive of regional projects in a wide range of sectors followed by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Commission, UNESCO and the World Bank. The rest of the agencies and donors usually concentrate in a single area/sector of ICT.

As shown by the project list there are already some level of collaboration among donors and agencies, particularly in the areas of telecommunication policy/regulation (strengthening of national capacities and regional networking), and in the field of e-government.

The few institutions surveyed directly (email or telephone calls) expressed interest in participating in some kind of co-funding arrangement, but needed more information on the mechanisms, the areas of focus and leadership of the process.

The following recommendations were formulated after the analysis of this survey:

- Further work is needed to get indication of particular trends in donors' inclinations toward projects they want to support, and check if the procedures for applying for funding are readily accessible to all stakeholders. Also need to see if some donors focus more on government, or civil society, or private sector
- There is a strong need to strengthen the capacity of development actors (governments, NGOs, researchers) in the different social areas (education, health, environment, etc.) to conceive, design and develop ICT4D projects. In general, there is a lack of ICT4D specialists in the region. A capacity-building exercise in project development and proposal writing should be integrated in the next CarlSnet activities, if any.
- Although of great benefit, the regional collaborative projects are scarce and seem to be very difficult to get going. It is recommended to advocate for some facilitation resources at initial stages of regional project development, and an additional "collaboration" overhead to be included in the project's budgets.
- As IDRC has a very good image both among agencies/donors and grassroots, and also significant experience in setting up collaborative venues and engaging strategic partnerships, it is recommended that it calls for, and manages, a formal donors' articulation/networking mechanism

(twice in the past it failed to work formally), and also liaise with stakeholders (possibly via CIVIC) to encourage the development of regional collaborative proposals and make the link with the funding sources.

### 3 Project Outcomes and Impact Assessment

#### 3.1 Main Project Outcomes

The CARISNET project represents a pioneering effort in many ways. It involved the facilitation and management of an interest-based, multi-stakeholder, multicultural online community focused on ICT for development in the Caribbean, one of its kind in the region.

The project activities have generated both product and process-based outcomes and these have been generated at several levels: at the project implementation/management level, at the level of interaction with the working groups, at the level of interaction with the broader CIVIC constituency, a wide outreach and impact in the Caribbean region, and beyond. The project has opened the way to formal and informal stakeholders' alliances, regional projects, and has implicitly become a medium for advocacy and decision makers' sensitization.

While some of these were anticipated/planned for in the project design, others evolved as the process unfolded.

Among the main project outcomes are the following:

- **Network development** - Improved insights into elements of interest-based network establishment, management and sustenance within a linguistically and geographically diverse, and real multi stakeholder membership (participation of high level gov officers together with regional organizations, donors agencies, NGOs, academics, private businesses and professionals/consultants)
- **Collaborative Project implementation** - Demonstrated capacity for project implementation by a consortium of geographically and linguistically diverse Caribbean organizations, which has provided a model on how ICTs can help foster regional integration and synergies through collective project implementation
- **Opportunities for Knowledge sharing** - Active knowledge sharing, discussion and information exchange and discussion on issues of interest relevant to network establishment and management, and ICT4D activities in the Caribbean, among a variety of perspectives, interests, levels of experience
- **Access to systematized ICT4D information**  
Increased ability for Caribbean ICT practitioners to access systematized information on ICT4D activities and players in the region, thanks to the establishment of an online database, the content of which is currently growing
- **Strategies to enhance collaborative interaction** in the frame of a new "orgware"<sup>8</sup> - Development of participatory processes to facilitate development of tools to enhance collaborative interaction between linguistically diverse members of the constituency, and improve communication across languages. The project also demonstrated the effectiveness of the methodologies used to establish a flat, participative, low overhead and democratic net-based kind of organization, who can undertake actions and develop activities without the need of traditional, brick-and-mortar structures.
- **Strategies for further development of CIVIC** - Insights and strategies geared toward influencing the further evolution of the CIVIC community toward more actions and policy advocacy, determining

<sup>8</sup> Following the "software", "hardware" jargons of ICT, denotes an innovative organizational structure for an online community like CIVIC

collaboration among its stakeholders. Discussions with members were facilitated to develop two documents focusing on (a) strategies to enhance the diversity (linguistic, basically) and (b) the requirements of a new technical platform that, together with developing regional capacity (in managing networks), should enable organically outgrowing the existing network.

- **An objective process for Case study assessment** - The call for case studies and the process involved in assessing them involved the development of a rubric for assessing the studies by a mix of CIVIC members including academics and field practitioners. The result is a valuable tool which can both guide the development of more informative case studies, and also objectively assess case studies. This effort has highlighted the need for illustrative tools to help advocate and share lessons among the stakeholders.
- **Benchmarking of the CIVIC community.** The CIVIC Survey undertaken close to the end of the project facilitated the benchmarking, at that point in time, the characteristics of the CIVIC community, the value of the online forum to them, their opinions of the interventions to date and their future expectations. An interesting and successful aspect of this is that the whole process was developed in a participative manner, with a group of volunteer members mandated to define objectives of the survey, develop the terms of references and select the consultant, support and validate his work.

## 3.2 Analysis of Outcomes

### 3.2.1 Network development

#### Genesis of the network

The community was created thanks to an external agent (ICA), which initiated registration of prospective participants into an online forum several weeks prior to the Barbados Roundtable, which was convened to discuss ICTs in the Caribbean. The participants introduced themselves and talked about some of the topics planned for the meeting and following the meeting the forum continued to be supported by ICA by way of a paid moderator. An organization chart was developed which guided governance of the forum, and has been somewhat modified since then. Following the exhaustion of funds and wrapping up of the post conference activity, moderation continued for two years on a voluntary basis, and the network membership and activity grew at a moderate pace, from 80 to 150 members.. At some point, there was an evident need to further structure support and gather additional support for the fledgling CIVIC community and the opportunity for doing this arose when, following a call for proposals by ICA, a four member consortium of NGO organizations submitted a proposal (CarlSnet) which was approved.

As the CarlSnet project started, the primary focus was to revitalize discussions which had waned somewhat, and generate focused input into structured activities which the community itself should evolve.

The soliciting of input into a draft discussion road map generated some limited but meaningful inputs. This level of participation has been the pattern since that time, as each discussion benefits from a few (often but not always the same) voices. This phenomenon is similar to that seen on other online communities where statistics show that less than 10% actively participate in discussion<sup>9</sup> –where most members make periodic inputs and the vast majority are lurkers. However, according to the collected survey statistics (Appendix 1) CIVIC enjoy higher rates of participation than the norm. (This is borne out on the CIVIC survey findings which garnered responses from 20% of the membership – which is significantly higher than the 10% which is considered reasonable for survey of this kind. (The only similar survey was the MISTICA evaluation survey which had 14.1% responsiveness).

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<sup>9</sup> see Jakob Nielsen's Participation Inequality at [www.useit.com/alertbox/participation\\_inequality.html](http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html).



The development of the CIVIC online network can be characterized using typologies developed to describe other virtual communities of interest. The relevant characteristics are:

<b>Network characteristics</b>	<b>Qualifiers</b>
Creation	Intentional – initially in response to Barbados Roundtable;
Orientation	Strategic –focused on ICT4D in the Caribbean
Membership	Open, voluntary, largely expert, and individual
Members profile (sector of activity, workplace)	Multi-stakeholder, mix of policy and decision makers, academics, NGOs, businesses, development agencies, consultants and experts, male dominated (60%)
Time in existence	5 years
Level of Maturity	Low to Medium, still evolving values and norms
Environment	Facilitated
Leadership	Based on self selection and willingness to lead, interest driven, member supported ideas and issues
Activity	Moderate- sporadic high intensity
Geographical dispersion	High – Caribbean wide and beyond
Cultural diversity	High
Members experience in use of Information Technology (online tools)	High
Topics relevance to members work	High

### 3.2.2 Animation, Moderation and Facilitation strategies

**Animation** has kept the discussion and participation ongoing throughout the project, and the various elements have had significant outcomes:

- systematic provision of information for discussion (press/news items, documents and web/project references, etc.) has helped to provide network members with a regional perspective and keep them updated on the national situation within various countries. It has also encouraged a culture of information sharing by encouraging members to share similar information systematically within the forum.
- The numerous calls for participation in the CIVIC discussions (survey, platform, roadmap, clearinghouse, diversity, CIVIC future, etc.) effectively reminded members of opportunities for participating in discussions that can positively impact ICT4D in the Caribbean region
- the enforcement of the self-introduction effectively lets everyone know who is in the network and offers opportunities for making contact and seeking personal and professional synergies
- supporting and facilitating the creation of sub working groups has enabled some quieter members to participate in a smaller forum which may not seem so intimidating as the broader group, and helping in conducting debates
- holding private discussions with a variety of stakeholders, encouraging them to share resources, and explaining how to use CIVIC for their work (research, surveys, regional projects, etc) has increased capacity among these members

**Moderation** has been key in maintaining a sustainable networking virtual space, growing organically and steadily, in particular by reducing the noise caused by cross-postings, unconsolidated responses, reducing the possibility for overwhelming members with large numbers of mails with repetitive messages and pacing the delivery of messages so as to allow time for members to assimilate messages. The result is more ease and convenience for members in the forum and not the frustration that often comes from being inundated with long mails that often occurs in other discussion forums.

This is felt to have had a positive impact on the low rate at which people unsubscribe from the list (less than 1 per month).

The reminders about the chart rules have helped members to maintain an order in the way discussions are proposed and undertaken. The general procedures have raised awareness about the issues involved in being a part of a self-managed flat network, the need for personal initiative and interest-based leadership, the ethic of collaboration are all supported within the forum.

**Facilitation** of specific discussions has been effective within the delicate context of a regional wide, multi-stakeholder network with a very diverse set of profiles and interest/expectations. It produced valuable outputs and strengthened considerably the network dynamics and, by engaging membership, enhanced considerably the sense of belonging to a community and thus its social appropriation.

The modalities used has enabled full participation of working group members in developing a solution to addressing an issue and assured the documentation of the outputs. The engaging of additional facilitators has developed capacity in this skill among members other than the main facilitator. It has set a model which is easy for other self-selected facilitators to follow.

The Caribbean Telecenter discussion has effectively reached out to another constituency within the Caribbean ICT region -one that has previously been underrepresented in the CIVIC forum. Continued elaboration of that initiative, Alliance of Caribbean Telecentres (ACT!), will, enrich CIVIC. It is also worth noting that although CIVIC was not actively pushed forward in the Caribbean Telecentres meeting scene, some CIVIC members (out of the 60 telecentres practitioners about 7-8 members usually part of the quiet group in CIVIC were present) promoted the idea and proposed that any new telecentre Caribbean network should be developed within CIVIC. In fact the telecenter alliance and its sub groupings should become a CIVIC thematic "channel" of the CIVIC 2.0 model.

This is a demonstration of the opportunities for CIVIC to be a leader in Caribbean ICT-related initiatives.

By the end of the project a volunteer member has requested assistance and was helped in constituting a permanent sub working group (Caribbean Telecommunications and ICT Policy forum). Although its results are not yet measurable (too early), it can be said that the CarlSnet project facilitation methods was successful in creating a model for members and stakeholders to develop specific discussion spaces / channels (and that need to be strengthened by the new tools envisaged in CIVIC 2.0).

All those working groups and facilitated discussions, engaging the most active (and sometime not, as the diversity sub working group that had 50% of members part of the usually silent group) CIVIC members produced the expected documented outputs, and strengthened considerably the network dynamics and, by engaging membership, enhanced considerably the sense of belonging to a community and thus its social appropriation.

Moderation and animation are generally well accepted and praised (as feedback and survey data show). For moderation, the only incident in 5 years has been one member doing commercial spam toward individual members (he was banned) and twice members having difficulties with "anti-cross-posting"<sup>10</sup> rule concerning the Caribbean ICT focus expected from the posts (or requiring short introduction to non Caribbean issues). After a public discussion, the rule was modified to give discretionary decision power to the moderator to accept non Caribbean postings, that is ICT4D issues not related to the Caribbean

### 3.2.3 Diversity and building bridges

The moderation and animation efforts, as well as the choice for an informal but normalized network structure, have preserved a delicate sectoral equilibrium and respectful discussion venue, which has permitted CIVIC to be the only virtual forum in the region with a real multi-stakeholder characteristic. Membership includes government official (staff, officers, and even 2 ministers) most regional agencies (including CARICOM secretariat #2, and main officers or several thematic regional organization) donors (about 10 different agencies and banks), Universities, Consultants, Private Businesses, and NGOs. It can be said that a dialogue between these sectors has been opened.

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<sup>10</sup> "Cross-posting" is the forwarding of mails from one mailing list to another

### 3.2.4 Collaborative Project implementation

The formation of the implementing team, the CARISNET consortium, as a geographically and linguistically diverse collaboration unit working on ICT for Development within the Caribbean region.

#### Identifying and acting on natural synergies

At the outset of the project development process, the four partners came together out of common interest in the field of ICT4D, and having been active in the Barbados roundtable and the early CIVIC online activities, all shared a common desire to further the goals of the regional networking opportunity that CIVIC represented.

Prior to the CIVIC activity, all four agencies had a track record of working in the ICT4D field, albeit in different capacities. FUNREDES had a strong social research and regional networking background, Fundación Taigüey had both experience in virtual conferences and networking and a strong social, hands-on grass roots orientation as did the JSDN, and DevNet had a strong technical and content management orientation. The principals of FUNREDES and Taigüey, both Spanish speaking and out of the Dominican Republic, had a background of working together, while the JSDN and DevNet, both English speaking, from Jamaica and Guyana respectively emerged out of the UNDP's Sustainable Development Programme established in the 1990's. They too had a history of collaboration with each other. As such, the formation of the consortium was based on both personal familiarity and institutional congruity.

It was felt that the interest in developing CIVIC, the combined skills of the partners, their representation of geographical and linguistic diversity within the Caribbean, and a shared keen understanding of the needs of the fledgling CIVIC enabled the new consortium to develop a proposal which met the criteria for funding by ICA. The project was only one of two that ICA funded following the Call.

#### Preparing for project Implementation

The initial stages saw parallel processes of team evolution with the product oriented tasks of proposal refinement, work plan development, budget finalization, contract signing and project launch. This process extended over several months and resulted in a delay in the initial implementation date.

In recognition of the many interrelated activities which were planned over the 12 month period, an Activity Coordinator was appointed. Taigüey undertook this, and was expected to keep team members on track to the extent possible. This worked fairly well, notwithstanding the overall delays, as there was always a keen awareness of time slippage. It is felt in retrospect that more effective use of scheduled conference calls could have better enhanced accountability.

The evolution of the consortium, in this period and beyond is a study in classic team formation with the fundamental elements of "forming", "storming", "norming", and "performing"<sup>11</sup> emerging. The forming processes saw the establishment of mechanisms of communication across distances, team discussions and collective decision making, and making allowances for the diverse working styles and schedules of the team members. Because of the flat and collaborative nature of the team's activities processes, and despite the Activity coordination, there continued to be slippage of time in the project schedule early in implementation. This is actually normal in the forming process of groups which generally involves the team continuing to define their tasks, determination of the information needs, discussions on concepts, and issues and other activities which have little to do with the achievement of the project's goals. This was certainly the case with the CARISNET team, and some of these discussions concerning moderation style, some fundamental differences in opinion regarding technical interconnectivity with other networks, membership, and among other things became increasingly fractious. This combined with anxieties

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<sup>11</sup> **Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning.** Glenn Alleman, Niwot, Colorado.(2004)  
<http://www.niwotridge.com/PDFs/FormStormNormPerform.pdf>

regarding time slippage, and the ascribing of responsibility for these slippages catapulted the team into the “storming phase” at the end of which, FUNREDES resigned from the team.

Another period of delay followed as the remaining members strove to recover from the break and review and reallocate the tasks left undone.

A period of “norming “ the team settled into a routine, albeit under an increased work load and fast approaching deadlines. ICA was approached for an extension which was granted and this provided some breathing space. The team moved into performing as increased activity was facilitated with the bringing on board of Stephane Bruno, also a founding member of CIVIC and a product of the SDN Haiti experience.

Finally, the team settled more deeply into the performing phase where more concentrated activity was focused in engaging the CIVIC constituency in a number of discussions by way of working groups, diversity enhancement outreach, and call for case studies and filling of the clearinghouse.

There was greater participation in areas outside of the initial task allocations and work load sharing based upon need rather than primary responsibility, the focus being on getting the job done and meeting the project commitments.

### **3.2.5 Opportunities for Knowledge sharing and Access to systematized ICT4D information**

This relates to information exchange, general and specific discussions –value added to Caribbean ICT knowledge base, increased familiarity with practitioner’s interest.

The data collection and systematisation process undertaken by the project has provided a ready pool of information which can be referenced by ICT4D practitioners in the region and beyond. The main components of this are the **Clearinghouse**, the **Case Studies** and the **Survey of Donors** which provide support to ICT4D activities in the region. The Clearinghouse represents a systematized information base on ICT4D in the Caribbean. With close to 400 entries so far, including projects institutions, documents and events, it is the most extensive of its kind in the region and provides an easily referenced compendium on what is happening in ICT4D in the Caribbean region. A study of the clearinghouse provides a picture of the various actors in the various areas of ICT4D and the areas of work they have been, or are currently engaged in. This information naturally facilitates the identification of gaps, the possible directions for further activity, and the determining of opportunities for increased knowledge sharing and the forging collaborative efforts based on the capacities and experiences of the various players.

### **3.2.6 Strategies to enhance collaborative interaction**

Throughout the period of the project at various times, issues relating to the utility of the tools available to the network arose. While the ease of use of the mailing list as a means of communication was generally appreciated the limitations in the ability to follow different discussions occurring simultaneously was found to be a problem. This issue was addressed by convening a discussion on criteria for a new platform which would offer improved collaboration facility. The discussion involved a number of persons with technical ability that could form a core group through which such a platform could be developed and /or tested. The output of the discussion relates with the future implementation of such a platform, be a core by which the platform can be developed and tested. In addition, the issue of language and the difficulties of persons without good understanding of English. It was out to this recognition that a discussion on tools arose. That discussion also relates to discussions that produced proposals for new platform and online linguistic tools.

### **3.2.7 Strategies for further development of CIVIC –**

The discussion on “What will be CIVIC’ is critical to the sustainability of the community.

A working group consisting of active CIVIC members is currently discussing various options at the time of writing this report. The working group discussion is unmoderated and is characterised by strong contentions for particular positions, which are taking place in a cohesive manner.

One recent thread of 45 exchanges saw a process of clarification which required little facilitator input.

Interestingly, this discussion comes after the end of the CARISNET project, and it seems to consolidate the building community experience of CIVIC. The working group consists of members who are part of the founding group, as well as persons who joined in late 2006. The group has recognised that the sustainability of CIVIC extends beyond the CARISNET project.

A suitable model has to be developed from the working propositions which include enhancing the current structure, moving to a more formal organised structure with elected representatives and physical secretariat.

### **3.2.8 An objective process for Case study assessment**

#### **Relates to Case study call –working group and assessment process**

The CARISNET project recognised that the development of Case Studies would contribute to the body of knowledge on the application of ICTs in the development of the Caribbean.

A working group was convened from CIVIC, which consisted of practitioners from academic and implementation backgrounds, and who all volunteered their time through December 2006. The group participation was cohesive and active and the structured deadlines and agenda helped in the facilitation of this group.

The Call for Case Studies was issued in CIVIC. Interestingly, of the four responses, only one came from a CIVIC member. It was evident that CIVIC members had circulated the call to other interested parties who submitted Case Studies for consideration in the competition.

The Working Group members were very enthusiastic in the design of the rubric which could be used to assess the Case Studies. The group also did a self evaluation of the process in developing the Case Studies, with one member posting her thoughts that the Case Study competition or call should be an annual activity, with some improvements in the process of evaluation.

The challenges which arose were deciding on the issue of innovative approaches to ICT4D in the Caribbean. There was an issue in trying to decide how to assess the innovativeness of some of the case studies and that is one part of the model which has to be developed further.

### **3.2.9 Benchmarking of the CIVIC community**

The CIVIC Survey undertaken close to the end of project has provided invaluable insights into the CIVIC community which, because of its multi stakeholder nature is probably a very good representation of the wider ICT community in the Caribbean. As such, being able to define the CIVIC community, its demographics, perceived needs, challenges and the value of the forum to members will facilitate improved planning and development of strategies to better serve not only CIVIC, but the wider Caribbean ICT community as well.

The survey, although having some shortcomings, also represents a basis on which a monitoring and evaluation tool for CIVIC or any online network can be developed. This is a critical to understanding the

evolution of networks of this kind and will foster the harnessing of lessons on what works and what does not, ultimately contributing to fine tuning and increased effectiveness and efficiency in the network.

### **3.3 Impacts**

Measuring and analyzing the wider impact of the project is a very difficult case as these are usually happening externally to the project itself and mostly "behind the scenes". However, the survey has shown that due to the project intervention, many people have:

- made direct contacts with other stakeholders, and sometime continue exchanges in informal sub networks
- deepened discussions and shared more information privately,
- improved their knowledge about the Caribbean ICT issues and are taking better advised decisions, developed or integrated new elements in their research and analysis,
- improved the capacity and understanding of policy makers many of whom are on the discussion list
- all stakeholders have added a regional perspective
- some created informal and event formal partnership,
- businesses and consultants, as well as academic and NGOs have great benefit on the information intelligence
- many initiatives and projects have added a regional component, thus improving their efficacy and widening their impact

In addition, the project has demonstrated mechanisms by which a flat democratic, non prescriptive discussion list can evolve into an interest directed forum with the potential for much more focussed and significant impact on regional policy and project initiatives.

It is to be noted that out of the other four ICA sponsored events and subsequent regional virtual networks created in 2002-2003 (other being the Central America, Andean region and South America networks), CIVIC is the only one that remained active.

### **3.4 Challenges**

The challenges which faced the project were multifaceted and varied. The main ones are below.

#### Project implementation

- Collaborative project implementation requires making allowances in order to work around each organisation/individual's schedule and there is lower probability for establishing periods/times/schedules suitable to all when there are too many individuals/organisations. Based on the multiple variables involved in time scheduling, there were sometimes periods of long periods between responses of team members. This was exacerbated by the challenges involved in working at a distance vs. Face to face. Closer proximity usually has greater immediacy in getting things done. There is generally more accountability and higher priority placed on activities. In addition, face to face communication reduces the difficulty in understanding underlying meanings and motives and cuts down on the possibilities for misunderstandings
- It was felt that the time it takes to facilitate this kind of collaboration was much slower pace than originally considered.
- There was significant psychological impact from the separation of FUNREDES mid stream the project, and these had to be overcome before the project could proceed smoothly. There was also the impact of the logistical adjustments where different persons/organisation had to take on additional tasks.

#### Facilitation and animation

- Managing group discussions within a time frame is difficult as comments from diversity of volunteer sub-group members with their own agendas and time constraints generally causes delays
- Managing “out of focus” discussions as well as some interventions that questioned the mandate/authority of the consortium also caused time delays and necessitated additional explanations and references to information provided at the outset of the project addressing these issues
- Members’ intermittent and short attention span, have the effect of having to backtrack, repeat things and restart discussions
- Managing the concerns of a reduced number of single divergent voices (mainly in the main community mailing list) that have a high impact on community life (as one member alone writing insistently on an issue or complaining on something has more voice than the other 99% busy or silent. Often those concerns were considered (in items proposed for decision) and managed.
- The difficulty of members of understanding the unusual set-up of a horizontal self managed community. As no one is responsible to process complaints and/or request for action, the moderator usually reminds members it is their responsibility to take the initiatives as requesting a vote to modify chart, call for a working group, create a project, initiate a sub group discussion to move forward their idea or concern. Older members are now more aware of the mechanism and make use of them

## 4 Capacity Building

The project served to increase the capacity of the consortium to manage a process such as this. The ethics of team work, patience and maintaining focus in the face of challenges has been a significant learning experience. The convening and managing of the various discussions and the ability to plan and make strategic interventions to divert and avoid potentially disruptive incidences have been honed under this project. In addition, there have been institutional benefits.

The JSDN has had its first experience in undertaking administrative management of a regional project and in house systems have been adjusted and refined to ensure prompt and accurate disbursement of funds while maintaining financial records in multiple currencies.

DevNet has gained much in terms of establishing and managing a multilingual clearinghouse and has developed skills in facilitating group discussions.

Fundación Taigüey gained added experience in facilitation and sharpening of online moderation techniques. but most of all in coordinating the implementation of complex collaborative projects (where several partners take decisions, and also implement in a decentralized/networked way)

All partners benefited from the experience of collaborative project management.

## 5 Financial and Institutional Sustainability

The prospects for financial and institutional sustainability for CIVIC still remains to be explored.

The main difficulty when considering the sustainability issue is that CIVIC impacts and benefits, which could/would/should support-back CIVIC “costs”, are external to it<sup>12</sup>. What is to be sustained is the

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<sup>12</sup> *The same problem applies to telecentres, or school labs: what is to be sustained is the bettering of education, social capital, small entrepreneurs, health services, local governments etc, not the computer project that is just an input to those*

appropriation by relevant stakeholders of the social/economics transformation process, so that the use of ICTs for development in the Caribbean is increased.

It is clear that at the very least support of a facilitator of the discussion forum needs to be in place to ensure that the tasks of moderation of messages, posting of informative pieces that can generate interest, discussion and where necessary action.

Based on the experience of other online communities, it is unlikely that commonly suggested sources of revenue including membership fees, payment for value added information are feasible.

It is likely that the sustainability of the forum will be more effectively measured in terms of the alliances that can be formed between members and the long term impact on the collective interventions that are undertaken in support of the Caribbean ICT4D development.

Although many of the CIVIC maintenance related activities could be supported by volunteer work, or by the assignment of human and financial resources of the institutions that benefit directly and indirectly from CIVIC networking, the management of the resources itself requires some paid resources.

Ultimately a recognized Caribbean voice for ICT4D could conceivably be developed and supported out of a regional ICT/Information society supporting mechanism such as the Carib-IS Caricom/Cariforum government supported and EU funded program.

These issues need to be further explored especially in light of major proposed long term interventions by various donors.

However, in the short to medium term, financial support for the basic functions of discussion, facilitation and moderation, development of improved interactive tools and development of value added information resources will be necessary to maintain momentum and allow for more maturing of the community to the point where more collaborative projects and activities are fostered and nurtured.

## **6 Lessons Learned**

### ***6.1 Lesson From A Regional Collaborative Networked Project Implementation***

There are a number of variables critical to collaborative working. These include institutional culture, flexibility, mutual support, logistics, collective accountability, delegation, communication and some time, individual personalities,

#### **6.1.1 Collaboration**

- Collaborative coordination worked most of the time, however there were occasional problems with the long response times of team members. It was felt that the time it takes to facilitate this kind of collaboration was much more than originally estimated.
- Agendas and priorities for the voluntary collegiate coordination and approval need to be agreed in the initial MOUs
- For a collaborative project to work, four organisations/individuals is the maximum. This is because many allowances have to be made to work around each individual's schedule and there is lower probability for establishing periods/times/schedules suitable to all when there are too many individuals/organisations.
- The psychological impact of separation mid stream a project can be more significant than the impact caused by the logistical adjustments.
- Individual personalities and compatibility between personalities is more important than institutional compatibility for this scale of project. Compatible personalities facilitate mutual support and understanding, which is critical in collaborative work.
- The fact that the consortium was multilingual and multicultural worked well; because there was one language all could understand and communicate in. All CARISNET team meetings and coordination tasks were done in English.



### **6.1.2 Institutional culture**

- The fact that the implementing organisations were small with limited capacities was not thought to be a significant factor in reduced implementation efficiency.
- The similarity in organizational culture (e.g. all were ICT4D/NGO oriented) helped in that the difficulties facing these small organizations causes limitations which true partners have to be able to understand

### **6.1.3 Logistics**

- There are greater challenges involved in working at a distance vs. Face to face. When in close proximity, there is greater immediacy involved in getting things done-more accountability/priority placed on activities. Further more there is likely to be easier and more effective, communication-less time necessary for explanation of meanings etc.
- For communication, conference calls using Skype were very useful apart from some power outage interruptions. The calls were not as frequent as they should have been however.
- Trying to dovetail coordination meetings with other large meetings in which any partner was deeply involved was not a good idea. (e.g. CARDICIS) The chance of "burnout" is significant and little is achieved.
- Subcontracting of more individuals to undertake various tasks should have been done sooner in the project

### **6.1.4 Accountability**

- The model of contracting/internal consultation models vs. staff with monthly fees was a plus. Delivery of products is more guaranteed as payment is based on deliverables. This may be the best model for this kind of task.
- Having the donor project officer in the coordination forum was useful. It facilitated easy communication and quick feedback on various issues, and there were no surprises, as she was abreast of most of what was happening as it transpired.
- There should be more formal procedures to accept funding from donors. E.g. the funding from Francophonie was never properly secured, and there was no direct agreement with the donor. This should be avoided in the future.
- Implementation coordination and activity tracking was key to seeing what was happening and what was not. The use of project management tools/ software may have been helpful, to facilitate visual display and highlight the impact that individual delays have on the rest of the project
- Having named individuals for various aspects of the project was important for accountability. However more consideration needs to be given to developing an MOU which addresses the timing on responses.

### **6.1.5 Conflict resolution**

- The fall-out with FUNREDES could not have been foreseen. The vision and clear objectives seemed to be common to all partners in the beginning.
- More attention needs to be paid to developing conflict resolution strategies including suitable exit strategies, in the event partners want to leave the consortium mid stream.

## **6.2 Project Implementation Lessons**

### **6.2.1 Communication**

- The communication with the CIVIC community could have been more effective e.g. Regular (quarterly bulletins) reporting on outputs, and progress made.

- Each and every time the partners address the CIVIC community with project related material they should sign as CARISNET
- Building a networked organization that goes beyond the traditional networks calls for much more work so that people can understand the mechanism of operation of CIVIC (flat organization /no chief etc)

### 6.2.2 Participation

- Most people are used to traditional decision making and do not easily transform to being PARTICIPATIVE and PROACTIVE.
- Participation is a challenge where there is a diversity of people, interests, sectors and needs
- When the “noise capacity “of the few is high and the majority is silent, it is hard to get a good view of what the majority really want
- In order to engage people it is important to meet them where their interests are.
- Regional multi stakeholder collaborative projects in this region are very new, and as such promotion of this is challenging.
- In order to get good, committed facilitation/moderation, it is better to have people paid for the task. Otherwise the task will have less priority, and quality will suffer.

### 6.2.3 Lessons on Case studies

It is clear that there is inadequate capacity or effort to develop good case studies within the CIVIC community. This was demonstrated in the low response to the call for case studies and in the less than satisfactory format of those that were submitted.

The specific lessons learned endorsed by the team of Case study judges are:

- The competition should be repeated annually or biennially. The concept of a case study competition is an excellent one. It encourages organisations to think about their successes and learning from their experiences. The financial incentive is also encouraging, because the time and thought that needs to go into developing the true "story" of an ICT4D experience is significant. If the repetition will demand reliable funding from a donor partner, an organisation like UNESCO, IIEP, ICA or the World Bank Institute should be approached for funding. Perhaps developing a project constructed on the learning from this initial venture - written as a case study using all of the same criteria listed in the Request of Cases would be useful to achieve this.
- The requirement that it is institutional or organisations' entries is a good one, particularly if the aim is to encourage institutional learning in the use of ICT4. Entries by individuals should NOT be accepted.
- The inclusion of a panel of jurors ensures that the selection of the winning entries is thoughtful and reasonably objective. The current number of jurors (5) seems about right.
- The use of a scoring rubric ensures that the judging is fair.
- The piloting of the rubric (like table marking in examination settings) ensures that the judges are using the rubric in a standardised way. This pilot also ensures standardisation and objectivity in the application of the rubric.
- Organisations should be encouraged to write their case studies in their mother tongue (providing that their mother tongue is one of the official languages of the Caribbean: English, French, Spanish, Dutch). If one or more of the judges is not conversant with language in which the case study is written, a translation of that case study into English or Spanish is possible - it's a five-page maximum.
- The entrants' submissions reveal a fundamental misunderstanding of what a case study is. This is based on the case studies submitted. It is also clear that some entries ignored the basic premises of this case study competition.
- Some submissions did not adhere to the submission criteria; some did not follow the directions given.
- A training course should be offered on case study development.

## 7 Conclusions And Recommendations

The CARISNET project has had an overall positive impact on the development and growth of CIVIC, and while there has not been an evaluation of the project itself by the membership, the satisfaction registered in the survey on moderation, the participation in the working groups, and the demonstration of the collaborative project implementation represented by CARISNET has frequently been positively regarded by various members. The other tangible outputs such as the clearinghouse is also well regarded as a good representation of what is happening in Caribbean ICTs for development, and will soon be the most comprehensive anywhere.

The systematic moderation and the implementation of constant animation and facilitation have considerably contributed to the growth of the network, its usefulness and advanced its appropriation. The lessons and expansion based on the outcomes of these processes, together with the development of endogenous capacity for sub-network/channel development and the user of new tools suggested (by the CIVIC 2.0 platform working group and validated in CIVIC) are part of the building blocks for the future growth of CIVIC and its impacts.

The survey results and the outcomes of the several working groups discussions has provided significant insights into the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing CIVIC and there are many observations, lessons, and recommendations available that can effectively guide the further development of CIVIC into a high impact constituency which can make significant inputs into issues relevant to regional ICTs for development.

### 7.1 Recommendations

The recommendations mainly have to do with making CIVIC a more efficient and effective mechanism by which to facilitate greater impact on Caribbean ICTs for development particularly in policy formulation.

- A new discussion platform should be developed which has the attributes: Flexibility, Interoperability, Ease of use, Support, Management, Security, Performance, System Requirements, Built-in applications, Commerce. Drupal, which is open source and fits the criteria best should be tested for the purpose.
- Improvement of language diversity should be addressed by the following:
  - Hosting of Face-to-face meetings regularly in different countries (like the original one in Barbados) to complement the virtual experience
  - Organize CIVIC meetings in non English-speaking countries in order to encourage more participation from the other linguistic groups and, thus increase the French and Spanish population of CIVIC.
- There should be a thrust to also address the under representation in CIVIC of other groups such as women and the private sector. This should be done by developing thematic discussions which can draw the attention of women focussed development groups, and in the case of the private sector, business/entrepreneurial focussed discussion themes should be used to attract participation.

The Call for case studies competition should be repeated annually or biennially. The concept of a case study competition encourages organisations to think about their successes and learning from their experiences. The financial incentive should be continued also as the time and thought that needs to go into developing the true "story" of an ICT4D experience is significant. However, prior to the next competition some training in preparing case studies should be undertaken as there seems to be inadequate capacity in this area.

- Additional work should be undertaken to get an indication of particular trends in donor's inclinations toward projects they want to support, and check if the procedures for applying for funding are readily accessible to all stakeholders. In addition there is a need to determine where the various donor's focus is e.g. on Government or Civil society, or private sector.
- The capacity of development actors (governments, NGOs, researcher) in the different social areas (education, health, environment, etc.) needs to be strengthened to help them conceive, design and develop ICT4D projects. A capacity building exercise in project development and proposal writing should be integrated in next CarlSnet activity, if any.
- In order to encourage regional project collaboration, there needs to be allocation of facilitation resources at initial stages of regional project development, and an additional "collaboration" overhead to be included in the project's budgets.
- IDRC should call for and manage, a formal donors' articulation/networking mechanism (twice in the past it failed to work formally), and also liaise with stakeholders (possibly via CIVIC) to encourage the development of regional collaborative proposals and make the link with the funding sources
- There should be a discussion and voting on the structure CIVIC should have, as well as whether the community should be involved in projects or the development of advocacy activities. A further discussion on funding should depend on the result of this process.
- A research project to determine the network of influence that CIVIC's discussions have should be established
- A system of monitoring and evaluating the progress of CIVIC should be instituted.

## 8 Perspectives for Carisnet 2

The CarlSnet partners in their last meeting (Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> 06) agreed to start preparing a follow up activity with the objective of strengthening the capacity for collaborative action geared toward addressing critical ICT4D issues in the Caribbean and identified the following critical activities and outputs for CarlSnet 2. The final design will incorporate the outputs of the ongoing discussions (technical platform, diversity, What will be CIVIC, survey etc, most have ).

### 1. Community, tools and mechanism, integrated portal and clearinghouse, facilitation thematic channels

- Development of improved platform for CIVIC web site
  - All tools integrated (polls, translations, forums/list)
  - Thematic channels / sections (no national) regional focus
  - Clearinghouse integrated in CIVIC site
- Facilitate discussion to get CIVIC positions and advocacy and projects:
  - facilitation diversity of persons:
  - CARISNET commitment : moderation and animation
  - specific discussion and documents
  - Moderate main discussion list / web site
  - Thematic channels (estimated 6 initially e.g. open source and software, education and ICT, e-government, ICT policy and regulation, business, disaster management and ICT)
  - Establish a pool of content managers (approve content) editorial policy taxonomy (volunteer), transversal for all web
  - Establish thematic facilitators (in charge of web sites sections and thematic mailing list / forums) report to the main group, prepare bimonthly, and build a constituency around that theme, blogs.
- Organize face to face meetings =
  - CIVIC meeting
  - Thematic facilitators / moderators to animate the site and thematic discussion
  - Business B2B
  - One big event with many tracks
    - Workshop to manage ITC mainstreaming/project in the sectors ICT4D mainstreaming workshop (education, disaster)
    - ICT4D Projects design
    - B2b business matchmaking day (CEDE)
    - ICT and development IS in the Caribbean: seminar
    - ICT4D regional fund / Donors match making –
    - Promote collaborative projects? Not to tell them
  - Innovation and entrepreneurship partnership in ICT
  - Coordination activities, meetings
  - Business online 2B2 market place is part of the project, funded separately.
  - Maintain CARISNET consortium web site

### 2. Collaborative regional project development

Provide support to facilitate development of Collaborative projects

- Convene Thematic gatherings/ activities
  - Voluntary but terms of reference
  - Convene channel Moderators training workshop (one per year) same meeting CIVIC meeting: 2 days 20 people

- Moderations and sub-groups :
  - Open to more people
- Pay people for their work
  - Diversity activities
  - Translation of documents
  - Improve Auto translation tools
  - Diversity Monitoring
  - Promotion meetings in French and Spanish and Dutch (3 meetings)

### 3. Research and systematization

Undertake surveys and polls, evaluations, document of processes

### 4. Partners possible commitments

JSDN or ICT4D Jamaica	Admin responsibility, Contracts, Monitoring and evaluation, Documentation lessons learned of the process, Organizations of the event if in Jamaica
TAIGUEY	Main Moderation / General Coordination ,Organizations of the event if in DR, Moderation, facilitators meeting, Monitoring Diversity ,Promotion meeting
DevNet	Content management, Moderation some groups, Coordination of the facilitation, Technical platform
AHTIC	Technical coordination, CIVIC Platform, Business matchmaking

## **Annex 1. CIVIC membership survey conclusions and recommendations (Dec. 2006)**

*(extracted from Consultant report, see full report as Appendices 3B-E)*

### ***Summary***

*Participation was a success, with 20% of the active members involved.*

*In general, the participants represented a diverse pool of occupations with a wide variety of professional interests. For them, CIVIC has its main value in the opportunity to exchange or access information with emphasis in the Caribbean region and ICT.*

*The results show how the membership has evolved to include a linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as a tendency toward a balance of gender distribution.*

*The respondents expressed a positive attitude toward CIVIC, an interest in developing new ideas without abandoning the open structure of the organization, and a demand for improvement of the platform, specifically the inclusion of new tools.*

*The vast majority of the members surveyed agreed with the work of the moderators, however, a few members criticized what they viewed as conflicts of interest. In terms of discussion themes, respondents hoped that ICT4Dev and Civil Society would receive greater attention.*

*Several issues to be addressed appeared after the analysis. These are stated in the conclusions and recommendations.*

### ***Conclusions***

In general, the results indicate that members have a positive attitude toward CIVIC. For them, CIVIC has its main value in the opportunity to exchange or access information with emphasis in the Caribbean region and ICT. More than 70% of members are willing or available to play an active role within the community. Time is the most prominent, and in fact nearly the singular, hindrance to further participation in CIVIC.

The majority of the respondents expressed interest in developing new ideas without abandoning the open structure of the organization. In addition, there is a strong interest in developing collaborative projects.

There is a significant demand for an improved platform that would allow threaded discussions and for a web content solution to access and order information.

The majority of the respondents agree with the work of the moderators, however, a few members criticized what they viewed as conflicts of interest. This conflict of interest refers to a perceived confusion between when the moderator "speaks" as such and as a member. The complaint also refers to the moderator's membership in various organizations. It should be noted that while this criticism was emphatic, it was alone in raising this issue as an important one.

The charter of rules is generally approved of, but an important number of members are not familiar with the content of it, especially those who have joined in the last two years.

### **Demographics and sector representation**

CIVIC has a wide range of countries represented. It can be concluded that CIVIC is doing a good job in maintaining a truly regional character.

English remains the dominant language of the group. However, there is an interesting increase in French and Spanish speakers in the community. In addition, those surveyed suggested that the organization find ways to accommodate the linguistic diversity of the region.

The multi-stakeholder character of the community is clear, but the largest sector represented is the Non-Government Organizations (38%).

The work focus of members is well distributed, with interest in Civil Society (42.22%), Government (35.56%), Education (35.56%), and the Private Sector (22.22%)

There is an important presence of National and Regional NGOs, as well as International and Cooperation institutions. Around 70% of members declared to be part of organizations that work regionally or internationally.

### **Membership Profile**

There are several important features of the CIVIC membership profile that emerge from the survey:

- Members' field of study is diverse with an important presence of people related to mathematics/computer science, social sciences, and economy and business.
- There is a general diversity in origin and workplace. The majority of the members are men, but gender is not an issue inside the community.
- English is the most spoken/understood language followed by Spanish.
- The vast majority of the members have postgraduate degrees or studies.
- Newer members are prone to be lurkers.

The comparison between original or older members with those who joined CIVIC in the last two years shows some interesting membership trends. It is possible to say:

1. There is a trend to balance the gender proportion within the community.
2. Language is diversifying over time.
3. The participation type seems to be related with the length of time a member has been part of the community.
4. For newer members, language is less of a barrier as it is for older members.
5. Rules and charter issues decrease in importance for newer members. This may be the result of a lower awareness or access to said regulations.

Among members who responded the survey, 35.55% started membership between 2005 and 2006.

Within this group, there is a well distributed diversity of field of study. An important number are consultants, and the most common focus of work is Civil Society.

### **Use and Impact of CIVIC**

The majority of the members (73%) have exchanged emails with others, but when asked if CIVIC has been useful to establish professional contacts just 40% considered that this happens frequently or always.

When members are asked about if CIVIC has been useful for them in developing collaborative projects, around 60% rank it as rarely or never. But when asked if they agree with the statement CIVIC enables/fosters collaboration, 78% answer positively.

And when asked about the use of the information retrieved/received from CIVIC, most of members answered that they use it to keep up to date in the fields of interest.

In the responses to a question about the impact of CIVIC in the professional lives of members, more than 70% remarked that CIVIC impacts Communications and Information dissemination, and more than 40% that CIVIC impacts by providing Professional Networking, Learning, and Development.



The disparity between responses that CIVIC enables collaboration and members rare utilization of the community to develop collaborative projects indicates that members' personal constraints (especially time) hinder this function of CIVIC, not the structure or practices of the community. For most members, CIVIC impacts their work in the exchange of information. In addition, the vast majority of the respondents indicated that CIVIC is also a useful vehicle for regional integration and exchange and a tool for advocacy in national and regional policy making.

Considering that almost 50% of the members surveyed forward the information received from CIVIC, it is also possible to say that the community may be impacting other networks, organizations, or individuals beyond its membership.

## **Participation**

20% of the membership participated in this survey. This number is high when compared with other surveyed communities where the average range is between 5-10%.

According to Jakob Nielsen's *Participation Inequality: Encouraging More Users to Contribute*, lack of participation is inevitable. In most online communities user participation often follows a 90-9-1 rule 90% of users are lurkers who never contribute, 9% of users contribute a little, and 1% of users account for almost all the action.

The perception of CIVIC's members shows a third of Proactive, Passive and Lurker members respectively. The perception is far from the reality, the CIVIC Mailing List Stats available at <http://www.websystems.ht/civic/> shows that 5% of the members have contributed 60% of the posts. However, according to the same source, CIVIC has a 75%, 20%, and 5% breakdown. In comparison to the 90-9-1, this should be considered an encouraging sign of participation, given that CIVIC has achieved a more equitable distribution than the mentioned average.

## **Recommendations**

- A new platform should be considered. It should include threaded capability and a search engine as well as other tools like a web content solution and a projects clearinghouse. Threaded capability could be effective for members to research and could impact the participation ratio by making easier to contribute.
- An automatic document should be sent to new members when they sign up so that they can be introduced to the resources, structure, and policies of CIVIC [Taken from a member suggestion].
- Improvement of language diversity should be addressed. As most of the members are willing to participate and an important percentage of membership is bilingual, it is recommended to invite those who speak French and Spanish to be part of a working team to design a solution.
- As CIVIC is a multi-stakeholder community, which probably is one the strengths it has as a discussion list, it is recommended to establish labels for messages in order to facilitate members reading, either by sector, source or subject.
- Rules should be re-distributed to clarify the goals pursued with them. If further disagreement continues, simple voting may be an option to resolve it.
- An annual voting process should be considered in order to keep membership aware of the rules and in order to allow improvement based upon experience.
- There should be a discussion and voting on the structure CIVIC should have, as well as whether the community should be involved in projects or the development of advocacy activities. A further discussion on funding should depend on the result of this process.

- In order to foster and promote collaborative work, CIVIC should activate or re-vamp its Thematic Groups.
- It would be interesting for the future to consider a research project that explored the network of influence that CIVIC's discussions have.