



Use the right language

It is clear that poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) see ICT as an integral part of different strategies that will lead to poverty reduction. CATIA has positioned itself as an ICT project and programme, and as such has been able to engage with the ICT sectors of its target countries. The ICT focus, however, has made it more difficult for CATIA to effectively use poverty reduction language and to engage with the wider development community.

It is a difficult tightrope to walk between getting on with the specialisation of the project (ICT) and ensuring that policy makers generally become increasingly aware that ICT has a role to play in their overall strategies – even sectoral ones. The OECD in its guidelines for best practice argues that it is time that ICT is seen as a tool to enhance all processes that work towards poverty reduction – and in this situation it becomes important that telecommunications are seen not as a side issue, but as a key platform from which to deliver pro-poor services efficiently and effectively.

In training and supporting regulators and policy makers, CATIA directly addressed the background capacity needed to implement ICT elements of PRSPs. The advocacy components of CATIA also work towards building a multi-stakeholder contribution to decision making, which should in theory lead to a better policy environment (which supports the PRSP aspirations).

Francais and Anglais

There is a significant gap between English and French (and Portuguese) speaking countries – the language and cultural differences can be a barrier to sharing resources and insights.

Key Lesson – Multi-stakeholder processes seem to work

The programme has demonstrated that multi-stakeholder processes can be achieved. They can be used to support the emerging role of civil society.

CATIA has been good at drawing together multi-stakeholder processes. Current development thinking is that multi-stakeholder processes are more effective than single stakeholder processes at delivering good policy, although at the moment there is little objective evidence to support this. Indeed it may be that policy is more influenced by ‘a quiet word in the minister’s ear’ than by multiple voices.

For example, one component has been very successful in bringing planned, articulate and sustained multi-stakeholder ICT policy to the fore in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Nigeria. KICKTANet in Kenya stands out as an important multi-stakeholder advocacy entity that is playing an instrumental role in bringing civil society and private sector voices to the forefront of policy dialogue and reform.

Conclusion

CATIA faced interesting challenges associated with working in a rapidly changing sector, with diverse projects, and with a wide range of stakeholders, each having different capacities and interests. Bringing diverse projects together in a single programme caused difficulties in planning and scheduling, and whilst collaborative working added little value to some projects it was of benefit to others. CATIA worked to influence policy through the power of debate and training – it held no power over decision makers. The programme had to stimulate communication and build trust between different stakeholder groups.

Policy making is a messy process, and it is difficult to attribute impact to any specific activity as processes take a long time to unfold and can be subject of many interventions. However, it is clear that overall, the programme adopted some innovative approaches, which have led to the learning of some valuable lessons as well as some notable successes.

Programme Design for Regional Capacity Building in Africa

The case of CATIA (Catalysing Access to ICT in Africa)

DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British government’s fight against world poverty.

One in five people in the world today, over 1 billion people, live in poverty on less than one dollar a day. In an increasingly interdependent world, many problems – like conflict, crime, pollution, and diseases such as HIV and AIDS – are caused or made worse by poverty. DFID supports long-term programmes to help eliminate the underlying causes of poverty. DFID also responds to emergencies, both natural and man-made. DFID’s work aims to reduce poverty and disease and increase the number of children in school, as part of the internationally agreed UN ‘Millennium Development Goals’.

Summary

This paper discusses challenges faced by the CATIA programme. It also presents general lessons learned that could be applied to the planning and implementing of any complex programme, particularly those seeking to build regional capacity in Africa.

Introduction

In this paper we present some of the programmatic challenges of CATIA, to draw out key lessons learned about designing and implementing complex programmes for regional capacity building.

The CATIA programme aimed to bring the maximum benefit of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to poor people in Africa and to act as a strong catalyst for reform. It supported a package of strategic activities to improve affordable access to a wide range of ICTs, from Internet to community radio, in order to promote the use of ICTs to address social and economic development issues. It's intention was to build capacity across Africa to achieve sustainable change.

In its core theory of change, CATIA documented how it would work at different levels:

- **the policy environment** – by awareness raising and capacity building;
- **the provision of communication services** – through actions in internet provision and radio that might decrease costs and increase quality, availability and participation;
- **the community level** – by providing new opportunities for livelihoods.

CATIA was a three-year programme (2004–07) of the Department for International Development UK (DFID) in close collaboration with other donors (e.g. Sida (Sweden), IDRC (Canada), CIDA (Canada) and USAID (USA)). It was implemented in close coordination with the Canadian government's Connectivity Africa initiative. CATIA was managed by

Atos Consulting from a programme office in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Planning the Programme

CATIA was conceived as an umbrella for managing funding for a range of ICT related projects. Each of the nine component projects was managed by a partner organisation and had gone through independent processes of project identification and design, each had its own history of negotiation with DFID, and each had different start dates. The process of collating components caused delays in commissioning the programme, and contributed to ill-will towards collaborative working at the start. In some cases delays in activities adversely affected the effectiveness of outputs.

In general, components working at the livelihoods level (community radio, local content creation) gained little added value from collaborating with other components. On the other hand, there were examples amongst the policy oriented components where coordinating efforts increased value. However, examples are few, and the synergies achieved were not as great as had been hoped.

In ballpark terms, only a third of the overall project funding was allocated to policy focused components that benefited substantively from collaborative working. Stakeholders in each of these came from different backgrounds (e.g. academic, private sector, NGO) and had different approaches to policy advocacy. Collaborative working activities then had to amalgamate these approaches; the programme could have benefited from coordination and 'common view' workshops at the project design stage.

Key Challenge – Avoid delays

Timeliness was an issue – CATIA missed some windows of opportunities. ICT is a fast moving sector, and involvement in it requires fast footwork.

For example, some CATIA partners reflected on how they lost various people who had been willing to contribute while in contract negotiations, but by the time the programme started they had moved on. Policy papers that were delayed due to various factors were no longer relevant when published (or became only a small voice in a mass of voices). The designers of one component felt that by the time the programme was established many of the major needs had changed. In one of the country evaluation studies, about one third of programme participants targeted for interviews had changed jobs within the year.

Key Lesson – Plan holistically

The development of the programme from individual ideas and concepts resulted in implementing agencies working on 'their bit' rather than thinking of the programme as a whole – a 'silo' mentality. Collaboration and cooperation remained a challenge throughout the programme. The lesson is that the programme would have benefited from a more holistic integrated plan as a means of developing synergies and building collaborative relationships between components.

Startup

Monitoring and Evaluation

CATIA made provision for an independent monitoring and evaluation team (i-team) to work alongside the programme for its duration. In any programme, good practice dictates that internal monitoring and evaluation is in place throughout the programme to provide formative feedback and shape the programme as it develops. Similarly good practice suggests that programmes have an independent evaluation at the mid point and end of the programme for accountability and broader learning. In this case an external team was asked to work alongside the programme to provide both formative feedback, to ensure the necessary accountability and to collate overarching lessons.



“Clear contribution to the policy formation processes in at least 10 countries. E.g. Kenya: multi-stakeholder support for new ICT policy, published Jan 06, and challenge of draft legislative bill. DRC: less restrictive policy practices stimulated by on the ground actions by the radio network. Uganda: expectations that Policy will be approved in June 06. New media bill in Sierre Leone outcome of strengthening independent communication commission and other media players (workshop chaired by President).”

CATIA Independent Assessment OPR 2006

Involvement of the i-team in the programme development was disappointing, but highlights a contradiction inherent in ‘independent’ evaluators participating in programme design. The i-team was engaged 6 months into the programme, at the end of the programme inception phase, i.e. at Start-up. The i-team then had its own inception phase, examining and questioning the planning documents, when the rest of the team were trying to start implementation. The two teams were effectively on different parts of the project’s cycle. There was an expectation by DFID management that the i-team would proactively work with CATIA to revise their logframes, but when this was undertaken during the inception phase it created both positive and negative reactions among teams, and when it was offered on a draw down basis in the latter stages, it was only lightly used.

Key Challenge – Plan for M&E from the start
It would have been good to include M&E specialists in the design of CATIA from the very start, and bringing the team in after the completion of the inception phase was not the best scenario.

The i-team found it difficult to achieve a balance between offering consultative services in programme design and internal M&E, and retaining their independence. At one point, a country based consultant became too close to one of the CATIA components and had to step back to re-establish their independence.

Beyond Logical Frameworks

The theory of change (TOC) approach was introduced by the i-team. The TOC approach encourages the implementing agents to think through what they actually expect to happen – who will change as a result of the programme, in what way will they change, and how will that change lead on to other changes. This approach was found to be helpful to some components and less appreciated by others who felt it duplicated the Logical Framework. To some extent it did the same job as the Logical Framework, but it helped identify specific people and assumptions. Overall, the theory of change approach worked well and clarified thinking within this complex programme.

Key Lesson – Theory of change clarifies expectations

The TOC approach coupled with a specific expectations document took some elements of an approach championed by IDRC called Outcome Mapping. While these approaches can be applied to ‘standard’ projects, they are particularly useful for experimental and complex programmes such as CATIA. They can enable the team to clarify what outcomes they expect and what they expect to happen both within the project and as a consequence of the project – outlining the variations that may or may not happen without having to commit to the contractual conditions of a logical framework.

An outcome of the TOC process was a key insight by the media component that they would have to adapt their working practice to the country context – this was a contributing factor to its positive performance. A simple example is that the types of issues that groups can lobby on depend on the political sensitivities of the country.



Outputs or Outcomes

A focus on outputs rather than overall impact may have compromised the flexibility required by CATIA members to respond to events and to fully exploit the capital available in the team. The CATIA team were encouraged to deliver outputs. Most of the impacts, however, have occurred where individuals, Champions and networks responded to windows of opportunities that opened up.

Key Challenge – Balance demands for performance with opportunity

The balance between delivery of products and reports, vs. funding people to network more generally is a difficult challenge but one that needs to be faced.

For instance, an opportunity arose in Ghana although this country was not in the CATIA work plan. A key initiative by CATIA funded personnel had a particular impact that contributed to the Purpose of CATIA. Towards the end of 2004, GISPA (a Champion involved with CATIA) negotiated reduced cost access to SAT3 fibre with Ghana Telecom, saving 50% in the tariff. GISPA’s agreement with Ghana Telcom represents the first time a party outside of the group of original investors has been granted access to SAT3 fibre, and provides an example for ISPs in other countries where international gateways are monopoly controlled.

Key Lesson – right people at the right time

Policy making is a ‘messy process’, into which CATIA has delved. Experience indicates that it remains down to individuals, who may be influenced in different ways – some may rely on evidence and research while others may be influenced by their peers through networking activities. A lot of

the value of the programme is in identifying the right people to support (those key individuals). Building capacity of these individuals (and institutions) has yielded results. Country specific politics are clearly an important feature, for example the team faced a reluctance in Nigeria to open up community radio. Political context (including the legal framework) also determines the extent to which advocacy can be effective e.g. successful reinstatement of the CCK board in Kenya as a result of advocacy. It is likely that the right person being in the right place at the right time is most important, and programme investment needs to be flexible to accommodate this.

Policy making training

Most stakeholders thought CATIA was an ICT programme, even though much of the work was attempting to influence policy. Many of the implementing agents did not have a background in advocacy and lobbying, and there was a need at the start for training and capacity building on how to influence policy making.

Stakeholder mapping

A more complete stakeholder analysis at the start of the programme might have allowed the components to target their work more comprehensively. Although each component maintained its own contacts database, and the programme attempted to keep a live contacts database, it was clear the programme was struggling to map the stakeholders. Several attempts were made by programme management, and with hindsight a lesson learned would have been to have a stakeholder mapping workshop. A stakeholder analysis at the start of the programme (and then as an ongoing activity) is key for policy making processes.

“At the start of CATIA, I would have been pleased if just half of the components (in what was, essentially, an experimental programme) were successful and had a real impact. We have come in well above this level. CATIA has been more successful than even I expected”

DFID programme manager

Key Challenge – Clarify the capacity needs of the programme

Effective policy advocacy and lobbying depends on a clear understanding of stakeholder relationships. If CATIA had recognised that policy advocacy and lobbying was a theme throughout the programme, they could have looked at and built on research into ways of influencing policy. RAPID (www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/) and IDRC research on policy making are two examples amongst others. A systematic training of the CATIA team might have enabled them to have a more cohesive approach and to be ‘working from the same page’.

Branding decisions and multi donor interests

CATIA decided not to have too strong a brand and to ensure cooperation and harmonisation with other donors. Examples of the beneficial cooperation that resulted included the following;

- Research ICT Africa (RIA provided some key research), funded by IDRC.
- IDRC provided key publications such as the satellite coverage maps (VSAT).
- USAID supported the NetTel ICT policy and regulation network, which was a key agent in the work of CATIA,
- Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden, in its support for Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) also enhanced the Africa wide discussion of IXPs.

Perhaps most importantly it should be recognised that Acacia, an IDRC programme, laid many foundations for CATIA, and that IDRC also laid the foundation for the multi-stakeholder processes in Kenya. The synergy among donors is due, to a large extent,

to the willingness of DFID to cooperate. DFID also encouraged programme partners to cooperate with others. The comparatively low branding of CATIA probably helped with cooperation, although opportunities to honour other donors were missed.

Key Lesson – Cooperation not competition Donor harmonisation and cooperation is worthwhile – CATIA has many synergies with programmes supported by other donors, and this common approach has enhanced impact.

Key lesson – Long-term view

Policy making and change can take a long time; impact may, therefore, be evident long after CATIA (this was recognised at the outset of the programme). A number of initiatives (and donors) may have contributed to a process of change.

The CATIA programme was intended to exert influence in the longer term. It was conceived as a 7-year programme, and even then, policy work takes such a long time that impact was only expected to become evident in the long term.

An example of the long-term view:- as yet there is no community radio in Nigeria, despite the efforts of the project. This has been attributed in part to the high registration fee imposed by the government. However, the government appointed a community radio policy drafting committee (on which people supported by CATIA served), which reported in December 2006 – all the signs indicate that at some point in the future, community radio licences will be issued as proposed by the committee.



Implementation

Strong management

Due to the planning history, the programme was set up as nine ‘components’. Two of these components accounted for approximately a third each of the programme budget. An overall logical framework was setup, but one which spoke of ‘components’. The focus on ‘components’ combined with the preparation history of each component meant the programme started with a ‘silo’ mentality. Each component was commissioned through Champions, and many Champions wondered why they had been brought together with the other components. To further muddy the waters, a management contract was set up to manage six of the nine components. The remaining three components had their own ‘internal management’ and were answerable more directly to DFID.

The strong management discipline provided by the management consultants for the six components has been instrumental in ensuring outputs were delivered by a mix of institutions with a range of management capacities.

Key Lesson – Complexity needs management

The engagement of programme managers (Atos Consulting) was key to ensuring delivery of outputs and a measure of communication throughout the programme, both horizontally and vertically. The project management capacity of many of the partners was quite weak initially, and it is unlikely that coherent reporting would have been achieved without the contracted management.

Building trust – Face-to-face

Many components experienced difficulties when relying on electronic means of communication. Extra money had to be invested in building trust and collaborative relationships through face-to-face meetings. E-debates may attract good participation, but respondents are self selecting in their willingness to enter into email discussion; it has proven more difficult to engage with specific individuals. A great deal of time and money was expended in promoting collaborative working through quarterly CATIA management meetings because building relationships and understanding is essential for collaborative working – but it involves cost.

Key Lesson – There seems to be no substitute for face-to-face meetings

Influencing policy makers depends on face-to-face meetings and many of the CATIA impacts seem dependent on key individuals networking at the right time in the right place (windows of opportunity). This was an important lesson. There seems to be no substitute for face-to-face meetings.

The i-team, for example, experienced resistance from some members of CATIA during the initial stages of their work. Likewise, one component experienced resistance to electronic communication from some of its target stakeholders in the initial stages. In both cases the resistance was significantly reduced after a face-to-face meeting (one component lead said that “after visiting Ethiopia, the policy makers started answering emails”).