



Sandra Roberts

'Supporting Community ICT
Projects in the SADC Region'



Current Situation



- CINSA's definition of a Community ICT initiative (CICT): Is a community-level initiative / project that provides broad access to the benefits of ICTs to support community development”.
- The trend is towards cross-over of technologies and incorporating many into one initiatives.
- CINSA membership open to: community ICT projects such as telecentres; community radio stations, MPCCs, CMCs, etc.; ICT-related networks; ICT-related research organisations and training institutions.

Current Situation

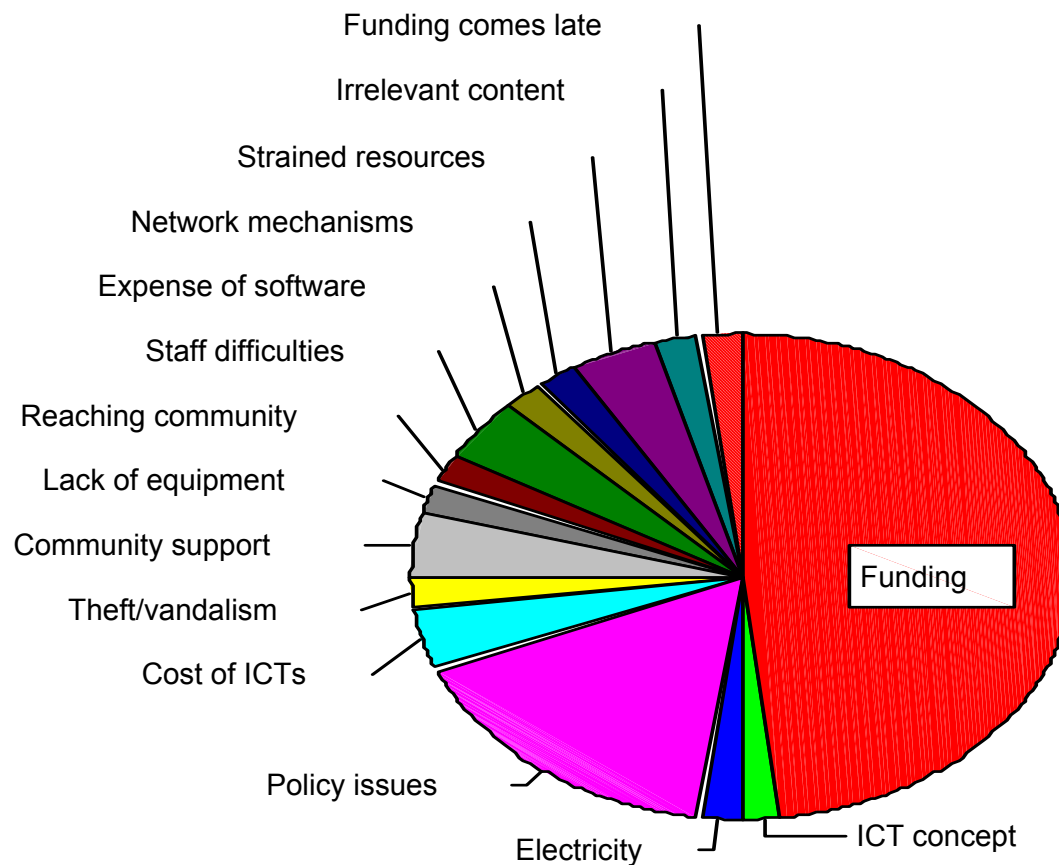


- CINSA partners include: donors, ICT service providers, regulatory bodies and non-ICT networks (e.g. NGO networks).
- Rationale: Community ICTs struggle to survive alone
 - High connectivity and equipment costs
 - Lack of necessary skills and technical support
 - Parts or consumables unavailable

Current Situation



- Key problems experienced:



Current Situation



- Financial sustainability
 - Many set up through donors (national, int'l) and required external funding
 - 52% exclusively donor-funded
 - Many had plans (charging for services, marketing, other donors)
 - Initiatives do not necessarily have the skills to handle finance

Current Situation



- Training & staffing issues
 - 76% said they needed training
 - Computer skills, operational, management
 - Skills gap & skills retention – often skilled people leave

Current Situation

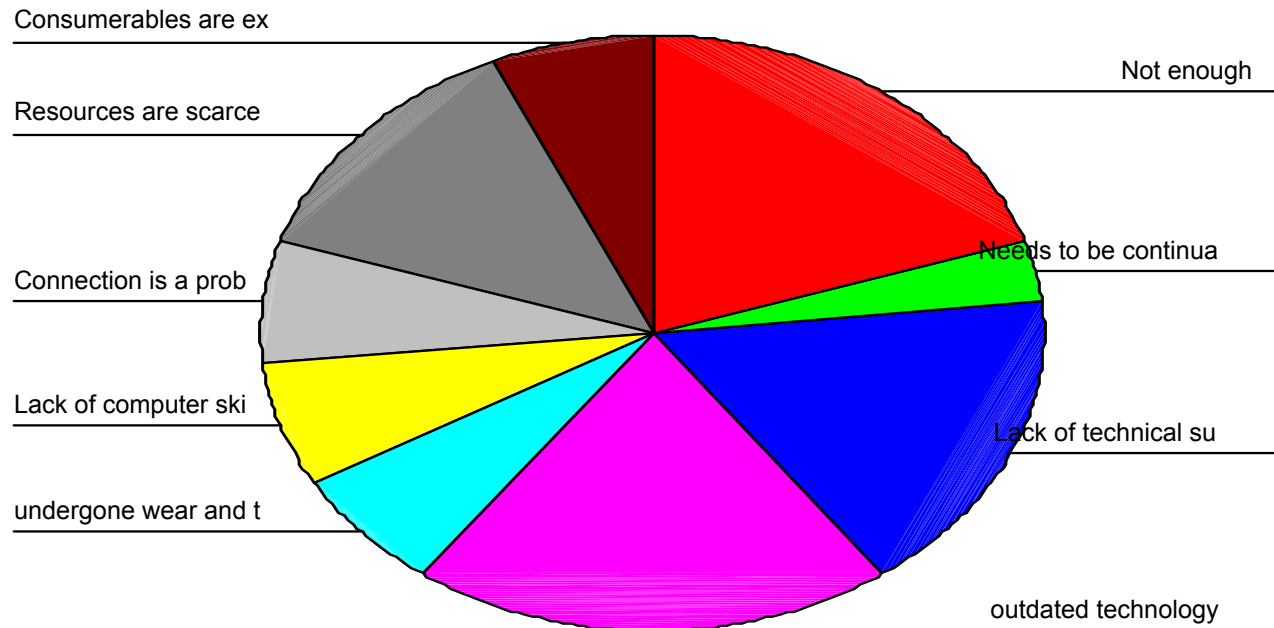


- Technology and Equipment
 - 6% said equipment was greatest problem
 - Equipment not sufficient for their needs
 - Technology worn & outdated
 - Technical support lacking (esp. in rural areas)

Current Situation



- Key Technological problems



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Current Situation



- Policy & stability issues
 - Lack of govt & legislative support
 - Major problem for 17%
 - Esp. in Zimbabwe
 - Community issues
 - Lack of understanding on the role of ICTs

Current Situation



- Gender situation
 - Not specifically addressed in research
 - Many women responded to survey, but from NGOs with attached ICT projects
 - Experience has told us that initiatives tend to be male-dominated
 - Social imbalances already existent - more illiterate women
 - Social exclusion of women is very evident in CICTs
 - Few CICTs have specific gender initiatives

CINSA – mission and objectives

Support network for existing and new community **'ICTs for development'** initiatives in the SADC region

Objectives (short-term):

- Conduct research: eg. case studies, best practices, technology options
- ✓ Develop information resources to assist community ICT projects with project management issues, such as sustainability
- ✓ Facilitate training for regional organizations / community ICT projects
- ✓ Develop CINSA into a regional 'brokerage service' for community ICT projects
- ✓ Interaction and cooperation with other regional + international networks

Supporting CICTs



- Supporting CICTs through a multi-pronged approach to complex problems
 - Advocating around policy and cost issues
 - Skills enrichment through:
 - Training
 - Skills exchange programmes
 - Consultants
 - Offering experience-based advice and expertise
 - Online enrichment tools, and later on to other platforms

Supporting CICTs



- Technical solutions such as low-cost computers and software, as well as
- Encouraging a research-based culture through:
 - Collecting ICT research and making it available on the website / portal
 - Providing research tools
 - Encouraging and building local research capacity
 - Enabling in-country networks to perform grassroots research which can feed into larger, comparative projects
 - Locally-relevant information collection and distribution through radio and other media forms

Supporting CICTs



- Sensitisation of community, in terms of:
 - Gender issues and empowering other marginalised groups
 - Establishing needs of community and how to use ICTs to address them
 - Enabling the community to find their own voice through the tools of ICTs
- And finally, sustainability:
 - Creatively drawing together the above mentioned issues for sustainability
 - Assistance with proposals and business plans
 - On-line tools / modules / best practices
 - Case studies and peer-to-peer problem solving

Supporting Women



- Solutions?!?
 - Increase gender sensitivity (women are not necessarily gender sensitive)
 - Engage women both as users and workers
 - Must be part of an overall gender strategy in communities
 - There is talk of women using ICT to sell goods, but the practical levels of this is unknown

Key Benefits



- Region-wide knowledge and expertise
- Harnessing the intra-network experience of members and partners
- Discounted rates for specific service providers and consultants
- Recommendations and hands-on support for funding / donors
- Publicity for members in the form of database and case studies
- Opportunities for capacity building in terms of training and research
- Coming soon: CDRoms of offline resources and products mailed periodically to members



Currently

- CINSA has a lively website with tools, resources, research, gender and ICT pieces and ICT news
- Database of CICTs, ICT practitioners and ICT service providers ready but unpublished
- You can contribute by emailing information for our website, contact numbers for CICTs and service providers and issues to advocate around community ICTs
- You can join CINSA as a member if you are a CICT, no fees are currently payable
- You can sponsor the network through donations or offering service at discounted rates

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Achievements

- Database of CICTs, ICT practitioners and ICT service providers ready but unpublished
- Online publishing space for CICTs
- Community ICT newsletter 'community informatics'
- Lubombo Community Multimedia Centre proposal development
- Training with Brokomo Women's Agriculture
- Helping in the establishment Belhar telecentre in
- IXP research
- Regional workshop last year
- Established regional nodes for regional perspective and advocacy

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Thank you

To join, contribute to the network or for enquiries
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