

ISOC-CG FINAL REPORT

Introduction

ISOC Congo was one of the chapters which were funded through the first funding project round of 2007. We submitted two projects and one was retained and funded. The retained project was the one the title of which is 'Information about Internet and capacity building on how to use Internet, in three localities in Congo'.

The chosen localities had one common characteristic: They are far from the two big cities of the Country in which the major ICT related activities are held. As our country lacks efficient communication and transport infrastructures, we decided to give opportunities to three localities which are distant to one another, to be open to and through the world. We then chose Dolisie, Impfondo and Ouesso as cities in which we would conduct our project.

The project was nationwide. We experimented some circumstantial difficulties in the process of the project, due to the unavailability (lost of Internet access) of the second locality Impfondo and then the third Ouesso. Face to this situation, we chose Nkayi another locality instead of Ouesso; as in Nkayi a private had just set up an Internet access network. Few days later, Oyo (another locality, in the north of the country) had been connected to Internet, and we then chose Oyo as the 3rd locality.

To date, the project has already been completed in the all three planned localities Dolisie, Nkayi and Oyo. In each locality, the lectures and training activities were done and ISOC local club set up.

The coming lines clearly show how the project have progressed by presenting the undertaken activities, pointing out some lessons learnt and presenting the total financial situation as well.

Description of the undertaken activities

Dolisie was the first town where we began to perform the project. As the major locality among the three, the biggest job was then in this town.

We managed to put together separated beneficiaries of all social groups (civil servants, women, students, youngsters, peasants, tradesmen and disabled people) to form our audience.

In Dolisie two activities were undertaken. The information phase consisted in informing participants upon Internet related-issues. We use the powerpoint means to make presentations on the theme: 'Information society: stakes and opportunities'. The Internet was presented on its technical and operational aspects and as a development tool as well. The process of WSIS and Internet governance were also explained to the audience. People were

surprised to know that they were unaware of much information on Internet related-issues. Exactly 52 various questions were then asked to lecturers to further understand about Internet, the level of its integration in our country, how it can really help to achieve development needs, how things are going at international level and about ISOC as well. In each locality, after the lectures some groups were constituted for the hands-on phase planned to be holding the next days according to the agenda and schedule made for the circumstance. In another hand in Nkayi, two days after Dolisie we duplicate the same lecture, “speech” and the enthusiasm seemed to be the same.

The second phase consisted in the capacity building step; during which we trained a cross-section of people on how to use Internet. This phase was very attractive and tiring as well. On one hand the trainers were very content to teach to enthusiastic people about the utilization of Internet, on the other hand we had to face some eccentric situations: for example someone does not want to leave the turn to another just because of fascination by what he/she was performing through that “magic and crazy thing”. We occupied all the three local cybercafés in Dolise and the sole of Nkayi and Oyo. ISOC chapter members mainly served as instructors. In Oyo, we use the internet café site of Office Congolais de l’Informatique (OCI), and local trainers of OCI were enthusiastic to help as trainers during the training activity.

The following notions had constituted the training program according to the documentation designed for this purpose:

- Basic notions on how to use a computer for those who had never use it.
- Creation of an e-mail address for each attendee. Each tried to send, receive and reply mails with others.
- Browsing on some known URL (www.isoc.cg, www.congopage.com, www.isoc.fr, www.rfi.fr ...
- Using research engines, mainly Google, to look for web links leading to specific information.

The third activity was the creation of the local ISOC clubs. It was done on a voluntary basis, almost all trainees and some of those who only took part in the lectures activity.

For each locality, we appointed one member as the leader of the club. Each club planed to have it first meeting generally on Friday the next week, and this was done so. We encouraged the ISOC local members to be enthusiastic and active and reassured them our availability to assist them.

The team of the project left the localities at that step, and bought some utilization-times from cyber cafes so that attendees individually could make more practices on the use of Internet.

As handled in the interim report, we have experienced a long delay to complete the project due to difficulties we faced to fund a third locality. The last part of the project held in Oyo have had many others particularities:

- A greater number (27) of ISOC members leaving in the capital traveled to Oyo
- The local authorities were very involved in the project. The first authority of Oyo Town gave an interesting speech to open the event before to launch the lectures activity.
- Oyo phase attracted many local people as in the two previous localities. People were very surprised and excited to learn that the Internet is an important and the necessary tool.
- ISOC-CG gave one fellowship to the locality for one local pupil to study in ECES high teaching school for 2 years in ICT field. This fellowship only covers the academic fees.
- The administrator of Oyo requested ISOC-CG to provide him with a computer, as he did not have any in his administration.

Performance against the goals of the project: Discussion

The project had a number of targets to reach in term of the number of persons to inform and train upon Internet. The following table presents those goals and indicates its level of achievement to date.

N0	Activity	Target	Result to date	Difference
1	Inhabitants to be informed	600	620	+20
2	Group to be trained	50	50	0
3	Trainees to be select as trainer	34	37	+3
4	Local ISOC clubs to create	3	3	0
5	Inhabitants to be trained	300	189	-111

This table reveals how the project has gone on in term of obtained results against the initial goals. The lectures activity have channeled and interested a great number of people in all three localities. We would like to point here that people who participated in these activities came from various situations, social profiles and different ages as well. Here (line 1) we have a gap of 20 persons who was been informed upon Internet related-issues. As underlined in our project overview, this step is very important for a person who doesn't know what Internet is, and how it can change their lives.

The time we took for each locality to hold our information campaign was underestimated. More days of informing people should have channeled additional participants on the lectures and consequently more people for the training activity.

The target of the number of persons to be trained for the hands-on activity was set to 50. In the first two localities, 44 persons had been trained, and 8 additional have been completed in Oyo. In the three localities, we have extracted 34 over 50 trainees to serve as trainers of other local potential people who need to be trained upon the use of Internet, including those who did not participate in the lectures phase.

The project had planed the setting up of the local ISOC club in each locality. Hereupon, 3 clubs have been set up, one in each locality exactly as it was planed. The Oyo Isoc club

decided to organize a local training in the days to come. They promised to subscribe as Isoc global members after that meeting.

The project had planned that the 34 trainees should form, at the end part of activities, in respective locality 300 others inhabitants in the use of Internet. In fact this activity was going on under the supervision of the ISOC local club committee which had to mobilize new persons to be trained. As seen on the table above, only 189 people have been trained to date over the 300 planned by the project. The gap in line 5 of the table is surely due to the beginning difficulties. As trainers we trained could not mobilize sufficient new learners, we could take that as the beginning stammering and we are sure to make them fulfill their mission even after the project time.

Outcomes and achievements

- People have discovered what Internet really is and learnt for the first time that Internet is a development tool, and it is a tool which is designed for everyone. They were ignoring so far the impact of Internet on their lives and how it can help them to solve their development needs and expectations as well.
- People have joined the Internet community
- Something has changed in the comprehension of nowadays stakes and many new people have become stakeholders of the information society process.

Lessons learned & Disappointments

- Internet is not known by the most part of the people, even by those who should know and use it such as teachers, nurses, students...
- There is a group of people who is interested in the results obtained through Internet but is not interested to use Internet by itself. It is the case of many people who request to send/receive e-mails and skype communications by only seeking to turn to somebody.
- We would like to evoke the issues on finding alternative funding. As a matter of fact, Internet is not very well known here, the decisioners do not really master all the stakes related to this tool and it was not easy to find local partners so that to match the finance needs. But we struggle as we could and obtained something after many difficulties from our local partners.
- The quality of connection and thinness of the bandwidth were the two major disappointments. In Oyo, the big dish you can see in pictures has only 256k/64 K as the total bandwidth for 17 computers!

In sum we are proud of performing such a project as we noticed that people were seriously interested and very enthusiastic once they have discovered Internet and are eager to become permanent Internet users if the access could be guaranteed for all and if the prices are rather affordable as well. We think that we have a serious problem of access in the Country, and

hope that Congolese people will also be counted among the next billion to be reached through ICT infrastructures in the forthcoming days.