411

Unganisha:
An Assessment of Results
and Effectiveness

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Acknowledgments

Contents

Executive Summary

Unganisha was funded as a project by IDRC to extend the Centre's connectivity to its projects and facilitate collaboration between projects, between IDRC program initiatives (PIs) and program officers, and between different groups within the Centre. This end-of-project evaluation was designed to determine the reach and effectiveness of Unganisha within both the Centre's research community and the Centre itself.

Opinions and feedback were collected using both email questionnaires and interviews from 29 project recipients, 42 Centre staff (interviews and questionnaires), 5 help-desk operators, and 19 users of ITrain materials.

Contributions

The Unganisha project has made important contributions to both IDRC and the recipients of Centre funds. For recipients, support was provided in the form of subsidies for Internet connections, technical advice, training, and assistance from help desks. Unganisha was highly valued by recipients because it responded appropriately to their needs, delivered support efficiently and effectively, and was a dependable source of informed advice and opinion on information and communication technologies. There is overwhelming support among recipients for continued help, not so much with connectivity, but to make better use of the facilities they now have.

Within IDRC, Unganisha has played a pioneering role with respect to the introduction of new methods and tools of communication such as the development of the Intranet, the testing and introduction of IPass roaming services, the facilitation of listservs, and the use of computer conferences. Centre staff appreciated the fact that Unganisha undertook experiments with regard to such things as smaller computers for use in the field and video conferencing for communication among PI members, and they believe that this type of experimentation should be continued.

Factors contributing to success

The location of Unganisha within the Programs Branch was crucial to the project's success. Because it was a project, Unganisha enjoyed the flexibility and funds necessary for both experimentation and innovation. As a result, Unganisha was able to purchase its own server and look into problems related to external access to email, work on the development of web-to-email services, experiment with video conferences, test the appropriateness of small computers for field use by IDRC staff, and purchase and test new software to determine if it might be useful to IDRC or its recipients. Although there was potential for conflict, the relationship between MIS and Unganisha has been positive. MIS retained its traditional support role, and Unganisha undertook research, which it could do because it had discretionary funds, and shared the results with MIS.

Unganisha staff were also an important reason for the success of the project. They combine technical expertise in Internet technologies with development experience, and are recognized for having listened to people's needs and suggested appropriate solutions, rather than simply pushing a specific technology or software solution.

Ongoing needs

Centre staff have come to look to Unganisha for technical advice on Internet technologies and the use of these technologies to promote improved communication and more collaborative working arrangements. Regional Office staff have more limited access to resources for advice and assistance and are unsure as how to best provide such advice to recipients. Although staff are prepared to include funds in projects for ICTs, they believe there remains a need for technical advice and training of the type provided by Unganisha. Staff also recognize that the Centre must remain at the forefront of thinking and practice about the use of ICTs for development. Unganisha has pushed some innovation within the Centre and has become "a focal point to reflect on issues and problems and an important part of the ferment of thinking in IDRC about ICTs and their use." IDRC staff believe it is important to find some way to retain both a source of technical advice and a focal point for debate within the Centre.

Other considerations

Unganisha could have been better publicized both within the Centre and to IDRC's project recipients. A relatively high number of program staff and project leaders know little about Unganisha or what types of assistance it might provide. Lack of promotion may also have limited the impact and effectiveness of the ITrain materials and the help desks.

The ITrain materials received praise, but to date they have had limited use in training programs. There was support for making these materials available in French and Spanish, and suggestions were made of other topics that should be the subject of future modules. However, before further investments are made, more research would be needed to determine if there is a real need, to understand how the materials have been used to date, and to determine if further revision is needed to make them more effective.

The concept of help desks is an example of Unganisha having the funds to experiment with an idea (in this case one proposed by AfricaLink). Although there have been some problems with the initial implementation, the idea of developing local resources that can provide assistance to project recipients was seen as an idea worth further consideration. Rather than focusing on connectivity it may be more useful for future efforts to be oriented to providing guidance and assistance on making decisions about how to use ICTs to solve specific problems encountered by recipients. The approach would be more to support "mini-Unganisha" resources that could help recipients solve specific problems, not simply provide technical connectivity advice.

Future needs

Most program staff, as well as recipients, have accepted electronic communication as a key element in effective program delivery. However, there remains a need to help people evolve their thinking with regard to the use of ICTs. This evolution is likely to go from the use of email, to dissemination and collection of information using the Internet, to collaborative group work. The introduction of email was considered a good entry point for promoting the IDRC philosophy of networking and knowledge sharing in current IDRC projects, but more work remains.

The demand for group work and the tools used for lists and conferences is likely to increase substantially in coming years. Centre staff expect that the use of lists and conferences will lead to

concerns about filtering of information and acceptable and appropriate behaviour in the use of listservs. They believe that IDRC must be prepared to make investments to work more effectively itself and provide appropriate advice to its research partners.

Centre staff suggested that future needs will arise with respect to the use of ICTs to connect researchers to their constituents and to more fully integrate these technologies into research methods. Unganisha was thought to be in a position to take leadership in such areas.

Introduction

Unganisha is a Swahili word that means connectivity and also conveys a sense of unity. The two words connectivity and unity reflect the objectives of the Unganisha project, which was approved by the Board of Governors of IDRC in late 1996 and started on 1 March 1997. To realize its objectives, the project sought to both extend the network of the IDRC's connectivity to the projects it funds and to facilitate collaboration between geographically diverse projects, between IDRC program initiatives (PIs) and program officers, and between different groups within the Centre.

Unganisha worked with IDRC grant recipients by offering direct financial and technical support to get project teams connected to the Internet and by providing training in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and in the publishing of documents on the World Wide Web.

The project also tried to improve the ability of both IDRC program officers and project leaders to communicate while in the field by offering technical advice and support to improve communication and information collection and dissemination among various organizations and institutions. Within IDRC, Unganisha helped PIs to use electronic mail, computer conferencing, and Web-based collection and dissemination of information. It also looked for ways to facilitate and promote information flow among all Centre staff who had access to electronic mail and information-based resources.

In conducting its affairs, Unganisha worked with various entities within IDRC. These groups included, but were not limited to:

- Management Information Systems (MIS) — to ensure that the project's technical direction was complementary to MIS's strategic direction;
- Internet Working Group (IWG) — to ensure that the project's development of Web-based information conformed with standards and practices developed by the IWG;
- Bellanet — to ensure that the project's development of connectivity information around the world were complementary to efforts being made at Bellanet; and
- Acacia and Pan Asia — to determine if small connectivity initiatives might be geared to their grant recipients.

The Unganisha project was designed to have a finite life and is scheduled to come to an end in mid-1999. Because the project was coming to an end, it was judged prudent to conduct an end of project review to determine what the project had accomplished and what impact it might have had on both IDRC and its project recipients.

Objectives and Methodology of Evaluation

This evaluation had two objectives:

- to examine the effectiveness of the Unganisha project in meeting its objective of enhancing the electronic communication and networking capacity of Centre-supported recipients and partner institutions in developing countries; and
- to examine the relevance of Unganisha within the Centre

To achieve these objectives, the evaluation was designed to determine the reach and effectiveness of Unganisha within both the Centre's research community and the Centre itself.

Separate questionnaires that could be administered by electronic mail were developed and pretested to obtain information from project leaders, IDRC program staff, help-desk providers, and users of ITrain materials. Modified questionnaires were sent as well to two external contacts (USAID-AfricaLink and SangoNet) to solicit their views.

Interview guides were developed and pretested to obtain information from IDRC staff (the occasion of the Open Program Meeting was used to interview Regional Office staff). In total, 19 interviews were conducted with Centre staff. The questionnaires and interview guides are provided in Appendix 2.

Questionnaires were sent electronically to a sample of IDRC project recipients and program staff. Before the questionnaires were sent, the Unganisha Project Officer sent a message to all of the people who were to be surveyed to advise them that they would be receiving a survey and encouraging them to take the time to reply. The questionnaires were translated into French and Spanish for the Project leaders, and into French for the IDRC staff and for the help-desk providers. Lists were compiled by Unganisha staff, who provided email addresses for those who were surveyed. These surveys were initially sent out 19 April, and replies were requested by 27 April. Problems were encountered with some of the email addresses, so email questionnaires were sent out over about a 7-day period as valid addresses became available. In addition, Unganisha staff sent surveys by facsimile to several IDRC project contacts who did not yet have email connections.

The questionnaire developed for the ITrain users was posted to appropriate mailing lists by Unganisha staff to solicit input (this questionnaire had a potential audience of several hundred to these mailing lists).

Organization of Report

This report is divided into three parts. The **Results**, which provides the data collected in the study, the **Discussion**, which reviews the findings of the study in relation to its terms of reference, and the **Conclusions**, which summarizes the major conclusions of the evaluation and suggests areas that may require follow-up by the Centre. The **Appendices** to the report include a list of those people who provided input to the study, the questionnaires and interview guides used in the study, and terms of reference for the evaluation.

Results

Table 1 presents information on the total number of questionnaires sent out and the number of responses received. The overall response rate was 32% to the questionnaire (57 replies to 180 questionnaires, excluding ITrain questionnaires). In total, 104 questionnaires were sent to project recipients and replies were received from 29 (28%). Program staff received 64 questionnaires and responses were received from 23 (36%). Five responses were received from the 12 questionnaires that were sent to Help Desk providers (42%).

Nineteen interviews were conducted with Centre staff. Included in the sample were senior IDRC management, staff working in Secretariats, program officers (based both in Ottawa and Regional Offices), members of the Advisory Committee on Information Management (ACIM), the Internet Working Group, and the Unganisha Advisory Panel, and other users of Unganisha services within the Centre. Two different interviews guides were used depending on the type of interaction Centre staff had had with Unganisha. A "detailed" guide was used for the seven program staff who had received direct assistance (either personally or for their projects); a "general" guide was used for the other twelve Centre staff who had had less direct interactions (see Appendix 3) .

Number Receiving Support
Of the 29 project recipients who replied to the questionnaire, 15 said they had received support from Unganisha, 9 said they had not, and 1 reported that he did not know whether the project had received support from Unganisha. The number of "recipients" who reported that they had not received Unganisha support was quite high (35%) considering that the list of contacts was provided by Unganisha. It is not clear why this is the case; however, it is possible that they were unaware that any assistance they might have received from IDRC had come specifically from Unganisha.

Table 1.   Distribution and responses to email questionnaires.

	Language	Sent by email	Sent by fax	Rec'd by email	Rec'd by fax
Project Leaders	English	61	9	17	3
	French	34	4	5	—
	Spanish	9	—	4	—
Program Staff	English	49	—	21	—
	French	15	—	2	—
Help Desk	English	7	—	3	—
	French	5	—	2	—
ITrain	English	—*	—	19	—

* potential audience of several hundred on electronic lists.

Table 2.   Types of support received from Unganisha by recipients and IDRC.

	Subsidies	Technical Advice	Training	Help Desks	Services	Publications
Recipients*	12	6	4	3	3	0
IDRC	10	17	9	6	6	4
Total	**22**	**23**	**13**	**9**	**9**	**4**
IDRC (not applicable or don't know)	5	3	6	6	9	8

* 9 of 26 recipients said they had not received support from Unganisha.

Input from IDRC program staff on support received from Unganisha was obtained by both email and interviews. In total, twenty program staff reported that they had received support from Unganisha, 8 said they had not, and 2 did not know if they had. The services provided by Unganisha were used almost equally within IDRC and for Centre-supported projects.

Types of Support

Table 2 shows the forms of support recipients and IDRC staff reported to have received from Unganisha. The responses from IDRC staff include assistance provided within IDRC as well as to Centre projects. Of the two most common forms of assistance, technical advice was used both within IDRC and projects; however, subsidies were more often provided directly for projects. In some cases, program staff thought there may have been some assistance, but they had no feedback from either the researchers or Unganisha.

Subsidies

Project recipients reported that subsidies were most often used to purchase and install equipment and software such as: computers (both workstations and servers), printers, scanners, modems, telephone lines, and browser software. As well, subsidies were used to pay for the costs associated with making connections to the local Internet service provider (ISP) and paying the monthly fee for connections. In one case, project support established a connection for a scientist at a distant research station. Other project staff reported more on how they were using the technology and how it was changing how they worked. They cited examples such as: enhanced connectivity among three NGOs in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania; improved communication with IDRC and other international organizations; and improved communication with other network members as well as the coordinating secretariat. These improved linkages were responsible for allowing network members to easily consult on issues, access research information, seek further information on technology, and better market their institution.

Program officers said that subsidies were used to provide initial access to ISPs to allow project staff to communicate easily with IDRC and with other network members and therefore be able to submit project reports and research papers as well as participate in discussions. After the initial hookups were established, program staff said that the institutions were expected to assume these costs on an

on-going basis. One program officer reported that subsidies from Unganisha had allowed a network consisting of 15 nodes to become established in East Africa; another noted that a subsidy was used to experiment with electronic conferencing.

Technical Advice

Technical advice allowed recipients to: evaluate and select the most appropriate software for their needs; operate Internet and email communications; obtain local advice on which type of computer equipment to buy and where to get the best price; and create networks to share database information using email and the Internet. As a results, they felt they were better equipped to gather information, establish links with international agencies, and understand both the potential and limitations of Internet and email.

IDRC program staff sometimes have little feedback from projects on technical issues related to the use and implementation of information and communication technologies. Their main concern is that email works, because this makes communication with the project much easier. Advice from Unganisha was used both to help recipients and change IDRC's own operations.

Centre staff reported that their projects had received advice from Ungnaisha on: how to create websites, technical information about computers and modems, the types of server and workstation needed to establish a network, and information on the costs and problems likely to be encountered in establishing a network. This advice had allowed them to determine what was needed to bring project participants on-line and into international discussions with other network members; encourage project staff to use the technology in their routine operations; and establish a web-based archive for correspondence, which helped overcome difficulties encountered in sending files through email.

Internally, Unganisha's advice was credited with changing how staff work because it had tested and introduced IPass roaming services and also provided assistance to help staff setup and use this service properly.

Program staff noted the value this internal source of technical advice, which is provided by people who understand how IDRC works and have technical skills and work experience in developing countries. Program officers believe the Centre must retain the expertise necessary both to advise projects directly and to identify and hire local consultants to provide the needed advice. A Centre resource that understands both the technology and development issues, has connections to local expertise and services, and can stay current with evolving technologies is considered important by program staff.

Training

Project recipients reported that Unganisha had helped staff learn to operate computer systems, to gather information, and to use email communication. As well, training (along with associated training materials) in webpage design has allowed recipients to create their own websites. One respondent reported that the training had shown him how to use email and that now he was able to

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train other researchers. Another respondent said that he planned to use the training materials on the Unganisha website (ITrain publications) to develop training manuals for community use.

Within projects, program staff mentioned that training had been very useful both to provide specific instruction, but also "open people's eyes" to what was in fact possible with the new communication technologies. Specific examples of how Unganisha had helped included: arranging for the local ISP to provide training to project staff; paying the fee for the trainer and also the per diems of projects staff from an Africa-wide network to stay for a few more days following a project meeting to obtain Internet training; and testing and using ITrain materials for Internet training sessions. The training supported by Unganisha was said to have allowed groups of researchers to become involved in network communication, increased the use of the Internet for networking, lead to the creation of project websites, and improved email communication with IDRC and other network members. In one case, the training demonstrated how to organize connectivity within a network and with others outside the main network. Assistance in this case included both local help to get connected as well as provision of links to help desks that were being established. One program officer noted that an intern in his PI had received some very useful training from Unganisha.

Help Desks
Only two recipients provided additional comments on help desks. One person said that the help desk had been useful for on-going support and for trouble-shooting email problems; however, the other said that although they had access to this service, they had not used it because they were conversant with basic email and Internet use.

IDRC staff, in most cases, did not know much about help desks or that they even existed (in one case the program officer knew one existed but thought it was not yet up to speed). One program officer noted that help desks should be able to provide continuing support for problems that were not foreseen in training sessions.

Services .
With regard to the services provided by Unganisha, one recipient noted that these services had facilitated the exchange of messages among colleagues, another noted that they could now identify useful websites, obtain relevant information, host a website, and participate in network discussions. These are very similar to the benefits attributed to technical advice, and suggest that recipients did not distinguish between the two. No mention was made specifically of the web-to-email server or the hosting of websites.

Program staff noted that Unganisha had hosted websites, helped with mailing lists, and provided web-to-email services. One program officer was very pleased with the direct assistance he had received from Unganisha to design and establish a website for his project. The site was originally hosted by Bellanet, but is now on the IDRC server and has been active since April. This site includes two bulletin board for input from users and captures the data that are entered using Cold Fusion software. Another program officer noted that he had received Unganisha's assistance to setup three separate listservs and has found these to be a very useful complement to ongoing network activities. In particular, they have been useful for getting input from donors, coordinating donor action, and trying to influence policy. IDRC staff also mentioned that Unganisha had helped coordinate

electronic conferences, which were reported to have worked well. Assistance from Unganisha included help with establishing the conferences as well as distribution of information on how to start and conduct conferences.

Publications

None of the project recipients indicated that publications had been a form of assistance they had received from Unganisha, although the Unganisha–Bellanet publication *From Workplace to Workspace* was specifically mentioned in the questionnaire. Two people did mention printed material in connection with training. *From Workplace to Workspace* was distributed in English, French, and Spanish.[1] In English, 1250 copies were published (190 sold and 657 distributed free); in French, 1000 copies were published (125 sold and 150 distributed free); and in Spanish 500 copies were published (16 sold and 167 distributed free). It is not clear why none of the recipients selected publications given this rather wide distribution. Perhaps they associated the book with IDRC rather than with Unganisha.

Only one program officer who replied to the email questionnaire specifically mentioned support in the form of publications. He cited the book *From Workplace to Workspace* as an excellent source of information on electronic mailing lists, and indicated that he planned to establish a mailing list using the books's guidelines. Although the level of knowledge of publications was a little higher among the staff who were interviewed, (most staff knew of *From Workplace to Workspace*), they had not used this book or the other ITrain materials. One program officer who had considerable dealings with Unganisha was not aware that Unganisha had produced publications or in fact that Unganisha even had a website.

Other Services

Under the category of "other," one recipient mentioned that assistance had been received to translate the institution's webpage. One IDRC program officer was pleased with a critical review of a project proposal he had received with regard to connectivity in his areas of program expertise. He valued the intellectual input he received as "extremely useful."

Quality and Relevance of Support

Two approaches were taken to try to rate the "quality" of the support provided by Unganisha. IDRC staff were asked how well Unganisha had responded to their information and communication needs as well as those of their projects (Table 3). Project recipients were asked to rate the support they had received from Unganisha in terms of how well it had helped them access research information, disseminate research results, and collaborate and network with others (Table 4). The overall level of satisfaction with the support received was very high (average of 4.6 over all types of support received by both recipients and IDRC program staff).

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[1] Distribution figures provided courtesy of Beryl Scrivens, Distribution Manager, IDRC Books.

Table 3. Program staff rating of how well support from Unganisha responded to the information and communication needs of them and their projects (based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not well" and number 5 "very well").

	Technical advice	Subsidies	Training	Help desks	Publications	Services
Program Officers	4.4	4.5	—	5.0	4.0	5.0
Projects	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.3	5.0	5.0

Table 4. Rating by project recipients of the support received from Unganisha (based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not well" and number 5 "very well").

Support provided to:	Average rating
Access research information	4.2
Disseminate research results	4.0
Collaborate and network	4.8

Recipients who reported that they had used the assistance to **access research information**, noted the increase in both the volume of material available to them and the new sources that they could now tap. These new information sources were used in ongoing research activities, for the writing of research papers, and to access research information from around the world.

Fewer examples were given of the use of Unganisha support to **disseminate research results**. Examples that were given included easier exchange and revision of research reports, increased use of email to disseminate information on ongoing research and the documents that were available (with the result that more students, individuals, and agencies were contacted and bought their publications), expedited communication of research findings (but still limited because not all colleagues had connectivity), improved ability to announce conferences on the Internet and through listservs, and the ability of projects to benefit from the resources available from other institutions in the network.

Collaborative work involved consultation with project advisors, discussions and exchanges among network members, and the contribution of information from each participating institution to the website (which was said to help each institution, as well as others outside the network, to know about the capabilities of each organization).

The IDRC project recipients were also asked whether the support they had received from Unganisha had been appropriate to their connectivity needs. Thirteen of the sixteen (81%) thought it was; the others were unsure. Nobody reported that the support had been inappropriate. IDRC staff noted that

their recipients had been able to gain Internet access and create websites. They also noted that the assistance had been provided in a timely way and that Unganisha staff had been very supportive and willing to work with recipients to find solutions that best addressed their needs.

Positive and Negative Aspects

Project recipients and program officers were given a chance to indicate what aspects of Unganisha had worked well and what required improvement. The overall feeling of project recipients was that the project had been positive. In addition to indicating that the establishment of physical connections and training in the use of email had worked well, the respondents pointed out that it was important that the project had been quick to respond appropriately to their needs and had been a very useful source of informed advice and opinion.

IDRC staff generally felt that almost all aspects of Unganisha had been positive. They credited the project for forcing people in IDRC to think in different terms about information and communication technologies and for helping to introduce new things to the Centre. Overall, there was a feeling that the Centre had recognized that connectivity was needed and Unganisha had taken the appropriate steps to make it "routine." Unganisha was seen as a catalyst that had speeded up this process and introduced the Intranet, IPass, listservs, and electronic conferences to the Centre. Initially, they suggested, these tools may be more important for IDRC than for the recipients, but they anticipate they will be increasing important to project staff as they become more familiar with how to use the tools they have recently acquired. In addition, the development of training materials and the experimentation with help desks were cited as positive contributions.

Program staff also praised Unganisha for its provision of equipment and the speed with which connections were established. Staff also reported that the training that had been supported by Unganisha had been very good and that they valued the technical input and advice they had received. As well, staff liked the high level of interaction that took place and the receptivity, availability, and understanding of the people working in the project. As an example of how this assistance had helped, one Program Officer pointed out that the links that had been established allowed a network member to make submissions to a publication that was being produced. The support received from Unganisha was described as "indispensable" to completing such work in collaboration with the project recipient.

The main negative comments related to the fact that more support was need for projects but could not be provided because of limited funds and people. In addition, it was suggested there may have been some imbalance in the attention given to some recipients. Others suggested that Unganisha should have been better at publicizing it efforts because some IDRC staff, as well as recipients, may not have been aware of the services that were available. Even some IDRC staff who used Unganisha were not aware of everything (such as the publications and help desks). Three program staff reported that they did not know enough about the Unganisha project to reply. Some staff suggested that more training should have been provided on how to access research information and to establish collaboration and contacts with other researchers.

Within MIS, there is a concern that MIS will inherit some things that may cause problems after the project is wound down. For example, the Unganisha server is running under Linux and this may

present future problems with licencing and upgrading because this is not part of IDRC standards. As well, MIS felt that perhaps it should have provided "more technical discipline" to some of the software and hardware choices made by Unganisha.

Need for Further Support

All but one of the project recipients who received Unganisha assistance believe there remains a need for such support. Although a few suggested the need for continued subsidies for connections, most project recipients now see a need for help to make better use of the facilities they now have. They mentioned the need for continuing technical input and advice on technology and websites to improve what they now do and for constructive feedback on their efforts to date. Training was cited as important in such areas as how to access information, manage networks, produce publications and training materials, improve cooperation and communication with others, and manage electronic conferences.

Eighty percent of IDRC program staff who were contacted felt that there was a continuing need for the type of services provided by Unganisha. Some of the reasons given to continue support included the need to help recipients participate in discussions both with donors and other project members. It was also suggested that there remains a need in Africa to promote connectivity, train researchers, and systematically introduce new communication technologies into IDRC's way of working in Africa.

Centre staff have differing views about the need for additional support of the type offered by Unganisha. Some feel that Unganisha's first priority of "connectivity" is taking care of itself, others still think that there is a need for some assistance. It was suggested that perhaps Unganisha should summarize its experiences to date with respect to connectivity by preparing a set of materials that could be used by both program officers and project staff who are tackling the task of becoming connected.

IDRC program staff indicated broad support for the Centre continuing to stay current about technical developments in information and communications technologies and experimenting with and testing different tools that promote collaborative work.

Future Priorities

Future Unganisha-type support was seen as "especially important" given the fact that IDRC is increasingly encouraging all of its projects to participate in networks. It was also suggested that the Centre as a whole needed to be prepared to work even more in a networking environment and to embrace more advanced uses of the Internet and Intranet. Opinions varied on how this "service" could be accommodated — through a strengthened ACIM, by continuing Unganisha in some way, or by contracting such services from Bellanet. However, there was agreement that this "unit" would function most effectively if it was located within the Programs Branch.

Project recipients and IDRC staff made several suggestions for future priorities. These have been grouped into: technical advice; reconnaissance; testing; internal communication; innovation; and marketing and promotion.

Technical Advice

There is a strong feeling among program staff that there remains a need to provide advice to projects and PIs on their ICT needs and how these tools can be properly integrated into program development from the start. It was suggested that the Centre continues to need a central location for current information on ICTs and advice on connectivity and the use of technology. As expressed by one staff member: "if anyone or anything I am dealing with needs connectivity, I now know where to go — Unganisha."

Centre staff believe this central location for program-related advice must be located in the Programs Branch because MIS staff have different priorities and lack the opportunity to travel or obtain developing country experience. This function as a "knowledge broker" or a "clearinghouse for information" and was generally supported by all staff who were interviewed. Program staff reported that they now depend on Unganisha for assistance with connectivity and how to use Internet technologies and are not sure how they will manage after the project ends.

Reconnaissance

To ensure that the Centre keeps itself well informed about advances in information and communication technologies, staff suggested the need for continuing reconnaissance both within the Regional Offices and in Ottawa to monitor technology, recipient needs, and opportunities to collaborate with other institutions and donors working in similar areas. Most program staff recognize that they do not have the background or knowledge needed to monitor developments in ICTs. One person summed up these feeling by suggesting that "IDRC needs a program officer for electronic connectivity."

Staff believe that networks are a priority (as a mechanism of information delivery and sharing). Therefore, IDRC must be on the forefront of these technologies to understand them and to advise its research partners on how they can be used. The introduction of ICTs (starting with email) provide an entry point to promote IDRC's philosophy of networking and sharing. Staff also pointed out that these inputs are sustainable because institutions grow to value the advantages they bring and continue to invest in them after the IDRC project ends.

Testing

IDRC staff place a high value on the testing of new hardware and software that was undertaken by Unganisha and recognize that this speeded the finding of practical solutions. In comparison to MIS, which focuses on infrastructure as its first priority, Unganisha was able to look forward and advocate change. This sentiment was expressed as: "it is important that the Centre retain an entity to provide a research and forward-looking function for staff."

Priorities for the future were suggested to relate to ensuring that the Centre maintains a mechanism for continued experimentation with new technologies as they apply to programs and projects and also to the conduct of business by the Centre itself. For example, staff suggested that there remains a need to help create local capacity to assist project recipients and it was recognized that the help desk idea might be a reasonable approach if further developed.

In particular, staff expect that as project staff obtain more experience with ICTs they will want to broaden their use of these tools from simple email to include experimenting with ways to disseminate research findings by using websites and stimulating greater dialogue through listservs and electronic conferences. To be in a position to promote such technologies, staff feel that IDRC needs to continue to be at the forefront in testing appropriate tools and techniques, and they believe Unganisha has filled this niche very well.

Internal Communication

Concerns were raised about how the Centre can make the Intranet work effectively. It is a priority for Centre management to ensure that Regional Office staff and Regional Directors become more directly involved in decision-making in the Centre. Further enhancement of the Intranet is considered one way to achieve this goal, and this is likely to become increasingly important as the Centre institutes the new 18-member program committee that was discussed at the recent open program meeting (OPM). Program staff are also looking for ways to improve dialogue among PIs and believe that Unganisha should continue to experiment with such mechanisms as video conferencing.

Innovation

Program staff also see a future role for Unganisha in exploring how ICTs can be used to connect researchers with their clients in the communities with which they are working. In essence, staff see that connectivity is only a start not an end. What is now required is continued innovation to improve how people communicate and interact — "the cultural stuff not hard technology stuff."

Program staff recognize that Unganisha has also led to innovation within the Centre (for example, IPass, Intranet, and trials of smaller computers for use by Centre staff). They believe this innovation must continue and are concerned about losing this resource within the Programs Branch.

Marketing and Promotion

More than one-third of the recipient who had received support from Unganisha reported that they were unaware of this fact. As well, several program officers were unaware of what services Unganisha provided, or were not aware of the full range of services. Although this does not diminish the impact that Unganisha has had, it does suggest that more information needs to be made available to both recipients and program staff. Some program officers found it hard to answer most questions in the questionnaire because they lacked specifics about the support provided. "I found the people in Unganisha excellent, but I do not have all the information (or in some cases any) about what Unganisha actually provided for my project. In a couple of cases I was copied in some of the correspondence, so I know. But I think they did a lot more than I am aware of." This suggests that more effort needs to be made to provide feedback on the support provided.

Those Who Did Not Receive Support

The respondents who did not report using Unganisha services were asked why. No one reported that Unganisha was not relevant to their needs. However, three said they did not know what services Unganisha provided and two were unaware of Unganisha. One respondent stated that they already had enough knowledge and did not need Unganisha.

Of those who reported that they had not received support, a few offered explanations. In one case, the respondent reported meeting with Unganisha staff to discuss their needs and determined that Unganisha could not help them. However, this person reported that the linkages that were created with IDRC were useful and were being continued. Another respondent had just received the grant letter and therefore had not officially received support. In another case, delays within the institution had meant that physical connections were yet to be installed; therefore, potential collaboration with Unganisha was delayed. In one case, the respondent reported that he was unaware of the project, but wanted to obtain additional information on how his institution could benefit.

Program staff who reported that they had not used Unganisha services were asked why not. Two said the support was not relevant to their program needs, one said he did not know what services Unganisha provided, and one said she already had enough knowledge for her needs. Four others offered other explanations: lack of time to take advantage of the services; new to the Centre and it took some time to understand how Unganisha could have been useful; Unganisha was over committed early on, so he did not pursue; and finally one program officer reported that he would have liked to use Unganisha services but could not because they were limited to IDRC recipients and could only be used for old projects.

Asked if they had anything else to add, one program officer expressed his feeling that there had been little information available within IDRC about the project and that it should have been much more closely associated with the other information programs in the Centre. He also questioned whether it was possible to attribute increases in connectivity to Unganisha or to the general rise in connectivity (in Africa, for example). He did offer that a case could be made that Unganisha was a catalyst to some degree, but wondered at what cost to the Centre. Other comments suggested that Unganisha was a good initiative, but that it would have been better to have clearer terms of reference and updates on availability of services. Finally, one program person suggested that although his program did not use Unganisha directly, discussions with Unganisha staff had been valuable, as had the availability of some of its resources (such as the web-to-email server and selected publications).

Help Desks

Five replies were received to the help-desk questionnaire. Four of the respondents reported that they had established a help desk with assistance from Unganisha, the fifth said the help desk was in place prior to the project.

Of the five help-desk respondents, all reported that they solved problems clients encountered, and three each responded that they monitored the status of the connectivity of their clients and provided training. Under the category of other types of assistance, one help-desk provider noted that he had installed new software, designed new network plans for LANs, and helped with project proposals. Another noted that often the problems were related to the telephone lines used to make the Internet connection.

Support provided

The help desk providers were also asked to indicate the areas in which their clients most often had problems. There was little difference in the reported frequency with which clients had difficulty. Problems related to encoding and decoding attachments were the most common, followed by hardware-related problems and difficulties in sending and receiving email. Making connections to the ISP and accessing information via the Internet were the least common.

Overall success

Asked to rate the success of the help desks on a scale of 1 to 5 with the number 1 representing "not successful" and 5 representing "very successful", the providers of these services rated them on average as 3.2. Asked what the biggest problem was with the help desks, responses ranged from none to the expression of a need for closer coordination and greater attention to contract issues and the need for more training of help desk operators. The operator who pointed to the need for more training noted that it is necessary to develop this expertise in-house because such skilled labour is hard to find. This operator also pointed out that he felt that the biggest weakness with the help desks was determining when the clients were having difficulty with their email.

Another respondent felt that help desks are not exhaustively used because once the ISP is chosen as a help desk, it might not be the same ISP the beneficiary is using. She also felt that the kind of service that the help desk was supposed to give was narrow and therefore most people might not use it. In her opinion, it would have been better if the help desk gave help on such issues as configuration of a mail server, administration of a Linux/NT server(s), and network security issues. She continued that this was a more challenging service, but that it would also help the researchers to have an in-depth knowledge of connectivity issues and help them evaluate the best alternatives to various hardware and software issues. Her opinion was that the current set up of the help desk would achieve little in terms of integrating the new information technology with ongoing research and that therefore information technologies will remain foreign.

With regard to the biggest successes of help desks, respondents indicated client interactions. For example, they were able to respond quickly to problems and provide a place where clients could turn for technical support because often vendor support is almost non-existent. In addition, one help-desk operator suggested it was a good opportunity to help IDRC grantees better understand their needs and the usefulness of connectivity beyond basic email.

Need for further support

All five respondents suggested that help desks were still needed for IDRC project recipients, although one also responded that for most more routine things support should no longer be needed. Some of the expected needs related to continuing problems caused by computer crashes and the unreliability of local telecommunication systems. One of the help-desk operators took a broader view of long-term needs. He suggested that there is continuing need to provide advice and assistance related to new innovations in information and communication technologies. He went on to say that in his country (in Eastern Africa) the average IDRC grantee still has no real understanding of how to make effective use of these technologies in their work areas. To keep pace with new innovations, he felt that project recipients will require assistance beyond the challenges that remain with respect to sustained connectivity (such as bad telephone lines and choice of ISPs) and publishing on the web. He suggested that Unganisha still had a pivotal role to play in packaging training and other support materials such as the ITrain publications.

Asked if they had anything else to add, two of the operators suggested some areas for improvement. One of the suggestions related to the need to maintain ongoing dialogue with Unganisha. He felt that it was not enough to sign the contract and then only correspond whenever there was an "event." He also thought that the Unganisha help-desk listserv needed to be better moderated. Another help-desk provider noted the need to develop good relationships between the help desk and its clients. Once these relationships are established, and a degree of confidence is created, he suggested that clients would turn to the help desk whether the problem was related to hardware or software.

ITrain Materials

In total, 19 people responded to the ITrain questionnaire. Of these, 16 reported that they had heard of the ITrain materials and methodology. However, of these 16, only 5 had used the materials for training purposes. Three of these people had used the materials for self-training as well as for training others; the other two had used the material in their training activities for others. Under "other" uses of the material, one user reported that within the network she was working with, the other partners had used pieces of the training manuals to put together training sessions on the Internet and web-page development. She reported that the participants appreciated the fact that the materials were available for free.

Usefulness

Those that had used the materials for training were asked to rate their usefulness on a scale of 1 to 5 with the number 1 representing "not useful" and 5 representing "very useful." Those who used the materials for self-training gave them an average rating of 3.7; those who used them to train others gave them an average rating of 4.0. One person noted that some trainers who used the materials ignored the exercises and made up their own instead. Another respondent who had not used the materials directly, reported that he had made heavy use of them in designing a syllabus for a development organization. He reported that he had gone through both the instructors notes and the student manuals and found the coverage to be wide enough and the approach to be very interactive.

Positive and negative features

The respondents were asked to indicate what they thought were the best and worst part of the materials. The things that were liked were the inclusion of exercises and evaluation sheets to gather feedback. The format was also praised, as was its attention to gender issues and the provision of information on how to prepare for a training workshop. The clarity and smooth progression from topic to topic were considered to be well thought out and to be good for both students and teachers. In this regard, the materials were judged to match the learning curve of the participants and to allow them to proceed at a comfortable pace.

The criticisms of the materials were limited and were really requests for broader access because the materials were only available in English. One person had translated them for use in Spanish, but this had taken a long time to do and to prepare a course based on them. Another hoped they would soon be produced in Spanish and French. Another noted that for the training she was undertaking, participants from remote locations took notes in the local language, and ideally the training materials would also be available in their language.

One person suggested that training materials are needed that focus on the development of an information campaign. In other words, how do you develop a comprehensive communication plan or strategy using the new ICTs. Once you have designed the strategy and identified the target audiences, then you can teach the participants how to use the specific tools they need to accomplish their communications objectives. Another suggestion was that the manuals include a component that indicates how to measure the impact of implementing a campaign based on ICTs. Finally, it was suggested that the manuals can be a little difficult to recompile for individual use, and it was suggested that each new topic start at the top of a page.

Need for additional materials

There was unanimous agreement among the respondents that there was a continuing need for such ITrain materials. It was noted that these materials were unique in their approach, and that it was important that they were available for free on the Internet. These factors made the training resources accessible to interested organizations and allowed them to teach themselves about Internet technologies at a very low cost. The fact that the materials provided trainers with information on how to conduct training sessions was considered to be important, particularly because some people have the technical knowledge but need help to be able to organize this information and disseminate it effectively. The ITrain materials were thought to bridge this gap, and give both the students and the teachers a sense of direction when they are using the materials.

Asked if they had anything else to add, respondents encouraged further work on the materials and several took the chance to suggest other topics for the series, such as: Windows 98; the new versions of Internet Explorer and Netscape; the suite of Microsoft Internet products; and hardware upgrades. It was suggested that there was a need in the training materials to give both the pros and cons of various options. For example, in the module on email solutions the training materials should point out cases in which various solutions might be most applicable. Often, it was suggested, lack of knowledge of existing products can lead researchers to make the wrong decisions. Hardware choices were also an area where this person thought more information could be given. For example, information on various kinds of modems and processors and their differences in terms of performance could be highlighted. It was also noted that it was useful to focus on software that could be downloaded for free, such as Eudora and Netscape. Others indicated their intention of continuing to use and adapt the materials for training they were planning, and commented that the materials were conceptually sound, thorough, and well presented.

Discussion

This section is organized on the basis of the terms of reference under which the study was completed (see Appendix 4).

Unganisha's Reach and Effectiveness Within the Centre's Research Community

Connectivity assessment
It is difficult to confirm how many researchers the Unganisha project provided assistance to on the basis of the data collected in this study. Not all project or program staff who were contacted replied to the questionnaire. In addition, project recipients who had supposedly received support reported that they had not received support from Unganisha. IDRC project officers also were often unsure whether, and to what extent, their projects had received support. However, according to Unganisha's records 181 IDRC projects have benefitted from some direct form of support from Unganisha during the life of the project. This includes projects where some form of financial support was committed on their behalf, whether in help desks, training, subsidies, or other form of support. It does not include projects that received technical advice only.

Support received
The project recipients who participated in this study most often received support from Unganisha in the form of subsidies for Internet and email access. This was followed by technical advice, training, assistance from help desks, and receipt of services from Unganisha. None of the respondents selected publications as the form of assistance they received, although two people mentioned printed material in connection with training.

Project staff gave consistently high ratings of how well Unganisha's support had allowed them to access research information, disseminate research results, and collaborate and network. However, an equal number of respondents indicated that these uses of the information and communication tools they now had were "not applicable." This may indicate that many of the recipients are limited either in access (or experience) to email and have not yet explored more "collaborative" uses of their connectivity. More work may be required by IDRC to help and encourage project staff to explore additional uses of the technologies they now have access to.

Changes due to Unganisha support
Unganisha's support was credited for such things as enhancing connectivity among a network of NGOs in Eastern Africa; improving communication between recipients and IDRC as well as other international organizations; and improving communication and coordination with a secretariat. As a result, project staff reported that network members could now consult on issues, access research information, seek further information on technology, better market their institutions, and extend the reach of their network to outside organizations and individuals.

Response to needs
More than 80% of the respondents felt that Unganisha had responded appropriately to their connectivity needs. Credit was given to Unganisha staff, who were reported to be very supportive and willing to work with project recipients to find the best and most appropriate solutions to the problems they faced. The support was as well very timely and allowed institutions to gain access to the Internet and create websites.

Success and failures
Respondents were very positive about the project. In addition to indicating that the establishment of physical connections and training had worked well, respondents pointed out that it was important that the project had been quick to respond appropriately to their needs and was a very useful source of informed advice and opinion. The ITrain materials were also considered to be very useful because they were made available for free and provided a broad overview of the Internet and allowed trainers to focus on local needs.

The most common concern was that the project could have made additional resources available. In addition, project staff suggested that training should include how to access research information and establish collaboration and contacts with other researchers. Some project personnel who received support suggested that they might have been better informed about the support that was available to them through the project. Five of the seven project staff who said they had not received support from Unganisha reported that they either did not know what services were provided or were unaware of Unganisha.

Effect of terminating project
More than 90% of the respondents felt that they would continue to need the type of support offered by Unganisha. However, only a few felt that this support would have to take the form of subsidies for connections (the most commonly reported form of assistance to date). The majority of project staff feel that the assistance they need now is related to making better use of the facilities they now have. This assistance includes technical advice and constructive feedback on websites, training in how to access information, manage networks, produce publications, improve cooperation and communication with others, produce training materials, and manage electronic conferences.

Unganisha's Reach and Effectiveness Within the Centre

Support to program staff
Just as in the case of project staff, the data that could be collected in this study make it impossible to quantify the number of IDRC staff who received support from Unganisha. Although questionnaires were sent to all program staff who were not being interviewed, only 22 of 64 replied. Of this sample of staff, half reported they had received support either for themselves or their projects. Support was about equally divided between internal IDRC assistance and project assistance.

Input from both the interviews and the questionnaires indicates that technical advice was the most common form of support received from Unganisha. This was followed by subsidies for Internet and email access, and training. Assistance in the form of input from help desks and specific services provided by Unganisha were the next most common. Publications were mentioned least often.

Unganisha has had a clear impact on the way that IDRC staff communicate. By helping establish basic connectivity, program staff reported that it is now much easier to communicate with project staff and to exchange reports and other correspondence. They suggested that initially this may have been given more importance by IDRC, but that project staff have grown to appreciate this new tool and look forward to making greater use of it.

IDRC staff also pointed to the benefits they now received from having access to email while they travel and recognized the value of the experimentation that Unganisha had undertaken with regard to IPass. Program Officers have also started to make greater use of listservs to share information among themselves and also with project staff and representatives of other donor organizations. These listservs have been established in Ottawa and Regional Offices. Electronic conferences have also become more common and are being used by some program staff for discussions. Websites have also been created with assistance from Unganisha and used both to publicize projects and to share information among network members. In at least one case, a website is being used as a vehicle to collect research data.

Program staff also point to the creation of the Intranet at IDRC and the major contribution made by Unganisha. This has changed the way that information is circulated and made available throughout the Centre. The Intranet is being used to post administrative information, staff news, and increasingly will be looked at as a way to increase dialogue and input on program issues with Regional Offices.

Unganisha has responded to the information and communication needs of program staff in at least two ways. First, Unganisha is seen as providing an essential research or experimentation function that is needed within IDRC. Staff do not see this occurring anywhere else in the Centre and attribute the introduction of IPass, listservs, and software such as Cold Fusion and Inside-Out, to the fact that Unganisha was in the Programs Branch and had the "freedom" to undertake trials. Program officers also suggested that it was important that Unganisha was taking the lead in looking ahead to the use of smaller computers for use during official travel and testing video conferencing. Second, Unganisha has provided essential advice and assistance with regard to existing technologies and software and how they can be used. Program staff who lack sufficient expertise depend on Unganisha for advice for themselves and their projects. They do not feel they have the needed expertise themselves to advise project staff on hardware or software choices, and often feel they need assistance as well to identify local consultants who can assist projects.

As the Unganisha project winds down, there is some difference of opinion among staff as to what effect this will have. Program officers who have expertise and experience in information and communications believe that connectivity issues are largely taking care of themselves throughout the developing world. Less technically oriented staff tend to feel that there will continue to be a need to help some institutions establish connectivity, and they are concerned about where such advice will come from in future. Beyond basic connectivity, staff believe there is a role for IDRC to inform institutions about new technology developments, facilitate the creation and maintenance of listservs, and support training. They also see a need for IDRC to maintain contacts with other donors to enhance collaboration and develop a roster of local consultants who can be called on to provide

advice. They place a high value on having this kind of consultation service "in-house." The help-desk concept was thought to be a good idea in principle, but one that requires refinement.

Beyond the advice that is provided to staff and projects, Unganisha has developed a reputation for undertaking tests of potentially useful hardware and software. This is an area that Centre staff think has been very useful and would like to see continue in some way. This forward-looking function is considered important because it helps introduce new ideas to the Centre. As the Centre and its recipients embrace networking, staff believe that IDRC must maintain a close eye on developments on the technology and related software that will facilitate such "group work." In particular, staff anticipate that there will be rapid expansion in the tools that will be available for such collaborative work using both the Internet and the Intranet. To evolve its own use of these tools, as well as advise and assist recipients, IDRC needs to be current and knowledgeable. Unganisha is seen as the source of such input now, and staff wonder how this will be provided in future.

Support to Program Initiatives

It is difficult to separate the impact that Unganisha has had on individual staff from the impact it has had in Program Initiatives. Unganisha has catalyzed the introduction of email, listservs, and the use of websites as ways to enhance collaboration and communication within PIs and between PIs and the projects they support. Program officers reported that they benefitted from more frequent and easier communication with project staff and from the easy exchange of reports and other project documents. In some cases, email had allowed members of networks to jointly write papers and other research reports much more easily and quickly as well as coordinate the planning of network activities such as workshops. PIs that have adopted these ways of working look forward to making even greater use of them in the future. Staff that were interviewed suggested that such communication methods where now considered routine and part of the way that program officers and PIs now conduct business.

Support of Centre management

Unganisha has made a significant (but originally unplanned) contribution to the Centre by taking the lead in the creation of the Intranet. In essence, 6 months of Unganisha staff time were used to facilitate creation of the Intranet. This special project was designed to provide senior management with the information they require for decision-making. Staff who were interviewed believe that this has been a major step forward for IDRC and noted that for the first time the open program meeting was open to everyone not just program staff.

Concerns were expressed about how to make the Intranet an effective tool for communication. Staff suggested that someone was needed to take the lead in making this work. As well, there is a need to ensure that such documents as trip reports, travel plans, information on workshops, and project information memoranda, are posted in a way that makes the information easily accessible. Management priorities include the need to engage Regional Office staff, and in particular Regional Directors, in policy and program discussions and decisions. For this to be effective all staff require easy and rapid access to the same information. Organized electronic discussions have been used to float ideas and gather reaction, but it has often been hard to get dialogue established. A future priority for Centre management will be a reserved space for electronic discussion among the newly created Program Committee, which will constitute about 18 people.

Collaboration with other Centre groups

Unganisha has had varying levels of interaction with different groups that are involved with information and communication activities within the Centre. Perhaps the most significant for the Centre has been the collaboration that has occurred with MIS. Unganisha has provided something that MIS was not able to do — undertake research into evolving trends and technologies. MIS does not do this type of research as it is outside its mandate and MIS staff have little developing country experience. As a result, Unganisha has filled a void for IDRC and has been able to push for innovation. This research function was welcomed by staff both in MIS and other parts of the Centre and has changed how the Centre works (e.g., IPass, Intranet, listservs, and websites). The only concern expressed by MIS is that Unganisha may leave behind a legacy of unsupported hardware and software and that MIS will be expected to support these "non-standard" items in future.

Unganisha has worked with the Internet Working Group to provide advice and institute standards for IDRC's web presence, and reported to the Advisory Committee on Information Management with regard to the development of the Intranet.

There are many common interests shared between Unganisha and Bellanet and as a result a considerable degree of interaction has taken place. This has taken the form of such joint activities as development of a web-to-email server, collaboration on the development of a subset of XML for use by development agencies, and coordination of such things as software purchases by pooling knowledge about available software and its capabilities to meet Centre needs. There is also a common interest in expanding the use of new information and communication tools to facilitate the exchange and delivery of information and enhance collaboration in electronic workspaces.

Collaboration with Acacia and PAN has been somewhat limited, in large part because the staff and recipients are more knowledgeable about ICTs. Reported collaboration with Acacia was limited to occasional identification of local consultants, and Acacia staff indicated that there was no overlap in their mandates (Acacia focusing on research and Unganisha on connectivity) so there is little opportunity for interactions and collaboration. More collaboration took place with PAN. PAN helped with the establishment of a help desk in South Asia, and has recently collaborated with Unganisha in Latin America to help develop local capacity by collaborating in training in such areas as website design and networking. PAN staff also reported that they have interacted with Unganisha staff on an individual level because they have "a development orientation and competence in Internet technology" and have promoted ITrain materials and help desks to recipients. Interactions in Africa have been limited because PAN does not support projects in this geographic area.

ITrain Materials

These training materials were considered to be an important contribution by those who had seen and used them. However, few people reported that they had actually used them either for self-training or for training others. They were praised because of their developing country orientation, gender sensitivity, thoroughness and range of topics covered, the exercises and evaluation sheets that were included, the guides for trainers, and the fact that they were available for free.

Users would like to see the materials available in French and Spanish. As well, they suggested other topics that should be covered in future manuals: how to design an information campaign based on ICTs, how to evaluate the impact of ICTs, Windows 98, newer versions of Eudora and Netscape, Microsoft Internet products, the choice of various hardware options and the advantages and disadvantages of various choices, cold-fusion technology, and electronic commerce.

It is not clear why the materials were regarded so positively, but were used to such a limited extent. This may be due in part to their newness, and in part to a lack of promotion. Publications were the least often mentioned form of support received from Unganisha. Nonetheless, respondents to the email questionnaire encouraged Unganisha to continue development of such materials.

Help Desks

The help-desk operators who replied to the survey reported that the IDRC recipients they worked with had the most problems with encoding and decoding attachments to email. Hardware-related problems and difficulties in sending and receiving email were the next most common problems. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with one representing "not successful" and 5 "very successful"), these operators rated the success of the help desks at a modest 3.2. Problems were said to relate to the need for closer collaboration with Unganisha, greater attention to contract issues, and a need for more training for help-desk operators.

These help-desk operators suggested a continuing need for such services, especially with respect to problems related to hardware crashes and unreliable local telecommunication systems. One African operator suggested that most routine things should no longer be needed, but that there is a real need to help project recipients by providing advice and assistance related to new innovations because "the average IDRC grantee still has no real understanding of how to effectively use these technologies in their work." Therefore, he said assistance would be needed beyond the challenges related to sustained connectivity and would need to include more advanced training (using ITrain materials).

Several IDRC staff admitted they had limited knowledge of the effectiveness of the help-desk concept, but thought that in principle it was a good idea. It was also suggested that they might be better established at universities or perhaps at training institutions. Others suggested that these entities, if they continue, should be self-supporting commercial activities that should not receive financial assistance from IDRC.

Conclusions

The Unganisha project has made important contributions to IDRC and the recipients the Centre funds. The project provided support to project recipients in the form of subsidies for Internet connections, technical advice, training, and assistance from help desks. This support was highly valued by recipients because it responded appropriately to their needs and was delivered efficiently and effectively. Unganisha was also seen as a very useful source of informed advice and opinion. The support provided by the project allowed recipients to participate in international discussions and to retrieve and disseminate research information more effectively.

Within IDRC, Unganisha played a pioneering role with respect to the introduction of new methods and tools of communication. These innovations (e.g., the development of the Intranet, the testing and introduction of IPass roaming services, the facilitation of listservs, and the use of computer conferences) were highly valued by Centre staff. As a result, staff have come to look to Unganisha for technical advice on Internet technologies and the use of these technologies to promote improved communication and more collaborative working arrangements both within IDRC and their projects. They are concerned that when the Unganisha project comes to an end they will lose this valuable resource. Regional Office staff, who have more limited access to such advice and assistance, are particularly concerned about how they will be able to advise project recipients. Although funds can be built into projects, they believe there remains a need within the Centre for technical advice and training of the type that was provided by Unganisha.

The location of Unganisha within Programs Branch was crucial to its success. Within the Programs Branch, Unganisha enjoyed the flexibility needed to take risks and had a source of funds not available elsewhere in the Centre for experimentation and innovation. As a result, Unganisha was able to purchase its own server and look into problems related to external access to email, work on the development of web-to-email services, purchase and try out new software packages, and experiment with such things as small computers staff might use while traveling and video conferencing. A Program-Branch location also made it clear that Unganisha had a program role within the Centre.

Although they were located in different parts of the Centre, the relationship between MIS and Unganisha has been positive. There was potential for conflict because Unganisha was pushing for change, but this was handled well by both MIS and Unganisha. MIS retained its traditional support role, and Unganisha undertook research, which it could do because it had discretionary funds. It therefore became the focal point in Programs Branch for informed opinion, advice, expertise, and knowledge. Some concerns do exist in MIS about the legacy that Unganisha might leave behind in terms of "non-standard" hardware and software that MIS may be expected to support in future.

A large part of the success that the project achieved can be attributed to Steve Song. He brought to the project, technical expertise about Internet technologies combined with development experience. His advice was sought both on technical issues and on how the use of ICTs could contribute to the realization of project objectives. Recipients as well as program officers noted that Unganisha staff

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listened to people's needs and suggested appropriate solutions, rather than simply pushing a specific technology or software solution.

In spite of its success, Unganisha could have been better publicized both within the Centre and to IDRC's project recipients. A relatively high number of program staff and project leaders know little about Unganisha or what types of assistance it might provide. In the case of recipients, this meant that they were not aware that support from IDRC had come from Unganisha. Even those who know about Unganisha are not necessarily aware of all aspects of the project or its resources. Lack of promotion may also have limited the impact and effectiveness of the ITrain materials and the help desks. Responsibility for this promotion cannot only rest with Unganisha staff, but should be shared by all program staff who want to improve the use of ICTs by their projects and PIs.

The ITrain materials received praise, but to date they have had limited use in training programs. There was support for making these materials available in French and Spanish, and suggestions were made of other topics that should be the subject of future modules. However, before further investments are made, more research would be needed to determine if there is a real need, to understand how the materials have been used to date, and to determine if further revision is needed to make them more effective. ITrain materials will also require greater promotion beyond the electronic world to various training and educational institutions. This promotion would need to involve users, Unganisha staff, IDRC program staff, and other donors who might also find the material useful for their projects.

The concept of help desks was considered to be good, and is an example of Unganisha having the funds to experiment with an idea (in this case one proposed by AfricaLink). Although there have been some problems with the initial implementation, the idea of developing local resources that can provide assistance to project recipients was seen as an idea worth further consideration. ISPs are not likely to be the best host for such activities because future efforts should be oriented to providing guidance and assistance on making decisions about how to use ICTs to solve specific problems rather than focusing on connectivity. In other words, future needs will not so much be for technical connections and wires, but how to use these connections effectively in the context of low-income economies. Program staff look to Unganisha to take leadership in such areas and believe that these local resource centres should provide "mini-Unganisha" support that could help recipients solve specific problems, not simply provide technical connectivity advice.

There is little doubt that basic connectivity and more advanced uses of ICTs will become more common for interactions among IDRC, other donors, and researchers. However, Centre staff suggested that questions must still be resolved with respect to more advanced networking techniques, the use of ICTs to connect researchers to their constituents, and the more complete integration of ICTs into research methods. More than 90% of project recipients also felt that they will continue to need the type of support offered by Unganisha. However, only a few felt that this support would have to take the form of subsidies for connections. The majority of project staff feel that the assistance they need now is related to making better use of the facilities they now have. This assistance would include technical advice and constructive feedback on websites, training in how to access information, manage networks, produce publications, improve cooperation and communication with others, produce training materials, and manage electronic conferences.

These suggestions confirm that most program staff, as well as recipients, have accepted electronic communication as the way they must now work. The introduction of email was considered by program staff as a good entry point for promoting the IDRC philosophy of networking and knowledge sharing in current IDRC projects, but more work remains to help people evolve their thinking with regard to the use of ICTs. This evolution from the use of email, to the dissemination and collection of information using the Internet, to collaborative group work can be quickened by interaction with knowledgeable program staff of the type available through Unganisha.

Centre staff share a concern that IDRC must remain at the forefront of thinking and practice about the use of ICTs for development. They believe that IDRC must be prepared to make investments in staying current so that it is in a position both to work more effectively itself and to provide appropriate advice to its research partners. Unganisha has pushed for innovation within the Centre and has become "a focal point to reflect on issues and problems and an important part of the ferment of thinking in IDRC about ICTs and their use." Staff believe it is very important to retain a focal point for such debate and provide guidance in evolving technologies. For example, as group work becomes more important, the availability of tools for lists and conferences will grow dramatically. IDRC staff expect that increased use of list and conference tools will lead to concerns about filtering of information and acceptable and appropriate behaviour in the use of listservs (the culture of use of the technologies) and look to Unganisha to provide leadership in the experimentation that will be required to determine the suitability of these tools for IDRC and its partners.

There is little question that Unganisha has had a positive impact on how the Centre and its recipients work and has created a niche for itself within the Centre's thinking about the use of ICTs to support development. The Centre must now decide whether to retain this resource within Programs Branch to continue the experimentation and innovation that has helped IDRC support networking among its development partners and improve communication within the Centre.

Appendix 1: Contacts

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Appendix 2: Email Questionnaires

Project Leaders

Dear:

I have been asked to undertake an end-of-project review of the IDRC Unganisha project. The goal of this project was to extend the network of the IDRC's connectivity to the projects it funds. In addition, the project sought to improve collaboration between geographically diverse projects, between program initiatives and program officers, and between different groups within IDRC.

This review is designed to determine: how well the project met the information and communication needs of IDRC recipients; and the relevance of the project to IDRC's own needs. Separate questionnaires are being sent to IDRC grant recipients and to IDRC program staff.

Your views and experiences are an important input to this study. I hope you will help by completing this short questionnaire. It should take you less than 10 minutes to complete. All replies are confidential.

Please return the completed questionnaire to me by 27 April.

Michael Graham
mgraham@achilles.net

Thank you for your assistance.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Did you receive support from the Unganisha project?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() Yes ... please answer only the questions in PART A of this survey
() No ... please answer only the questions in PART B of this survey
() Don't know ... please stop here and return the survey

PART A: FOR USERS OF UNGANISHA SERVICES

A1. What type of support did you received from the Unganisha project?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answers.
() Technical advice (e.g., advice on technology selection and implementation)
() Subsidies for Internet/email access (e.g., computer hardware, Internet subscriptions, and telephone subsidies)
() Training (e.g., workshops, one-on-one training, and training resources)
() Help desks (e.g., provision of local support for projects)

() Publications (e.g., From Workplace to Workspace, List Facilitation Guide, and ITrain materials)
() Services (e.g., Web hosting, help with mailing lists, and web to email services)
() Other (please specify)

A2. What did each of the types of support you selected in Question A1 allow you to do?

Technical advice:

Subsidies for Internet/email access:

Training:

Help desks:

Publications:

Services:

Other:

A3. How would you rate the support you received from the Unganisha project in terms of how well it helped you access research information, disseminate research results, and collaborate and network with others? Please provide a brief example.
Please place a number in the () to indicate your rating.
Rate each factor on a scale of 1 to 5, with number 1 representing "not well" and number 5 "very well".
If you did not receive support in a category, please place an "x" beside not applicable.

() Access research information. For example:
() not applicable

() Disseminate research results. For example:
() not applicable

() Collaborate and network. For example:
() not applicable

A4. Did the Unganisha project respond appropriately to your connectivity needs?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() yes
() no
() don't know
Please explain:

A5. What aspects of the Unganisha project do you feel have worked well, and what aspects have not worked well?

Worked well:

Did not work well:

A6. Do you anticipate that you will continue to require services such as those that were provided by the Unganisha project?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() yes ... please provide more detail below
() no
() don't know
What are these services, and why are they important?

A6. Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

Michael Graham

PART B: FOR NON-USERS OF UNGANISHA SERVICES

B1. Why did you not use the services of Unganisha?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() Not relevant to program needs
() Did not know what services Unganisha provided
() Unaware of Unganisha
() Already had enough knowledge for my needs
() Other (please specify)

B2. Were there specific types of assistance that you expected to receive from Unganisha, but which were not provided?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() yes ... please provide more detail below
() no
() don't know
Assistance expected:

B3. Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

Michael Graham

Program Staff

Dear:

I have been asked to undertake an end-of-project review of the Unganisha project. The goal of Unganisha was to extend the network of the IDRC's connectivity to the projects it funds. The project also sought to improve collaboration between geographically diverse projects, between program initiatives and program officers, and between different groups within IDRC.

This review is designed to determine: how well the project met the information and communication needs of IDRC recipients; and the relevance of the project to IDRC's own needs. Separate questionnaires are being sent to IDRC program staff and to IDRC grant recipients.

Your views and experiences are an important input to this study. I hope you will help by completing this short questionnaire. It should take you less than 10 minutes to complete. All replies are confidential.

Please return the completed questionnaire to me by 27 April.

Michael Graham
mgraham@achilles.net

Thank you for your assistance.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Did you, or anyone in your projects, receive support from the Unganisha project?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() Yes ... please answer only the questions in PART A of this survey
() No ... please answer only the questions in PART B of this survey
() Don't know ... please stop here and return the survey

PART A: FOR USERS OF UNGANISHA SERVICES

A1. Why did you use the services provided by Unganisha?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer. Select all answers that are applicable.
() Directly relevant to program needs
() Requested by recipient
() Directed to Unganisha by someone else within IDRC
() Approached by Unganisha
() Other (please specify)

A2. How did you use the services provided by Unganisha?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() Used directly within IDRC

() Used by one (or more) of my projects
() Used both directly within IDRC and by my projects
() Other (please specify)

A3. If some of your projects received assistance from Unganisha, please provide the names of up to three project leaders or researchers and their email addresses. (They may be contacted to obtain additional information.)
1.
2.
3.

A4. How would you rate the support you received from Unganisha in terms of how well it responded to the information and communication needs of both you and your projects?
Please place a number in the () to indicate your rating.
Rate each factor on a scale of 1 to 5, with number 1 representing "not well" and number 5 "very well".
If you did not receive support in a category, please place an "x" beside not applicable.

Technical advice (e.g., advice on technology selection and implementation)
() services provided to you
() services provided to projects
() not applicable

Subsidies for Internet/email access (e.g., computer hardware, Internet subscriptions, and telephone subsidies)
() services provided to you
() services provided to projects
() not applicable

Training (e.g., workshops, one-on-one training, and training resources)
() services provided to you
() services provided to projects
() not applicable

Help desks (e.g., provision of local support for projects)
() services provided to you
() services provided to projects
() not applicable

Publications (e.g., From Workplace to Workspace, List Facilitation Guide, and ITrain materials)
() services provided to you
() services provided to projects
() not applicable

Services (e.g., Web hosting, help with mailing lists, and web to email services)
() services provided to you
() services provided to projects
() not applicable

A5. What did the support provided by Unganisha allow you to do?

Technical advice:

Subsidies for Internet/email access:

Training:

Help desks:

Publications:

Services:

A6. Were there specific types of assistance that you expected to receive from Unganisha, but which were not provided?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() yes ... please provide more detail below
() no
() don't know
Assistance expected:

A7. What aspects of the Unganisha project do you feel have worked well, and what aspects have not worked well?
Worked well:

Did not work well:

A8. Do you anticipate that you will continue to require services such as those that were provided by the Unganisha project?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() yes ... please provide more detail below
() no
() don't know
What are these services, and why are they important?

A9. Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

Michael Graham

PART B: FOR NON-USERS OF UNGANISHA SERVICES

B1. Why did you not use the services provided by Unganisha?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() Not relevant to program needs
() Did not know what services Unganisha provided
() Unaware of Unganisha
() Already had enough knowledge for my needs
() Other (please specify)

B2. Were there specific types of assistance that you expected to receive from Unganisha, but which were not provided?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() yes ... please provide more detail below
() no
() don't know
Assistance expected:

B3. Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

Michael Graham

Help Desks

Dear:

I am undertaking an review of the IDRC Unganisha project. Part of the activities of this project involved the establishment of ICT Help Desks to provide connectivity support for IDRC researchers in developing countries.

This brief questionnaire is designed to determine the effectiveness of this approach from the point-of-view of those who implemented the Help Desks.

Your views and experiences are an important input to this study. I hope you will help by completing this short questionnaire. It should take you less than 5 minutes to complete. All replies are confidential.

Please return the completed questionnaire to me by 27 April.

Michael Graham
mgraham@achilles.net

Thank you for your assistance.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. Did your organization establish a Help Desk in collaboration with the Unganisha project?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() Yes ... please proceed to question 2
() No ... please stop here and return the survey

2. Which of the following services did you provide as part of the Help Desk?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() monitored status of connectivity of clients
() solved problems clients encountered
() provided training
() other (please explain)

3. In which of the following areas did clients have the most difficulty?
Please place a number in the () to indicate your how often your clients had difficulty.
Rate each area on a scale of 1 to 5, with number 1 representing "very rarely" and number 5 "very often".
() making connection to Internet Service Provider
() sending or receiving E-mail
() problems encoding or decoding attachments
() problems accessing information via the Internet
() hardware-related problems

() other (please explain)

4. In your opinion, how successful have the Help Desks been?
Please place a number in the () to indicate the success of the Help Desks. Use the number 1 to represent "not successful" and number 5 "very successful".

() Success of Help Desks

5. What do you think was the biggest problem with the Help Desk?

6. What do you think was the biggest success of the Help Desk?

7. In your opinion, are such services as Help Desks still required for IDRC project recipients?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() yes
() no
Please explain:

8. Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

Michael Graham

ITrain Users

Dear:

I am undertaking an review of the IDRC Unganisha project. Part of the activities of this project involved the establishment of a collaborative web-based resource of Internet training materials called ITrain (http://unganisha.idrc.ca/itrain/) that included resource aimed at both instructors and students.

This brief questionnaire is designed to determine whether your have used these training materials and how useful they might have been to you.

Your views and experiences are an important input to this study. I hope you will help by completing this short questionnaire. It should take you less than 5 minutes to complete. All replies are confidential.

Please return the completed questionnaire to me by 27 April.

Michael Graham
mgraham@achilles.net

Thank you for your assistance.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. Have you heard of the ITrain materials and methodology?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() Yes ... please proceed to question 2
() No ... please stop here and return the survey

2. Have you used the ITrain material for training?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() Yes ... please answer second part of this question
() No
If you answered yes, how did you use the material?
() For self-directed training (for your own use)
() For training others
() Other (please specify):

3. If you used the ITrain training materials, how useful were they for the training you were undertaking?
Please place a number in the () to indicate your rating.
Rate each factor on a scale of 1 to 5, with number 1 representing "not useful" and number 5 "very useful".
() For self-directed training
() For training others

() Other (please specify):

4. If you used the ITrain training materials, what do you think were the best and worst things about these materials?

Best thing:

Worst thing:

5. Do you think that there is a continuing need for such ITrain materials?
Please place an "x" within the () to indicate your answer.
() yes
() no
Why, Why not?

6. Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

Michael Graham

Appendix 3. Interview Guides

Detailed

Name:
Title:

INTRODUCTION:
I am undertaking an end-of-project review of the Unganisha project, which was designed both to extend the network of the IDRC's connectivity to the projects it funds and to improve collaboration between geographically diverse projects, between program initiatives and program officers, and between different groups within IDRC.

The review is designed to determine: how well the project met the information and communication needs of IDRC recipients; and the relevance of the project to IDRC's own needs.

Questionnaires are being sent to IDRC grant recipients as well.

GENERAL:

1. How did you first learn about Unganisha?

2. How did you first make contact with Unganisha?
() I was directly approached by Unganisha staff
() I approached Unganisha staff to ask for help

PROVISION OF SUPPORT:
Unganisha has provided several types of support. For each type of support the project has made available, I would like to know whether you have received this type of support, what this support has allowed you or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc. to do, and how you would rate the usefulness of this support.

3. Technical Advice:

Did you (or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc.) receive Technical Advice (e.g., advice on technology selection and implementation) from Unganisha?
() yes
() no
() don't know

How would you rate the usefulness of this support on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not useful" and 5 "very useful".
- ► Provided to you — usefulness:
- ► Provided to projects, Secretariat, PI etc. — usefulness:

Can you please provide examples of what this support allowed you or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc. to do, or to do better.

- ▶ Individual
- ▶ Projects, Secretariat, PI etc.

4. Subsidies for Internet/email access

Did you (or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc.) receive subsidies for Internet/email access from Unganisha?
() yes
() no
() don't know

How would you rate the usefulness of this support on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not useful" and 5 "very useful".

- ▶ Provided to you — usefulness:
- ▶ Provided to projects, Secretariat, PI etc. — usefulness:

Can you please provide examples of what this support allowed you or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc. to do, or to do better.

- ▶ Individual
- ▶ Projects, Secretariat, PI etc.

5. Training

Did you (or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc.) receive training from Unganisha? ?
() yes
() no
() don't know

How would you rate the usefulness of this support on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not useful" and 5 "very useful".

- ▶ Provided to you — usefulness:
- ▶ Provided to projects, Secretariat, PI etc. — usefulness:

Can you please provide examples of what this support allowed you or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc. to do, or to do better.

- ▶ Individual
- ▶ Projects, Secretariat, PI etc.

6. Help Desks

Did you (or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc.) receive support though help desks (e.g., provision of local support for projects) from Unganisha? ?
() yes
() no

() don't know

How would you rate the usefulness of this support on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not useful" and 5 "very useful".

    ▸   Provided to you — usefulness:
    ▸   Provided to projects, Secretariat, PI etc. — usefulness:

Can you please provide examples of what this support allowed you or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc. to do, or to do better.

    ▸   Individual
    ▸   Projects, Secretariat, PI etc. Help desks (e.g., provision of local support for projects)

7. Publications

Did you (or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc.) receive publications (e.g., From Workplace to Workspace, and ITrain materials) from Unganisha? ?
() yes
() no
() don't know

How would you rate the usefulness of this support on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not useful" and 5 "very useful".

    ▸   Provided to you — usefulness:
    ▸   Provided to projects, Secretariat, PI etc. — usefulness:

Can you please provide examples of what this support allowed you or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc. to do, or to do better.

    ▸   Individual
    ▸   Projects, Secretariat, PI etc. Help desks (e.g., provision of local support for projects)

8. Services

Did you (or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc.) receive specific services (e.g., Web hosting, help with mailing lists, and web to email services) from Unganisha? ?
() yes
() no
() don't know

How would you rate the usefulness of this support on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not useful" and 5 "very useful".

    ▸   Provided to you — usefulness:
    ▸   Provided to projects, Secretariat, PI etc. — usefulness:

Can you please provide examples of what this support allowed you or your projects, Secretariat, PI etc. to do, or to do better.

- ▸ Individual
- ▸ Projects, Secretariat, PI etc. Help desks (e.g., provision of local support for projects)

9. In your opinion, is the type of support being offered by Unganisha still needed within IDRC or within the projects, secretariats, PIs etc the Centre supports?
IDRC
()Yes
()No
()Don't know
Why? Why not?

Projects, Secretariat, PI etc.
()Yes
()No
()Don't know
Why? Why not?

10. What aspects of the Unganisha project do you feel have worked well, and what aspects have not worked well in IDRC and in projects, secretariats, PIs etc?
IDRC
Worked well:
Did not work well:

Projects, Secretariat, PI etc.
Worked well:
Did not work well:

11. If Unganisha-type activities where to be supported in future, where should the priorities be placed? (Ask to rank suggestions in order of importance.)

IDRC:

Projects, Secretariat, PI etc.

12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

General

Name:

Title:

INTRODUCTION:
I am undertaking an end-of-project review of the Unganisha project, which was designed both to extend the network of the IDRC's connectivity to the projects it funds and to improve collaboration between geographically diverse projects, between program initiatives and program officers, and between different groups within IDRC.
The review is designed to determine: how well the project met the information and communication needs of IDRC recipients; and the relevance of the project to IDRC's own needs.
Questionnaires are being sent to IDRC grant recipients as well.

1. What sort of interactions have you had with Unganisha?

2. Unganisha was to have had an impact both within IDRC (among PIs) and externally with recipients. How effective has it been? What still needed?
Internally:
Externally:

3. What is the relationship between Bellanet/ACIM/Acacia etc and Unganisha?

4. How have Unganisha and Bellanet/ACIM/Acacia etc worked together?

5. In your opinion, is the type of support offered by Unganisha still needed? In Projects? Within IDRC?

6. What aspects of Unganisha have worked well/not well?
Well:
Not Well

7. If Unganisha-type activities are supported in future, where should the priorities lie?

8. Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix 4. Terms of Reference

The objective of the evaluation is two-fold: (i) to examine the effectiveness of the Unganisha project in meeting its objective of enhancing the electronic communication and networking capacity of Centre-supported recipients and partner institutions in developing countries; and (ii) to examine its relevance within the Centre.

In the context of a general evaluation of the Unganisha project, the consultant will address the following questions:

1. Unganisha's reach and effectiveness within the Centre's research community

Through review of project documents, questionnaires, and possibly interviews with selected Unganisha-supported researchers in Africa, the following specific issues will be examined:

a. Connectivity Assessment
   i   How many researchers did the Unganisha project provide assistance to? What gaps exist?

b. What kind of support did the Centre researchers receive from the Unganisha project? How did the support break down between connectivity subsidies, capacity building/ training, and support/ helpdesks?

c. Have there been any noticeable changes for researchers as a result of the Unganisha support, specifically with regard to:
   i   Access to research information – i.e., how has Unganisha support contributed to (or expected to contribute to) enhancing researchers' access to relevant information?
   ii Dissemination of research results – i.e., how has Unganisha support impacted (or expected to impact) on the capacity of researchers to promote their research?
   iii Collaboration/networking – i.e., what difference did the Unganisha support make (or is expected to make) in the frequency and content of communication with the Centre, with other researchers, and/or with other funding agencies and like-minded individuals?

d. To what extent has the Unganisha project responded to the needs of researchers with respect to using information and communication technologies to enhance communication/networking?

e. What has worked, what hasn't? Why?

f. How will the termination of the project affect the Centre researchers currently supported by the Unganisha project?

g. What recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the Unganisha project and for ensuring the sustainability of its work?

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2. Unganisha's reach and relevance within the Centre

Through review of project documents, questionnaires sent to the Centre program staff, and interviews with selected program staff, Management, and Unganisha partners, the following specific issues will be examined:

a. The Centre Programme Staff
    i   How many programme staff received support from the Unganisha project? What kind of support? [Staff should identify support both to themselves and on behalf of their projects selecting one or more of the six categories from the Unganisha activities page. (http://www.idrc. ca/unganisha/activities.html)]

    ii Has the Unganisha project changed the way program staff communicates? How?

    iii Has the Unganisha project responded to the information and communications technology needs of programme staff?

    iv What has worked, what hasn't? Why?

    v   How will the termination of the Unganisha project affect The Centre program staff?

    vi Recommendations to enhance effectiveness of the project and ensure sustainability of its work.

b. Programme Initiatives (PIs)
    i   To what extent has the Unganisha project enhanced the effectiveness of PIs? In what ways?

c. Centre Management
    i   Has the Unganisha project affected the general flow of information within the Centre? In what ways?

d. Unganisha Partners
    i   To what extent has the Unganisha project collaborated with these groups and what has the impact of the collaboration been.
    ii MIS
    iii Internet Working Group
    iv Bellanet
    v   Acacia
    vi PAN