

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SUPPORT CENTRE (CAICC)

Strategic Plan 2012-2016 Maputo, May 2012

SUMMARY

The Community Information and Communication Support Centre (CAICC) is a programme for supporting centres that promote community information and communication. It was established by governmental and non-governmental institutions that are active in this area, as a way of responding to the need to develop and consolidate the existing national network. It is hosted by the Eduardo Mondlane University Informatics Centre (CIUEM) in Maputo, an autonomous institution within the university carrying out research, providing services to the university and the public, doing extension work and supporting teaching and learning.

CAICC started up in mid-2006 with the following objectives: (i) establish a platform for sharing and coordinating information and resources among the various institutions, programmes and projects connected with community information and communication technologies (ICTs); (ii) be a support system for the daily management and operational activities of telecentres, community radios and community multimedia centres; and (iii) implement a strategy to document and share innovations among partners in Mozambique and in the world.

CAICC's main activities include a helpdesk, management of a website and social media tools, production and dissemination of content (online and offline) in the area of governance, and training for local partners through courses, workshops, and working visits including on-the-job training. It also promotes exchanges of experience between centres, annual radio competitions and networking at regional and international levels. Through these activities CAICC contributes to improving its partners' quality of work and consolidating their mission to inform, communicate, defend freedom of the press and of expression and promote good governance.

At the time that this Strategic Plan was in preparation CAICC was working with a network of over 90 ICT centres in ten provinces, variously linked to government,

communities or religious faiths¹. A recent evaluation showed that over the preceding 18 months CAICC had provided training (at the least a 5-day course) to around 60% of the centres comprising the national network.

Mozambique was one of the first African countries to encourage ICT development, but the advances since then have not met expectations. Citizens have little access to information, one reason being the poor infrastructures. Where they exist, the community ICT centres and the radio component in particular are key vehicles for communication and information. However, there is no specific legislation for community radio/ICTs.

In Mozambique community ICTs have been introduced by a variety of actors without much coordination among themselves. As a result, the type of infrastructures, institutional arrangements, equipment and nature and level of training that was provided varied considerably between one centre and another, thus increasing the complexity of the ongoing tasks of training, technical assistance and maintenance. Most of the community ICT centres depend on volunteers for their programmes and their income-generating services. The scanty income they manage to earn is used for operational expenses. Exceptions to this rule are the centres managed by the Institute for Social Communication (ICS) and to some extent the faith-based centres.

The creation of the Community Radio Forum (FORCOM) in 2004 as a civil society mechanism for supporting and defending the interests of the community radios opened the way to a new dynamic. FORCOM has developed training activities for its members and is channelling some funding to its members for their projects, as a way of stimulating the sector.

The Ministry of Science and Technology (MCT) has been the principal actor in the expansion of district-level community multimedia centres (CMCs) since 2005. It is currently managing the National CMC Programme with the aim of establishing a CMC in every district. The ongoing programme plans the building/upgrade of 40 centres by 2014.

An environmental analysis identified opportunities for CAICC. Greatly in its favour is the credibility and prestige it enjoys, which enable it to establish good relations not only with national stakeholders and local partners but also with local government and international cooperation agencies. However, its visibility outside the ICT sector is still limited. Increased interest in the field of information and communication (linked to the need to improve citizen participation in promoting more inclusive and democratic governance) opens up opportunities for a significant expansion of the work that CAICC has already begun, in particular the production and dissemination of relevant content for developing citizenship and for socio-economic development at local level.

¹ For ease of expression this document will generally use the broad concept of “community ICTs” to denote CAICC’s local partners as a whole.

The Strategic Plan

CAICC sees its **mission** as the provision of multifaceted services to members of the network, with special emphasis on the use of ICTs and facilitating horizontal information and communication flows; providing technical support, advice, training and intermediary services in different areas; and developing a modern, decentralized and appropriate support system.

During the next five years, CAICC will work to achieve four main **strategic objectives** (see logical framework in section 6 of the full document in Portuguese):

- Strengthen the community ICT network so that it can better defend the freedoms of expression and information, and win the necessary “space” for carrying on its work more sustainably, and within a framework of responsibility and solidarity;
- Build the capacities of CMCs, community radios, telecentres and other community ICT initiatives to enable them to meet the information and communication needs of the communities they serve in the areas of citizenship and development, through the more effective and integrated use of locally available technical resources;
- Raise consciousness among communities about the potential of ICTs to help citizens to both enjoy their rights and freedoms and participate in socio-economic development at local level;
- Progressively develop and consolidate CAICC’s internal organisation and operations in a more sustainable way, so that it can improve its performance of the functions attributed by its stakeholders.

CAICC’s **intervention** strategy has two main components: training and content. The training function is aimed at increasing the competence of the centres, and is done through regional courses, district workshops, local courses and on-the-job training; subsequent follow-ups of the people and centres that received the training, through visits and the helpdesk; and information sharing between centres through visits and the tools made available through the CAICC website, blog, news and discussion list. The training cycle (together with the helpdesk) was evaluated as being the activity most in demand, reflecting in part the lack of this type of support from other institutions. But it is quite expensive, and requires high investment in well qualified human resources. In the next five years CAICC will invest progressively in creating local capacity for training and technical assistance, so as to provide some services in a more decentralized way and with improved cost effectiveness, without losing relevance and quality. It will also focus more on issues of gender equality.

The second main component - making information available - includes various types of activities: (i) identifying/surveying existing information that would be particularly useful for rural communities; (ii) gathering this information and “treating” it as required; and (iii) disseminating it through the CAICC website, training activities, and producing CDs and an information bulletin. CAICC will significantly increase the volume of information circulating among network members, giving priority to material in the areas of citizenship, governance and basic services.

Combined with the two main components is support to improving the organizational and material conditions that enable the centres to produce and disseminate information. CAICC will continue, as now, to assist the centres by providing them with smallscale material support, namely multimedia kits. These interventions will be integrated into the broader objectives, such as for example the training courses and radio competitions, or as specific initiatives. Finally, given its expertise in this area, CAICC will collaborate actively in stakeholders’ efforts to create and develop a more favourable environment for community ICTs and for access to information, through debates, studies, research and piloting innovations in the sector. It will also continue to facilitate bridges between the network partners and organizations that defend rights and freedoms, particularly with regard to freedom of expression and the right to information.

When implementing its strategy, CAICC will continue to pay special attention to its coordination with national level partners with interests in this area, encouraging insofar as it can increased coordination to avoid unnecessary duplications and thus increasing the effectiveness of the various interventions. The importance of documenting and measuring its results will be integrated into its actions.

The Strategic Plan’s **budget** plans a significant growth in costs during the first two years, related to the recruitment of more staff and consequent increase in activities. From 2014 onwards the annual budget shows reasonable stability, remaining between USD 570,000 and USD 620,000 per year. CAICC currently has confirmed funding equal to 35% of the budget for the first year and around 28% for the following year, and contacts are under way with various institutions interested in CAICC’s work and the area of information and communication for governance.