External Review of the IDRC Acacia Program

Final Report

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CONTENTS

Acronyms

ACA2K	African Copyright & Access to Knowledge
ANLoc	African Network for Localization
ARLF	Acacia Research and Learning Forum
AVOIR	African Virtual Open Initiatives and Resources
CCK	Communications Commission of Kenya
CLDR	Unicode Common Locale Data Repository
EFF	Electronic Frontier Foundation
FPR	Final Program Report
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GRACE	Gender Research in Africa into ICTs for Empowerment
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technology for Development
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
NCC	Namibian Communications Commission
OASIS	Developing Open Architecture, Standards and Information Systems
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PALM	Publishing and Alternative Licensing Model of Africa
PanAf	Pan African Research Agenda on the Pedagogical Integration of ICTs
PCD	Peace, Conflict and Development Program
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PICTURE	Poverty, Information and Communication Technology in Urban and Rural Eastern Africa
RIA	Research ICT Africa
rPCR	Rolling Program Completion Report
SCA	Scholarly Communication Access
UHIN	Uganda Health Information Network
MHIN	Mozambique Health Information Network
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

1. Introduction

The period 2006-2011 marks Phase III of the IDRC's Acacia program, intended *"to support research on ICTs that improve livelihood opportunities, enhance social service delivery, and empower citizens while building the capacity of African researchers and research networks." (Acacia Prospectus 2006-2011, p. 1).* The program is structured around three themes:

- People Empowerment (Gender Research, Digital commons, Localization)
- Social Service Delivery (Tertiary Research and Education Networking, Local Governance, Health, New Learning Environments and Practices)
- Economic development and Opportunity (Social and Economic Development, Infrastructure Policy and Indicators, Small Scale Agriculture)

The outcomes of Phase III originally were intended to achieve four high-level objectives: Sustained Policy Dialogue, Thriving Research Networks, Enhanced Research Capacity in ICT4D, and More Social and Technical Innovation in ICTs. By and large these objectives have guided the Acacia team through to the present despite some minor modifications that are discussed in this review.

The Acacia III budget of $64.9m is spread across 161 projects. Over 80 percent of the budget is applied to some 13 networks, with allocations averaging $4.3m, but ranging from $707,000 (African Virtual Open Initiative and Resources (AVOIR)) to $8m (Research ICT Africa (RIA)). Allocations to individual projects average approximately $400,000 and vary widely, from a few thousand dollars to support occasional seminars, to over $2.5m for ongoing support to some networks.

The Acacia External Review Panel commenced work in April 2010 and comprises Jonathan Miller, Zenda Ofir and Daniel Paré, ably assisted by Emily Taylor. This external review of Acacia's programming follows the revised program evaluation strategy initially used in 2009 for externally reviewing the Peace, Conflict and Development (PCD) Program. Throughout its review process the panel found itself reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the new approach. In line with the view expressed by the PCD review panel, we concur that the involvement of the Acacia team in critical reflection as part of the review process is a key component of learning and hope that it has, indeed, shifted the process to "one that is done with the team, rather than 'to' the team" (PCD, 2009, p. 1).

2. Approach and Methodology

This review comprises an external verification of the Acacia team's self-evaluation of their work over the past five years as reported in the Final Prospectus Report (FPR). The parameters for this exercise were established by four questions stipulated in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) provided to the panel members:

- *To what extent was the implementation of the program's prospectus appropriate?*
- *Overall, was the quality of the research outputs/publications supported by the program acceptable (given the context/intended purpose, etc.)?*
- *To what extent are the program's outcomes relevant, valuable and significant?*
- *What are the key issues for the IDRC's Board of Governors?*

The methodology employed by the review panel was guided by an evaluation matrix consisting of 19 questions that elucidate the four key review questions.[1] A mixed methods approach using different sources was employed for data collection in order to enable adequate triangulation for credibility of the findings. Key components were (i) a document

review of program and selected project documents provided by the Acacia team; (ii) a synthesis of rolling Project Completion Reports (rPCRs) to obtain aggregated information on completed projects above CAD150 000; (iii) an on-line survey distributed to 176 potential respondents with 36 responses received; (iv) a total of forty 1.0-1.5 hour interviews (telephone and face-to-face) with purposefully selected key informants; (v) an assessment of the quality of the research outputs/publications of 34 projects spanning the three thematic pillars of the Acacia program;[2]and (vi) a citation analysis of Acacia publications. Detailed information about the panel's approach and methodology is provided in Annexes 1 to 9.

3. Challenges and Limitations

The review panel faced several challenges and limitations. First, in light of the broad scope of the review and the priority focus on verification of the FPR set out in the Terms of Reference, the panel was not able to interview as many people as it would have liked who are directly involved in some manner with Acacia. Instead, it prioritized understanding the internal approaches, processes and dynamics of the Acacia program. The panel members also are conscious that the review is based on a relatively swift review of primary and secondary sources and the structured gathering of input from a small (yet highly credible) group of experts—most from within Acacia, but a few from outside who all have recognized experience in ICT4D. Given the robustness of the methodology employed, the panel is confident in the conclusions that it has drawn, but stresses that these have not been verified through engagement on the ground with Acacia projects in Africa.

Second, a large number of Acacia's Phase III projects are ongoing or in the early stages of implementation. It is still too early to assess the potential relevance, significance and value of their eventual research outcomes. Given the large portfolio of Acacia projects, the panel was only able to analyze a limited number of projects in depth. The work of the panel also was constrained by the serious deficiencies in Acacia's information and knowledge management systems.

Third, the core concepts used in, or at least relevant to, Acacia Phase III (e.g. quality, innovation, coherence, significant outcomes) were not formally defined by the Acacia program. The review panel developed its own understanding of these concepts —informed, in part, by input for Acacia team members—and remains cognizant that its understanding may not fully align with that held by the whole of the Acacia team and its research partners.

4. Appropriateness of Prospectus Implementation

Key findings:

- ***The implementation of Acacia III went largely according to plan. Where changes were made, these were well reasoned and justified.***
- ***The well-conceived and defensible logic and priorities in the Acacia III strategy, its division into sub-themes and networks with common objectives, and its well-articulated operational principles—which the Acacia team closely followed—laid the foundation for its coherence, successful implementation and achievement of expected outcomes.***
- ***The* committed, interactive and adaptive *(flexible, based on learning) management style of the Acacia team helped to overcome or avoid potential management risks and tensions.***
- ***Acacia's willingness to take risks by working in under-researched areas and its commitment to understanding how ICTs can contribute to economic, political, and social development are***

widely recognized as a key strength.

- ***Program coherence was facilitated by the well-coordinated, stable team of experienced and specialized Program Officers and network leaders, a shared understanding between them of Acacia's strategy and operational principles and a good Program Officer-to-budget ratio that facilitates their ongoing engagement in shaping the areas of work.***

In evaluating the appropriateness of the choices made to evolve the Acacia III strategies from what was outlined in the Acacia Prospectus 2006-2011, the panel considered four key variables: (i) the priority areas of work and other choices made against Acacia's mission as articulated in the 2006-2011 prospectus; (ii) Acacia's implicit, and later explicitly articulated change logic; (iii) key developments in the ICT4D field; and (iv) constraints and potential risks to relevance, effectiveness and impact.

The panel identified two **main drivers** for the priorities and choices made during implementation of Acacia III:

- the Acacia III strategy which is based on a framework informed by the IDRC's goal of fostering inclusive knowledge and information networked societies, lessons learned through the evolution of Acacia II and Connectivity Africa, inputs from participants in the first Harvard Forum,[3] and consultation with potential participant groups in Africa; and
- the operational principles articulated in the 2006-2011 Prospectus which were, in turn, supported by a limited 'adaptive management'[4] approach.

These drivers were critical to the program's relevance, relative coherence and effectiveness. The review panel finds the Acacia III strategy to be well conceived and defensible. The strategy is reflected in the project portfolio for each thematic pillar and is evident in the considerable synergy between the desired and achieved outcomes. Resource allocations were more or less equal to each theme (Annex 10), and the priority areas of work closely aligned with what was originally intended. Acacia's 'theory of change' which was made explicit at the 2009 Acacia Research and Learning Forum (ARLF) shows few signs of departure from the initial strategy aside from some expanded details and updated assumptions about the change logic.[5]

Few implementation changes are explicitly mentioned in the FPR. The most significant of these is the identification of 'contributing to a formal body of knowledge' and 'applying meaningful gender analysis' as ***formal program objectives*****.** This modification does not appear to have affected the overall program direction[6] given that the importance of these categories of activity had already been recognized in the Acacia II evaluation findings[7] and were included as program activities in the 2006-2011 Prospectus. A related decision was the shift from identifying 'thriving research networks' as an objective to recognizing it as **an implementation modality**. From a program design perspective, this decision was appropriate.

Despite the potential for several of the implementation choices to expose Acacia to **risk and programming tensions**, the panel finds the rationales underpinning these choices to be generally convincing,[8] and notes that they appear to have been managed in a manner that minimized potentially negative impacts on Acacia's effectiveness:

- Given that Program Officers and network leaders exert significant influence over the types of research undertaken in the thematic areas, the decision to steer clear of soliciting competitive grants for the sake of capacity building and nurturing ongoing relationships within a decentralized management structure could have perpetuated 'pet' projects and

researchers.[9] This risk appears to have been offset by such factors as the need for defensible rationales for adopting specific research foci in the Acacia sub-themes, the experience and commitment of individual Program Officers and network leaders, the frequent interactions between Program Officers and research partners regarding proposal strengthening and appraisal, and the Program Officers' efforts at expanding viable networks.

- A 'forward planning' organizational imperative combined with cross-fertilization between projects and the growth in networks such as RIA, GRACE and AVOIR enabled Acacia III to expand across some 22 countries in Africa and the Middle East. While significant differences in formal and informal institutions, language, infrastructure and development imperatives across the sub-regions in Africa brings with it formidable management challenges,[10] it is apparent that researchers in many countries have benefited from Acacia's research funding (Annex 10).
- South African organizations and researchers received significant amounts of funding. However, in many instances these transfers were managed as intermediary grants that connected researchers and networks across countries with the benefits of these grants accruing beyond South Africa (Annex 10). Acacia's rationale for this allocation pattern is rooted in the need for the transfer of high level expertise, capacity building and mentoring, and organizational capacity to manage large grants. While the panel acknowledges the measure of risk associated with concentrating grants in 'comfort zones,' it is satisfied that given the infrastructure and capacity constraints in Africa, the funding allocation strategy employed is appropriate and did not diminish the effectiveness or impact of Acacia's efforts.[11]
- Acacia provided measureable support for several under-researched yet important domains of ICT4D including participatory Geographical Information Systems (GIS), ICTs and agriculture, ICTs and crisis situations and ICTs and climate change, cybercrime, censorship and human rights. Its willingness to take risks and its commitment to understanding *how* ICTs can contribute to economic, political, and social development is widely recognized as a key strength.

In verifying and assessing the **coherence** of the Acacia III program,[12] the panel finds significant *horizontal* (thematic) coherence. The themes, sub-themes and networks consist of projects that complement and build upon one another. In this sense, Acacia can be considered to be 'more than a sum of its parts.' There were also many positive comments on the usefulness of the ARLF in October 2009 where network members met together for the first time, enhancing the opportunity to exchange and understand what value can be added through collaboration. (Several key informants confirmed that they were unaware of the potential until this event.) This conclusion, however, is somewhat offset by the seemingly limited cross-fertilization across some networks and projects. The panel recognizes the several efforts made to link the work of different networks but notes that despite the presence in some cases of structures to facilitate cross-fertilization (e.g. emphasis on and promotion of outcome mapping), the information emerging from a number of interviews suggests that these mechanisms did not always work as well as desired.[13] This is view is reaffirmed by the comments on page 23 of the FPR which note that there should be more cross-collaboration between gender and sector teams, and that initial efforts to establish cross-fertilization with RIA, for example, were not yet successful.

The panel finds that there were two key success factors in establishing coherence. The first is the well-reasoned strategy for Acacia III. The second is the decision to work within sub-

themes with networks and projects that either address a specific challenge through a number of different activities, or provide for comparative work across countries and regions.

The ability to manage for coherence appears to have been facilitated by the presence of three important factors. First, a well-coordinated stable team of experienced and specialized Program Officers and network leaders; second, a shared understanding of Acacia's strategy and operational principles; third, a good Program Officer-to-budget ratio that facilitates their ongoing engagement in shaping the area's work.

Overall, the ***review panel finds that Acacia III has been managed in a manner which ensured that program implementation was in line with what was envisaged at the start of the existing program period***. Priorities were established and changes were made in a thoughtful manner, with convincing rationales offered for divergences from what was originally intended.

5. Quality of Research Publications

Key findings:

- ***Acacia addresses pressing ICT4D issues in need of research***.
- ***It is appropriate for Acacia to operate without adhering to fixed/codified or an overly academic-centric definition of quality research.***
- ***Publications emanating from Acacia supported research generally are of good to high quality and contribute to filling important gaps in knowledge at both applied and theoretical levels of ICT4D-related issues, as well as providing African authors with a growing voice in the ICT4D domain.***
- ***The research outputs reported by Acacia III are significant, but the efficacy of its influencing strategies has been limited.***

In assessing the quality and significance of research outputs/publications, the review panel took as its starting point the definition of research excellence set out by O'Neil (2002) and Acacia's mission. According to O'Neil (2002) "*by 'excellence,' we may mean 'urgently needed and challenging research'—that which is problem oriented, multi-disciplinary (preferably comparative) and carried out by teams networking internationally across research sites and policy jurisdictions.*" Acacia's mission echoes this view insofar as it places emphasis on the utility of research[14] in seeking "*to support research on ICTs that improve livelihood opportunities, enhance social service delivery, and empower citizens while building the capacity of African researchers and research networks*" (Acacia Prospectus 2006-2011, p. 1).

The vast majority of those who contributed data through interviews, including the Acacia team members, observed that Acacia lacks a clearly articulated definition of what constitutes high quality research. This view was offset, however, by an acknowledgement among the interviewees and survey respondents that there nonetheless exists a tacit, pervasive sense among Acacia staff and research partners that quality research comprises research outcomes with practical applications as well as research that meets traditionally accepted academic standards. It also was widely noted that the guidance and assistance provided by Program Officers throughout the various phases of the project cycle plays a central role in reinforcing the notion of quality research. The review panel also notes that various mechanisms (e.g. advising, internal and external peer-review, mentoring) are in place to promote quality research across the different domains of Acacia supported

research. The panel likewise affirms that in terms of relevance, all of the interviewees and survey respondents attest to the fact that ***Acacia addresses pressing ICT4D issues in need of research***.

A central tension that is widely recognized as underpinning the lack of a clearly articulated definition for quality research, and any assessment thereof, is the blurring of the line between development research projects and projects that have human development objectives. A complicating factor in this regard is the fact that Acacia's "Theory of Change' links researchers' activities to changes in the social, economic and political circumstances of people and communities" (Sey, Martin and Sinha, 2010, p. 10). At issue here are differences in the criteria and techniques used for understanding and evaluating quality in these different yet complementary contexts.

For instance, in some cases it may be appropriate to assess the outputs from a research development project in accordance with traditional quality criteria such as the number of publications in peer-reviewed journals, whereas the notion of quality within the context of a development project may be associated with criteria such as publications in non-peer reviewed outlets, and/or the extent to which a particular initiative enhanced the delivery of a particular social service. This paradox was aptly summarized by one interviewee who, in lamenting the propensity in some quarters to view publishing in peer-reviewed academic journals as a proxy for quality research, stated that, "*The emphasis on academic publication is not always suitable. Practical research needs other channels of distribution.*"

In light of the diverse national and regional contexts within which Acacia operates and the various facets of ICT4D research that it supports, the panel endorses the view that it is ***appropriate for Acacia to operate without adhering to fixed/codified or an overly academic-centric definition of quality research.*** The application of traditional quantitative metrics and indicators for evaluating research quality in the academic domain appears to be ill-suited for appraising the inter-disciplinary ICT4D research outputs (applied and non-applied) supported and promoted by Acacia.

In considering the quality of research outputs the review panel examined research outputs/publications from 42 closed/completed projects spanning the three pillars of the Acacia program for their merit and significance. The criteria used to evaluate merit and significance is presented in Annex 8. In terms of merit, the review panel is of the view that the research publications it sampled are generally of ***good to high quality and contribute to filling important gaps in knowledge at both applied and theoretical levels of ICT4D-related issues, as well as providing African authors with a growing voice in the ICT4D domain.***

There are two important caveats. First, when assessed on the basis of traditional quantitative indicators for gauging the quality of research outputs (e.g. bibliometrics analysis, citation analysis, number of publications in peer-reviewed journals) the scientific merit of the majority of publications in the sample—and indeed, from Acacia III as a whole—is ambiguous (see Annex 9). According to our review of scholarly citations using *Google Scholar* only four of the 44 articles published in peer-reviewed journals,[15] and one[16] of the 41 international conference papers had returns of 10 or more citations. The seemingly limited scholarly citation of these research outputs questions their impact at least in the academic domain. Moreover, some 84% of the 920 research outputs/publications emanating from Acacia III were not externally peer-reviewed[17] (see Annex 11). The latter does not *ipso facto* mean that Acacia research outputs are not good

quality, but the lack of more substantive engagement in external third-party peer-review is at odds with one of the basic tenets of scholarly research.

That said, in making its judgement about the quality of Acacia research publications/outputs, the panel readily acknowledges the limitations of relying too heavily on quantitative indicators for assessing research quality for social scientific and humanist research (see, for example, Science-Metrix, 2004). At issue here is the inability of quantitative metrics to account for, and/or recognize, the differences in the publication norms and research practices across research domains. For example, these measures cannot account for the types or quality of research outputs that are embedded in such things as the Open Source Software being developed through the work of the Developing Open Architecture, Standards and Information Systems (OASIS)[18] and the African Virtual Open Initiatives and Resources (AVOIR)[19] networks, or such achievements as the inclusion of 54 new African locales as part of Unicode Common Locale Data Repository (CLDR) which resulted from the efforts of the African Network for Localisation (ANLoc)[20] Locales project.[21]

In considering the significance of Acacia supported research, the review panel sought to assess the extent to which the research outputs of particular networks and projects have influenced, or are influencing, the environments within which the intended beneficiaries are operating. Here too, the tension between development research projects and development projects manifests. For example, despite the limited publications produced by the PanAfrican Research Agenda on the Pedagogical Integration of ICTs (PanAf) network,[22] one would be hard pressed to argue that the outputs arising from this network's study—how the pedagogical integration of ICTs can enhance the quality of teaching and learning—have not directly influenced educational practices in the twelve participating countries across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The panel was not able to appraise the link between capacity-building and quality research as manifested within the Acacia program. In addition to time, undertaking such an exercise in a credible manner would require access to baseline data derived from monitoring information as well as qualitative data sources.[23] Such detailed program and project information is not available.

Based on its review and analysis of the evidence, the panel is satisfied that by and large the research outputs reported by Acacia III are significant. There is, however, a caveat. Despite the efforts expended by the Acacia program to assist its partners in identifying their target audiences, when asked about the effectiveness of the strategies employed by Acacia to ensure that research effectively reached intended users, the message from the majority of interviewees was clear: ***the efficacy of Acacia's influencing strategies has been limited, especially when it comes to matters of information diffusion***. The perspective of most of the interviewees regarding this matter was aptly summarized by one individual who noted that, "*Not enough emphasis is placed on the 'diffusion' capacity. And this is even reflected in the project budgets. There are no clear diffusion strategies. That said, some projects do have their own diffusion strategies, but not all of them. For each project what is really need is both a body of knowledge and a diffusion strategy."*

6. Outcomes

Key Findings:

- ***Acacia-supported networks and projects have had, and are having, important direct and***

indirect policy influence;

- ***The outputs and outcomes reported in the FPR offer persuasive evidence of important contributions being made to the ICT4D research community***;
- ***There is ample evidence to suggest that Acacia III has made an important contribution to the body of knowledge in ICT4D;***
- ***Acacia networks and projects are fostering important social and technological innovations that are, in turn, contributing to ICT usage in a variety of contexts***;
- ***Important first steps appear to have been made with regard to engendering Acacia supported ICT4D research***.

There are five program-level outcomes. The panel was tasked with verifying the significance and contributions of the reported outcomes in accordance with the perspectives of research partners, research users, and other influential stakeholders. The panel's work can be seen in the context of related evaluations of Acacia III, including the development of the Project Completion Reports (rPCRs) and the Wilson-Grau and Vincent (2010) outcomes evaluation.[24] The analysis presented below focuses largely on substantiating the extent to which the desired outcomes and sub-outcomes set out in the 2006-2011 Prospectus have been realized as reported in the FPR. Within the context of ICT4D in Africa, especially the dramatic growth in mobile telephony and the imminent rollout of far greater bandwidth in many African countries, ***the panel considers the body of outcomes emanating from Acacia III to be highly relevant and valuable.***

Outcome 1: Fostering ongoing, robust policy dialogue

This outcome centers largely upon the complex and rapidly changing ICT policy and regulatory environment. It is linked to Acacia's efforts to foster greater researcher participation in local, national, and global policy fora, and to enhance on-going dialogue among regulators, policy-makers, and researchers regarding telecommunication network infrastructure issues. ***The panel notes that there are several examples to support the claim that this outcome has been largely realized.*** The Research ICT Africa (RIA) network[25], for instance, carried out ground-breaking research into mobile interconnection rates in Namibia and played a pivotal role in influencing the Namibian Communications Commission's (NCC) decision to cut those rates by 50 percent. Indeed, this is a key outcome that was often referred to in the interview discussions with a number of Acacia partners and with key external informants drawn from the panel members' own professional networks. This research combined with the action taken by the NCC had knock-on effects insofar as the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) subsequently began to reduce that country's interconnection rates, and the President of Kenya followed suit by calling upon the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) to work toward reducing Kenyan interconnection rates.

The RIA network's research also has come to the notice of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as well as the government statistical agencies of a number of African countries. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are the network's research outputs relating to its ICT Sector Performance Reviews and Household Surveys of ICT usage in seventeen African countries. Other Acacia networks including Poverty, Information and Communication Technology in Urban and Rural Eastern Africa (PICTURE), as well as the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, have adopted RIA methodology, including the incorporation of Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's) into data collection activities. It seems plausible to

conclude, therefore, that RIA's efforts are succeeding in raising awareness about the importance and benefits of collecting data that aggregates the use of various ICTs in African households as well as contributing to evidence-based policy-making in Africa.

The panel's analysis reveals that it is not only the older more established Acacia networks that are successfully influencing policy development in national and international contexts. The work of the African Copyright & Access to Knowledge (ACA2K) network—which was established in 2007—examines how copyright is understood in Africa, how national copyright legislation is affecting education and access to knowledge on the continent, and the types of copyright environments that might be best suited to furthering education and learning in Africa. Its research efforts, which currently span some eight African countries, have generated new insights into the relationship between international copyright treaties, domestic law, education, and strategies for promoting access to knowledge in Africa. The research outputs from this network have important domestic and international policy implications and have garnered international recognition, as evidenced by the invitation for network members to present their research findings to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the citing of its work by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF).

Another desired sub-outcome of the policy dialogue outcome, set out in the 2006-2011 Prospectus, was "fostering municipal-level champions to facilitate ICT-enabled delivery of local-government services allowing for citizen e-participation." Evidence of the successful realization of this goal can be seen in the eFez[26]project, which helped a number of municipalities in Morocco to successfully launch electronic civil registration processes. This effort led to the first allocation of municipal budgets to ICT in the cities that participated in this project.

Based on the evidence it has gathered and analyzed, the ***panel concludes that Acacia-supported networks and projects have had, and are having, important direct and indirect policy influence.*** However, there is a need for caution in generalizing this conclusion across the broad spectrum of activities supported by Acacia. Indeed, the panel's analysis suggests a notable degree of network- and project-level variance in the extent to which this outcome has been met. Given that commercial and political issues constrain influence, this variance appears to be linked in part to types of topics addressed by the networks and projects. For example, in the case of the Publishing and Alternative Licensing Model of Africa (PALM)[27] project, efforts to get publishers to provide open access to published material made headway among some who demonstrated an increased interest in buying books where they were accessible on the Internet. Likewise, the influence of ACA2K at WIPO and the incorporation of African locales in the Unicode Common Locale Data Repository (CLDR) resulting from the work of ANLoc demonstrate that networks and/or projects that are still relatively young can nonetheless achieve policy influence. The variance may also be due, in part, to what appear to be limitations in effectively communicating research findings to target audiences and intended users, and the blurred line between development research projects and projects that have human development objectives with a research component.

Outcome 2: Increasing Research Capacity in ICT4D

The number of ICT4D researchers in Africa is very small, and the absence of a critical mass in most parts of the continent militates against effective ICT4D research and implementation. Hence, a vital component of harnessing the potential opportunities afforded by ICTs to improve the economic, political, and social circumstances of people and communities is the enhancement of African ICT4D research capacities. Acacia has done

much work in this regard including, "*contributed[ing] extensively to the increase in the number of African ICT4D researchers through the use of different models such as: peer-mentorship, competitive grants, South-South cross-fertilization, and training activities aimed at providing the generation of researchers with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct rigorous and relevant research"*[28] (Evaluation Unit, 2007). To this end, the evidence gathered and examined by the panel suggests that the network modality has played a crucial role in mitigating the effects of the limited—and often isolated—cadre of researchers in Africa, as well as in extending timeframes characteristic of effective research work.

For this outcome the panel was able to substantiate reported claims of realization of the great majority of desired sub-outcomes specified in the 2006-2011 Prospectus. Some examples include the supporting of some 50 diploma, masters and PhD students across several networks through the Acacia Fellowship Program with the University of Nairobi; the making public of the ACA2K network methodology for researching copyright challenges for educational materials; the RIA network's development, implementation, and publication of its methodology for conducting large-scale household surveys of ICT supply and demand; and the support provided by Acacia III for eHealth research that includes support for computer scientists developing open source software health applications such as those being developed by the OASIS network.

The panel finds that the outputs and outcomes reported in the FPR offer persuasive evidence of important contributions being made to the ICT4D research community; not the least of which is an augmenting of local and global awareness of the ICT4D research capacities and expertise residing in Africa. ***However, the panel is troubled by the absence of in-house baseline data and monitoring information to help support this observation.*** While there is little doubt that capacity-building is occurring at various individual and organizational levels as a result of Acacia's efforts, the lack of established benchmarks combined with the absence to information derived from systematized data collection and monitoring activities, limits the ways in which Acacia can draw lessons from its work and integrate such lessons into future endeavours.[29]

Outcome 3: Contributing to a formal body of knowledge in ICT4D

Although it was implicit, this particular outcome was not set out in its own right in the 2006-2011 Prospectus. As such, there were thus no pre-specified sub-outcomes. On the basis of the evidence gathered and analysed, however, the panel concludes that ***Acacia III has made an important contribution to the body of knowledge in ICT4D*** insofar as it was able to substantiate the following:

- *Greater participation by representatives of African research networks in global fora.* Evidence of this may be seen in the engagement of leaders of the ACA2K network in international fora on copyright and intellectual property matters and the AnLOC network embarking on the significant developmental effort to tackle multiple African language interfaces.
- *Face-to-face intra-regional knowledge exchanges on thematic research areas.* To name but a few, examples here include the intensive workshops conducted by the OASIS network to foster development of Open Medical Records Systems software and the GRACE network's workshops to share thinking and build on-going rapport among researchers across the region.
- *Expanding existing thematic research networks to more African countries.* Several networks were established during the Prospectus period that involved Western and

Eastern African organizations hosting and leading African or sub-regional networks (Cyber Crime and Security in Africa; the Informal Sector in West Africa and ICTs; e-Local Governance (Log-in network), and researching poverty and ICTs in East Africa (PICTURE network). Membership beyond Sub-Saharan Africa includes North African membership or Middle Eastern membership (GRACE).

- *Incorporating ICT4D-related research and programming into African Universities.* The FPR notes that the ACA2K network has been instrumental in the creation of new academic programs at the Universities of Makerere and Cape Town, and that RIA now offers an executive short course on alternative regulatory strategies related to Connectivity and Convergence at the University of Cape Town.[30] In addition, some 25 per cent of the respondents to the panel's survey of Acacia program participants agreed with the statement: *"Our work has directly contributed to the creation of new university degree level programs and courses."*

An important component of contributing to the formal body of knowledge in ICT4D is ensuring that researchers can access information in the language of their choice. In line with this, the FPR reports that Acacia III supported projects have contributed to an increase in the number and quality of ICT4D-related scholarly publications in French. The panel notes, however, that, while quantitatively Acacia has helped support the publication of more French language ICT4D publications/scholarship, the bulk of this output has been at the local in-country level. As such, it is very difficult to assess the 'significance' of the contribution this work has made to the body of domestic and global knowledge in ICT4D.

Another facet of Acacia's contribution to the formal body of knowledge in ICT4D that was not reported in the FPR but which is noteworthy pertains to increasing access to, and use of, on-line scientific publications in Africa. The work done by PALM and ACA2K under the *Digital Commons* sub-theme is particularly salient in this regard. These two projects have led to a confluence project now called the Scholarly Communication Access (SCA) project that was launched in early 2010. Bringing together researchers and four universities in Southern Africa, this project will pilot alternative ways of publishing the knowledge materials they are producing including institutional repositories, online journals, and digital archives as well as non-peer-reviewed academic publications and other grey literature. While the SCA understandably has yet to produce any outcomes, this initiative and its antecedents are illustrative of the Acacia team's ongoing contribution to advancing the relatively embryonic thinking about the digital commons in Africa.

Outcome 4: Stimulating Social & Technological Innovations in ICTs

The promise and potential for ICTs to dramatically change peoples' quality of life and economic well-being in the developing world remains largely elusive. The desired outcome of stimulating social and technological innovations in ICTs is oriented toward addressing some of these challenges and demonstrating significant and valuable advances such as providing increased transparency, efficiency, and accountability in the delivery of social services.

The outcomes reported in the FPR suggest that only a limited number of the desired sub-outcomes specified in the 2006-2011 Prospectus have been achieved. No information is provided for almost half the specified sub-outcomes.[31] The sub-outcomes for which supporting evidence is provided include:

- new, affordable, African-developed, low-cost technologies improving learning environments and educational practices by providing better access to

educational content and resources;

- innovative technologies enhancing the delivery of social services by providing increased transparency, efficiency, and accountability;
- well-developed infrastructures and affordable technologies offering Africans the opportunity to compete in national, regional, and international markets;
- Africans producing and accessing content, services, and tools in their own languages.

Much of the work associated with these sub-outcomes has been associated with strengthening computer skills development and small ICT businesses. However, it cannot be taken for granted that the latter necessarily leads to increased employment and entrepreneurship.

The common trait spanning the networks and projects associated with the above sub-outcomes is the applied nature of their research component. And these efforts appear to have yielded positive results in areas of agriculture (DrumNet),[32] education (e.g. PanAf), health (Uganda Health Information Network (UHIN)/Mozambique Health Information Network (MHIN)),[33] infrastructure (OASIS), and social service delivery (e-Fez). Also noteworthy are the accomplishments of the AnLOC network in preparing the ground for Africans to produce and access content, services and tools in their own languages through its work with the Unicode Consortium.

The panel concludes that Acacia networks and projects are fostering social and technological innovations that, in turn, are contributing to ICT usage in a variety of contexts. While each of these examples is illustrative of the types of potential benefits arising from innovative ICT-based initiatives at the local level, the extent to which these types of benefits can be successfully scaled up and sustained is not clear. On the basis of the available evidence the extent of usage/uptake of these innovations is also unclear. And finally, the significance and contribution of these initiatives in terms of wealth creation and support for the agricultural sector and small farmers is indeterminate.

Outcome 5: Applying meaningful gender analysis

The external review of Acacia Phase II called for gender to be given priority in Phase III. At least one international expert in the field endorsed this priority in the panel interview by saying: *"There has not been enough mainstream attention to this aspect. There can be dramatic gender differentials in this field, and ICTs can also reinforce differentials in economic power. Rigorous research in this field is extremely important, and IDRC can play a very significant role."*

The Acacia team set about strengthening its own ability to assist its project partners in raising the awareness about engendering all projects. They wanted to ensure that Acacia contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of women's access and usage of ICTs in Africa, reduces the magnitude and evolution of the observed gender gap, and changes gender relations in access and patterns of ICT use, ICT literacy, education and skills, and ICT employment.

Although these objectives were implicit throughout the 2006-2011 Prospectus, they were not captured in a separate outcome but instead integrated as two 'sub-outcomes' in other areas: (i) *an ongoing engagement between gender and ICT researchers and policy-makers resulting in more gender-aware ICT policies;* and (ii) *greater capacity in research*

methodologies, in particular on ICTs and gender analysis. A stronger outcome included later, focused on the systematic application of meaningful gender analysis.

The Gender Research in Africa into ICTs for Empowerment (GRACE) network was formed in 2005. Its objective was to investigate the ways in which women in Africa use ICTs to empower themselves, the external structural barriers and the internal factors that prevent women from using ICTs to their advantage, and strategies employed to overcome these impediments. The GRACE network has been pivotal in meeting sub-outcome (ii) above, fostering the development of gender and ICT researchers, some of whom had never authored published texts or been invited to speak about their gender expertise. Most importantly, it has created a sense of community, sharing and support—a good illustration of the value added of the Acacia networking approach.

Network members interviewed, claim that they have undergone fundamental and powerful personal change and development, and the outputs and outcomes of GRACE's activities point to behavioral change among the researchers. GRACE is providing training, guidelines and opportunities to publish, thus developing a new cadre of researchers in the field of gender and ICTs, as exemplified in the 2009 book: *African Women & ICTs. Investigating gender, knowledge and empowerment,* which is the most visible and applauded GRACE product to date. It uses a variety of research approaches to highlight critical empowerment issues using fourteen different experiences from twelve countries in four different stages of empowerment. Contributions were made by thirty researchers from Africa and the Middle East, five of whom are men. There are also ripple effects of GRACE in other spheres. For example, in 2009 GRACE researcher Salome Awuor Omamo co-founded the Big Sisters Network in Kenya, which provides a centre for mentorship and capacity building for teenage girls and a youth centre for ICT access and training.

Efforts to mainstream gender in Acacia projects have met with limited success. It was intended that the APC's Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM)[34] would be applied during Phase III, but as noted in the FPR, this was eventually deemed not to be appropriate given the focus on research rather than evaluation. More appropriate guidelines were compiled instead.[35] Some 53 percent (n=36) of the respondents to the review panel's survey agreed that their work "has specifically considered and integrated gender issues and analyses." Examples can be seen in projects of ANLoc, PALM, UHIN, ACA2K, PanAf and AVOIR, although the Wilson-Grau Vincent (2010) evaluation confirms that these were mostly related to gender inclusion and not transformation. Likewise, many of the key informants noted the presence of a gender element in their project work. However, these and other individuals also tended to acknowledge obstacles to engaging women in the ICT professional context, which militates against female involvement.

Based on the Acacia team's own assessment as well as the Wilson-Grau Vincent (2010) outcomes evaluation, the FPR affirms this by acknowledging that "*the transformative changes in behavior during this prospectus period reflect modest gains*" (p. 22). As such, the panel finds itself largely in agreement with Sey, Martin and Sinha's (2010) query about the extent to which this might be the result of limited understanding of what constitutes gender transformation. There may also be a lack of incentives to pay significant attention to this type of work. Several informants noted that development agencies are placing a 'burden' of requirements on them for which they are not equipped, such as outcomes oriented planning, policy influencing and gender mainstreaming. That said, the panel views it as appropriate that the Acacia team continues to seek understanding and more effective ways to achieve greater engagement between gender and ICT researchers and policy-makers in

order to foster more gender-aware ICT policies and a more sophisticated understanding of women's access and usage of ICTs in Africa.

Despite the limited evidence of external sub-outcomes reported in the FPR, there is internal progress, especially within the GRACE network that is building up a close-knit community of researchers in Africa and the Middle East. The network also is gaining visibility, as indicated by the invitation to the network leader and two co-facilitators from the region to lead discussions at the ICTD2010 conference at Royal Holloway, University of London, England. The work emerging from this network appears to be poised to make a substantial contribution to the field as existing projects come to fruition. ***The panel therefore commends the contribution IDRC/Acacia—one of the few players in the field—is making by actively pursuing research into gender and ICT4D.***

7. Key Issues for the IDRC Board of Governors

Acacia has an established and perhaps unique track record of rigorous evidence-based knowledge production in the field of ICT4D. With its programs rooted in rigorous research, cultivating a deeper understanding of developmental change and building local level capacities, it has achieved strong international brand recognition and fills an important niche. Acacia's strengths are well-captured in the comments of a prominent international expert in the field of ICT4D who has no affiliation with Acacia. When interviewed, this individual noted that, *"IDRC was throughout the whole period one of the most influential organizations in the field of ICT4D. In the beginning they spent time on pilots, but their disposition was to root things in understanding, in research, towards deeper changes. This made them stand out—unlike most others who had an obsession with pilots without understanding, without using them as controlled experiments to test hypotheses. IDRC cared about the deeper research questions."*

The panel's review substantiates this view and affirms that Acacia III appears to have contributed in a significant manner to the advancement of knowledge and capacity building in ICT4D in Africa. It also reveals several important challenges arising from how Acacia manages its streams of knowledge, and highlights what it must contend with if it is to successfully capitalize on the fifteen years of expertise and knowledge established through the Acacia program.

1. **Institute a program-wide Monitoring and Evaluation framework**

   Acacia has a marked lack of effective systems for monitoring and managing information. This is evidenced by the apparent lack of adequate baselines, benchmarks, and indicators to measure and demonstrate the cumulative impact of Acacia's efforts. This, coupled with the absence of a program-wide monitoring and evaluation framework (M&E), has limited Acacia's ability to adequately reflect upon and report on its experience as a research entity. Performance monitoring and evaluation are ineffective when information is locked in reports that do not support the systemic capture and use of key information for organizational learning and decision-making. For example the type of learning about the network approach resulting from the Wilson-Grau Vincent exercise could be replicated for other facets of Acacia's undertakings (e.g., capacity building and gender) thereby further enhancing overall program quality and effectiveness.

2. **Apply ICT4D Lessons learned as ICT4D is mainstreamed**

   There is a real danger that areas of work in which Acacia is a recognized as a leader will dissipate into other domains as the IDRC mainstreams ICT4D research. The withdrawal of

donor support for ICT4D research and projects risks fomenting policies based on hyperbole about the developmental potential of ICTs as opposed to rigorous evidence-based knowledge production. Given its established track record, there is clearly an opportunity for members of the Acacia team to work toward minimizing this risk by drawing upon the program's expertise, approach and lessons learned as ICT4D is mainstreamed within IDRC.

3. **Extract, synthesise, document and disseminate lessons learned in Africa**

   One of the most important constraints in the evolution of the ICT4D field remains the inadequate attention paid to capturing *synthesised* evidence and learning based on rigorous work. Acacia has accumulated unique operational knowledge including important principles about how to design, execute, learn from and evaluate projects in the ICT4D field, specifically in Africa. This knowledge is a vital asset that risks being lost with the shift in focus away from regions such as Africa. The Acacia III program team should therefore be encouraged and given the time to: (i) systematically extract and document *syntheses* of lessons drawn from experience about process and content; and (ii) engage in targeted dissemination of these lessons in a manner that can lead to transformative changes in development as well as informing future IDRC programming. This is vital to ensuring that as the IDRC enters a new phase of programming, the experiences and lessons gained through the Acacia program are captured in a manner that can make a difference both within and outside IDRC.

4. **Balance the emphasis on research outcomes versus emphasis on communicating with and influencing policymakers**

   The research carried out by Acacia treads a narrow line. On the one hand it emphasizes rigorous research and assesses the merit of its outcomes via traditional academically-based criteria and metrics. However, the great majority of Acacia III's publications are not externally peer-reviewed by third parties, and proportionately speaking relatively few appear in the academic literature. With a few notable exceptions, those that do are not frequently cited. On the other hand Acacia strongly emphasizes the significance of its findings in the field, and sets out to influence policymakers and other external stakeholders through publications such as policy briefs, newspaper articles etc. The strategic challenge for current and future programs—which echoes that identified by Patrizi and Patton (2009)—is to ensure that programming decisions, objectives, and outcomes embody the tensions between supporting quality research per se on the one hand and quality research that effects change on the other.

8. Concluding Remarks

Working in a field that is characterized by rapid change, and in a region largely defined by its limited human and financial resources, Acacia has successfully carved out a unique and enviable niche. Through the use of a network modality it is building a cumulative tradition of quality research that is receiving international attention. Moreover, many of the outcomes of this work have, and are, resulting in tangible benefits on the ground in Africa. Future IDRC initiatives building on the Acacia platform may enjoy even better outcomes for citizens of Africa and elsewhere by carefully weighing and finding an optimum balance between an emphasis on research outcomes versus emphasis on communicating with and influencing policymakers. In the coming years the IDRC would benefit greatly from allocating adequate time and resources to support the creation of baseline indicators and metrics to adequately measure progress in the various domains within which it operates,

and to frameworks and systems needed to monitor, evaluate, and learn more effectively from its work.

Acacia External Review Panel Report

Annexes

Annex 1: Description of Review Approach and Methodology

Review process

The review panel initiated its work in March 2010 after introductory conference calls with the IDRC evaluation unit and members of the Acacia team. Each member was contracted for a 25 day period, far fewer days than for earlier strategic program reviews. This is in line with IDRC's new approach that emphasizes the verification of self-evaluation by program teams, as well as the role of expert opinion.

In late April 2010 the panel met face-to-face in Amsterdam over a three day period to develop the review design. During this meeting the panel developed a shared understanding of the focus of the review, defined key concepts, developed its analytical framework, and set out the assessment criteria to be used. Each panel member concentrated on a specific key evaluation question and on one of the three Acacia themes, each with its subthemes and networks (Table 1).

Table 1: Acacia Pillars and Networks

Pillar	Social Service Delivery	Economic Development and Opportunity	People Empowerment
Networks	PAREN LOGIN OASIS UHMIN PANAF AVOIR	PICTURE RIA! Wireless Africa	ACA2K ANLoc PALM GRACE
	Independent projects	Independent projects	Independent projects

The months of May and June 2010 were used for developing the interview protocol and survey questionnaire, for data gathering, sharing of information between team members and preliminary analysis. Email and teleconferences were the main modes of communication. In early July the panel met again in Ottawa to conduct a series of final interviews with IDRC staff, agree on findings and conclusions, and test their preliminary findings with the Acacia team. A draft report was circulated for comment. The final report was submitted on 30 August 2010 after consideration and integration of the stakeholder feedback.

The review

The review design was determined by the explicit focus in the Terms of Reference on

i. the external verification of the Acacia team's self-evaluation of their work over the past five years - as reported in the Final Prospectus Report (FPR);

ii. four key review questions:

- To what extent was the implementation of the program's prospectus appropriate?
- Overall, was the quality of the research outputs/publications supported by the program acceptable (given the context/intended purpose, etc)?
- To what extent are the program's outcomes relevant, valuable and significant?
- What are the key issues for the IDRC's Board of Governors?

iii. The need to limit the scope of the external review given the time constraints. This implied limited sampling, a focus on verification of information in (self)evaluation reports and thus limited primary data gathering, and a stronger than normal reliance on expert opinion (the latter aspect was confirmed by the IDRC task manager).

The review was focused through the development of a matrix with 19 questions elucidating the four key review questions. This matrix (see Annex 2) determined the scope of the review and thus served as the review framework.

As triangulation using a variety of methods and sources was to be a critical requirement for a credible review, a mixed methods approach was used for data collection. The panel emphasized in-depth qualitative information, given the nature of the review questions. The nature of the review also meant that the panel was dependent upon the availability and quality of secondary data and information sources although some primary data gathering was done to increase the panel's understanding of key issues, and to help verify some of the secondary information. Although sequential execution of the data collection methods would have helped to improve triangulation, due to time constraints the interviews, survey and citation analysis were implemented in parallel.

Unit of analysis

While the overall unit of analysis was the Acacia program, data and information were collected and analysed by theme and in some instances by network, and compared and consolidated to program level. Project level information was used in the assessment of outcomes, but in no instance was a project a unit of analysis.

Definition of concepts

In the absence of explicit definitions in the Acacia team, concepts such as coherence, appropriateness, relevance, research quality and significance the review panel developed is own understanding of these concepts—informed, in part, by input for Acacia team members—and remains cognizant that its understanding may not fully align with that held by the whole of the Acacia team and its research partners.

Data collection

The review panel combined several methods to enable adequate triangulation and to improve the validity of the findings.

Document review

An extensive document review was conducted before the review design was concluded, and throughout the review as new information was sought or emerged. The IDRC evaluation unit and IDRC Intranet facility provided access to relevant program and project documents, technical reports and evaluations. Externally available documents such as published papers, conference proceedings, books and book chapters were obtained from the Internet, Intranet or from network leaders. Key documents guiding the team were the initial Acacia

Prospectus as well as the Final Program Report (FPR); the October 2009 Dakar Acacia Research and Learning Forum (ARLF) report; and the Wilson-Grau and Vincent (2010) Acacia outcomes evaluation.

Extended project review

The panel purposefully selected a set of 34 projects (see Annex 3) and their relevant documents to study in detail. This was done in order to work with a manageable number of projects, to inform the panel's understanding of key projects and the IDRC grant-making approaches and implementation processes, and to go beyond the projects identified in the FPR.

The projects were selected based on (i) their size (larger grants had preference), (ii) significance accorded in the FPR; (iii) region and (iv) subtheme/network representation. As far as possible an equal number was selected from each subtheme or network. A few grants that were not part of a network were also included.

Synthesis of project completion reports

A synthesis was made from some of the key documents where Acacia captured their lessons and experiences. A total of 22 stage 3 rolling Project Completion Reports (rPCRs) were analyzed to obtain aggregated information on completed and closed projects with funding of more than CAD 150 000.[36] The analysis and synthesis addressed seven dimensions:

- Did the projects achieve their general and specific objectives?
- If the objectives were not achieved, why not?
- How many projects had unique and/or innovative outputs? What big picture trends are these outputs pointing to?
- How many outputs were of poor quality? Why were they of poor quality?
- What are the key categories of outcomes that cut across these projects?
- What big picture lessons emerged that relate to program level learning?
- Do these rPCRs speak to any tensions in the program's work?

Key informant interviews

Interviews were conducted with a total of 40 key informants, purposefully selected from the provided list of more than 200 Acacia management team, network leaders, research partners and external expert order to provide perspectives from different sources. Structured interview guides with primarily open-ended questions were used to ensure consistency among the panel members. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to deepen the discussion and to allow issues to emerge. Each panel member was responsible for consolidating and analyzing their own data, and this information was shared where the different task assignments required.

External key informants included ten widely recognized experts with a broad view of the field of ICT for development and one of the evaluators of the mid-term evaluation of the networks and outcomes. Seven IDRC staff members and one former Acacia manager, seven network leaders and 19 research partners provided internal perspectives on the program.

Survey

An online survey questionnaire was designed and posted in both English and French in order to gather responses from a larger group of grantees and research partners, expanding

the pool of respondents beyond those interviewed. The panel decided against a survey of external actors (refer to section on the sampling strategy).

The survey was conducted during a four week period using the SurveyMonkey on-line facility (The request for the survey was sent via two different email accounts in order to limit the chance that one of them could be flagged as spam by certain servers) to 176 potential respondents. A response rate of 20 percent (36 respondents) was obtained.

Research quality analysis

The panel designed a template to assess the quality of selected Acacia publications, specifically a sample of peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed project documents. See Annex 8.

Citation analysis

As one (limited) approach to assessing their uptake or utility, citation analysis was conducted for the 35 English-language, Acacia-funded, publicly available peer-reviewed articles available to the panel. One peer reviewed article published in Arabic was not included in the analysis. There were no French language peer-reviewed articles to include in the sample.

Two tools were used to rate each article: Scopus and Google Scholar. The limited results achieved with Scopus prompted the panel use Google Scholar instead. The latter database is updated more frequently than Scopus and therefore more likely to return citations for recently published articles. The results of this analysis are given in Annex 9.

It is well known that assessing the influence of peer-reviewed articles can be fraught with challenges, especially in the case of recently published papers. The panel therefore adds their voice of caution about the limited utility of citation analysis as a proxy for overall uptake or influence of Acacia peer reviewed journal articles. It is a very narrow and often misinterpreted and misused indicator for academic merit.

Website statistics

An IDRC analyst provided summary statistics regarding web access to the materials hosted on the Acacia websites.

Sampling strategy

The sampling strategy of the review panel was purposefully designed within the limitations noted in the report to ensure a variety of diverse sources, perspectives and experiences representative of the themes, subthemes and networks. Projects, key informants and publications for the quality review were purposefully selected as explained in each method section.

The panel took a decision *not* to conduct a survey among external actors to obtain insights about the profile and influence of Acacia, and verify the FPR noted external outcomes. This decision was based on three key constraints: (i) there was no readily available list of an adequate number of external actors, with their contact details; (ii) it was unlikely that the review would garner adequate responses from people, in particular policy-makers who are not at all connected to Acacia and hence without any incentive to respond; (iii) it would have been impossible to give appropriate explanations of the work and outcomes of Acacia.

Ethical issues

Although some of the review panel members worked with IDRC on other assignments, none has been engaged in the Acacia design or implementation.

The panel did not find any sign that the IDRC evaluation unit or the Acacia team wanted to have anything but a high quality review. Pressure was never exerted on the panel to take a specific point of view.

The confidentiality of information provided by interview informants and survey respondents was respected and safeguarded at all times. The informants and respondents were informed of this at the start of their engagement.

Validation strategy, limitations and the credibility of the review

The panel is confident in the credibility of the review findings, albeit with cognizance of the challenges and limitations noted in section 3 of the report. In addition to as much triangulation as time and opportunity would allow, the validation strategy included comparison of preliminary findings between panel members, an interaction with the Acacia team to discuss preliminary findings and a review of the draft report by the IDRC evaluation unit and program team. Factual corrections and valid, evidence-based arguments were considered by the panel, documented for the evaluation office and integrated into the final report. There were no major concerns or disputes between the panel and the program stakeholders (A program response will accompany the report if the Evaluation Unit and Acacia team feel this is warranted).

The confidence of the panel in the findings was also confirmed by the consistent patterns that emerged around the main findings when the key informant interviews and survey results were compared with each other and with the desk study results. The fact that it was already known that Acacia would be terminated, and the confidentiality with which the interviews and surveys were conducted, promoted frank inputs.

Finally, although the review panel did not work with the international evaluation standards beside them, they are confident that the review has been conducted well within these standards within the constraints that such a review faces in practice.

Annex 2: Review Matrix

The analytical framework adopted for the review consisted of 19 questions that covered the five components presented in the Review matrix below. It was approved by the IDRC Evaluation Unit in May 2010.

***Issue 1:* ACACIA's Logic**

Evaluation Questions	Focus	Methods and Sources
1. What is the program **logic underpinning Acacia** as conceptualized in the initial prospectus? How did it evolve over time? Was it **used to guide** program implementation and management? If not, what guided program implementation and management?	Qualitative and quantitative mapping of program activities and outputs	• Program prospectuses and related program documents, including ARLF in Dakar, Oct 2009 • Interviews with program management

***Issue 2:* Appropriateness of Implementation Priorities and Choices**

Evaluation Questions	Focus	Methods and Sources
2. To what extent did the network and individual project activities **reflect the initial Acacia prospectus**? Were the priorities set and choices responsive to the intent? What factors were responsible for any **modifications or deviations**?	Analyses of • divergences from initial prospectus • rationale(s) for divergences • influencing factors	• Program documents & reports • Selected project documents • Interviews with program management • Survey(s)
3. To what extent did Acacia's choices and priorities **reflect and evolve with changes in the external environment?**	Comparison between • changes in external environment, and • Acacia directions	• Interviews with key informants • Survey(s)
4. To what extent do priorities and choices reflect **responsiveness to (e.g. socio-cultural) context?**	Analysis of how context has been addressed in programming and implementation	• Program documents & reports • Interviews with program management & network leaders • Survey(s)
5. How has the **concept of program coherence** been understood and managed at the program level?	• Extent of shared understanding of coherence • Extent of coherence in the priorities and choices made - also over time	• Program documents & reports • Interviews with program management & network leaders

Issue 2 (cont'd): **Appropriateness of Implementation Priorities and Choices**

Evaluation Questions	Focus	Methods and Sources
6. To what extent are the '**strategic lessons' in the final prospectus representative** of the lessons drawn from experiences across the program? Were they **systematically drawn and 'learnt'**? Do they shed **light on the (implicit or explicit) logic** underpinning the program?	• Sources of evidence to support claims of lessons learned. • Linkage between lessons and the logic underpinning the program	• Final prospectus & program (project?) reports • Interviews with program management & network leaders • Survey(s)

Issue 3: **Quality and Significance of the Research**

Evaluation Questions	Focus	Methods and Sources
7. How has the **concept of research quality** been understood and managed at the program and network levels?	• Extent of shared understanding among program management, network leaders and members • Quality assurance system in place at different program levels	• Program documents & reports • Interviews with program management, & network leaders • Survey(s)
8. To what extent do the **research outputs reflect sound methodological practice?**	• Core features of the research process	• Project completion reports • Research output/publication analysis
9. To what extent have Acacia's research findings been **significant** at a (i) theoretical and (ii) applied level	• Advancing knowledge in the field in terms of: (i) thought leadership; (ii) research practice; and (iii) use of research outputs • Reputation for quality	• Final prospectus & evaluation report • Interviews with key informants • Interviews with program management, network leaders & members • Citation analysis

Issue 4: **Achievement of Program Outcomes**

Evaluation Questions	Focus	Methods and Sources
10. To what extent were the outcomes to which Acacia is said to have contributed **in line with the intent** (as expressed in the initial Acacia prospectus)?	• Major discrepancies or gaps • Unintended outcomes or consequences from the work of Acacia	• Program documents, evaluation report • Interviews with key informants • Interviews with program management, network leaders • Survey(s)
11. To what extent does the **evidence marshalled** in the final prospectus support the claims of outcomes?	• Verification of the documented evidence to determine plausibility of claimed outcome	• Final prospectus, evaluation, program & project reports • Interviews with key informants • Survey(s)
12. How has the **concept of relevance** been understood and managed at program and network level?	• Extent of shared understanding among program management, network leaders and members • Handling of issue of relevance at different program levels	• Program documents & reports • Interviews with program management, & network leaders • Survey(s)
13. How have the **concepts of value and significance** been understood at program and network level?	• Extent of shared understanding in assessing program outcomes for reports and the final prospectus	• Interviews with program management & network leaders
14. To what extent are Acacia's **outcomes relevant, valuable and significant to the goal of influencing** the African information society?	• Contribution of project outcomes to program outcomes • Contribution of program outcomes to influencing the African information society	• Program & project documents & reports; evaluation reports • Interviews with key informants • Interviews with program management, network leaders • Survey(s)

Issue 5: **Strategic Implications for the IDRC Board of Governors**

Evaluation Questions	Focus	Methods and Sources
15. In what ways and why have Acacia been **influential,** given IDRC's mission and mandate?	• Final assessment of program outcomes, and their (likely) influence	• Synthesis of Review findings
16. Were any **outcomes absent** compared to expectations?	• Synthesis of program outcomes achieved versus intent	• Synthesis of Review findings
17. Are there **emerging issues** that need to be considered in IDRC programming?	• Listing of new/important issues that emerged during the Review	• Synthesis of Review findings
18. What **lessons can be learned** from the Acacia **experience** that can **inform IDRC programming in future**?	• Synthesis of lessons from the Review	• Synthesis of Review findings

Annex 3: List of Projects Reviewed (N=34)

Social Service Delivery Pillar	Economic Development Opportunity Pillar	People Empowerment Pillar
101974	103110	102508
102509	103114	102895
103107	103745	102933
103109	103848	103735
103252	103889	103885
103517	103890	104475
103753	104012	104501
104053		104502
104466		104852
104584		105007
104745		105716
104819		
104861		
104862		
105715		
105720		

Annex 4: Documents Reviewed

IDRC Corporate Documents

Clarke, Michael. (2007). ICT4D- Report to the Board of Governors September 2007.

Fuchs, Richard. (2005). Report to the Board of Governors September 2005.

Freeman, Constance. J and Gilles Forget. (2008). IDRC in Sub-Saharan Africa- Report to the Board of Governors.

Freeman, Constance J. and Gilles Forget. (2006). IDRC in Sub-Saharan Africa-Report to the Board of Governors.

IDRC. (2004). Corporate Strategy and Programming Framework 2005-2010. International Development Research Centre, Ottawa.

IDRC Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Consultation Report Nairobi, 10-11 March 2009 by Kathryn Touré and Constance Freeman

Acacia Program Documentation

Acacia Prospectus 2006-2011, February 17, 2006

Acacia Workplans 2005-2010

Acacia Project Portfolio 2005-2010, March 24, 2010

Acacia Team Meeting Reports 2005-2010

Acacia First Technical Report to DfID

Acacia Second Technical Report to DfID 2008-2009

Emdon, Heloise. (2008). Connectivity Africa Final Project Report, April 2008.

Acacia Strategies and Approaches

Bannerman, Sarah. (2007). Intellectual Property Issues in ICT4D.

Buskens, Ineke. (2007) *Towards an ACACIA Culture of Gender Awareness: Ineke Reflecting on the Team's Workshop Reflections.*

Jensen, Mike. (2009). *The Outlook for Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in International Development Assistance- Issues, Trends and Opportunities*. Global Knowledge Partnership.

Jensen, Mike. (2009). Natural Resources Management

Primo, Natasha. (2009). IDRC Acacia Gender Integration Guide for Project/Research Proposal Development and Appraisal.

Valk, John-Harmen. (2008). ICTs and the Global Food Price Crisis.

Acacia Evaluation Reports

Acacia. (2009). Participants Evaluation: Acacia Research and Learning Forum, Dakar, Senegal. October 12-14, 2009.

Acacia. (2008). ACACIA Gender Awareness Workshop (Johannesburg, October 10-11, 2008).

Acacia. (2005). Evaluation Report on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Phase II.

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Annex 5: List of Key Informants

Name	Organization/ Position	Region/Country	Project Number
1. Valerie D'Costa	InfoDev	North America/United States	N/A
2. Hernan Galperin	LIRNENET	Latin America/ Argentina	N/A
3. Kerry McNamara	American University	North America/United States	N/A
4. Aida Opoku-Mensah	UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)	Africa/Ghana	N/A
5. Russel Southwood	Balancing Act	Europe/ United Kingdom	N/A
6. FF Tusubira	Ubuntunet Alliance	Africa/ Malawi	N/A
7. Ricardo Wilson-Grau	Independent Evaluator	Latin America/ Brazil	N/A
8. Kiss Abraham	Knowledge and Information Service to Society	Africa/ Zambia	102508
9. Jonnie Akakpo	Centre for Information Technologies Research and Development	Africa/ Ghana	103252
10. Charles Batambuze	National Book Trust of Uganda	Africa/ Uganda	104502
11. Boubakar Barry	Association for African Universities/ Coordinator	Africa/Senegal	104466, 105266
12. Martin Benjamin	Kamusi Project International/ Executive Director	Europe/Switzerland	104475
13. Jonathan Campaigne	PRIDE Africa/Chairman	Africa/Kenya	103745, 104744, 103745, 103701
14. Willie Currie	Association for Progressive Computing (APC) Communications and Information Policy Manager	Africa/South Africa	104334, 104576
15. Stephen Esselaar	Intellecon/ Principal Telecommunications Consultant	North America/Canada	103114
16. Hamish Fraser	Harvard Medical School/ Partners in Health/Assistant Professor of Medicine	North America/United States	104862
17. Godfred Frempong	CSIR Ghana, S&T Policy Research Institute/Researcher	Africa/Ghana	103890
18. Thierry Karsenti	University of Montreal/ Canada Research Chair, Associate Professor	North America/Canada	105715
19. Driss Kettani	Al Akhawayn University/ Professor	Africa/Morocco	104474, 104053
20. Holly Ladd	SatelLife Inc./President	North America/ United States	104819
21. Margaret E. Ngweira	University of Malawi/Professor	Africa/Malawi	104584, 104965

22. Frances Pinter	Bloomsbury Academic/ Publishers	Europe/United Kingdom	104502
23. Achal Prabhala	ACA2K, Principal Investigator	Asia/India	104501
24. Natasha Primo	Association for Progressive Communications/ National ICT Policy Advocacy Coordinator	Africa/South Africa	10433
25. John Willinsky	University of British Colombia/ Professor	North America/Canada	103885
26. Luci Abrahams	University of Witwatersrand/ Director of LINK Centre	Africa/ South Africa	104503
27. Chris Armstrong	University of Witwatersrand/ Research Fellow	Africa/ South Africa	104501
28. Ineke Buskens	The Grace Project/ Project Leader and Research Director	Africa/ South Africa	102508, 105007
29. Alison Gilwald	RIA/ Director of Research	Africa/ South Africa	103114
30. Ophelia Mascarenhas	University of Dar es Salaam/ Professor	Africa/ Tanzania	103876
31. Julian May	University of Kwazulu Natal/Professor	Africa/South Africa	103876
32. Chris Morris	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research/ ICT for Development Specialist	Africa/South Africa	104477, 101981
33. Alioune Camara	IDRC/ Senior Program Officer with Acacia	Africa/Senegal	N/A
34. Michael Clarke	IDRC/Director of Program Area/ICT4D	North America/Canada	N/A
35. Adel El Zaim	IDRC/Senior Program Officer with Acacia	Africa/Egypt	N/A
36. Heloise Emdon	IDRC/Team Leader of the Acacia Program	North America/Canada	N/A
37. Khaled Fourati	IDRC/Program Officer with Acacia	Africa/South Africa	N/A
38. Chaitali Sinha	IDRC/Program Officer with Acacia	North America/Canada	N/A
39. Steve Song	Former IDRC Staff/Former Acacia Team Leader	Africa/South Africa	N/A
40. Ramata Thioune	IDRC/Program Officer	Africa/Senegal	N/A

Annex 6: Interview Protocols for Key Informants

Interviews were conducted with a total of 40 key informants, purposefully selected from different yet important groupings in order to provide perspectives from different sources. Structured interview guides with primarily open-ended questions were used to ensure consistency among the panel members. The interviews were conducted in semi-structured format to deepen the discussion and allow issues to emerge. Panel members were responsible for consolidating and analyzing their own data, and this information was shared where the different tasks required this.

Two interview guides were prepared: the first to guide interviews with network leaders and selected project principal investigators, and the second to guide interviews with widely recognized experts in the field of ICT4D.

1. Interview Guide for Network Leaders & Selected Project Principal Investigators

Introduction

i. *Purpose of the interview*: The IDRC External Review of its Acacia Program is being conducted after five years in order to provide an independent view of how the Program has been performing, the extent to which its strategic objectives have been met, and what can be learnt to inform future programming by funders of ICT4D, including IDRC. Although the Review results will be used by the IDRC Board and Management for accountability, it will thus also be used to guide future programming decisions.
ii. It is therefore important to be circumspect as well as frank in your comments so that the Acacia experience can help improve future action and help optimize the use of resources for development in Africa. The interview responses will be completely confidential and will be seen only by the Review team and survey administrator. Aggregated data and syntheses will be used for the report.
iii. The Review does not focus on individual projects or grants but on the Acacia program as a whole, with cognizance of the work of the various networks within it.
iv. Field visits will not be conducted. Instead the Review team verifies and enriches the information in self-assessments and other external evaluations by triangulating between different sources of information, including interviews with different stakeholder groups. Network leaders and PIs are therefore very important sources of information, in addition to Acacia management and non-Acacia experts.
v. The interview should take approximately 1.0 to 1.5 hours. Thanks for taking the valuable time!

NOTE: (i) Interviewer will make minor adjustments to questions to focus on the Network, Program or project level, depending on exposure of informant. (ii)Specific questions on specific outcomes, outputs etc. reflected in the reports need to be added during probing; (iii) Expert interviews will focus on sections 2, 3, 5 and 7.

Section 1: Identification and profile as (key) informant

Name _____ Date/duration of interview:_____

Organization: _____ Position in organization: _____

Network (if relevant): _____ Role (if relevant): _____

Acacia project(s) (if relevant): _____ Role (if relevant): _____

Region in which based: _____ Country of origin: _____

Gender: ☐ **Male** ☐ **Female**

How long have you been (*role in Network)*? _____ Engaged in ICT4D / Information Society work _____?

In what field of ICT / ICT4D / AIS have you been specializing? _____

Where would you like our discussion to focus (circle one or more): Acacia program and/or Network above (note if more than one) and/or Project (note if more than one)

Would you regard yourself as an expert in ICT4D (or in ICT)?

1. **Yes.** I am widely acknowledged as a leader on the continent (and even more broadly)	2. **To some extent.** I stay updated on current developments through literature and events, and contribute quite regularly.	3. **Not really / not sure.** I do my best to stay updated, but it is not always possible	4. **No.** I am just starting to work in / understand the field

Section 2: Relevance, significance and value of the work

1.	a. Can you identify major trends or significant advances / breakthroughs in the field of *Acacia/Network field of work* in Africa over the last 5 years? In other words, how has it evolved during this time and what were the major milestones in this evolution?	
	b. Did the work by *Acacia/Network/project* contribute to this evolution in any *significant* manner?	*Yes / No*
	c. If so, how, and why do you regard its contribution as *significant?* Has it also been *valuable*? Alternatively if not, why not? What were the constraints?	
2.	a. What do you consider to have been the most pressing issues in need of research in the *Acacia/Network/project field of work*, over the past 5 years, and why?	
	b. Who (if anyone) is addressing these issues? And is the work by *Acacia/Network/project* contributing, or positioned to contribute, to these in any *significant* manner?	*Yes / No*

c. If so, how, and why do you regard the work as *significant*? Has it also been *valuable*?

Alternatively if not, why not? What were the constraints?

3. a. How responsive has *Acacia / Network / project* been to needs/demand and changes in context? Do you have evidence that we could use to inform our findings in this regard (other than the reports we already have)?

For our use and/or guide them:

- Very (it was designed to meet a specific need/demand, grounded in local contexts, and policy and research developments related to the area of work have been tracked and changes timeously made if necessary; OR such developments are tracked, but there have as yet not been reason to make adjustments; OR the topics and ongoing outputs show that the researchers are in tune with needs/demands and with developments in the field)
- Somewhat (its area(s) of work were based on specific need/demand, with some understanding of local context, but efforts have not been made to track, and/or adjust to, relevant policy or research developments; OR it is not clear that the researchers are in tune with needs/demands and with developments in the field)
- Not really (it is in an area that we believe is or will be important – although others may not yet think so; OR they are working in areas irrelevant to where the field needs to be/go now)
- Not sure

b. Did *Acacia/Network* 'manage for relevance'? For example, did it define 'relevance' and actively encourage its Networks and/or projects to be relevant and responsive? | *Yes / No*

c. If so, has this been clear enough? What more could have been done to ensure that the *Acacia / Network / project* work was, or remains, relevant and responsive?

4. Is there anything in the work of the Network - or in the approaches by IDRC or Acacia - that you feel distinguishes them from others, making the work more effective or influential? | *Yes / No*

Please give reasons for your response.

Section 3: Quality of the work

5. a. Was there a common understanding of 'research quality' among *Acacia/Network* members? If so, how was this 'defined'? | *Yes / No*

b. Were strategies deliberately applied by *Acacia/Network* to help ensure 'quality' research / outputs? If so, how was this done? | *Yes / No*

c. How successful was *Acacia/Network/project* in ensuring 'quality'? On what do you base your assessment? Do you have evidence that we could use to inform our findings in this regard (other than the reports we already have, and our output assessment)?

For us to use and/or to guide them:

- Very – e.g. the proposals had been judged carefully according to an explicit set of quality criteria (*if so get these*), and during the support period (lifetime of the program/network/project) the need for quality work has been emphasized and encouraged and/or expectations made clear; OR it is clear from the quality of the outputs that the research has been of high quality.
- Somewhat – e.g. these projects had been approved and research quality was assumed to be in order; little was done to discuss, promote or clarify quality during the support period. AND/OR the quality of the outputs indicates variable research quality.
- Not really – e.g. quality was not seen in approval or management processes as one of the important issues or expectations; OR the quality of the outputs was mostly disappointing).
- Not sure

d. What are/were the main (i) facilitating factors and (ii) constraints to high quality research in *Acacia/Network/project* - and more broadly in this field of work? What more could have been done to get better quality research?

Section 4: Gender and capacity building initiatives

6. a. Acacia III launched a renewed effort to train members and integrate gender meaningfully into its work. Did you deliberately apply strategies in your *Network / project* to promote transformative changes in behavior in

   - focusing on gender justice
   - integrating social and gender analysis into projects
   - develop ICT applications taking consideration of women users' needs?

   Yes / No

   b. What were the strategies? How successful were you and on what do you base your assessment? Do you have evidence that we could use to inform our findings in this regard (other than the reports we already have)?

- Very – please describe why.
- Somewhat – please describe why
- Not really – please describe why
- Not sure – please describe why

c. What are/were the main (i) facilitating factors for and (ii) constraints to integrating gender in *Acacia / Network / project?* What more could have been done?

a. Acacia III had a 'complete capacity building' approach that included attention to research capacities, management capacities, evaluation, resource mobilization, policy influencing, ensuring research as public good and so on. Were these the correct targets for capacity building?

b. How effective were these efforts overall? Do you have evidence that we could use to inform our findings in this regard (other than the reports we already have, and our output assessment)?

- Very – please describe why.
- Somewhat – please describe why
- Not really – please describe why

- Not sure – please describe why

c. What are/were the main (i) facilitating factors for and (ii) constraints to building capacities (generally) in *Acacia / Network / project?* In retrospect, what more could have been done?

Section 5: Influence and reach of the work

7.	a. Were your *Network/project* results / achievements / outcomes in line with what was intended in the beginning?	*Yes / No*
	b. What factors (i) facilitated and (ii) constrained success towards the intended results? (Were they due to the concept design, implementation or contextual challenges?)	
8.	Are you familiar with the Wilson-Grau evaluation and final Program report (prospectus)? If so, how confident are you in the evidence of *Acacia/Network/project* outcomes that are said to have been achieved in the Wilson-Grau evaluation and final Program report (prospectus)? Please give reasons for your response.	
9.	a. Did *Acacia/Network/project* launch or promote specific strategies to ensure that the research effectively reached potential users - *i.e.* did it have clear 'influencing strategies'?	*Yes / No*
	b. If so, what were the main components of these strategies?	
	c. What were the main (i) facilitating factors and (ii) constraints to *Acacia/Network/project* efforts to influence policy? How can / could better results have been obtained?	

Section 6: Management

10.	In your view, what was the main value added by having a 'Network approach' in Acacia III rather than for instance just a portfolio of grants? Would you recommend this modality in future?	
11.	a. Has *Acacia/Network* been managed as a *coherent entity* in order to achieve its objectives? For example, in how projects were selected, how critical issues were integrated, how common understanding was created, and so on?	*Yes / No*
	b. If so, how has this been done? And if not, why not? In retrospect, how can/ could this have been improved (Does this matter)?	
12.	a. Was *Acacia / Network / Project* deliberately (actively) managed to get the best	*Yes /*

performance and impact?	*No*
b. What were the best aspects of how the *program/network/project* was managed? c. In retrospect, which important things could have been done better that we have not yet discussed? (2-3 most important improvements).	
13. a. What were the 2-3 main factors that influenced the success of the work and thus results of the Network – (i) positively and (ii) negatively? b. Among others did you find that members had a shared understanding of what was to be achieved? Did (socio-cultural) differences among members play a role? Were power relations between different actors – donor, program/network/project management and members – a factor?	
14. a. Were you a 'learning' Program and/or Network – in terms of regular team/member learning from the research findings and process, using reporting results, basing programming or project decisions on evidence, and so on? b. If so, how did this work, and if not, why not? In retrospect, how could this have been improved?	*Yes / No*

Section 7: Conclusion and the future

15. In summary, what would have been different today if this *Program / Network / project* did not exist?
16. What are the 1-2 most important things you would like to see this policy and research in this field of work – ICT4D / African Information Society - move forward in a dynamic way in future? Do you want to recommend anything to IDRC specifically?
17. Are there any issues you would like to address that we have not discussed?

Interviewer: _____

2. Interview Guide for Experts

Introduction

i. *Purpose of the interview*: The IDRC External Review of its Acacia Program is being conducted after five years in order to provide an independent view of how the Program has been performing, the extent to which its strategic objectives have been met, and what can be learnt to inform future programming by funders of ICT4D, including IDRC. Although the Review results will be used by the IDRC Board and Management for accountability, it will thus also be used to guide future programming decisions.
ii. It is important to be frank in your comments so that the Acacia experience can help improve future action and help optimize the use of resources for development in Africa. The interview responses will be completely confidential and will be seen only by the Review team and survey administrator. Aggregated data and syntheses will be used for the report.
iii. The Review does not focus on individual projects or grants but on the Acacia program as a whole, with cognizance of the work of the various networks within it.
iv. Field visits will not be conducted. Instead the Review team verifies and enriches the information in self-assessments and other external evaluations by triangulating between different sources of information, including interviews with different stakeholder groups.
v. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes. Please feel free to focus on those questions that are most relevant to your experience.

Section 1: EXPERT PROFILE

Name _____ Date/duration of interview:_____

Organization: _____ '

Region in which based: _____ Country of origin: _____

Gender: ☐ **Male** ☐ **Female**

How long have you been engaged in ICT4D / Information Society work _____?

In what field of ICT / ICT4D / AIS have you been specializing? _____

Would you regard yourself as an expert in ICT4D (or in ICT)?

1. **Yes.** I am widely acknowledged as a leader on the continent (and even more broadly)	2. **To some extent.** I stay updated on current developments through literature and events, and contribute quite regularly.	3. **Not really / not sure.** I do my best to stay updated, but it is not always possible	4. **No.** I am just starting to work in / understand the field

Section 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Familiarity with the field of ICT4D and with IDRC/Acacia:

1. How much do you know about the work of Acacia and/or any of its networks (RIA, PICTURE, Wireless Africa; A2K, AnLOC, GRACE; PAREN, LOGIN, OASIS, UNMIN, PANAF, AVOIR)? How informed are you of their recent research activities and outputs (especially since 2005, i.e. Acacia III)?

Evolution of the field:

2. What are the main trends in terms of research and the use of research in the field of ICT4D (and the African Information Society)? In other words, how has the field been evolving over the past few years? What were the most significant advances or breakthroughs in the areas of work (especially in the areas covered by Acacia if you know their work)?

Significance and value of Acacia's contributions to the field:

3. To your knowledge, did Acacia supported work contribute in any significant manner to these advancements, adding value at either a (i) theoretical and/or (ii) practical level? If so, what were these? If not, what do you think are the reasons?

Factors influencing contributions to the field:

4. If an organization or donor initiative is to be effective in contributing in a significant manner to research on ICT4D, how should it approach its work? What should its 'characteristics' be?

5. What would be critical constraining factors in this field of research, capacity building and influencing through research? And important facilitating factors?

Strengths and weaknesses of IDRC, Acacia and/or its networks:

6. From what you know about the work of Acacia or IDRC, what are their strengths? Is there something that makes them different from others – in a positive way?
7. And what are some of their weaknesses or areas of improvement? Is there something that makes them different from others – in a negative way?
8. If you know Acacia's work well, do you see coherence (strategy) in their approach? Or are there gaps you would have liked to see filled?

Reputation and quality of Acacia's outputs (research work):

9. Does Acacia (IDRC) have a reputation for high quality outputs (research)? What are the reasons? How would you define 'quality' in this context?
10. Can you point to specific Acacia (or specific networks) outputs or contributions that you regard as of
    i. high quality
    ii. insufficient quality?

Reach and influence of Acacia's work:

11. Can you identify any Acacia (or specific networks) outputs or activities that were especially significant in terms of influencing policy?
12. Is Acacia visible enough in the field of ICT4D? Are its outputs and other contributions known? In your opinion, do they reach the ideal audiences? Please explain your response.
13. What would have been different if Acacia (or one or more of its networks) did not exist?

Thinking about the future:

14. What are some of the most needed and also emerging priorities for research on ICT4D?
15. What recommendations would you make to IDRC if they are to continue their work in the field of ICT4D / African Information Society? Should they continue in this field?
16. Any other comments or issues you would like to address?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INSIGHTS!

Annex 7: Survey Design and Distribution

An online survey questionnaire was designed in order to gather responses from a larger group of grantees and research partners, expanding the pool of respondents beyond those interviewed. The survey was conducted over four weeks using the SurveyMonkey online facility. The request for the survey was sent via two different email accounts in order to limit the chance that one of them could be flagged as spam by certain servers. The 176 potential respondents yielded a response rate of 20 percent (36 respondents).

1. Introduction

Please answer the following questions by ticking the boxes, and/or writing in the spaces provided. *Your response will be treated confidentially. The information you provide will not be passed on to any third party, and will be aggregated to ensure anonymity. Note that this survey is also available in French.*

PLEASE NOTE: Where you do not have experience of the ACACIA program as a whole, please respond as Network member and/or as a Project Leader. Where you have been involved in more than one project or Network, please select the one(s) in which you have been most actively engaged:

2. Demographics of respondent

Acacia theme in which your project is located (Please note: if you are engaged in more than one project, please select one that can best inform this survey):

How long have you been engaged in this project?

Network of which you are a member (If engaged in more than one network, please select the one in which you are most frequently engaged):

How long have you been a member of this network?

Region in which you are based:

How long have you worked in ICT4D?

Would you regard yourself as an expert in a specific field of ICT4D?

Yes. I am widely acknowledged as a leader on the continent (and even more broadly)	**To some extent.** I stay updated on current developments through literature and events, and contribute quite regularly.	**Not really / not sure.** I do my best to stay updated, but it is not always possible	**No.** I am just starting to work in / understand the field

3. Survey questions

Research Quality

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	N/A
1. **ACACIA** expectations of what constitutes' high quality' research are very clear to me							

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	N/A
2. The research in my network/ projects is of high quality							
Additional explanation if any							

Innovation

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	N/A
3. The ACACIA work I am familiar with is innovative, with innovative outputs							
Additional explanation if any							

Acacia in the Field of ICT4D

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	N/A
4. ACACIA addresses pressing issues in need of research in the ICT4D field							
5. The researchers in my network/ projects track changes in the research *and* policy environment to ensure that we are updated, and adapt our research if necessary							
Additional explanation if any							
6. Our research work has succeeded in filling a gap in existing ICT4D knowledge							
Additional explanation if any							

Outcomes

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	N/A
7. The outcomes of our work are already making a difference to policy and practice in the African Information Society							
8. Our work has an explicit strategy to achieve influence and ensure that the research findings have a good chance to be used							
Additional explanation if any							
9. Our work has directly contributed to the creation of new university degree level programs and courses							
Additional explanation if any							

Capacity Building

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	N/A
10. Participating with **ACACIA** has developed my organization's capacities to conduct research							
11. Participating with **ACACIA** has developed my organization's capacities to conduct research							
12. Participating with **ACACIA** has developed my organization's capacities to communicate research results							

and influence appropriate audiences							

Gender

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	N/A
13. Our work has specifically considered and integrated gender issues and analyses							
Additional explanation if any							

General Comments

How would ICT4D and the African Information Society in particular be different today if ACACIA did not exist?
Do you have any other comments or recommendations? E.g. What are the most important things you would like to see done to move the field of ICT4D forward in a dynamic way in future?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING VALUABLE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY

Annex 8: Details of Research Quality Assessment

Merit of the Research Process	**n/a=0**	**very poor=1**	**poor=2**	**Average=3**	**good =4**	**Excellent=5**
Rationale or theoretical framework described						
Scholarly literature is appropriately reviewed						
Data collection described e.g. sample size						
The process used to conduct the research and the explanation as to why it was selected meets the common sense standard for rigor and credibility						
Conclusions are clearly derived from the evidence						

Significance of the Findings to the Field (use)						
fills a gap in the knowledge or provides a new analysis (academic significance) or topic addresses a key policy/practice problem (policy/practice significance)						
research product is presented in a timely manner for policy makers and practitioners (e.g. when they need it)						
research product is in an accessible format for policy makers and/or practitioners or appropriate format for academic audience						
relevant groups are aware of the work						
Prospective end users are appropriately involved in the co-production of knowledge						
Relevant groups perceive it to be valid/credible						
relevant groups perceive the work as valuable						
relevant groups use the findings to develop new policies, products, behaviours, ideas						
The norm or debate in the field has shifted due to this contribution (academic)						

Annex 9: Citation Research

Introduction

A citation analysis was conducted for all English-language Acacia-funded peer reviewed articles (n=34), as one way of assessing the influence or uptake of these works. One peer reviewed article published in Arabic was not included in the analysis. Two tools were used to rate each article: Scopus and Google Scholar. Scopus was recommended by the IDRC library as the most effective way to determine the citations of individual peer-reviewed articles. However when searching in Scopus very few articles returned citations, so the team decided to move on to Google Scholar, whose database is updated more frequently than Scopus and is therefore more likely to return citations for recently published articles.

Limitations

Assessing the influence of peer-reviewed articles is difficult especially in the case of recently published papers. The panel also cautions about the limited utility citation analysis as a proxy for overall uptake or influence of Acacia peer reviewed journal articles as this is a very narrow indicator for measuring merely academic merit.

Peer Reviewed Citations Report

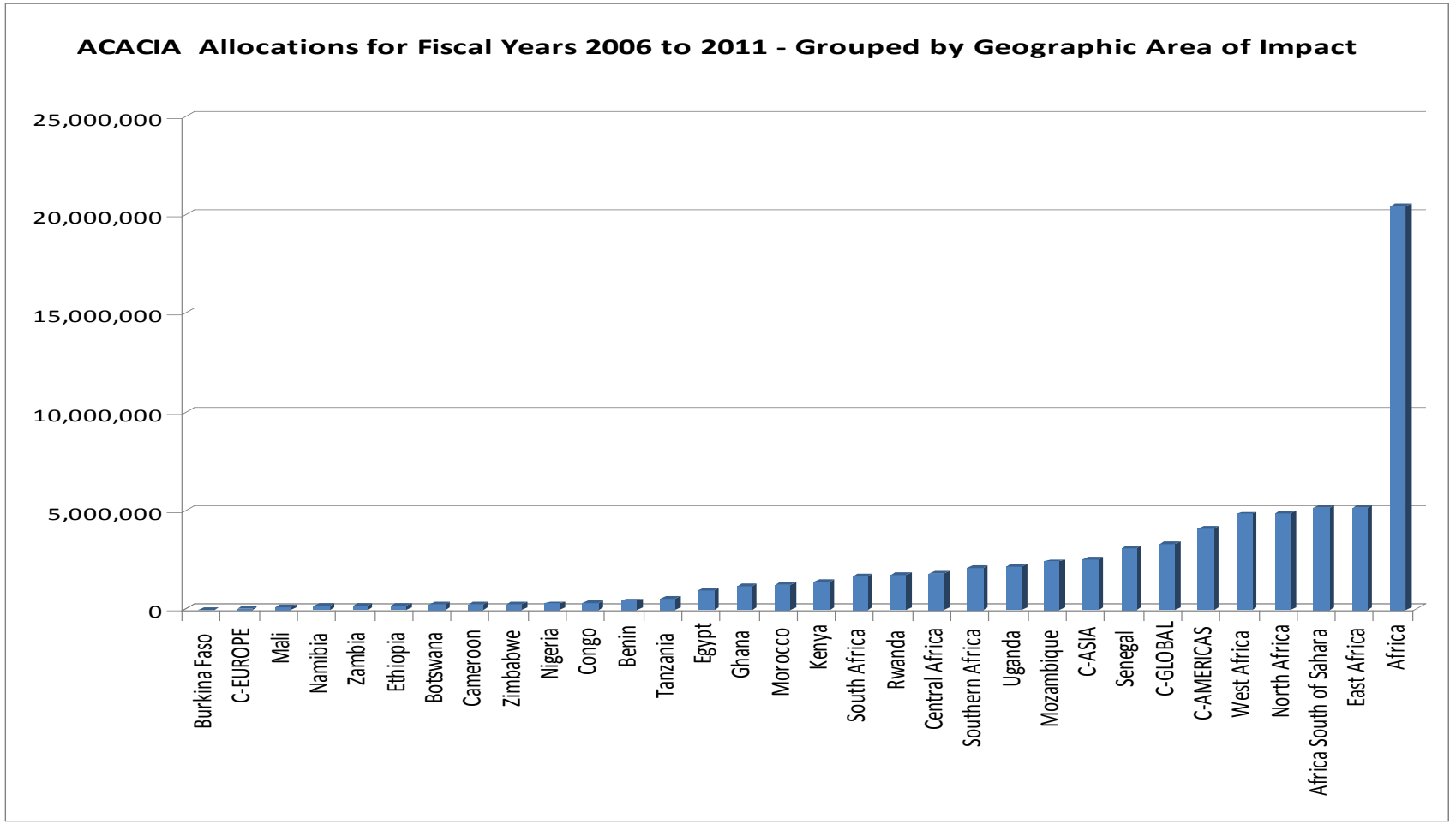
Article	Google Scholar Citation Returns	Scopus Citation Returns
1. Abrahams, Lucienne; Mark Burke; Johann Mouton. (2009). Research Productivity-Visibility-Accessibility and Scholarly Communication in Southern African Universities. *The South African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 10, 2009/2010.	0	0
2. Amorso, C.; B. Akimana; B. Wise; HSF Fraser. (2010). Using Electronic Medical Records for HIV Care in Rural Rwanda. *MedInfo (In Press).*	0	0
3. Armstrong, Chris; Heather Ford. (2006). Africa and the Digital Information Commons: An Overview. *The Southern African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 7, 2006.	2	0
4. Ashraf, Nava; Gine Xavier; Dean Karlan. (2008). Finding Missing Markets (and a disturbing epilogue): Evidence from an Export Crop Adoption and Marketing Intervention in Kenya. *JFL.*	11	0
5. Chabossou, Augustin; Christoph Stork; Matthias Stork; Pam Zahonogo. (2008). Mobile Telephony Access and Usage in Africa. *The South African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 9, 2008.	1	0
6. Chabossou, A.; Christoph Stork; Mathias Stork; Pam Zohonogo. (n.d.) Mobile Telephony Access and Usage in Africa. *SAJIC.*	1	0

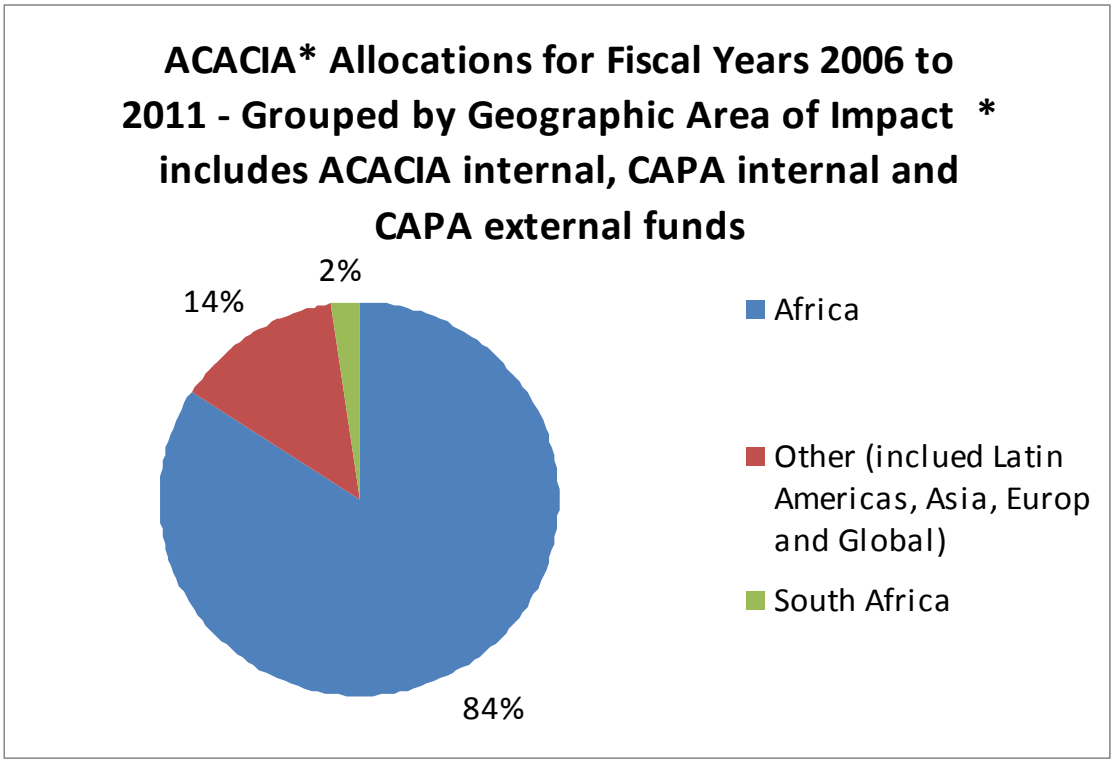
7. Chabassou, A.; C. Stork; M. Stork; Z. Zahonogo. Mobile Telephony Access and Usage in Africa.	1	0
8. Fairall, L.R.; Bachmann, M.O.; Louwagie, GMC; van Vuuren, C.; Chikobvu, P.; Steyn, D.; Staniland, GH.; Timmerman, V.; Msimanga, M.; Seebregts, CJ. (2008). Effectiveness of Antiretroviral Treatment in a South African Program. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, Vol. 168, No. 1.	51	40
9. Fairall, L.R.; Max O Bachmann; Merrick Zwarenstein; Carl J. Lombard; Kerry Uebel; Cloete van Vuuren; Dewald Steyn; Andrew Boulle; Eric D. Bateman. (2008). Streamlining Tasks and Roles to Expand Treatment and Care for HIV: Randomised Controlled Trial Protocol. *Trials,* 9:21.	2	2
10. Frempong, Godfred. (20 09). Mobile Telephone Opportunities: The Case of Micro- and Small Enterprises in Ghana. *Emerald Group Publishing Limited.* Vol. 11, No. 2	3	0
11. Frempong, Godfred. (2006). Trends in ICT Usage by Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Ghana. *ATDF Journal.* Volume 4, Issue 1.	1	0
12. Gillwald, Alison. (2007). Between Two Stools: Broadband Policy in South Africa. *The Southern African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 8, 2007.	5	0
13. Gillwald, Alison; Christopher Stork. (2006). Towards an African e-Index: ICT Access and Usage Across 16 African Countries. *ICT Sector Performance Review 2006.*	4	0
14. Govinda, S.P.; H.B. Chittoo. Critical Success Factors and Key Performance Indicators for e-Governance Projects: The Case of Mauritius.	0	0
15. Gray, Eve. (2009-2010). Access to Africa's Knowledge: Publishing Development Research and Measuring Value. *The African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 10, 2009-2010.	0	0
16. Keats, Derek. (2006). Implications of the NonCommercial (NC) Restriction for Educational Content Licensed under a Creative Commons Licence. *Southern African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 7, 2006.	1	0
17. Keats, Derek; Maria A. Beebe. (2004). Addressing Digital Divide Issues in a Partially Online Masters Program in Africa: the NetTel@Africa Experience. *International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies.*	11	1
18. Keats, Derek. (2003). Knowledge Environment for Web-based Learning (KEWL): An Open Source Learning Management System Suited for the Developing World. *Technology Source Archives.* University of North Carolina.	9	0

19. Kettani, Driss; Michael Gurstein; Asmae El Mahdi. (2009). Good Governance and e-Government: Applying a Formal Outcome Analysis Methodology in a Developing World Context. *International Journal of Electronic Governance.*	1	0
20. Kettani, Driss; Bernard Moulin; Michael Gurstein; Asmae El Mahdi. (2008). E-Government and Local Good Governance: A Pilot Project in Fez, Morocco. *EJISDC.* 35, 1.	2	0
21. Liang, Lawrence; Achal Prabhala. (2006). Comment: Reconsidering the Pirate Nation. *The South African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 7, 2006.	0	0
22. Maumbe, Blessing, M. (2010). E-Agriculture and E-Government for Global Policy Development: Implications and Future Directions. *Information Science Reference.*	0	0
23. Okello, Julius; Ramatu Al-Hassan; Ruth Okello. A Framework for Analyzing the Role of ICT on Agricultural Commercialization and Household Food Security.	0	0
24. Rens, Andrew; Lawrence Lessig. (2006). Forever Minus a Day: A Consideration of Copyright Term Extension in South Africa. *The South African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 7, 2006.	0	0
25. Schonwetter, Tobias; Jeremy de Beer; Dick Kawooya; Achal Prabhala. (2009). Copyright and Education: Lessons on African Copyright and Access to Knowledge. *The South African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 10, 2009/2010.	0	0
26. Schonwetter, Tobias. (2006). The "Fair Use" Doctrine and the Implications of Digitising for the Doctrine from a South African Perspective. *The Southern African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 7, 2006.	0	0
27. Seebregts, Christopher, J.; I. Asangansi; L. Hanmer; A. Kanter. (2009). Building an Integration Framework for eHealth. *Health Informatics AIDS Conference.*	0	0
28. Seebregts, Christopher, J.; Burke W. Mamlin; Paul G. Biondich; Hamish S.F. Fraser; Benjamin A. Wolfe; Darius Jazayeri; Christian Allen; Justin Miranda; Elaine Baker; Nicholas Musinguzi; Daniel Kayiwa; Carl Fourie; Neal Lesh; Andrew Kaner; Constantin T. Yiannoutsos; Christopher Bailey; The OpenMRS Implementers Network. (2009). The OpenMRS Implementers Network. *The International Journal of Medical Informatics.*	10	1
29. Seebregts, Christopher J.; Merrick Zwarenstein; Catherine Matthews; Lara Fairall; Alan J. Fisher; Clive Seebregts; Wanjiru Mukoma; Knut-Inge Klepp (2009). Handheld computers for survey and trial data collection in resource-poor settings: Development and evaluation of PDACT, a Palm Pilot	4	2

Interviewing System. *International Journal of Medical Informatics.*		
30. Stork, C. (2009). Inter-Connection Benchmarking in Namibia. *CPR South 2009.*	0	0
31. Tang, Amy; Rowan Seymour; John DeRiggi; Hamish Fraser. (2009). Training Software Developers for Electronic Medical Records in Rwanda. *AMIA 2009 Annual Symposium.*	0	0
32. Van Gorp, Annemijn; Chris Morris. (2007). Serving under-serviced areas in South Africa: the potential for Wi-Fi community network deployment and the role of regulation. *Emerald Group Publishing Limited.* Vol. 10, No. 1	1	1
33. Van Reijswoud, Victor. (2006). Book Review: At the Crossroads: ICT Policymaking in East Africa, edited by Florence E. Etta and Laurent Elder, East African Publishers. *Southern African Journal of Information and Communications.* Issue 7, 2006.	6	0
34. Visser, Coenraad. (2006). Technological Protection Measures: South Africa Goes Overboard. Overbroad. *The Southern African Journal of Information and Communication.* Issue 7, 2006.	0	0

Annex 10: Acacia Financial Data

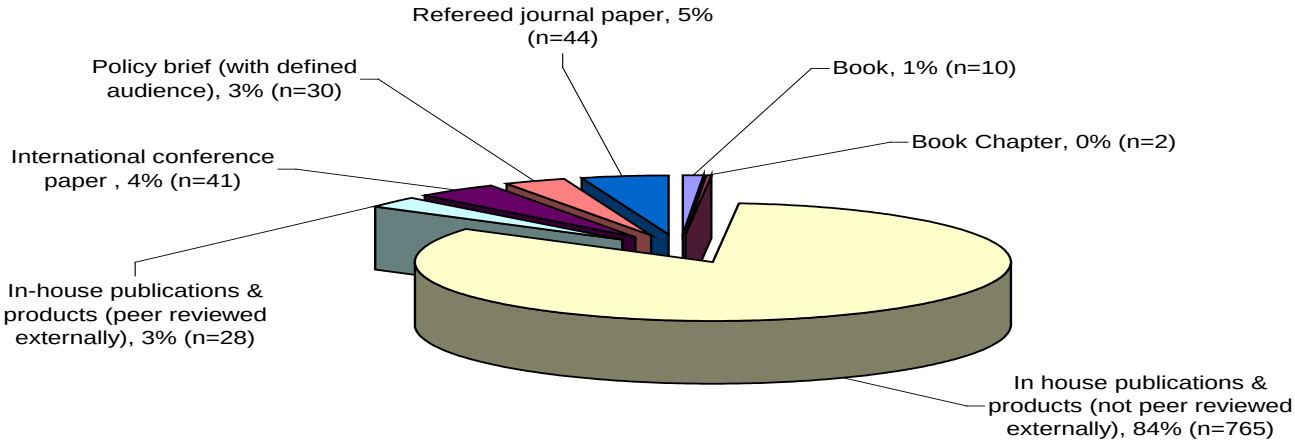



ACACIA* Allocations for Fiscal Years 2006 to 2011 - Grouped by Geographic Area of Impact * includes ACACIA internal, CAPA internal and CAPA external funds
2%
14%
84%
Africa
Other (inclued Latin Americas, Asia, Europ and Global)
South Africa

Annex 11: Acacia Research Outputs/Publications by Sub-Theme

Sub Theme	Book	Book Chapter	In house Product (not peer reviewed)	In-house product (peer reviewed)	International conference paper	Policy brief (with defined audience)	Refereed journal paper	Grand Total
EA	1	0	43	8	0	0	8	60
EDO	2	1	209	18	3	1	16	250
PE	2	1	213	2	28	25	11	282
SA	4	0	108	0	1	2	0	115
SSD	1	0	192	0	9	2	9	213
Total	**10**	**2**	**765**	**28**	**41**	**30**	**44**	**920**

Annex 12: Acacia Composite Research Outputs/Publications Index 2006-2010 (N=920)



Annex 13: Outcomes Analysis

A matrix was developed as a tool for comparing expected outcomes set out in the Acacia inception Prospectus Report, with the outcomes reported on in the Acacia Prospectus Final Report (FPR). The matrix categorized outcomes with respect to those that were:

- Planned and achieved;
- Planned and unachieved;
- Planned and not reported on; and
- Unplanned and achieved.

Planned and Achieved	Planned and Unachieved
Those outcomes that were listed as expected outcomes in the inception Prospectus Report, and were reported to be at least partially achieved in the Final Prospectus Report (FPR)	Those outcomes that were listed as expected outcomes in the inception Prospectus Report, and were at least partially unachieved compared to expectations.
Planned and Not Reported On	**Unplanned and Achieved**
Those outcomes that were listed as expected outcomes in the inception Prospectus Report, and were not reported on specifically with evidence in the final report.	Those outcomes that were presented in the Final Prospectus Report, but were not listed as planned or expected outcomes in the inception Prospectus Report.

Annex 14: Panel Biographies

***Dr Daniel Paré*,** is the Acting-Chair of the Department of Communication at the University of Ottawa, Canada. He has some 15 years of experience in researching and assessing the use of ICTs for development, and established the first graduate level course on ICT4D in Canada. He has been involved in a wide range of regional, national, and organizational ICT-related assessments in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. He is the author of *Internet Governance in Transition: Who is the Master of this Domain?* and one of the founders of the *Global Media Journal – Canadian Edition*. His articles have appeared in the *Canadian Journal of Communication*; *The International Review of Law, Computers, and Technology*; and *The Information Society.*

Dr Zenda Ofir, a South African citizen and past President of the African Evaluation Association, is an international evaluation specialist who works primarily in Africa and Asia. She has conducted national, regional and global level evaluations and developed learning orientated monitoring systems in nearly 40 countries for more than 30 clients. These include UNDP, ILO, UNEP, UNIFEM, IFAD, CGIAR, IDRC, SIDA and JICA. She regularly serves as expert advisor on M&E, most recently to the CGIAR, WHO TDR, GAVI, IFAD and the Rockefeller Foundation. Zenda was a panel member for the OECD-DAC/UNEG review of the World Food Program evaluation function, NONIE steering committee member and Special Advisor on Knowledge Management to the Executive at the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in Switzerland. She has been a visiting professor at the University of Hiroshima and the United Nations University in Tokyo, and served as first international Board member of the 6 000 member American Evaluation Association. With a PhD in Chemistry, Zenda started her professional career as national grants program manager at a South African research council followed by five years as Director of Research at the University of Pretoria.

Dr Jonathan Miller, based in South Africa, has worked in management in the manufacturing and oil industries, carried out business school teaching and research at the University of Cape Town and for the last ten years consulted via his company, Trigrammic. He focuses on monitoring and evaluation and ICT policy and practice in the developing world. In the M&E context, assignments include E-readiness assessments in several African countries; assessment of ICT investment opportunities in East Africa; Evaluation of the Finnish Government Program for Information Systems in Africa; Monitoring and Evaluation of eSri Lanka; Monitoring and evaluation of the Syrian Five Year Plan, and preparation of the Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the Ugandan Agricultural Technical and Advisory Services (ATAS) Project for World Bank. Selected assignments in the ICT arena include ICT Policy formulation for Namibia, ICT Policy formulation for Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, Case study on Diffusion of the Internet in Tanzania, and was on the original project team that designed and implemented the South African IT Industry Strategy Project. He has over 20 refereed articles and many professional articles and conference papers on topics such as measurement of ICT effectiveness.

Endnotes

[1] This framework was approved by the IDRC evaluation unit in April 2009.

[2] These projects were purposefully selected to provide insight into grant-making approaches and implementation processes.

[3] *Information and ICTs for Poverty Reduction: Where, when and how?* First Harvard Forum held at the Harvard Faculty Club, 19-20 September 2003. Details can be found at http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/10787612051Harvard_Forum_2003_-_Summary.pdf, and http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-56840-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

[4] That is, a management style that takes decisions based on lessons learnt from experience and evidence.

[5] It should be noted that an earlier formulation of the program logic, and in particular better exploration of its major assumptions, would have drawn attention to some of the issues raised by this Review, for example the definition of 'quality', the potential tension between quality and capacity development, and effective mechanisms to reach target audiences.

[6] Indeed, the process associated with this decision (e.g., Wilson-Grau and Vincent (2010) outcomes evaluation) highlights the benefits of participant reflection.

[7] See S Batchelor, N Hafkin, A Chéneau-Loquay (2005) External Review Program Initiative – Acacia II, 2001- 2005.

[8] It must be noted, however, that the panel could not investigate this particular issue in depth.

[9] This is particularly so in cases where research foci were largely determined by groups of researchers with pre-existing relationships with Acacia.

[10] Viable programming within such diversity requires experienced leaders who understand and manage difference very well. It also requires adequate resources to establish sufficient numbers of researchers and to engage organizations that can contribute to the development of areas of work.

[11] The crux of the issue here is the extent to which knowledge, skills and resources are transferred through constructive relationships between researchers across country boundaries.

[12] In its review of Acacia documentation the review panel did not find any documented definition of coherence that could be used to guide its own definition or assessment. The Final Prospectus Report is silent on this matter.

[13] Given the potential sensitivity of this finding the review panel has chosen not to provide more detail about these cases so as to ensure the anonymity of the interview respondents

[14] Utilization-focused research in this context refers to the ability of research to produce knowledge that can generate research outputs that "ultimately gain some uptake and exert influence in the relevant quarters" (see Sey, Martin, and Sinha, 2010, pp. 22-23).

[15] Particularly noteworthy in this regard is Seebregts, Zwarenstein, Matthews, et. al.,(2009) which returned 51 citations.

[16] See Keats and Beebe (2004). Paper presented at Fourth IEEE International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies, Joensuu, Finland

[17] The review panel was not able determine the portion of these research outputs/publications that had been internally peer-reviewed. The Panel does note, however, that many of the works falling

into this category were likely to have been reviewed either by a network leader or by other members of the network from which it emanated.

[18] The OASIS network was established in 2007. For this initiative "an action research methodology is used to investigate, establish and evaluate methods, tools and techniques required to develop and implement sustainable open architectures, standards and information systems supporting healthcare in three Southern African countries (South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe)" (See, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-116782-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

[19] The AVOIR network has been operating since 2004. Focusing on software for education, this initiative brings together "software developers, educational specialists and others in Africa to build a knowledge network capable of designing, developing, and supporting Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) that can help address African development issues and create African business opportunities" (See, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-87736-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html).

[20] The ANloc project has been in place since early 2008. This project seeks to adapt ICTs to the language and culture where it is used (ie., localization). ANloc has created a network of "African language localisers involved in a variety of sub-projects" with each sub-project addressing "a specific localization need whether enabling (a once off task designed to allow digital work in a language) or localization (the actual work of making a piece of software in a local language." (See, http://www.idrc.ca/MINGA/ev-122243_201_1-DO_TOPIC.html)

[21] The Unicode standard is a computing industry standard that enables the consistent representation and handling of text expressed in most of the world's writing systems in all modern software products and standards. Its development is coordinated by The Unicode Consortium**,** a non-profit organization that is incorporated in California

[22] Phase II of the PanAf project was launched in mid-2009. The overall objective of this project is to "better understand how, for whom and under what circumstances the pedagogical integration of ICTs can substantially improve the quality of teaching and learning at all levels of African education systems." See, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-146279-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.

[23] The panel acknowledges that Acacia's reliance on qualitative indicators and anecdote also reflects the difficulties associated with developing quantitative indicators for measuring progress in the various domains in which it operates.

[24] It is important to note, and as confirmed by Wilson-Grau, no independent verification of outcomes reported by Wilson-Grau and Wilson evaluation report was conducted.

[25] Launched in 2003, Research ICT Africa (RIA) has successfully conducted demand- and supply-side studies with a view to better understanding information and communication technology (ICT) access and usage in Africa. The network expanded over the first two phases of support (101584 and 103114) to include members for Southern, Eastern and Western Africa, and is expected to bring in North Africa during the current phase. The overall goal of the project is to provide ICT policymakers in Africa with evidence-based information so that they can provide an enabling environment for wider participation of Africans in the information society.

[26] Phase 1 of this project started in 2004 as "an e-government initiative in partnership with the local administration of the city of Fez in western Morocco" that allowed "local authorities to ICT-enable their offices, giving citizens fast, easy access to a wide range of government services" (See, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-125086-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html). In 2006 Phase II was launched with the objective of scaling up the achievements of the first phase as well as, "enhance[ing] stakeholders' readiness and awareness, establish the linkages between the central government and local authorities, disseminate e-Government implementation strategies and models, and elaborate/refine a national roadmap and outcomes assessment framework" (See, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-116196-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html"

[27] Launched in late 2007, this project investigated "the application and outcomes of flexible licensing regimes in the publishing industry in Africa" with the aim of better understanding "how these can facilitate citizen's access to knowledge in the digital environment and how the adoption of new and innovative business models of publishing can help African countries improve the publishing of learning materials" (See, http://www.idrc.ca/ccaa/ev-117012-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html).

[28] Evaluation Unit. (2007, May). Working Together to Strengthen Skills: Organization. *Evaluation Highlights 15*. IDRC http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-/12171981361 Working_Together_to_Strengthen_Skills_IN_ORGANIZATIONS.pdf.

[29] The panel notes that Acacia only recently begun to systematically collect quantitative metrics about research outputs due to the direct influence of one its funders, namely DFID.

[30] It is noteworthy that the influence of ACA2K extends beyond African institutions to include the University of Ottawa, Canada, whose law school has introduced a new law course as a result of this work. This is in no small measure due to the fact that one of the principle ACA2K researchers is based at the University of Ottawa Law School

[31] The panel acknowledges that this observation may reflect issues in the preparation of the FPR rather than actual failure to achieve the desired sub-outcomes.

[32] Commencing in 2003, this project planned to grow the DrumNet network aggressively, linking smallholder farmers to banks, farm input suppliers, and agricultural buyers throughout Kenya, East Africa and eventually the entire continent. The goal is to enable financial, marketing, and information services that directly stimulate wealth creation and the economic integration of small-scale farmers, particularly women farmers, in Africa

[33] The UHIN project has gone through a number of phases. In the earlier phases it "successfully demonstrated the viability and cost-effectiveness of integrating handheld computers (personal digital assistants - PDAs), mobile caching services and mobile telephones into a network for the collection and dissemination health of information in under-resourced areas of Uganda". In the current phase, Phase IV, the project seeks among other things to "fully integrate the Network into the Ministry of Health district and national health systems by expanding and improving the robust two-way electronic communication system developed under the earlier phases" (See, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-117006-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html). The MHIN project and its objectives closely parallel those of UHIN, but in Mozambique (See, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-116198-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html).

[34] The Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) is an evaluation methodology that integrates a gender analysis into evaluations of initiatives that use information and communications technologies (ICTs) for social change. It is an evaluation tool for determining whether ICTs are really improving or worsening women's lives and gender relations, as well as for promoting positive change at the individual, institutional, community and broader social levels. GEM was first developed in 2002[1] and was tried and tested by thirty community-based organizations. Details can be found at http://idrc.ca/lacro/ev-92793-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

[35] These guidelines were aimed at integrating gender into research projects—i.e., to help mainstream gender in projects, and to conduct gender-focused research. At the time of writing, these guidelines are only now being finalized. However, they have been used in draft form throughout the past year

[36] At the time this program review took place more than two thirds (n=71) of the 93 Acacia projects were not yet complete. Stage 3 reports are compiled upon project completion and include key lessons as well as the achievement of objectives, outputs and outcomes.