

Development Network of indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA), Uganda

NGO network

Introduction

The Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) was founded by representatives of 21 NGOs in 1988. DENIVA membership comprises Ugandan NGOs and CBOs – international organisations are only eligible for associate membership, a feature that distinguishes it from the other national network (Uganda National NGO Forum).

Their mission statement is to be:

“A network of indigenous voluntary associations strengthening civil society organisations in the quest for transparency, equity and democratic governance through advocacy, networking and capacity building for sustainable development in Uganda”

The activities of the organisation fall under three programme areas:

- Networking and information sharing (NISP);
- Self understanding and capacity building (SUCB);
- Policy research and advocacy (PRAP).

The first of these, NISP, is the core programme which underpins the work of the organisation and has been operating for many years (>6), as has the SUCB programme; PRAP was started more recently.

NISP addresses information management, and recognises the potential of modern ICTs, aiming to enable members to *“acquire new ideas, designs and perspectives through effective horizontal and vertical interaction and making use of new ways of relating with each other such as the email, internet and other new electronic communication innovations”*. The case study will, therefore, focus on this programme.

There is a demand for ICT services within other DENIVA programmes e.g. they have conducted research into the role of women councillors under the PRAP and want to publish it more widely through the web site.

<p>Sustainability factor</p>	<p>Notes from Interviews</p> <p>Directly Involved (DENIVA) Prof. Kwesigwa Executive Secretary Jane Project Co-ordinator Anne Kyohairwe (Information Officer)</p> <p>Users SODANN (Soroti District Area NGO Network)</p> <p>Organisations Having an Overview Anton Barre, DANIDA</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is vital in enabling members to achieve their development goals, and to effectively engage in planning processes. The programme will make use of new technologies to facilitate vertical and horizontal integration of members. Areas of concern include: information management, gender mainstreaming, environment, decentralised information exchange and others. Programme goals are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the capacity of members to manage information – identify information needs, provide training and reference materials, and organise study visits and discussion fora. • Improve access to information on poverty and other development issues – improve utilisation of ICTs for poverty eradication, developing

	<p>experiences of members, to manage a database for NGO profiles, and investigate gender differences in access to information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve research into development information –assessments of research needs of members, and work with research institutions. • Strengthening resource centres – training in resource centre management, promote information flow, investigate viability of establishing new resource centres. • Increase dialogue with other development stakeholders – create links with other organisations and participate in activities and policy development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DENIVA acknowledges the potential of ICTs, and is working to promote awareness and use of these services. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build the capacity of members and promote the use of information
Policy environment	<p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing processes aimed at improving communications infrastructure in remote rural areas will improve the ability of member organisations to benefit from electronic communications facilities. • Many districts are setting up information resource centres, providing an opportunity for DENIVA to forge links for dissemination. <p>DANIDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major sustainability factor is right of access to information – which is a premise of national policy. • They are supporting Human Rights Commission tripartite – DANIDA, EU, SIDA. DANIDA & EU also supporting media strategy in particular.
Institutional arrangements	<p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DENIVA is in the process of developing a communications policy and an information dissemination strategy. <p><u>Organisation roles / responsibilities/ Constraints.</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes are directed by the Board of Directors (9), which includes representatives from all over the country, and a range development interests including agriculture, environment, health, education, gender, disabilities, microfinance. The vice chair in particular is keen on ICTs and information management. <p><u>Role of Target Group</u></p> <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no formal arrangement between DENIVA and members concerning ICTs - rather, the network makes what use it can of facilities enjoyed by members. SODANN have recently been equipped with computer facilities as part of donor funding programmes; they are, therefore, in a position to explore the potential of electronic communication with the national network. <p><u>Quality Control</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation is debating how best to ensure quality control and have elected a computer committee to take responsibility for purchasing and servicing, and to demonstrate transparency in associated purchasing procedures; the lack of technical knowledge is a handicap. <p><u>Review / evaluation procedures</u></p>

	<p>DENIVA recognise the potential impact of electronic communication on organisational and cost matters, but have not as yet carried out a formal evaluation. It is assumed that SODANN will need to carry out some form of project evaluation for their donor(s).</p>
<p>Target Groups</p>	<p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member organisations are primary target groups for programmes; most goals of the NISP specifically refer to members. • Due to the advocacy and policy related nature of the work of DENIVA, it is difficult to precisely identify target groups. This is illustrated in dissemination strategies for research outputs e.g. outputs from research into the role of women councillors was disseminated through local activities at district level, an article in the Monitor (newspaper) as part of Women's day celebrations. 1,000 copies of the report were published and distributed to government departments, NGOs, and international organisations, and a launch workshop. • The ability of DANIVA to take advantage of electronic communication with members is constrained by the lack of ICT facilities in most of the member organisations, i.e. beyond the control of DENIVA <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local NGOs and CBOs working on community development and economic development in the Soroti District. • There is a need to go out into the field to work with target organisations - want video and generator
<p>ICT Technology</p>	<p><u>What ICTs do they have?</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several offices have PCs, but there is only 1 email connected PC in the organisation. They are not satisfied with their ISP, and plan to change (Infocom to UTL online). • 30 - 40 member organisations broadcast programmes on radio (English and local language). • Around 80% of the leaders of member organisations have mobile phones; mostly used to arrange meetings. • Of their membership, only around half have email addresses, and some of these may be accessing via cyber cafes. Some members are now beginning to create web sites, but at around \$5,000 - \$8,000 the cost is prohibitive. Members in remote areas can access faxes through post offices. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the telephone network has improved recently to the point where it is possible to keep an uninterrupted internet connection for 20 minutes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 laptop; • 2 desk top PCs • 1 refurbished desktop PC <p><u>How appropriate is the technology?</u></p> <p>DANIDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very keen on local radio e.g. Farm Radio website, making material available on the web for translation and local broadcast. • People in rural areas are prepared to accept, and can benefit from, poor services e.g. they can use email if only available 1 day a week, they can find spot on top of a termite mound where you can get a signal <p><u>Common Problems</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common problems are caused by viruses. • Also problems with power cuts (every PC has a UPS / voltage stabiliser). They have a generator that is started manually.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems with email are that it is difficult to get a connection on the phone line, and availability of the ISP server. • Members don't know how to use email systems and can claim that they haven't received information. They don't check mail regularly, which can cause problems with reply deadlines. Member organisations often censure use of the PC, which can be located in the Director's office, denying access to appropriate staff. • At present as there is only one email connected PC in the organisation so staff have to book time to send emails. Incoming emails are printed out and distributed to staff. Problems faced in using electronic means of network communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some districts with no telecommunications infrastructure; • costs - purchase and maintenance of equipment, and expenses associated with telecommunications; • skills <p><u>Support Services</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They contracted Uganda Online (Kampala) to design their website (cost \$5,000), and this was managed under the NISP. Within DENIVA staff have only basic updating skills. The site has a chat-room facility, but this is not in use. • They contracted out regular maintenance of PCs, but found this too expensive. They now use a pool of approved firms to carry out repairs. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment is taken to Kampala for repairs - it is dangerous to transport equipment.
Financing	<p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DENIVA relies on funding from donors and from membership subscriptions. The NISP and capacity building programmes received 5 year funding from NOVIB (NL). This covered support for ICTs, personnel and workshops, and came to an end in 2001. • Closely linked to the NISP programme are a number of ICT training initiatives targeting organisations at district level e.g. NOVIB funding 10 districts, HIVOS a further 8. • DENIVA attracts funding support from a range of donors e.g. SNV, MS Uganda, Ford Foundation, ActionAid. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part funded through 2 Danish donors (MS, and DANIDA). <p>DANIDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not believe in economic sustainability of ICTs, but are convinced of the social sustainability of ICTs and the contribution communications can make towards breaking marginalisation. They want to create networks of CSOs, and provide them with access to the internet; they will pay costs. <p><u>Budget</u></p> <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photocopier toner 280,000/- (US\$ 165) • Electricity: 53,000 /- (US\$ 30) per month <p><u>Cost Recovery</u></p> <p>Users</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They don't add the cost of ICTs to costs of activities e.g. workshops (donors not prepared to pay). <p><u>Are there clear cost sharing mechanisms in place?</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All programmes are supposed to contribute towards the running of the web site (and other communication services such as ISP, telephone and computer maintenance). In practice, some managers don't budget for this. It is the responsibility of the finance officer to enforce the budgeting procedures. <p><u>Training/Upgrading and replacing</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowance for 1 PC included in budget each year. • HIVOS funded a programme of ICT training for members in 1999 – 01. DENIVA are currently in the process of drawing up a development plan for 2002 – 06. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aware of the finite life of equipment - needs to be replaced in 3 - 4 years. Donors don't like to pay for equipment (especially maintenance), so SODANN have to claim allowances in proposals for other activities, such as training.
The project process	<p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After DENIVA was founded in 1988, setting up the resource centre was one of the first activities. They then moved into capacity building, and the PRAP is the most recent programme to be established. The resource centre is now part of the NISP, which is the core programme of DENIVA. Note that many member organisations have their own resource centres. • The idea of developing ICT skills amongst members is not new e.g. ICTs has been a component of information management workshops. Need to select those members which have a PC and a phone line. • A DENIVA team spent 2 months discussing strategic issues for the web site before embarking on this project. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no specific project through which SODANN and DENIVA are provided with ICTs. • He was consulted by DENIVA when drawing up their ICT policy. <p>DANIDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a donor, they have no exit strategy to help beneficiaries prepare for long-term sustainability of ICT use. <p><u>Quality Control and Performance</u></p> <p>Both DENIVA and SODANN have struggled with lack of ICT knowledge and have had to rely on external services e.g. website design, computer maintenance. This makes it difficult for the organisations themselves to enforce quality control and exposes them to high costs.</p>
Key linkages	<p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DENIVA are keen to link into other programmes e.g. UNDP pilot project on effective use of ICTs. • Linkages between members themselves can be an effective means of capacity building e.g. swap librarians. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health, Water, Environment. Both Ministry and District level. • Human Rights Commission.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities - Makerere and Kumi (private university in Soroti district) • Agricultural research institutes e.g. SAARI (which can provide training for members). • Ex patriot who used to work in Soroti, as a source of advice on ICT matters e.g. purchasing equipment
Intermediaries	<p><u>Procedures for receiving / processing requests for information</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to the web site, her colleagues expect the NISP manager to put information on the site. • As the web site falls under the NISP, the manager is expected by her colleagues to put information on the site. Whilst the technical operations are not a problem, colleagues also expect her to edit information into a web-friendly format; obviously this can cause problems where she has no knowledge or understanding of the topic in question. • She prioritises her time to search for information on key topics. From their experience of meetings (with members and others), it is DENIVA management which decides on the "hot" issues to be pursued by the organisation. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members themselves - only about 25% take the initiative to request information. Also, only about 25% take advantage of the opportunity of submitting information for distribution via the network. One of the goals of the network is to enhance capacity through promoting the work of members so that members can learn through shared experiences.
Capacity	<p><u>Staff Equipment Training</u></p> <p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She and colleagues have received training on the web site, but only on updating information. • They have developed booklets on resource centre management. • She can do training on introduction to PC. Need to bring in external experts for technical aspects of training. They have run a course on information management. • She learned basics when at university, and has since learned "on the job". • Some staff are sent for training, and she has received training on Photoshop and Corel Draw. <p><u>User Training</u></p> <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director is self taught on PC skills. • The Administration officer has a diploma in business studies so is familiar with the PC. • They need a further person with information management skills if they are to operate effectively as an information organisation.
Development benefits	<p>DENIVA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to use the post to distribute information but this was expensive and takes a long time. They would also hand deliver to local representatives of organisations, relying on them to distribute more widely. Electronic communication results in considerable cost saving with a members mailing list of 550, plus an external mailing list (e.g. international organisations) of a further 250. <p>Users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliability and speed of email - sending a document to Kampala or the UK, for example, can take up to a month in the post, with the risk of missing deadlines for funding. • Members can access information resources e.g. commodities price information

	<p>compiled by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) - director downloads price sheet (Appendix xx) and distributes copies to members (free); members can contact organisations (see anecdote below).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves ability to contact members and others e.g. when organising workshops. • Benefits of DENIVA membership to SODANN include a calendar and newsletter; some information is sent to members via email. SODANN also use email to request specific information (e.g. for organising activities, see workshop anecdote below). <p>DANIDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His view is that communications should be a human rights issue. This was the basis on which telephone and postal services were made available throughout countries in Europe at universal charge rates. In which case, financial sustainability is not of prime concern. • Benefits in conflict areas e.g. Katakwi – people want the ability to tell their own story, press may not select for publication, or edit. Internet news site enables people to publish unedited. Communication is an important weapon in easing tensions. It is, therefore, ironic that telecoms services are not available in those areas of conflict e.g. Katakwi, Kitgum – there should be investment in services.
<p>Anecdote</p>	<p>SODANN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members lack an appreciation of the value and availability of information, and they lack access to technologies to access information. • The director was being severely frustrated by the mouse (cord connected) on his laptop PC. He was delighted when a visitor demonstrated that the ball could simply be removed, the dirt build up on the rollers removed by hand, and the mouse function repaired. He exclaimed that when he got sufficiently frustrated, he would have travelled to Kampala (a day's journey) to take the mouse to a repair shop, who would have charged him handsomely for the repair, stayed the night in Kampala then spent another day returning to Soroti. This is an example of how a lack of local knowledge creates barriers to the use of modern ICTs. • When organising a workshop on "Decentralisation policy and advocacy", SODANN wanted some advice on content for the training programme, so they sent an email to the Director of DENIVA attaching the draft programme for the workshop along with an outline of the key issues for discussion. He was then able to inform them of a previous workshop, and suggested that, rather than coming up with a new (duplicate) set of recommendations, they should build on the outputs of the previous workshop. • The Director of SODANN met a lady from an international aid agency at a workshop in Kampala, where they discussed potential projects after he explained the local problems arising as a result of recent cattle rustling in the district. Following the workshop, he was able to email her with a profile of SODANN, and request further information on funding guidelines. As a result of her response, he is now working on drafting proposals for HIV/AIDS programmes with appropriate member organisations. The principal feature of the email facility, which has made this possible, is the speed of communication - information can be sent and received whilst an idea is still fresh in people's minds. • A representative of a member organisation dropped into the SODANN offices wanting to make contact with a company selling sunflower seeds, so they wrote and email and sent it off to the company. Later the same day, the person returned to the office to find the emailed reply, which gave the number of their regional representative. He then used the office phone to contact the representative and make a purchase. The alternative means of communication

	would have been by post, and the director's view is that a letter would never have been written.
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