

Developing a Culture of Participation and Promoting Partnership with Sight Savers International

Context

ICA:UK started working with Sight Savers International (SSI) in 1999, and over the first twelve months, provided facilitation services for SSI and two of its partners in Belize and Pakistan. These events introduced a new, more participatory way of working to SSI and had sufficient impact that ICA:UK was asked to facilitate a series of events in the SSI West African region from 2002-2003, and the SSI partner in Belize invited ICA:UK back in 2004 to facilitate their new 5-year plan.



WEST AFRICA REGION

Process

During the period 2002-2005, ICA:UK:

- facilitated Country Reviews in Sierra Leone, Cameroon and The Gambia;
- developed a Facilitators Manual as a guide for future reviews; and
- held two ten-day training courses (in 2003 and 2005) for 49 members of staff from SSI and its partners in Facilitation Methods and Skills.

Outputs

As a result of these events:

- SSI and stakeholder staff became aware of more participatory ways of working;
- stakeholders were involved in Country Review meetings and saw their input included in SSI's new 3-5 year plans;
- SSI have a manual for use in guiding facilitators through a Country Review and other planning processes;
- SSI West Africa has a pool of trained staff members who are being called upon to facilitate a wide range of events for SSI and its stakeholders, both in the West African region and outside.

Impacts

A review session in 2004 enabled the SSI staff to bring out the key differences that the introduction of facilitation methods and skills had brought. These included a clearer idea of key issues leading to:

- more informed projects/ programmes
- proposals more grounded in reality
- improved relationships with partners
- more openness, and
- wider ownership of outcomes.

In addition, ICA:UK has not been asked to facilitate any event in the West Africa region since the second training in March 2005, thus indicating that the core group of facilitators is active and effective; and the results in West Africa have led to increased interest from other SSI regions

Participants' comments on the training included:

- *"It has been a wonderful learning and pleasant experience. The eventfulness of the training removed virtually all stress that adult learning could have generated"*
- *"Congratulations to the facilitators for an interesting and lively training. I was hooked to the proceedings from beginning to end"*



- “This is one of the best trainings I have ever had. It is detailed, practical and very useful”
- “This is a very useful programme and I will recommend for all programme officers and programme managers in SSI”

OTHER REGIONS

Process

In *Eastern, Southern and Central Africa*, ICA:UK facilitated two events for SSI:

- The Tanzania Country Review in 2004, and
- The Review of the National Eye Care Plan for Tanzania in 2005.

In *India*, ICA:UK facilitated part of the Regional Meeting in 2005.

In *South Asia and the Caribbean (SAC)*, ICA:UK facilitated:

- two strategic planning events for the Belize Council for the Visually Impaired (BCVI) in 1999 and 2004, and
- a meeting of International donors in the eye care sector in Bangladesh in 2004.

In addition, SSI staff members from the *Headquarters* in Haywards Heath have been attending open courses on facilitation run by ICA:UK in the UK.

Outputs

- Introduction of a more participatory way of working into two further regions and two countries within SAC
- Greater involvement of partner staff and other stakeholders in planning events
- Discussions in ECSA on a training of facilitators, currently scheduled for 2007.

Impacts

Given how recent many of these events are, it is probably too early to be able to point to major differences.

ATTITUDES TO PARTNERSHIP

Process

As part of the review process leading up to a revised policy on partnership, SSI commissioned ICA:UK to facilitate a global survey on how SSI staff and partners view partnership. This survey took place between August 2004 and March 2005 across the four SSI regions, involving 39 partners and SSI regional, country and headquarters staff. It was facilitated by ICA:UK and staff from ICA Tanzania and ICA India and PromPT Bangladesh.

In a subsequent piece of work, draft principles for the policy were drawn up for consideration by the staff and partners. An ongoing process developed the necessary guidelines and supporting documents to enable the policy to be effectively implemented.

Outputs

The resulting report was used as a key resource in the development of the new policy, and led to the development of a framework for future assessment of partnership relations.

Eleanor Cozens, Head of the Programme Development Unit of SSI, wrote:

“I think it was a signal success that you and your team managed the fieldwork so well and that the end result is clearly accepted as being very important for the organisation. Partnership has been well and truly raised up on everyone's agenda.”

Impacts

In addition the participatory way in which the survey was facilitated has led to an increase in interest in the topic of partnership, greater openness between SSI and its partners, and a determination to improve the relationship.