



Rwenzori Information Centres Network (RIC-NET)

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RIC-NET NARRATIVE REPORT, January -December, 2011

Strengthening Citizens' use of ICT in Tracking Local Government Service Delivery, Accountability and Voicing the Silence

RO EA 1002693



Approved by

Rev. Isaiah Mucunguzi

Chairperson Board

A. Context of the organization (max 1 page)

1. Did any important developments in the socio-economic, political and ecological context occur during the reporting period? If so explain how these influenced your organization or programmes.

The 2011 landmark was that Ugandans went through the general elections process and voted for the President, Members of Parliament and Local Government leaders.

The general election brought in some new leaders at different levels; both at local governments and Parliament. This affected RIC-NET implementation of its project work in that there was a need to create new alliances and rapport with the new elected leaders. From March 2011, triggered by the excessive expenditures during the general election, the country experienced the economic crisis characterized by high inflation for especially essential commodities and food items. This led to political disturbances as the opposition mobilized citizens to demand for government intervention through the walk to work campaign. Uganda's opposition leader Kizza Besigye involvement in the walk2work campaign and later on evolving into Activitis4Change (C4C) protests colored the involvement of CSO in sensitization of citizens to demand for their entitlements and good governance. The higher food and fuel prices by April, 2011 also impacted on the implementation of projects as the costs for all commodities rose and the project money in the bank lost value.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2067136,00.html#ixzz1sriuhgqH>

The Government forces (Police and Army) violently crushed the walk2work protesters, and the Activists for Change (A4C) citizens' pressure group; demanding government to act on the rising prices of food, fuel and the foreign exchange rates deterred some citizens to actively participate in even peaceful demand for social accountability actions with the local governments. These protests impacted on RIC-NET activities in a way that any effort to mobilize citizens to demand for their rights was interpreted as support for A4C pressure group or anti- government and support of opposition leaders.

With inflation rising from 6% to 40% from Jan to April 2011 respectively, majority of the citizens were stricken by poverty at both community and national levels. Local peoples' income and salaries were eroded by inflation. The high costs of food and fuel translated into high costs of conducting some activities that depend on gathering local people. In similarly, voluntarism from the citizens slowly became unheard of and the struggle remained to gain anything to survive on. **Details on what is captured in this report can be found on:**

<http://ric-netnews.blogspot.com> www.ricnet.co.ug or www.ricnet.info

<http://ric-netnews.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2011-01-01T00:00:00%2B03:00&updated-max=2012-01-01T00:00:00%2B03:00&max-results=50>

<http://rwecovoice.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2011-01-01T00:00:00-08:00&updated-max=2012-01-01T00:00:00-08:00&max-results=18>

B. Internal organization (max 2 pages)

2. What major policy decisions have been taken during the reporting period (e.g. with regard to mission, long-term objectives, strategies)?

RIC-NET did not change much on its vision and mission. The operational Areas were expanded from just Rwenzori region to National -the whole of Uganda.

Core business has remained as promoting the use of ICT for sustainable, timely, relevant information documentation & sharing; and giving technical back up to other CSO, NGO, government institution and private sector.

The intervention strategy has expanded from using ICT for access to information on Agriculture, Health to include governance and social accountability. As well as strengthening civic competence and amplifying the citizens' voices on governance and rights issues, promoting social inclusion¹ for marginalized persons or communities and unlocking youth and women potential to employment through ICT skills, environmental and climate change issues.

RIC-NET also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Kabarole District Local Government on operation of the e-society in the District, and had preliminary discussion with other three Districts of Bundibugyo, Kamwenge and Kyenjojo. The MOU with these other Districts will be signed soon in 2012.

RIC-NET has partnered with UNICEF Uganda on supporting information sharing with the youth and giving the youth ICT skills. (U-report).

RIC-NET joined Uganda Community Library Association, a network of libraries to enhance information sharing with other public libraries and providing space for reading books and sharing of best practices in documentation.

3. Major changes in the organization's formal structure and/or decision-making mechanism.

RIC-NET formally acquired a new address as:

Plot 18 Mugurusi Road, Fort Portal Municipality,

P.O. Box 916, Fort Portal. Uganda.

Office Telephone: +256 382 277994

Membership increased to include: 8 County Information Centres and 2 District E-Society Centres as associate members. The County Information Centres namely: Bwera Information Centre (BIC); Busongora Rural Information Centre (BRIC); Kabarole Information Centre (KIC); Semuliki Information Centre (CIS); Kamwenge Community

¹ Includes even though marginalized because of sexual orientation and practices.

Information Centre (KACOICE); Kyegegwa Rural Information Centre (KRIC); Village Connect Information Centre (VCIC); Mwenge Rural Information Centre (MURIC).

Kasese and Kabarole Districts have the E-Society Centres running. These Centres though independent of each other and have their autonomous legal systems, have a shared vision on what is intended to be achieved using ICT and effective information sharing.

4. The type and frequency of meetings of the Board and General Assembly.

During the reporting period, RIC-NET established a position of a Programme Manager held by Ms. Kyomuhendo Joselyne. She is a defacto deputy Executive Director. She is in charge of coordinating different programs' implementation endeavors, ensure results are achieved and documented with evidence verified through the monitoring process. And to ensure the effective and appropriate assignment of the different resources especially the human resource. The list of RIC-NET staff and volunteers as by 31st December 2011 is attached. In addition, RIC-NET has 15 plant clinic 'Doctors' and 20 Community Information Facilitators (CIF). The Executive Committee (Board) is composed from the Chairpersons of the centres listed above and a representative from other CSOs, (Kabarole Research and Resource Centre).

The steering committee is composed of the following:

1. The Chairperson – Rev. Isaiah Mucunguzi from KRIC
2. Vice Chair person- Ms. Kabaikya Agnes-
3. Treasurer- Mr. Azoli Bahati Chairperson CIS

-Committee members

4. Mr. Isingoma John Patrick- Chairperson BRIC
5. Mr. Moses Johnstone Baguma – Chairperson KIC
6. Mr. Jimmy Baluku- Secretary BIC
7. Mr. Julius Mwanga – Director KRC

Ex- official: Board Secretary- Mr. Murugahara John Silco, Executive Director

The Executive Committee (Board) held two (2) full board meetings; three (3) human resource sub-committee meetings, and one (1) joint Board and Staff meeting at the annual reflection in Kasunga. The staff also held twenty five (25) weekly staff meetings for planning and reviewing the implementation of the different actions.

Major decisions made were approval of the annual work plan & budget, approval of annual narrative & audit reports for 2010, the establishment of a new staffing structure & recruitment of New staff, the enrichment of the core and strategic areas of intervention, the approval of the management and monitoring tools, the opening up of

the operation area to be the whole of Uganda, admission of E-Society Centre as part of RIC-NET network, and change of the Head of secretariat title to Executive Director .

As a membership organization, the composition of the steering committee is dependent on the members from the mother organizations.

C. Results (max. 15 pages)

5. Summary of the activities that have been implemented and the outputs (results of activities) realized during the reporting period; including those which were not financed by Hivos.

5.1 Set up and apply web based platform

Set up and apply web based platform in PETs and the application of IT in documenting and reporting incidences in service delivery.

One platform <http://www.citizensvoice.ug> was designed and developed and partially used by CSOs under RWEKO and CEW-IT to share information. A facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nokasesesplit/> was setup to aid quick group sharing of information in addition to the original d-group.

These platforms have been effectively utilized except the citizens' voice which is ineffective due to delay in the operationalization of the short code 6030. We hope by few months to come the platform will have several reports from rural areas.

Two staff attended training by SODNET to prepare for the deployment and use of Huduma platform that will be used by Rweco/ CEW-IT to share information on service delivery.

RICNET has been recognized by Kasese and Kabarole District Local Governments for the support in maintaining the E-society center and District websites www.kasese.go.ug and www.kabaroleDistrict.go.ug . This has consequently increased RIC-NET and project Visibility in the region and Local Government, indentifying themselves with the project aspirations.

5.2 Document and Publish findings in a Quarterly Newsletter (4 volumes) Per Annum.

Three volumes of the quarterly magazines "Rwenzori Peoples Voice" (for RWEKO) and "RICNET News" (for RIC-NET) were produced during the reporting period. 1000 copies of each were distributed to the partners including schools, government departments and CSOs. A strategy was developed for the next distribution of the newsletters including e-distribution, designing a puzzle for the readers to solicit feedback from the leaders. The Articles in these magazines reflect the issues from the community and the intervention done by RWEKO and RIC-NET members and other stake holders. This is the only documented record of the issues which the community members can use for reference.

5.3.1 Strengthen the Kasese E-Society Facility.

One IT staff (M) was hired and one volunteer (F) placed at the E-society. One training for the governing council was also held, and twenty three (23) participants were trained (8F, 13M) in Web 2.0, moderating the D-group and management of the e-society

District staff and CSO partners were also trained in data management, online documentation, blogs, twitter, Skype chat/conference, facebook and Internet browsing. The Kasese E-Society Center has attracted new partners like the Belgian Technical Corporation and CIPESA who have offered to support the Kasese E-society.

So far 126 people have trained in computer literacy and 1331 people have used the centre to send or access information using the Internet facility at the centre.

5.3.2 Set up, Popularize and Equip E-Society Facilities in 6 Districts

Kabarole District E-society was set up with support from RWECO, Kabarole District Local Governments. Other CSOs in the District were brought on board e.g KIC and FORUD, which supported the Kabarole District E-society with computers and other accessories. (10 used computers, 12 chairs and tables). RIC-NET procured 5 branded computers, multipurpose photocopier, D-link switch & other LAN accessories, Orange fly box (internet modem and wireless gateway). The District provided the office space, electricity, two computers, one full paid staff and burglary proofing of the resource centre.

Negotiations with other Districts of Kyenjojo, Kamwenge and Bundibugyo are on-going and MOUs are likely to be signed before the end of June 2012.

5.3.4 Support 6 Districts to Design, Develop, Activate, Host and Maintain District Websites;

One District website of Kabarole was designed and it is operational. www.kabaroledistrict.go.ug, and three other websites for Bundibugyo, Kyenjojo and Kamwenge and under design.

5.4 Train 140 Stakeholders in the 7 Districts in the Operationalization and Maintenance of the E-Society Component.

About 98 stakeholders from the Districts of Kasese, Bundibugyo, Kyenjojo and Kabarole were introduced to use of e-society components. These included staff of Districts and CSOs. The courses' content included aspects from different fields such as: computer literacy and trouble shooting, Information sourcing and packaging, use of E-platforms, LAMIS (localized marketing information system), and computerized record keeping of plant diagnosis, Community library training, Pro-poor Budget analysis, web 2.0 tools and photo editing.

5.5 Conduct Quarterly Staff, Board and Members Annual Meetings.

RIC-NET held two full Board meetings. One at the inception of the project at which an M&E framework was approved and the other for consideration of strategic focus and administration. During these meetings the Board made strategic decisions in regard to expanding the operational area, staffing, budget approval, approval of 2010 annual reports, review and plan new project focus, project comprehensive implementation strategies, review and approval of both management and project monitoring tools, setting strategy for further fundraising and other internal decisions.

RIC-NET participated in meetings and forums with Government, CSOs and other agencies in Kabarole and Bundibugyo Districts to set up the Districts integrity forums.

5.6 Conduct District Roundtable Meetings.

Three round table meetings were held within the reporting period, the meetings were organized by RICNET in Bundibugyo, Kyenjojo and Kabarole. Issues covered were about setting up of the E-society Centers and stimulating the District stakeholders in information sharing with others.

6. The Activity output analysis.

The activity- output matrix is attached as annex 1.7. Progress has been made during the reporting period towards the achievement of the objectives of the proposal & contract

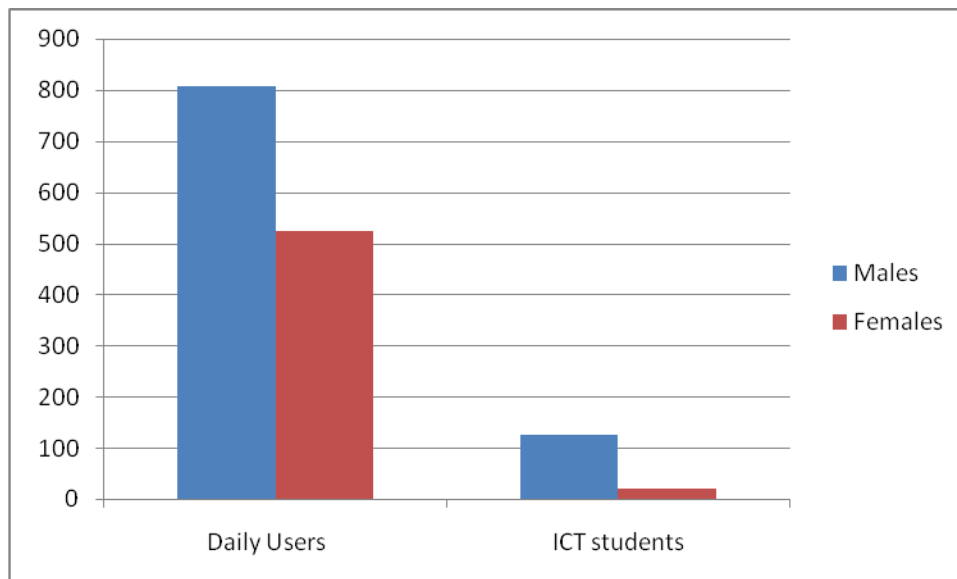
Indicator 1

Over 30,000 persons have been reached directly through the online platforms, 689 people (338 males and 351 females) have directly accessed information from our market outreach programme by information facilitators, 1485 have accessed information directly from the e-society centres; over 6,000 people have accessed information through the quarterly newsletters and an estimate of over 150,000 citizens have accessed information through the radio programmes.

Table 1: SUMMARY OF USERS FOR KASESE E-SOCIETY CENTRE JAN-DEC 2011

s/n	categories	Males	Females	Total
	Daily Users	808	523	1331
	ICT students	126	20	146
	Internship students	3	3	6
	Grand Total			1483

Chart 1: Users of Kasese E-Society Centre



A total of 689 farmers (338 males and 351 females) from 55 villages in 18 Sub Counties of Kasese and Bundibugyo Districts were supported by RIC-NET volunteers.

Table 1. Summary of farmers reached through plant clinics, August – December 2011

No.	Names of Plant Doctor.	Market place.	District.	No of Farmers	Gender	
					M	F
1.	Musoke Wilson	Mpanga	Bundibugyo.	112	45	67
2.	Bahunguli Astalhuzi [Mrs.]	Mpondwe	Kasese.	91	39	52
3.	Asaba Wilberforce	Kisinga& Kiburara	Kasese.	234	128	106
4.	Juliet Martina [Mrs.].	Kinyabisiki	Kasese.	109	44	62
5.	Agnes Katusabe [Mrs.]	Bubandi	Bundibugyo.	67	31	36
6.	Hussein Baridi	Kajambala	Bundibugyo.	47	27	20
7.	Kanyarutoke Elias		Kyenjonjo.	33	13	20
8.	Mwasi Charles	Bubandi	Bundibugyo.	29	11	18
Grand Totals				689	338	351

Indicator 2

Six (6) participating County Information Centres have been trained and supported to undertake systematic social accountability. One hundred and thirty three (133) CBOs and twenty three (23) institutions of Local Governments participated in the actions of these centres.

The result was; four (4) community meetings with political and civil servants with these communities were held and people petitioned on different issues raised and documented on videos e.g. BIC petitioned on the gravity water in Mpondwe-Lhubiriha Town Council, poor education standards in the primary schools in Nyakiyumbu Sub County and poor service delivery at Bwera hospital. KRIC also petitioned on the lack of extension workers in the Agriculture sector and poor teaching standards in primary schools; whereas KACIOCE petitioned leaders over poor rural roads system, lack of market for agriculture products especial honey and pineapples produced in the area and poor health services.

We have received appreciation letters upon this collaboration with other CBOs, local government and other institution with similar vision of information sharing and social accountability. ***Copies attached as Annex 5.***

Indicator 3

There is evidence of increased information sharing and participation by other stakeholders and citizens. As seen from the online platforms and people calling in during our radio programmes. For instance by looking at the platforms developed we had the following viewers by 2011.

- <http://ricnetnews.blogspot.com> 7656 viewers
- <http://kasesenews.blogspot.com> 9230 viewers
- <http://rweconews.blogspot.com> 7,938 viewers
- <http://kabaroledistrict.blogspot.com> 199 viewers
- 165 citizens successfully called within our radio programmes to voice their issues to the local authority.

Indicator 4

RICNET was able to raise **15,056 Euros (53,944,195 UGX)** out of the total income from donors **111,762 Euros (400,442,164 UGX)**.

This is 13.5% of out of the total income. But in terms of running costs for essential services, RICNET is able to run with only core staff (Director, Accountant, ICT officer and Administrator) for a year.

HIVOS contributes through its several projects with RIC-NET/RWECO to salaries of seven (7) staff out of 13 staff members now available. Of the seven, five are fully paid by HIVOS and the two HIVOS contributes about 80% of the salaries.

The organization has managed to attract funds from consultancies with private sector, SNV, local CSO, Uganda community library, EIFL (<http://www.eifl.net>).

However, our core activities are still majorly funded by HIVOS and other donors from Plant clinic (sharing information on crop & Animal pests and diseases) which is fully funded by RIC-NET and the member centres.

8. If an internal or external evaluation took place, who initiated it and how was it organized? What were the main conclusions and recommendations? Specify if and in what way the outcome of these evaluations will affect the organization's policy or programmes.

During the reporting period, the external evaluation on the farmers' plant clinic programme was done. This evaluation was part of **"Second Generation Plant Health Clinics in Uganda"** by Assoc. Prof. Solveig Danielsen, University of Copenhagen.¹

A copy of this report is attached as Annex 2.

RIC-NET carried out the annual internal evaluation and reviews of the information centres and E-Society Centres. The final report will be ready in the course of 2012. The internal reviews were useful to the refocusing of the project on the objectives and indicators in the proposal. **Copy of report for two District findings is attached as Annex 3.**

9. If an evaluation took place during the previous reporting period, what steps has the organization taken in response to the observations/ recommendations?

RIC-NET has planned a staff, board and some key stakeholder retreat to lay strategies in regard to the information from these evaluations. This will inform the 2012-2013 project proposal and review of implementation strategy of the current project.

Reflection

10. Analyze the results as described above. Did the planned strategies work out as expected, and if not, why not? Were there unexpected opportunities the organization could profit from, and how? Explain major variances, positive or negative, from the proposal referred to in the contract letter and/or the relevant work-plan: what has caused them?

Variances may be caused by internal organizational factors, such as policy changes, changes in staff composition, etc., by the implementation of strategies that proved to be inadequate, or by external factors, such as natural disasters or political turmoil (ref. A1).

Cfr: Outputs/ achievements see table above (Annex 1) for details

11. Describe any changes (positive or negative) in the organization's relationships with other actors in the same sector of activities (locally, nationally or internationally) and in the relationship with local and/or national authorities (if applicable). Comment on each

¹ Email sodan@life.ku.dk or soldanielsen@gmail.com; Tel +45 4220 5769

of these changes in so far as they have influenced the level of achievement of (expected) results.

RIC-NET has had good working relationship with members of RWECO and CEW-IT which has made it easy to implement specific activities (especially in area of IT) accorded to RIC-NET. The local Governments in the region have appreciated the intervention of RIC-NET in the area of promoting use of ICT to enhance information sharing. Most of these local governments have showed willingness to not only participate but commit resources to ensure that e-society centres are a success.

The international organizations such as SNV, UNICEF, and CABI-UK have continuously worked with RIC-NET to ensure that information on specific aspect of common interest to reach the target communities.

Higher institutions of learning have collaborated with RIC-NET in documentation; Action based Research and training/mentoring of students. Such institution include; Mountains on the Moon University, Uganda Pentecostal University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Canon Apollo Core Primary Teachers College, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Uganda Metrological Department, Uganda Bureau of Standards.

Local CBOs have also been involved in RIC-NET activities especial in the area of targeting specific groups as women, youth, Disabled and minorities. The evidence of all this can be seen from letters of appreciation from different partners during the reporting period and their comments in our visitors book whenever their come along.

With this level of partnership, RIC-NET is recognized by most partners as key player in promoting use for ICT for the good of the community and information documentation and sharing.


12. What is your overall assessment of the progress made this year, in view of your organization's longer-term objectives? What did your organization learn from this strategic analysis of results? How will this affect next year's/future activities?

D. Monitoring Performance and Organizational Quality (max. 2 pages)

13. How has the quality of your organization improved? Provide information on activities and results relating to the indicators for the improvement of organizational quality in the contract (if any).

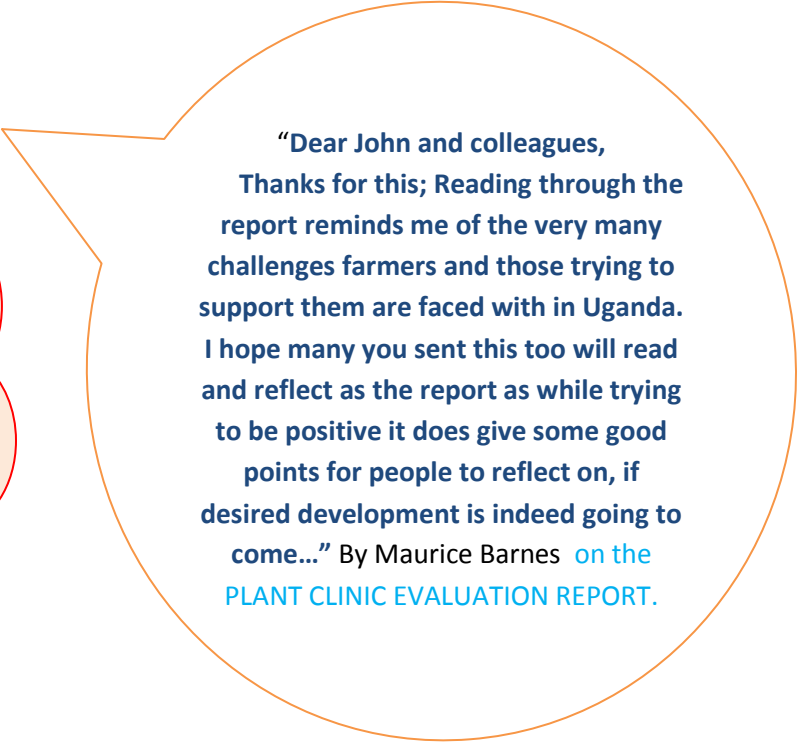
The results from the monitoring exercise have not been discussed in the management and stakeholders of RIC-NET. The reports have already been shared to board and other stake holders and a reflection meeting will be held soon.

But, the general mood was that we are on track but some serious intervention has to be done to ensure sustainability. Some examples of emails from stakeholder are:



"Interesting study I received through Felix, it would be nice to share it on the APF online platform. It could assist the dissemination of the information to a wider public..." BY **Marieke van Schie ; SNV Rwenzori Portfolio**

On the **PLANT CLINIC**



"Dear John and colleagues,
Thanks for this; Reading through the report reminds me of the very many challenges farmers and those trying to support them are faced with in Uganda. I hope many you sent this too will read and reflect as the report as while trying to be positive it does give some good points for people to reflect on, if desired development is indeed going to come..." By Maurice Barnes [on the PLANT CLINIC EVALUATION REPORT.](#)

RIC-NET intends to use the evaluation reports to design its next three years intervention in the area.

14. How did the internal planning and reflection process function during the reporting period (i.e. who was involved and in what way)?

RIC-NET held first a three days staff reflection, and later a two days members and Board reflection in Kasunga Training Centre. The reflection was facilitated by Mr. Richard Okuti from Asili Richlands and Ms. Winnie Lawoko (Former Director of Sales and Marketing at MTN Uganda).

The reflection reviewed the years focus and the implementation strategy and highlighted the areas of members' strategic interest and partnerships. We also streamline the internal management and monitoring systems.

15. How did the organization monitor performance of the programme(s) and how was this information used? Please provide examples.

RIC-NET has internal staff reporting systems both at activity reports and monthly reports. Before an activity is done a planning tool is used setting out what will be achieved/ outputs and results. The monthly reports are discussed in the staff meetings and action points taken. Copy of these tools is attached as Annex 7.

16. What are your experiences with the indicators that have been agreed upon to monitor the organization's progress towards the objectives of the contract? Is there a need to replace or add one or more indicators? Please explain.

The agreed upon

Indicators:

1. 30 percent (approximately 630,000) of the citizens in the 7 districts of the Rwenzori region access and utilize reliable information on governance and service delivery and 10% (about 210,000) of the citizens in the 7 districts are able to give feedback and engage the duty bearers by March 2012
2. Seven participating county information centres undertake systematic social accountability tracking of delivery of basic services; train about 140 CBOs and community groups reporting, documenting and sharing accountability and governance information by March 2012
3. Evidence of strong information sharing and participation in joint activities between the information centres, CSO and local government as seen on online platforms and quarterly magazines.
4. RIC-NET as an institution attain over 50% self sustainability of its running costs including core staff salaries by 31-3-2012

RIC-NET has gained a remarkable progress on these indicators as seen in the report above. The progress on indicators should not only be measured from a single project of RIC-NET with HIVOS but also from its contributions in other consortiums such as CEW-IT and RWEKO.

RIC-NET institution sustainability as in indicator 4 should be extended to December 2012; this will allow proper analysis at the closer of 2012 financial year.

Indicator one should be broadened to allow information utilization on other sectors like climate change, Agriculture, Health and Education in which RIC-NET is actively involved.

17. Has the organization shared progress information with the beneficiaries and other stakeholders of the programme? If so, how; if not, why not?

RIC-NET shares a lot of its information on social media and stakeholders and partners access progress reports timely.

<http://ric-netnews.blogspot.com> www.ricnet.co.ug <http://rwecovoice.blogspot.com>

E. Relationship with Hivos

18. If you received non-financial support from Hivos during the reporting year, please indicate if you were satisfied with this support, and why (not)?

There was no non financial support provided from HIVOS. Income sources are in the Audit Report.