Evaluation of "Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia"(SIRCA) Programme

Evaluator: Ann Mizumoto

Commissioned by:
Singapore Internet Research Centre (SiRC) and International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

November 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluator would like to express her deepest gratitude to the many individuals who have contributed their valuable time and effort to make the evaluation of "Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia" (SIRCA) Programme possible. Their candid responses in the surveys and interviews about the performance and the potential improvements to the programme are the pillars to this evaluation. Principal Investigators, Mentors, Grant Review Committee members, Trainers, the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, the Singapore Internet Research Centre, and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) have all made this evaluation possible.

Special appreciation goes to the SIRCA Secretariat, including former SIRCA Senior Manager, Ms. Joanna Tan Keng Ling, and former Programme Officer, Ms. Grace Kwan. The SIRCA Director, Professor Ang Peng Hwa, and Assistant Director, Dr. Arul Chib, have provided invaluable guidance and the 'big picture' at crucial stages of the evaluation process. The evaluator is extremely grateful and honored to have received their advice. The evaluation would not have been possible without the time and effort put in by the SIRCA Senior Manager, Ms. Yvonne Lim, who has taken an exceptional lead in this evaluation and has fully participated in all stages of the evaluation. Without the input and extensive assistance from the Programme Officer, Ms. Sri Ranjini Mei Hua d/o Raman, and Programme Manager, Ms. Naowarat Narula, especially during the development of the work plan and the surveys, the evaluation would have stalled and floundered. The evaluator is extremely grateful for the Secretariat's logistical and administrative support, including full and free access to all SIRCA documents, and to Mdm Lim Lee Cheng from the Wee Kim Wee School. The evaluator is impressed with the commitment, efficiency, dedication, professionalism and hard work that the SIRCA staff members demonstrate in their everyday job. It is almost hard to believe that SIRCA's scale of achievements is managed by a very small team of people.

A very special thank you goes to the evaluator's mentor based in India, Sociologist and Evaluator, Mr. Chelladurai Solomon. From start to finish, he was there for support, guidance, confirmation, assurance, and provided the evaluator with his experience, expertise and wisdom to make this evaluation possible. He also made possible the opportunity for the evaluator and SIRCA Senior Manager to share the SIRCA evaluation experience at the Evaluation Conclave in New Delhi, India in October 2010.

The evaluator is indebted to two mentors based in Canada for their time and expertise – Dr. Ricardo Ramirez and Dr. Dal Brodhead. Despite working in a 12-hour difference with the evaluator, they always responded promptly, thoroughly and provided countless inestimable advice, including many important reference documents, to assist the evaluator progress through the evaluation stages.

The support from IDRC Canada, including a scholarship to attend the International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) at a very timely and coincidental juncture of the evaluation, has sparked creativity, inspiration, and passion for completing this evaluation. A special thank you goes to Ms. Chaitali Sinha and Dr. Matthew Smith from the IDRC headquarters in Ottawa.

Any errors or omissions in this report are the sole responsibility of the evaluator.

November 2010

Ann Mizumoto
Evaluator

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Grant Review Process

LIST OF FIGURES

Grant Review Process

Mentorship Programme

Workshops and Conferences

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACM	Association for Computing Machinery
AMIC	Asian Media Information and Communication Centre
AMIS	Agricultural Market Information Services
DECI	Developing Evaluation Capacity in ICTD
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GRC	Grant Review Committee
IAMCR	International Association for Media and Communication Research
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
IFIP	International Federation for Information Processing
ICA	International Communication Association
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICTC	Information and Communications Technology Council
ICTD	Information and Communication Technology for Development
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
M4D	Mobile for Development
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NTU	Nanyang Technological University
PAN	Pan Asia Networking
PI	Principal Investigator
SiRC	Singapore Internet Research Center
SIRCA	Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia
SMS	Short Message Service
TOR	Terms of Reference
UFE	Utilization-Focused Evaluation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
WKWSCI	Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains the findings from the formative evaluation of the "Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia" (SIRCA) Programme. SIRCA was established with the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) under the "Developing Evaluation Capacity in ICTD" (DECI) project. DECI aims to build evaluation capacity in ICTD among its research partners in Asia by providing technical assistance to researchers to enhance evaluation knowledge and skills. An external consultant evaluated the period from the Programme's inception in March 2008 to July 2010. Through Michael Quinn Patton's 'Utilization-Focused Evaluation' (UFE)[1] approach, the evaluator facilitated the Primary Intended Users to be closely involved in the evaluation process. The Primary Intended Users identified the uses of the evaluation, defined the key evaluation questions, assisted with the evaluation design, analysis and interpretation of findings, and the generation of recommendations. A mixed method triangulation approach was also employed to substantiate findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The evaluation was guided by 3 Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs):

1. To what extent did the Grant Review Committee (GRC) select the most appropriate candidates for the SIRCA grants given the time and resources available to them?

2. To what extent did the Mentorship Programme facilitate learning and/or collaboration between emerging and established researchers?

3. To what extent did the Workshops & Conferences facilitate publication and dissemination of research findings?

In light of the first KEQ, it was found that more review time for proposals, fewer proposals per person, and a large and diverse Grant Review Committee would enhance the fairness of the application process. Findings suggest that SIRCA can refine the screening criteria to cull out Principal Investigators (PIs) whose priorities and motivations are not high enough to enter SIRCA's rigorous research programme.

In exploring the second KEQ, the evaluation found that both PIs and Mentors achieved bidirectional learning through the Mentorship Programme. The face-to-face Mentor Site Visits were helpful in contextualizing projects and elucidating field work challenges and solutions. A growing "SIRCA Community" including Mentors, GRC members, and workshop Trainers can be built through social networking sites, reduce the sense of isolation felt by stakeholders dispersed across continents, and strengthen professional ties.

Workshops and conferences addressed in the third KEQ were found to have a positive "trickle down" effect from PIs to their teammates and colleagues. Workshops and conferences were found to be the ideal venue to share knowledge among researchers, to narrow the gap between academia and practice, and to market the growing research outputs in ICTD from Asia.

In conclusion, the SIRCA Programme has produced capacity building outcomes such as peer-reviewed publications and participation in international ICTD conferences which demonstrate the effectiveness of the Programme. There are opportunities for SIRCA to become an even stronger programme going forward, starting with more clarity in the Programme's mission – to fund emerging social scientists or to fund well-established ICTD researchers. SIRCA already embraces its feedback surveys. With more monitoring indicators, SIRCA can continue to document its notable achievements as it heads towards innovation and expansion in the years to come.

[1] Patton, Michael Quinn. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the evaluation

In August 2008, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) appointed the Singapore Internet Research Centre (SiRC) at Nanyang Technological University to become one of five members of its Pan Asia Networking (PAN) programme. PAN brings together academic researchers, civil society, the public sector, and the private sector to find sustainable solutions to development challenges in Asia using multidisciplinary knowledge, technologies, scientific evidence and policies in Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICTD). SiRC was chosen as a PAN partner because it aims to bring the Asian perspectives and experiences to the global discussion about the impact of ICTD while conducting and promoting research for policy and development.[2] SiRC was endowed with CAN$1 million to establish a capacity building programme called "Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia" (SIRCA). SIRCA aims to:

- Enhanced research capacity in the region, demonstrated by the increased quality and reach of strong, methodologically rigorous, theoretically sound research findings
- Creation of a space for discussions and knowledge sharing on ICTD social science research issues in Asia
- Creation of linkages among emerging ICTD researchers in Asia, and among established and emerging researchers through the mentorship program
- Greater awareness of ICTD research published by Asian-based researchers through dissemination of findings in international peer-reviewed publications and conferences

To date, SIRCA has funded 13 Principal Investigators (PIs) for SGD 20,000, SGD 26,500, and SGD 33,000 awards, and 1 graduate student with a SGD 15,000 award. All projects ranged from 12 to 24 months. The researchers are further supported in the form of one-on-one guidance by a mentor and fully-funded participation in workshops.[3]

1.2 Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation's purpose is two-fold. The first is to build evaluation capacity within SIRCA through IDRC's "Developing Evaluation Capacity in ICTD" (DECI) research project which uses Michael Quinn Patton's Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE)[4] approach. The second purpose is to assist the *Primary Intended Users* of the evaluation to articulate the *primary intended uses* of the evaluation. The *uses*, broadly, are to identify areas and recommendations for programme improvement. This formative evaluation was conducted between November 2009 and November 2010 by an external evaluator and covers a period of 2 years and 4 months from the Programme's inception in March 2008 to July 2010.[5]

[2] *PAN (IDRC) – SiRC Funding Program for ICTD Research Capacity Building: SIRCA – Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia.* Singapore Internet Research Center, July 2008. p.1
[3] *1st Technical Progress Report, August 2008 – July 2009.* IDRC Small Grants Program for ICTD Research Capacity Building: Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia (SIRCA). IDRC grant number: 104921-001. p. 3
[4] Patton, Michael Quinn. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008.
[5] See Annex 2 for the complete Scope of Service for the evaluator.

1.3 Key Evaluation Areas & Key Evaluation Questions

The Primary Intended Users identified 3 areas of the SIRCA Programme where they thought it was worthwhile having an in-depth evaluation done. The **Grant Review Process** was one area for evaluation because the Primary Intended Users had gotten feedback about the "short" time for the review period which might have affected the screening process. The **Mentorship Programme** was identified as the second evaluation area because it was a unique component of SIRCA that went beyond a typical grant programme. SIRCA embraced a vision of professional support and career formation for emerging researchers. It was hoped that this relationship addressed the needs of the PI as a researcher, a collaborator, and a future contributor to the field of ICTD. The third evaluation area was the capacity building activities – **Workshops and Conferences**. These were areas that the Primary Intended Users could adjust quickly as workshops and conferences are planned with antecedence.

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQ) were extracted from the evaluation areas above:

- *Evaluation Area: Grant Review Process*

  KEQ 1: To what extent did the Grant Review Committee select the most appropriate candidates for the SIRCA grants given the time and resources available to them?

- *Evaluation Area: Mentorship Programme*

  KEQ 2: To what extent did the Mentorship Programme facilitate learning and/or collaboration between emerging and established researchers?

- *Evaluation Area: Workshops and Conferences*

  KEQ 3: To what extent did the Workshops & Conferences facilitate the publication and dissemination of research findings?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The UFE Approach

The methodology underlying this evaluation was the Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach. The evaluator adhered as much as possible to Steps 1 through 11 of the 12-step UFE process. The last step of UFE is a Meta-Evaluation which the evaluator and the Primary Intended Users did not undertake. The 12 UFE Steps are:[6]

1. Program/Organizational Readiness Assessment
2. Evaluator Readiness and Capability Assessment
3. Identification of Primary Intended Users
4. Situational Analysis
5. Identification of Primary Intended Uses
6. Focusing the Evaluation
7. Evaluation Design
8. Simulation of Use
9. Data Collection
10. Data Analysis
11. Facilitation of Use
12. Meta-evaluation: Evaluating Use

Much time has been invested in building a trustful relationship with SIRCA's key stakeholders, without which the UFE evaluation would not have been achieved. SIRCA's management and staff diligently met early in the planning stage with the evaluator and the IDRC mentor to assess SIRCA's readiness to do a UFE evaluation and collaboratively developed a rough evaluation timeline (Step 1). The evaluator did a self-reflection of her readiness and understanding of UFE (Step 2). When SIRCA stakeholders and the evaluator were ready, the *Primary Intended Users* were identified based on their knowledge of the organization, their commitment to the evaluation, and their decision-making power to carry out recommendations (Step 3). Subsequently, a situational analysis was done to examine any possible barriers to use within the organization, such as administrative or political barriers (Step 4). Over several weeks of discussion, the Primary Intended Users clarified the *Primary Intended Uses* of the evaluation (Step 5) and defined the key evaluation areas and questions (Step 6). The Primary Intended Users worked with the evaluator to make a feasible evaluation design and relevant survey questions (Step 7). To ensure that the questions yielded useful findings, the evaluator and the Primary Intended Users reviewed simulated answers to every question for the different groups of respondents (Step 8). This simulation exercise was extremely helpful in discarding irrelevant, biased, or redundant questions and considerably shortened but increased the quality of the questionnaires. Data collection was done through electronic surveys and personal or telephone interviews (Step 9). The Primary Intended Users were not involved in data collection. Data analysis, including interpreting findings and generating recommendations, was a collaborative effort between the evaluator and the Primary Intended Users (Step 10). The evaluator helped the Primary Intended Users prioritize the evaluation recommendations so that use of findings became more manageable (Step 11). It was important to constantly involve the Primary Intended Users in the entire UFE process to impart a sense of ownership of the evaluation. This participatory process served to achieve the first evaluation purpose which was to build evaluation capacity in the organization, equipping staff with the knowledge of conducting, managing, and using evaluations. It also achieved the second purpose of the evaluation which was to enlighten the organization with areas for programme improvement.

[6] Patton, Michael Quinn. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008. pp. 576 - 581

2.2 SIRCA's Theory of Change

To assist the Primary Intended Users identify the key evaluation areas and questions, the evaluator developed a "Theory of Change" or logic model for the SIRCA Programme (Annex 1). The Theory of Change is a visual representation of how a programme expects to attain its objectives.[7] The Theory of Change articulates the mission and the underlying assumptions of a programme while taking into account the resources to achieve transformations in knowledge, attitude, behaviors, and practices. Theories of Change are often non-linear and complex with several feedback loops. However, a simple, linear representation was adopted for SIRCA with 'Inputs', 'Activities', and 'Outputs' flowing into 'Short-term Outcomes', 'Intermediate Outcomes' and 'Impact'. This allowed the Primary Intended Users to more easily pin-point key evaluation areas and questions. The evaluation's scope was contained between 'Inputs' and 'Short-Term Outcomes'. 'Long-Term Outcomes' and 'Impact' were deemed too difficult to measure because the impact of a capacity building programme could take several years.

2.3 Mixed Methods Triangulation

A mixed method approach was employed to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Triangulation of data through perception (evaluator's own observations), validation (surveys and interviews) and documentation (desk review of documents and literature) was used to substantiate findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

- Electronic surveys were distributed to all PIs, Mentors, GRC members, Trainers, and SIRCA staff.[8] Respondents were given the option to return the survey via email, or to answer the questions over the phone with recording.[9] The response rates were as follows:

    - Principal Investigators: 93% (14 out of 15)
    - Mentors: 100% (10 out of 10)
    - GRC members: 91% (10 out of 11)
    - Trainers: 100% (3 out of 3)
    - SIRCA Staff: 100% (7 out of 7)
      Total Response Rate: 96% (44 out of 46)

- Structured interviews (face-to-face and telephonic) were conducted with respondents who preferred to answer questions in person. These interviews were recorded for accuracy.

- Informal interviews were conducted with Mentors and PIs participating in Workshop 2 and during the Mobiles Preconference in Singapore (June 2010)

- The evaluator participated as an observer in Workshop 2 and the Mobiles Preconference which were capacity building activities organized by SIRCA.

- SIRCA made available the shared drive and all past and current documentation and internal records for desk review.[10] This includes application forms of SIRCA PIs, Mentors, Trainers and GRC members, PI progress reports, final reports, project amendments, quarterly and biannual feedback survey responses, technical reports, email correspondences, and video recordings.

[7] Imas, Linda G. Morra, & Ray Ris. *The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations.* Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2009, Chapter 4.
[8] See Annex 5 for a list of individuals consulted.
[9] See Annex 3 for all stakeholder survey questions.
[10] See Annex 6 for a comprehensive list of key documents consulted.

2.4 Limitations to the evaluation

2.4.1 UFE Limitations

UFE as a step-wise approach to conduct evaluations has not always worked in reality. There were limitations within the UFE context.

1. UFE is a participatory evaluation with considerable investment of time and effort by Primary Intended Users in the evaluation process. Primary Intended Users have day-to-day job priorities. Evaluation is another job imposed on the Primary Intended Users and the evaluator is inevitably, but understandably, faced with less attention, time constraints, long turn-around times, or delays in deliverables. Redoubled effort is required by the evaluator to obtain better participation of Primary Intended Users in each of the UFE steps. With much patience from both parties, however, this can and *was* overcome.

2. Primary Intended Users may simply lose interest and drop out as the evaluation may have become a burden to their work. When the Primary Intended Users is a group of people, it is easier for some individuals to drop out as they may expect that the remaining Users in the group will stay on in the evaluation process.

3. As in many organizations, SIRCA was not immune to staff turnovers. Over the course of the evaluation, the Primary Intended Users changed twice and a third person in the group dropped out. UFE is so dependent on individuals, not just positions, that staff turnover leads to loss of knowledge, experience, evaluation capacity, and subsequent delays along the evaluation timeline.

4. UFE changes the role of the evaluator from a typically external, independent, distanced, and objective person to a trusted facilitator and advisor. Key stakeholders commissioning the evaluation may at first question and resist this type of relationship with the evaluator as the notion of “objectivity” is trumped. Evaluation findings and recommendations can be seemingly biased with direct input from stakeholders commissioning the evaluation. Gradually working with the Primary Intended Users and gaining their understanding of UFE to instill a sense of ownership of the evaluation can allay the initial resistance to this approach.

2.4.2 Mixed Methods Limitations

Limitations to the mixed methods approach to data collection have not considerably affected the interpretations of findings. Perhaps the quantity, rather than the quality of findings, may have been reduced because the evaluator could not spend additional face-to-face time with the majority of respondents. The evaluation has been conducted within the realm of respondents being dispersed in several countries and the fact that evaluation field visits to projects were not possible due to funding.

1. Most of the evaluation data was collected via email with a few face-to-face interviews with respondents based in Singapore, and one phone interview with a respondent living outside Singapore. The respondents had the option to submit their surveys electronically or to have an interview. When responses are written, non-verbal cues are not perceived (e.g. gestures, body language, tone of voice, eye contact) which usually can give the evaluator a more complete picture of the answers. The quality of the evaluation questions, therefore, became key to capturing answers accurately. Responses also depended on how much people are able to or want to write. Several responses were left blank or incomplete making interpretation difficult or impossible.

2. The evaluator was able to get the views of a few PIs and Mentors in Workshop 2 and the Mobiles Preconference during coffee breaks and lunch breaks, but not all PIs and Mentors were reached during these limited, informal settings. Some PIs and Mentors were, understandably, more interested in networking with fellow colleagues and other participants during breaks than talking with the evaluator so

their responses were brief. Rather than this ad-hoc method to collect information, face-to-face time especially allocated to the evaluator and the respondents would have increased the depth of responses.

3. The survey questions were simulated but not pilot-tested on actual respondents. The surveys could have been tested on real respondents for each group (PI, Mentor, Trainer, GRC member, SIRCA staff), but since the responses are returned by email, the turnaround time is uncertain and this could have hampered the evaluation's progress. Some questions clearly needed to be reworded and restructured. For example, when asking how many proposals were ideal during the GRC review time, the multiple choice categories could have been mutually exclusive to prevent ambiguity. The evaluator also needed to go back to a few respondents to seek further clarification.

4. Recording interviews has made some respondents more wary and self-conscious about how they responded to questions. Some respondents changed their demeanor and tone of voice as soon as the evaluator started recording. Thus, responses may not be 100% accurate.

5. Categories for quantitative results are created by the evaluator, although based on SIRCA's work. Results can be interpreted differently depending on how one categorizes the responses. This pertains especially to the Grant Review Process section.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Evaluation Area: Grant Review Process

KEQ 1: To what extent did the Grant Review Committee select the most appropriate candidates for the SIRCA grants given the time and resources that were available to them?

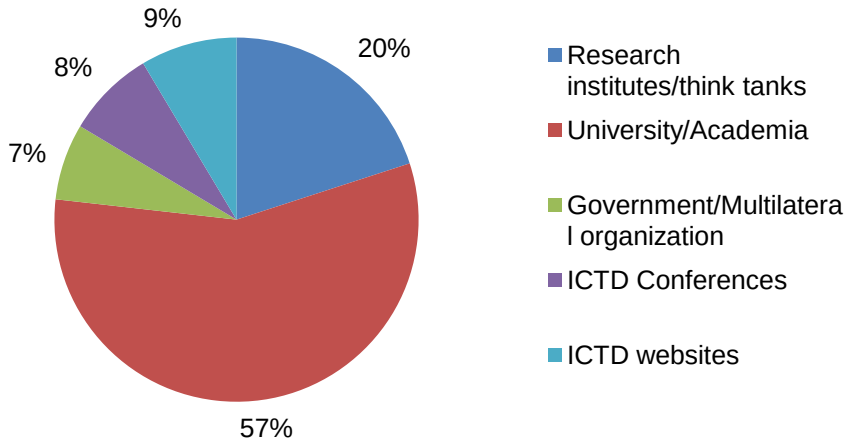
3.1.1 Programme Reach

Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 show the entities to where the Secretariat disseminated the SIRCA Programme in August 2008 to receive applications. The advertisements were done via email and website postings. In order to gauge the topics and countries of study, a 'Call for Interest' was issued by the Secretariat a month prior to the formal 'Call for Proposals' whereby applicants registered their name and proposal title through SIRCA's website.

Table 3.1 Entity Advertising the SIRCA Programme

Entity	Number	%
Research institutes/think tanks	56	20%
University/Academia	159	57%
Government/Multilateral organization	19	7%
ICTD Conferences	22	8%
ICTD websites	24	9%
TOTAL	**280**	**100%**

Figure 3.1 Entity Advertising the SIRCA Programme



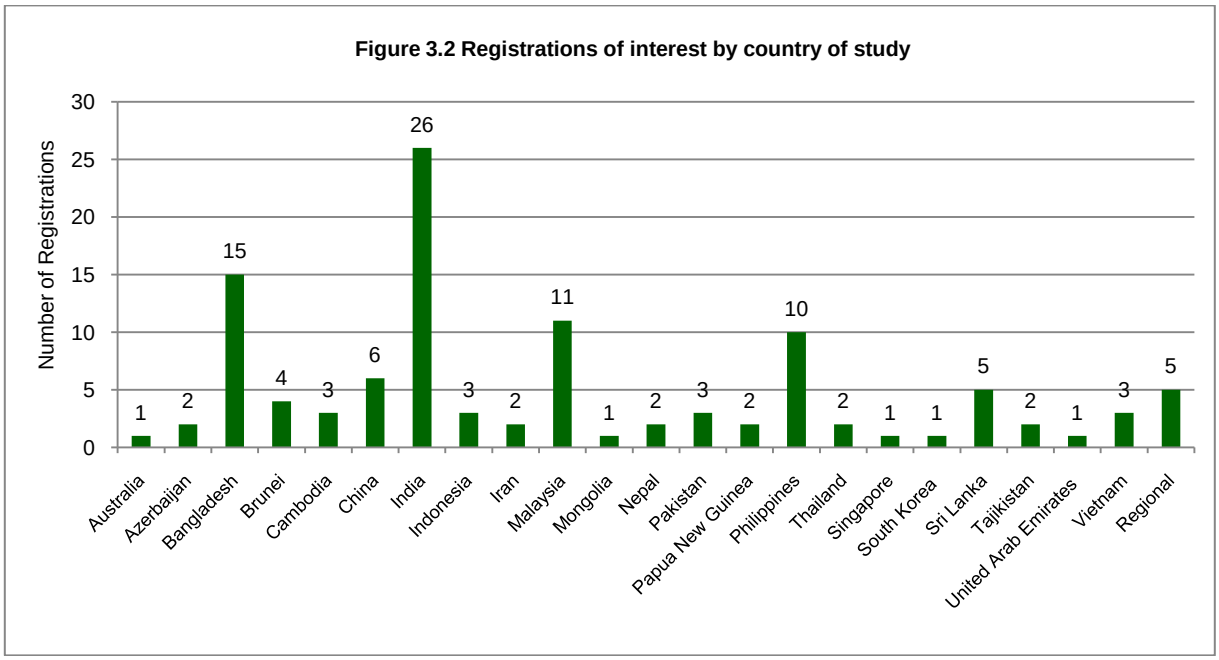
The Secretariat consulted several websites to develop the Project Assessment Decision Matrix which was used by the GRC members to review and score proposals. The diversity of entities in the list demonstrates the Secretariat's effort to seek for quality and neutrality. One academic institution, 4 public sector research programs, 2 professional associations, and 2 multilateral institutions were consulted to create the Assessment Matrix (Table 3.2 below). SIRCA staff believe that the Decision Matrix, the MOU, and the Assessment Framework Guidelines reached a level comparable to those of *"leading journals"* while striking a *"nice balance between detail and task effort".*

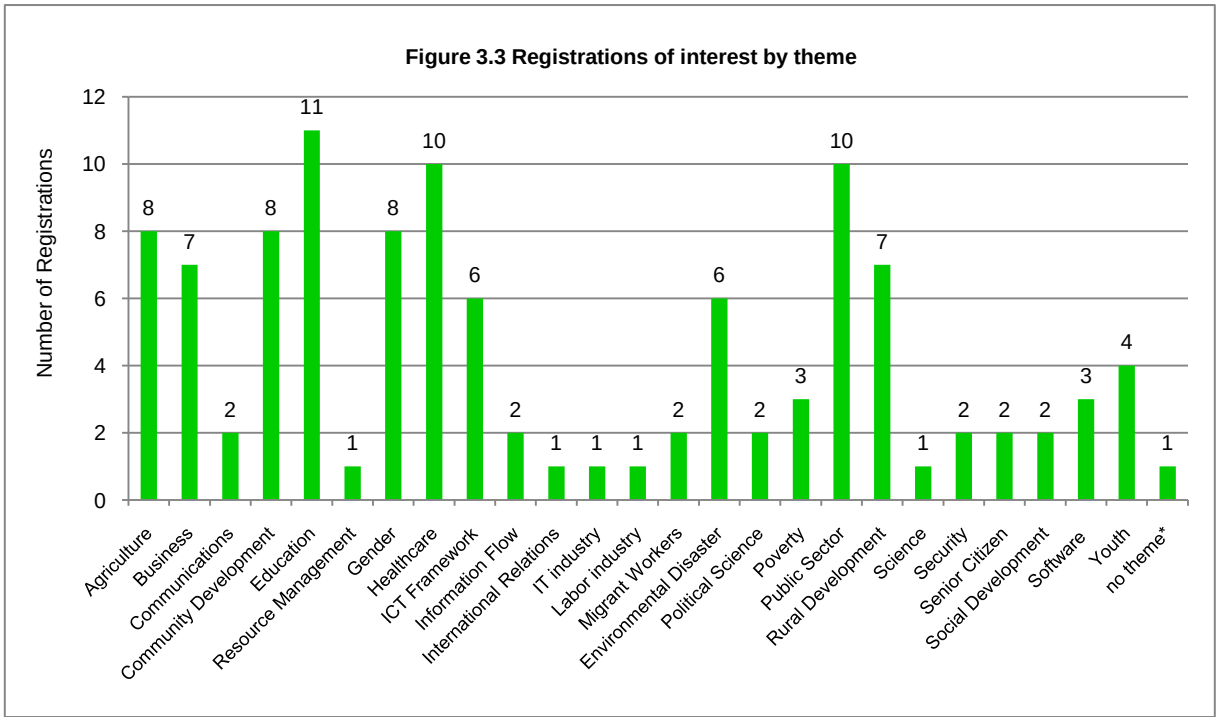
Table 3.2 Entities consulted by SIRCA to develop the Project Assessment Decision Matrix

Type of Entity	Number	%	Name of Entity and URL
Academia	1	11%	Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Research Program
Public Sector / Government Research	4	44%	National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (United States)
			Social Policy Evaluation and Research Committee (New Zealand)
			Food and Health Bureau (Hong Kong SAR)
			Science and Technology Facilities Council (United Kingdom)
Professional Associations	2	22%	Council of Writing Program Administrators
			American Urogynecologic Society
Multilateral Institutions	2	22%	European Research Council
			World Bank
Total	9	100%	

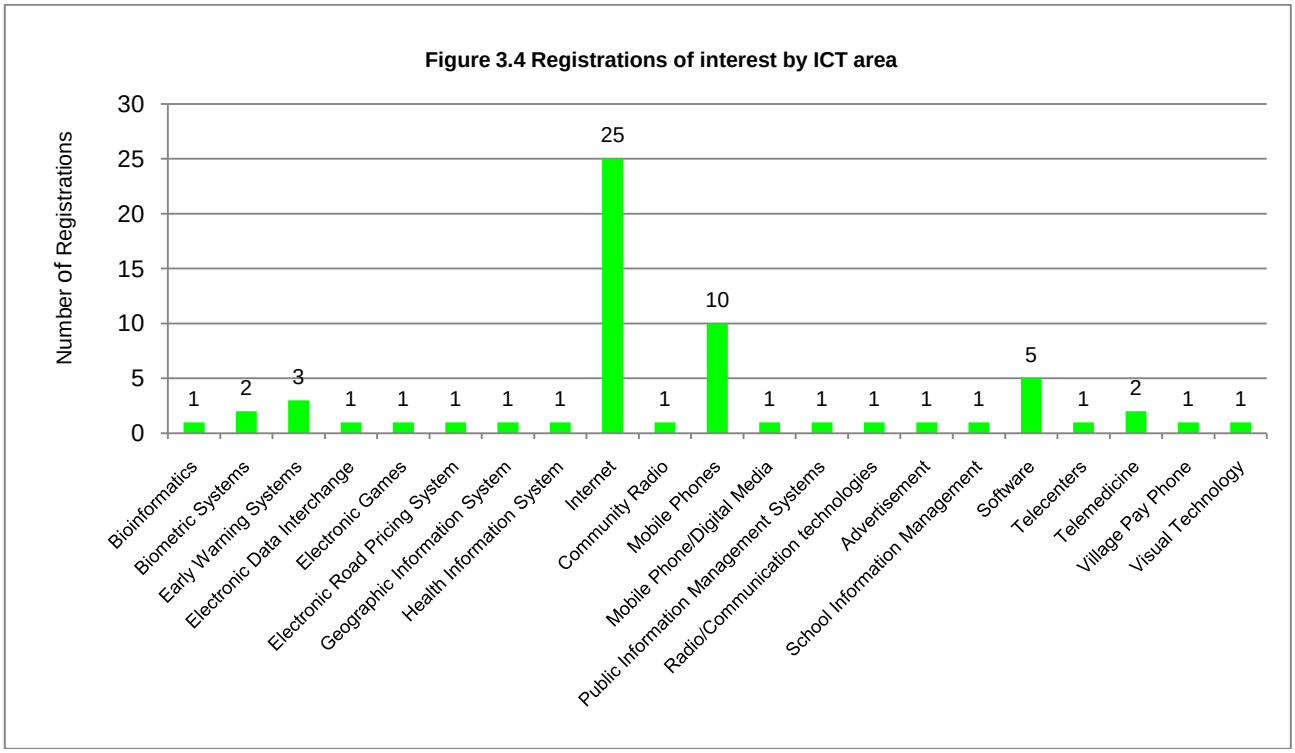
Recommendation #1
While most research is based in universities and academia, more advertising of SIRCA to non-academic entities doing development work such as government bodies, multilateral organizations, think tanks, and professional communities can be done as SIRCA is inherently aiming to understand and/or resolve development challenges using ICT.

Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 illustrate the diversity of applicants by registrations of interest (total of 111 registrations).

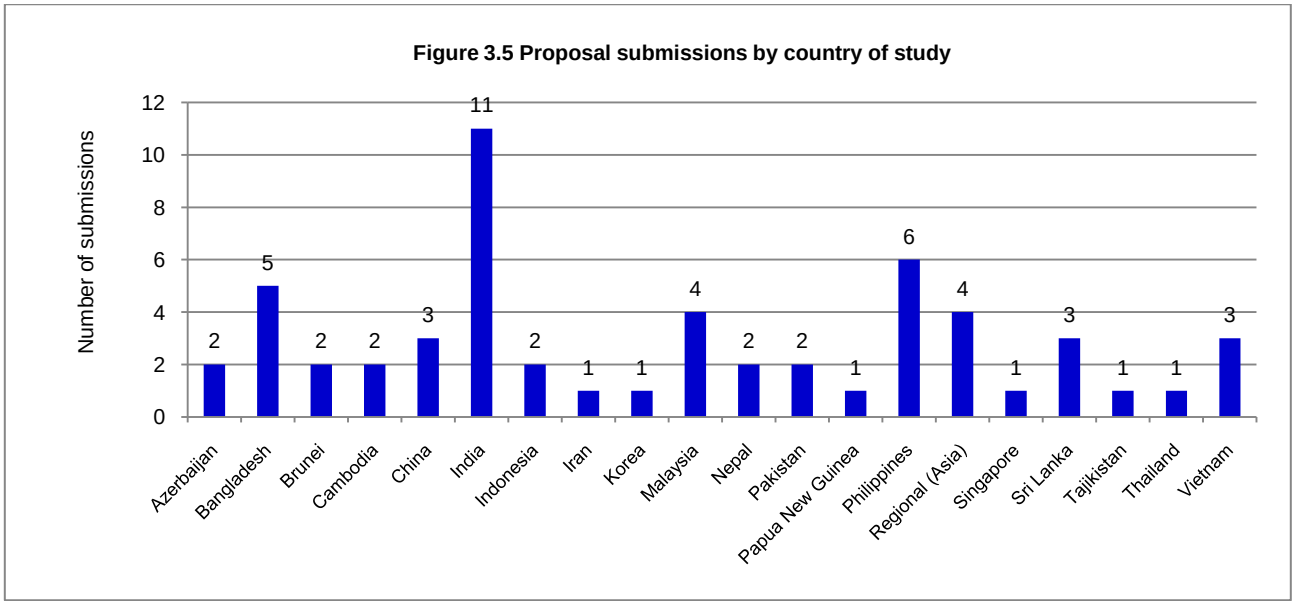




No theme – Paper title not available



Figures 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 show proposal submissions (total of 57 submissions, or 51% of registrations).



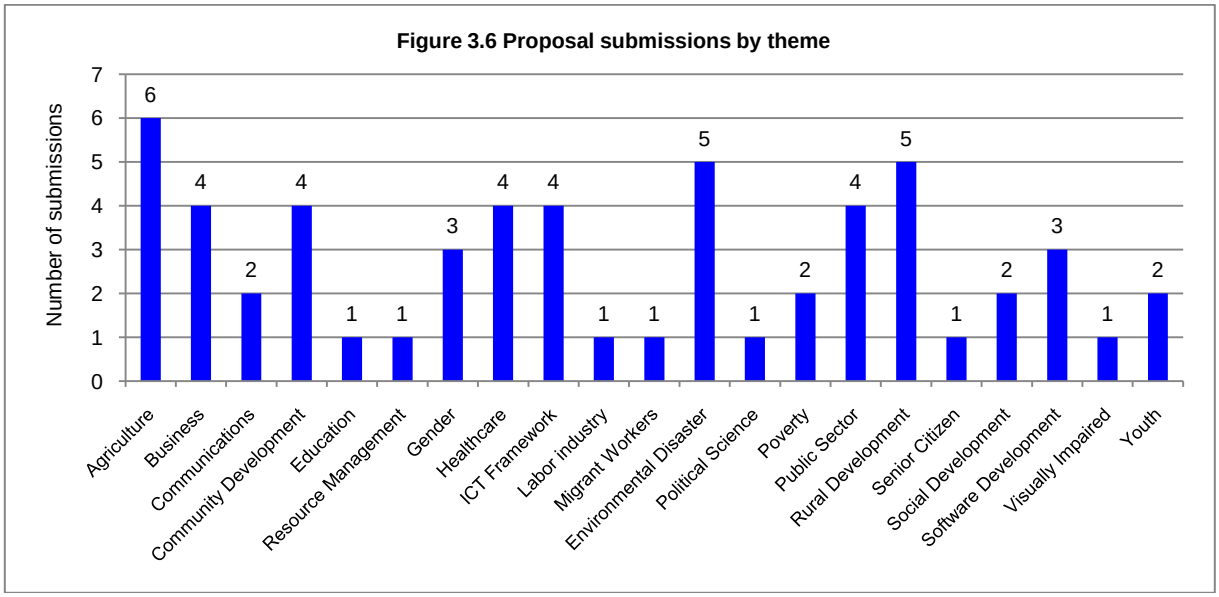


Figure 3.6 Proposal submissions by theme
Number of submissions
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
6
4
2
4
1
1
3
4
4
1
1
5
1
2
4
5
1
2
3
1
2
Agriculture
Business
Communications
Community Development
Education
Resource Management
Gender
Healthcare
ICT Framework
Labor Industry
Migrant Workers
Environmental Disaster
Political Science
Poverty
Public Sector
Rural Development
Senior Citizen
Social Development
Software Development
Visually Impaired
Youth

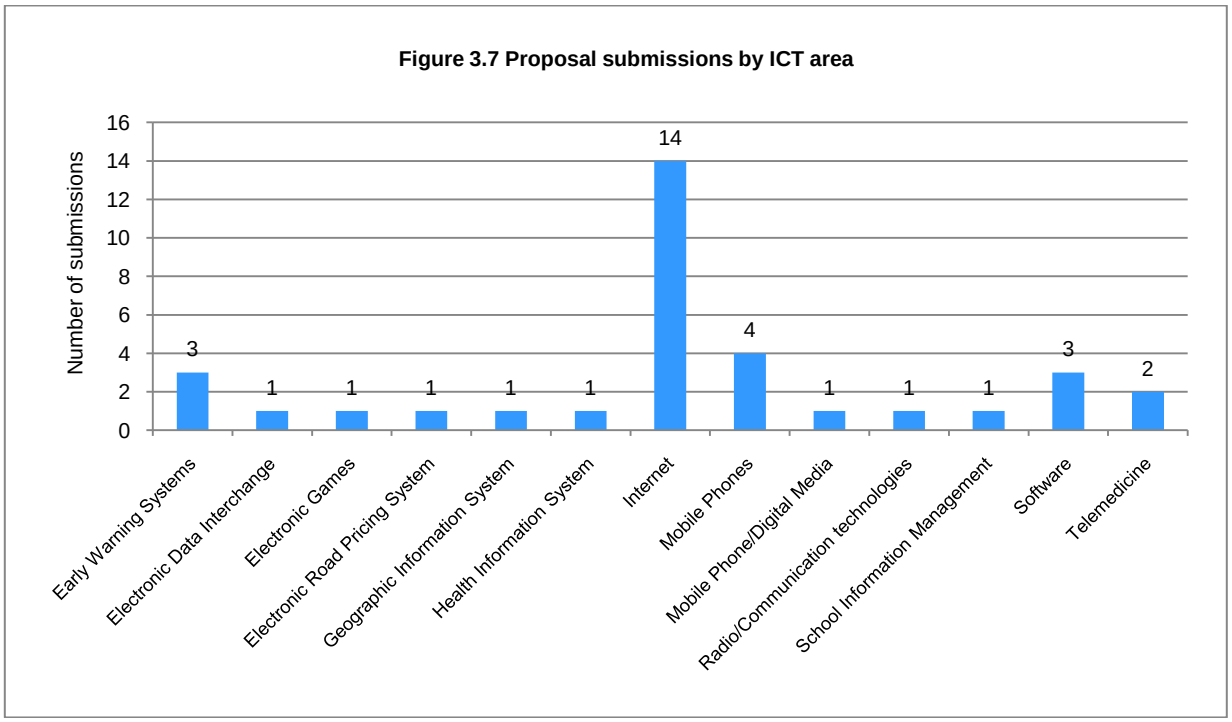
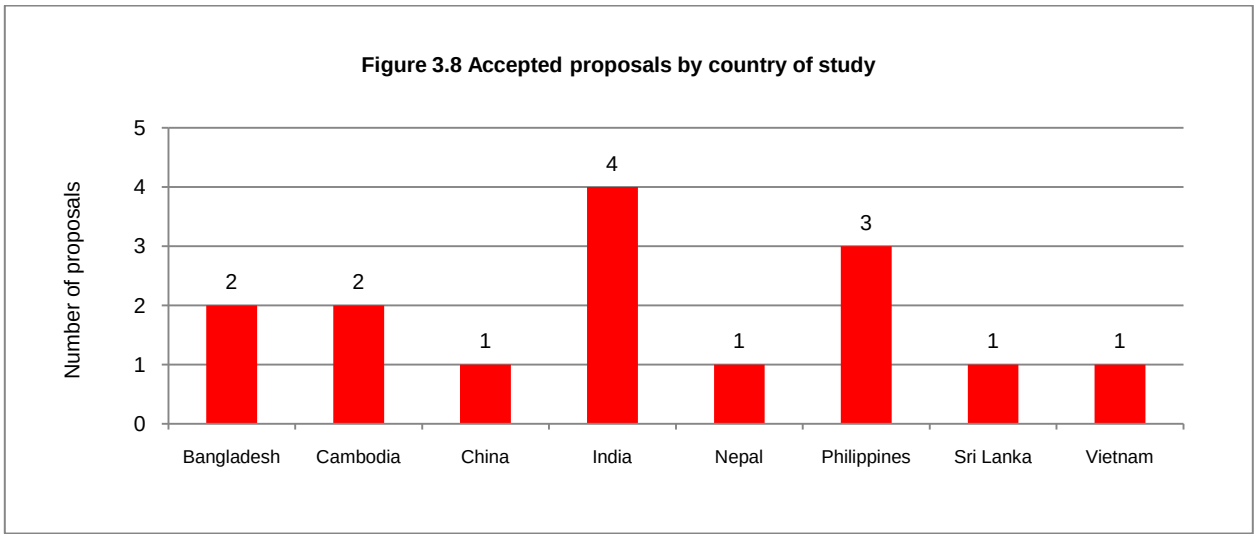
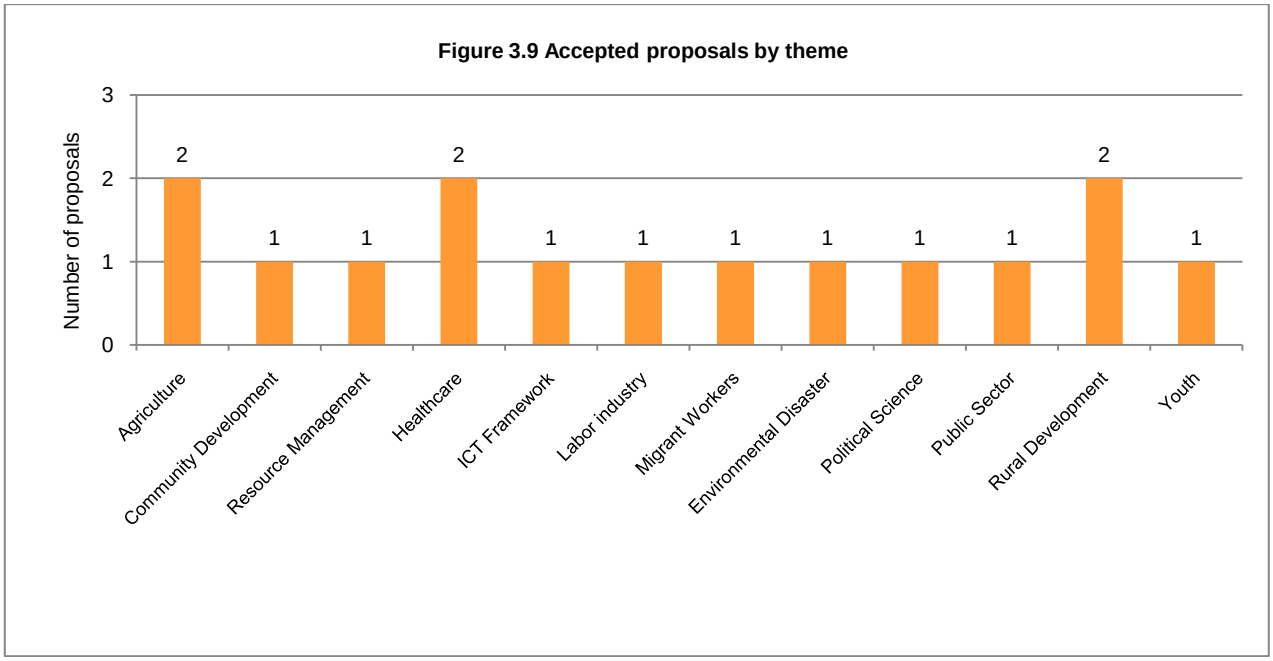
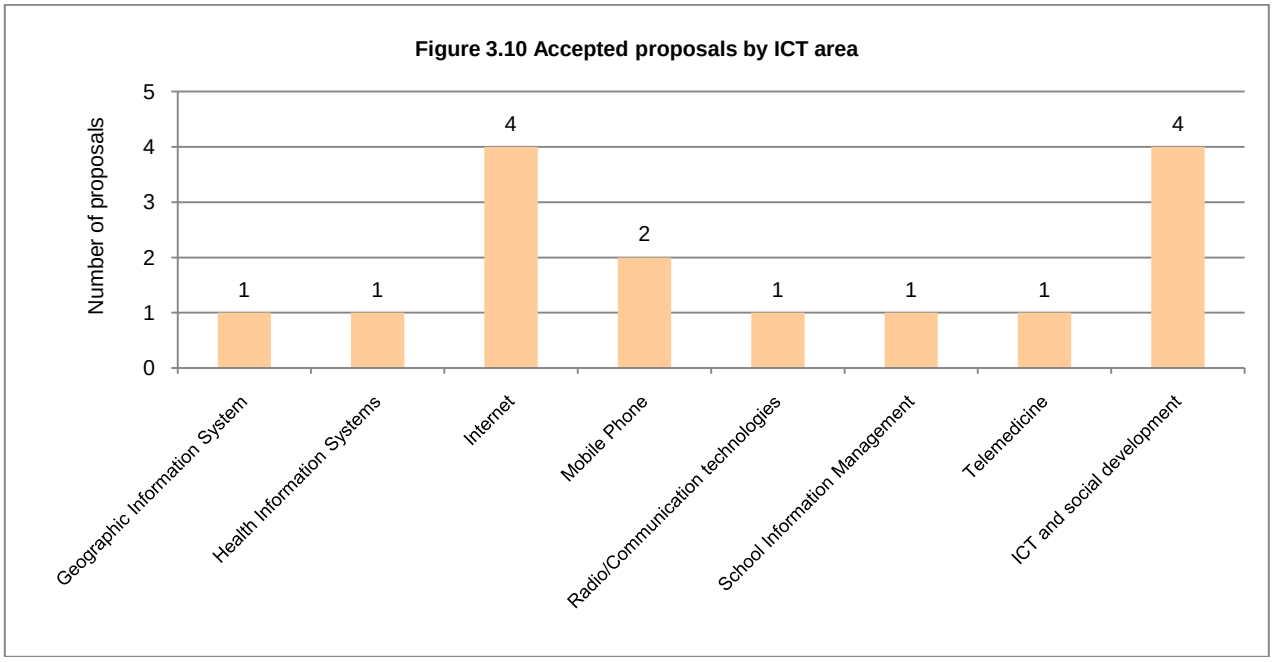


Figure 3.7 Proposal submissions by ICT area
Number of submissions
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
16
3
1
1
1
1
1
14
4
1
1
1
3
2
Early Warning Systems
Electronic Data Interchange
Electronic Games
Electronic Road Pricing System
Geographic Information System
Health Information System
Internet
Mobile Phones
Mobile Phone/Digital Media
Radio/Communication technologies
School Information Management
Software
Telemedicine

Figures 3.8, 3.9 and 3.10 show the selected SIRCA grantees (total of 15 projects selected, or 26% of submissions).







Despite time and resource constraints, the Secretariat did a commendable job in outreach as can be seen from the large number of registrations of interest (111 registrations, Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4), number of full proposals submitted (57 submissions or 51% of the registrations, Figures 3.5, 3.6, 3.7), and the range of countries and project themes represented (Figures 3.8, 3.9, 3.10). It is notable that Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and the Philippines were highly represented in the registrations, submissions, and selected grantees (except Malaysia for the final selection). Internet and mobile phones dominated as ICT areas of study, while rural development, community development, disaster management, and healthcare were the most popular topics for submission.

One PI from the Philippines and one PI from India withdrew from the programme before commencing their projects, citing the home institution's closure due to financial constraints and career change. A third PI from Nepal left the programme in the middle of the project due to personal reasons. Thus, SIRCA saw 12 projects to completion – 2 PIs from Bangladesh, 2 PIs from Cambodia, 1 PI from China, 3 from India, 2 from the Philippines, 1 from Sri Lanka, and 1 from Vietnam.

Recommendation #2
Scrutinize the PIs' ambitions, motivations, and priorities to do research through more screening criteria in the written application or through personal interviews. SIRCA can consider including age, professional occupation, and other personal elements to get more background information about applicants.

3.1.2 GRC Meeting

Each GRC member was given 1 week to review and score 12 to 13 proposals before attending the GRC selection meeting in Singapore in October 2008. While 57% of SIRCA staff thought that 2 weeks was sufficient time to review proposals (Figure 3.12), 50% of the GRC members who actually went through the process of reading and commenting on every proposal said that 3 weeks or more was necessary. Forty-percent (40%) of the GRC members said that 2 weeks was sufficient (Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11 Optimal Review Time (GRC)

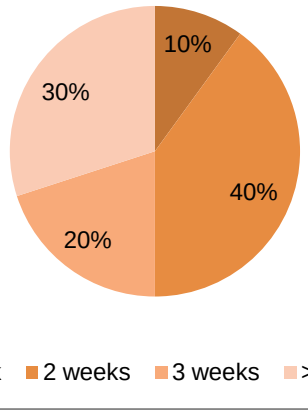
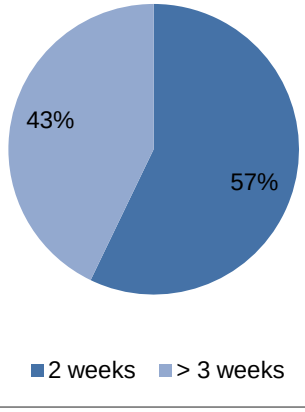


Figure 3.12 Optimal Review Time (SIRCA)



The GRC members felt that a maximum of 10 proposals during the review period was optimal – 70% suggesting between 5 to 10 proposals, and 30% suggesting 2 to 5 proposals (Figure 3.13). SIRCA staff expressed a greater range for the number of proposals to review, with 43% preferring to review 2 to 5 proposals, another 43% for 5 to 10 proposals, and 14% preferring more than 10 proposals (Figure 3.14).

Figure 3.13 Optimal number of proposals to review (GRC)

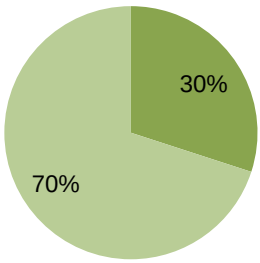
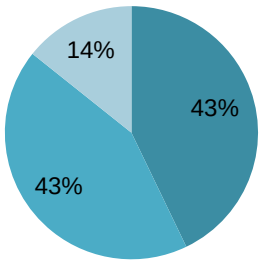


Figure 3.14 Optimal number of proposals to review (SIRCA)



The optimal number of days for the GRC meeting was split among the GRC respondents, with the majority (40%) preferring 2 days, and 30% for 1 day (Figure 3.15). An overwhelming 71% of the SIRCA staff preferred 2 days for the GRC meeting (Figure 3.16)

Figure 3.15 Optimal number of days for GRC meeting (GRC)

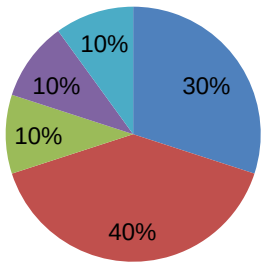
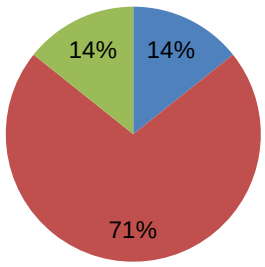


Figure 3.16 Optimal number of days for GRC meeting (SIRCA)



While 40% of the GRC members (Figure 3.15) and 71% of the SIRCA staff (Figure 3.16) felt that 2 days for the GRC meeting was optimal, some Reviewers elaborated in their qualitative responses that the meeting could have been shortened to 1 day if completely ineligible proposals were discarded prior to the meeting. One respondent even suggested that the GRC meeting in Singapore was not necessary if the Reviewers simply emailed their scores to the Secretariat. The rationale was that if the GRC Reviewers were expert enough, their final scores would be accurate whether or not they met face-to-face.

Recommendation #3
Have a large and diverse body of Reviewers – people from academia, government, private sector, think tanks, and civil society – as this diversity is also reflected in the topics and countries of applicants. Having practitioners and policy makers in the body of Reviewers will help to maintain relevance to development and social science research. More Reviewers in the GRC group will ease the burden per Reviewer to assess many proposals.

Recommendation #4
It is not necessary to hold an on-site GRC meeting if SiRC decides to accept assessment decisions from reviewers electronically. If SiRC decides to hold a GRC meeting, teleconferences with reviewers located abroad is a possible avenue of communication. SiRC can collate Q & A from reviewers and send them out weekly to clarify inquiries from GRC members during the review period.

The GRC members and SIRCA staff rated similarly on the GRC documents and the GRC meeting. Almost 90% of the GRC members thought the Terms of Reference (TOR) was 'Above Average' (Figure 3.17) while 100% of SIRCA staff felt that the TOR was 'Above Average' (Figures 3.18).

Figure 3.17 TOR rating (GRC)

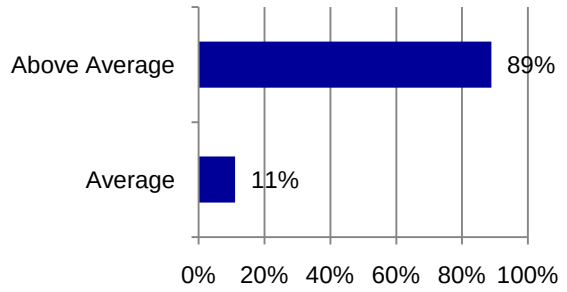
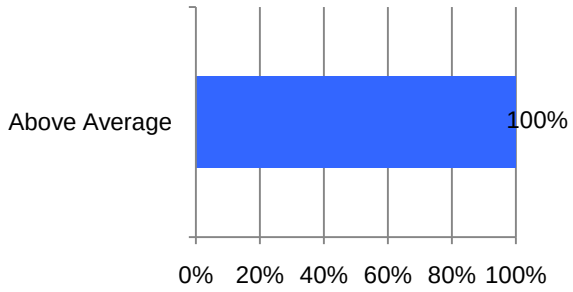


Figure 3.18 TOR rating (SIRCA)



Seventy-eight percent of the GRC members felt the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was 'Above Average' (Figure 3.19) and 83% of the SIRCA staff felt the same (Figures 3.20).

Figure 3.19 MOU rating (GRC)

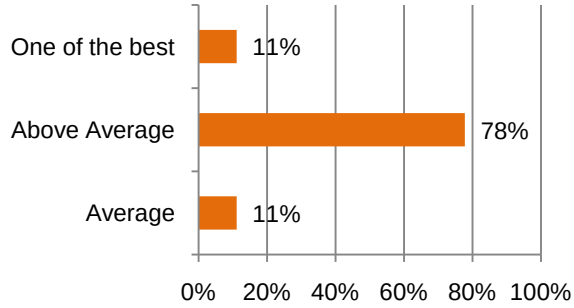
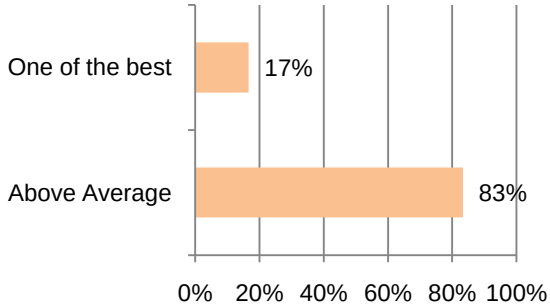


Figure 3.20 MOU rating (SIRCA)



The Assessment Framework Guidelines used by the GRC members to understand the scoring system of the proposals was rated as 'Above Average' by only 56% of them (Figure 3.21), versus 83% of the SIRCA staff rating it as 'Above Average' (Figure 3.22). The range of responses was larger for the GRC members, with 11% rating the Guidelines as 'Below Average' and 22% rating it as 'Average'. Meanwhile, 17% of the SIRCA staff rated it as 'One of the best'.

Figure 3.21 Assessment Framework Guidelines rating (GRC)

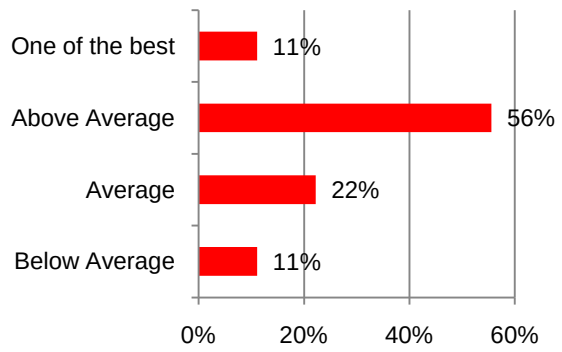
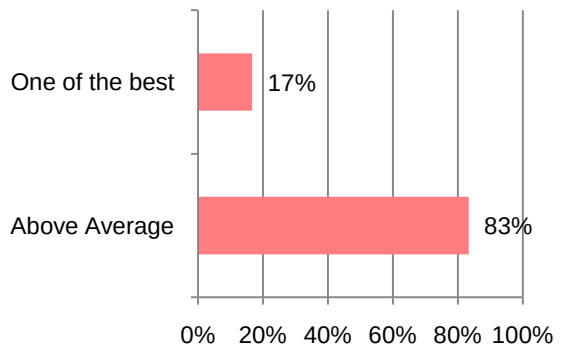


Figure 3.22 Assessment Framework Guidelines rating (SIRCA)



The Project Assessment Decision Matrix[11], an Excel spreadsheet where the quantitative scores and qualitative comments were recorded as proposals were reviewed, was rated as 'Above Average' by 56% of the GRC members (Figure 3.23) versus 83% by the SIRCA staff (Figure 3.24), and 33% of the GRC members felt it was 'Average' compared to only 17% of the SIRCA staff.

Figure 3.23 Project Assessment Decision Matrix rating (GRC)

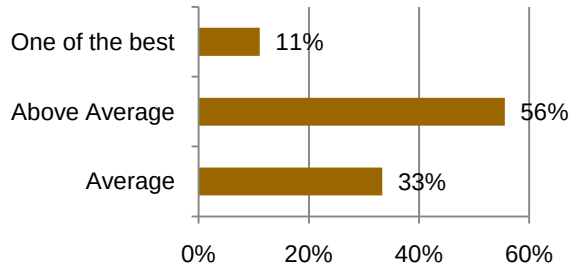
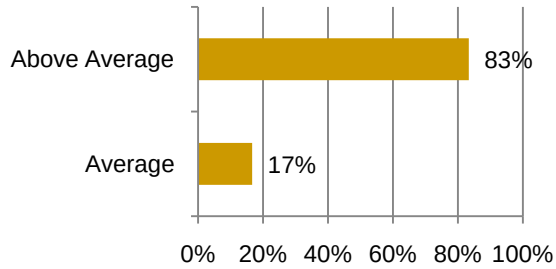


Figure 3.24 Project Assessment Decision Matrix rating (SIRCA)



[11] See Annex 4 for the Project Assessment Decision Matrix

There were similar opinions about the hotel and meals provided during the 2-day GRC meeting at Changi Village Hotel, Singapore. Seventy-five percent of both the GRC respondents and SIRCA staff respondents rated the hotel as 'Above Average' (Figures 3.25 and 3.26), and 90% of the GRC members closely mirroring the 100% of SIRCA staff responded 'Above Average' or 'One of the Best' for meals at Changi Village (Figures 3.27 and 3.28).

Figure 3.25 Hotel Accommodation (GRC)

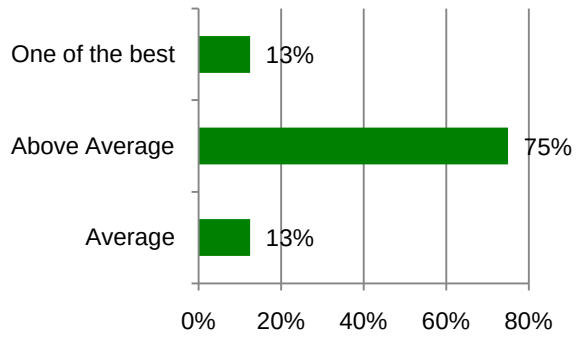


Figure 3.26 Hotel Accommodation (SIRCA)

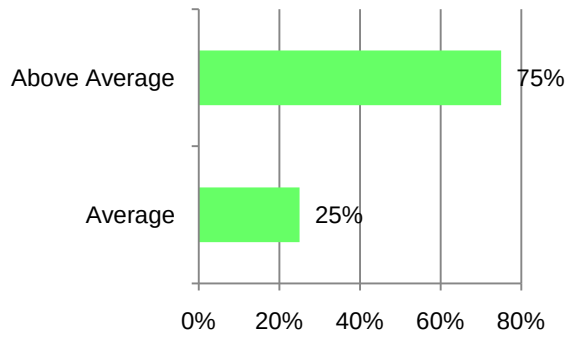


Figure 3.27 Meals (GRC)

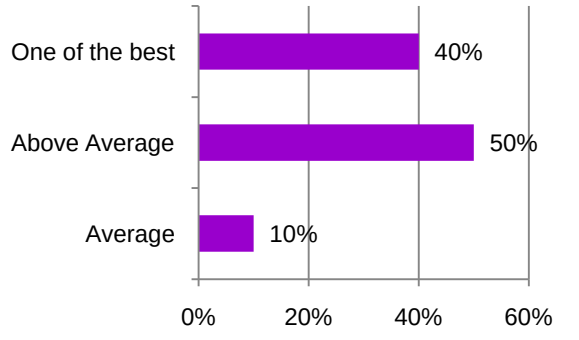
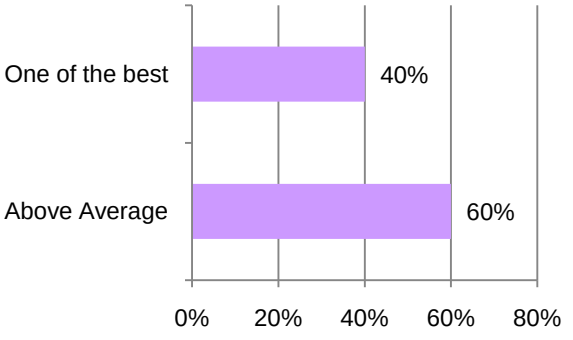


Figure 3.28 Meals (SIRCA)



The ratings for the Pre-Meeting Interaction with the SIRCA Secretariat was more dispersed for the GRC members (Figure 3.29) than for the SIRCA staff (Figure 3.30).

Figure 3.29 Pre-meeting interaction rating (GRC)

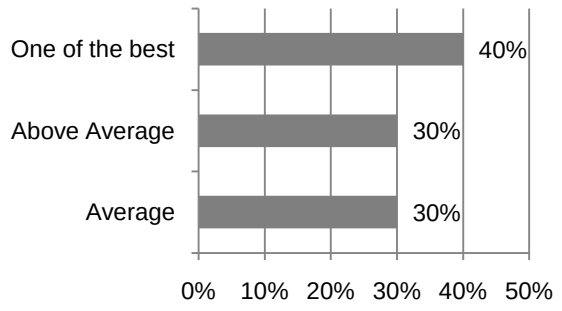
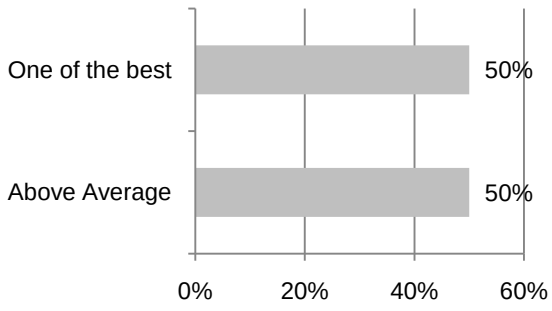


Figure 3.30 Pre-meeting interaction rating (SIRCA)



Fifty-percent of the SIRCA staff thought that the Flight Arrangements were 'One of the Best' while 20% of the GRC members felt the same (Figures 3.31 and 3.32).

Figure 3.31 Flight Arrangements (GRC)

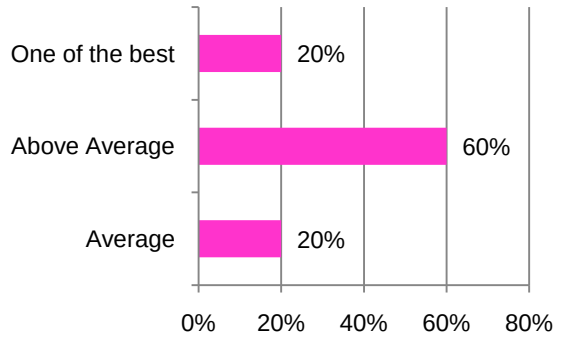
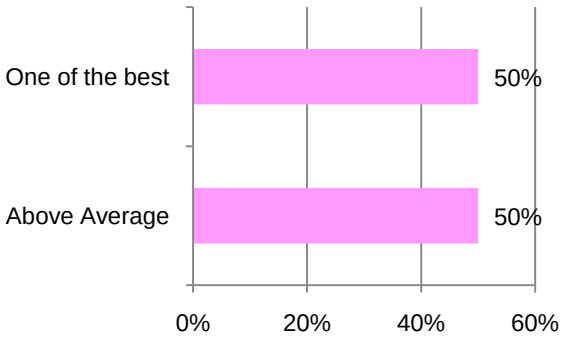


Figure 3.32 Flight Arrangements (SIRCA)



3.1.3 Programme Start-up

The SIRCA Secretariat heard feedback from the Grant Review Committee participants that 1 week was "too short" to properly and fairly review 12 to 13 proposals. The data illustrated in Figures 3.11 through 3.16 corroborates this observation. Upon review of the Programme's start-up documents and interviews with key SIRCA staff, several contextual factors emerged to explain why the review period was less than the ideal 2 weeks initially planned by the Secretariat.

- The SIRCA Secretariat was experiencing staff shortage during the critical 6-month period between March and August 2008. The SIRCA team started with 3 people. The Director was on sabbatical leave, the Assistant Director had come newly on board, and the Senior Manager was on maternity leave. A Programme Officer was hired in September 2008 after IDRC's first disbursement of funds. Although a lot of the work was done over email, especially with IDRC counterparts in Canada, the shortage of manpower, expertise, and urgent face-to-face interaction in the Secretariat delayed start-up tasks and shortened the amount of time for scheduled activities such as the GRC review period.

- The Secretariat had a range of things to do from the menial to the high level within a matter of weeks. It had to produce all documents from scratch (for example, Memorandum of Understanding for all SIRCA stakeholders, proposal assessment guidelines and matrices, all application forms, mid-term progress report templates, final progress reports templates, amendment forms, budget tracking sheets), the legal framework between NTU and IDRC, and prepare for the GRC meeting in Singapore. The pressure mounted when IDRC disbursed the first installment of the grant to SIRCA in August 2008, as the clock started to count down for the 2-year Canadian grant. IDRC had also sent out a soft call for Mentors and Reviewers before the official launch of SIRCA, and the programme was already being promoted on a few ICTD websites and conferences, thus increasing the pressure to launch the programme as soon as possible.

- There was delay in communication and deliverables between the Secretariat and IDRC. The turn-around time for IDRC to review SIRCA's full programme proposal was inevitably lengthy as IDRC did a thorough and meticulous review of the document. There was some confusion on how to write the proposal as IDRC had not provided any guidelines. IDRC gave the Secretariat two important documents which could have been shared earlier to facilitate and expedite processes. First, IDRC had its own budget template with specific line item definitions which would have helped SIRCA develop the budget in their language and terms. Second, IDRC requested an Institutional Profile Questionnaire (IPQ) to be filled out which needed further work by NTU's finance and legal departments. It was understood in the middle of the legal process that SiRC could not sign directly with IDRC as it was housed under WKWSCI. WKWSCI had to become the co-signer of the contract. Such administrative requirements took a couple precious weeks away from the actual program activities.

- SIRCA gave grant applicants a reasonable 4 to 6 weeks to allow them enough time to consider and apply for the programme. The effective time for the GRC to review proposals was therefore shortened. Late applicants were still considered, further reducing the Reviewer's time.

The timeline of the Programme's plan was pushed back because of the above mentioned contextual factors. As a result, there was a chain effect of delays in extending the call for GRC reviewers, the call for Mentors, the call for applicants, and organizing the Grant Review process.

3.1.4 Project Assessment

Some respondents felt that the scoring system of the Project Assessment Decision Matrix created bias favoring certain proposals over others. While the intent of the Framework was to have both quantitative and qualitative sections to balance out the overall scoring, a few GRC members did not write comments on their score sheets, thus giving more weight to the numeric results. There were voices that time was wasted on assessing irrelevant proposals. Below are the views of a few GRC members:

> "*The criteria were adequate. However, in many cases they were superfluous. They were not applicable. Since scores have to be awarded for all criteria, it lands up creating a bias for some proposals."*
>
> *"There was wide disparity among the scores, partly this may have been from the background of the assessors. It was done in two's, so there was the tendency for rater errors. If so, it would have made sense to just let everybody do the assessments. It would also have helped if there were pre-selections or filtering of obviously ineligible proposals (e.g. from non-priority countries, from ineligible researchers, etc). Even the understanding of what ICTD projects are supposed to be seem to vary considerably."*
>
> *"I also feel that some criteria (i.e. relevance) is a pass–fail response. By this I mean that where the Reviewers find that the proposal is not relevant to SIRCA (i.e. it is R&D rather than social science research) the proposal is an automatic fail regardless of the merits of the rest of the proposal or the relevance to ICTD more broadly. I felt that the documentation was not sufficiently clear that we were looking to fund social science research and not typical applied / action ICT4D R&D research. As a result some Reviewers were advocating for proposals that did not fit with the intentions of the SIRCA program."*
>
> *"I found it somewhat difficult to use. Would have preferred if some of the assessment criteria was weighted as I think some criteria are more significant."*
>
> *"I think the weighting and sequencing of the questions led to results that were perhaps not stand up well in a test-repeat validity test. That being said, the best way to address this would be to do a dry-run with some proposals and then refine the framework accordingly…to ensure the framework used for the next round of assessments can address the technical layout of the questions, ordering, etc."*

The GRC Reviewers may have benefited from a Q&A session organized by the Secretariat.

> *"I would suggest providing a few pre-determined times when one or two people from SIRCA would be available over Skype or video conference. This can be like 'office hours' for a teacher. Any one of the GRC members could come and ask questions. The responses to these questions could then be summarized and sent out to the entire GRC group. I would suggest 3 or 4 fixed times. I imagine the first couple wouldn't get a lot of visitors, but once people see the value of these interactions, I think participation would increase. Then, for future GRC meetings, a summary of the common questions and answers can be circulated in the initial form, email[ed] to the GRC members."*

There were issues of fairness and equity on the decision-making process. One GRC member suggested having a lead Reviewer for each proposal, plus a 2nd and 3rd Reviewer.

> *"[O]rganize the agenda to be sure that every proposal is discussed. Ensure that the meeting chair is neutral – i.e. has not reviewed any proposals."*

A large and diverse Grant Review Committee would ensure a fair assessment with different perspectives, while the Selection Committee/Matching Committee could come from current Mentors, Trainers, Secretariat staff, IDRC and other stakeholders. Time and resources can be saved if a GRC

meeting did not physically take place, but the Secretariat has to reflect on the benefits of face-to-face discussions and whether such debates truly enhance the quality of decision-making.

It is important to have the Grant Review Committee independent and mutually exclusive from the Selection Committee. The Selection Committee and the Matching Committee can, however, overlap, remain small, and come from people in Singapore who have the opportunity to meet face-to-face more frequently. One GRC member suggested having a Grant Review Committee, a Selection Committee, and a Matching Committee. This idea was also echoed by a SIRCA staff.

> Form a *Grant Review Committee* ➔ Reviewers read/assess proposals ➔ *Selection Committee* in Singapore receives qualitative/quantitative results by email ➔ Selection Committee selects the PIs ➔ *Matching Committee* matches the awarded PIs to Mentors

Recommendation #5
Maintain the Grant Review Committee external to SiRC and without overlap with the Selection Committee. GRC Reviewers have read the proposals in great deal and consequently may want to Mentor a particularly interesting project, thus deliberately selecting the project for a grant. Alternatively, knowing about the project in great deal can subconsciously influence, positively or negatively, the outcome of the proposal. It is better to maintain mutual exclusivity between the 2 committees and avoid bias.

Reviewers would be glad to see the fruits of their labor by keeping up to date with the outcomes of SIRCA grantees. While the Secretariat made an effort to update the website with news about the PIs, Mentors, and upcoming events, including an e-Newsletter, not all GRC members took the time to go to the website. As a result, many of them were not informed of what has happening with SIRCA and some wanted more involvement after their role as Reviewer had ended.

> *"Maybe better after-grant linkages between grant review committee members and the grants… I have lost track of what the grants are doing."*

While being part of the GRC did not have any significant influence on their careers, the rich networking with colleagues in the ICTD field, knowing the latest trends in ICTD research, and being part of a blind peer-review process was definitely worthwhile to all Reviewers. They did not hesitate to return to the GRC for the next round of SIRCA, except for one person who has moved on to a different career. There was much praise for the Secretariat's work.

> *"I happen to have an immense amount of respect and confidence in the work being done by the SIRCA team, and the overall mandate and modus operandi of the programme."*

Recommendation #6
Keep GRC members informed and involved with SIRCA, updating them with the latest news/e-Newsletter. GRC members are resource persons that can play other roles in the Programme in the future.

3.1.5 The playing field

Six out of eleven GRC members, or 55% of respondents, voiced their concern that the playing field was not equal to all applicants, favoring those who were more experienced in writing and research. Applications were in free-writing format. One respondent observed that the GRC's mandate was to select emerging researchers but the GRC members tended to lean towards candidates with shining resumes and dazzling applications. As a result, they unintentionally selected the strongest researchers in the pool.

Another GRC member noticed that weaker applicants needed more help in writing the SIRCA application:

> *"[Applications] were prepared sometimes by novice researchers unaware of the general headings, language or approach to be used, or how to organize and structure a bid. A proposal template would have ensured all the issues were addressed by proposers. Perhaps proposers were not informed of the criteria or headings either. Clearly we need a procedure that helps novices as well as early career researchers, perhaps different procedures….we made decisions in ignorance because proposals were vague or incomplete (and it favored experienced proposal writers). Also, the evaluation criteria & weightings should be public (fair and capacity building). I'm not sure they were…Or to explicitly address the novice researcher / early researcher divide….also big difference in countries - some countries (India?) researchers or centres need capacity building, and some whole countries (Cambodia) that need capacity building."*

Even though a candidate does not have experience in ICTD, having a research background is a significant step ahead. Out of the 13 SIRCA grantees awarded, at least 2 PIs had extensive research background in academia. While their outcomes such as journal publications are visible and widely disseminated, the 'value added' of SIRCA in terms of building research capacity is questionable. One GRC member suggested including age and professional occupation in the application form so as to give more information about the PI's background and facilitate decision-making.

> *"I would recommend selecting PIs who are younger and starting out in their careers. The Secretariat could perhaps add in the age and position in life cycle (assistant professor, PhD student, full professor) of the applicant to help the Reviewers make this decision. Building capacity in younger researchers will have the most long-term benefits for the program. Some older researchers are really not doing the research themselves. They are organizing graduate students and research assistants to do the work, while they act as project coordinators."*

SIRCA may ultimately need to revisit its mission if it were to take note of these concerns. The GRC reviewers must be clear on the target population. Would SIRCA want to build capacity of inexperienced researchers or help experienced researchers publish prolifically? These two directions are not necessarily mutually exclusive and SIRCA can become a model programme to address both types of researchers.

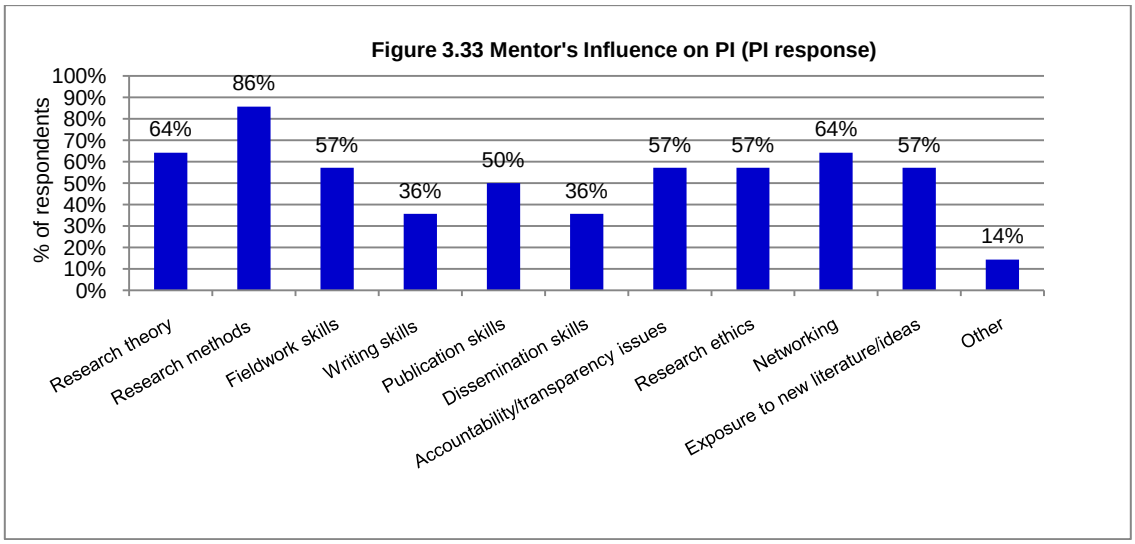
Recommendation #7
SIRCA needs to be clear about its target applicants, objectives and mission. Will it fund emerging researchers, or experienced researchers? This will ultimately affect the GRC selection process.

Recommendation #8
Have an application form to equalize the application process regardless of the applicant's research background or experience. Application content can reflect the items on the GRC Project Assessment Decision Matrix which is the basis for scoring. All applicants need to present the same information to the Grant Review Committee instead of free-writing the application. In the future, SiRC may consider creating an online template for applicants to fill out, as done in many university applications.

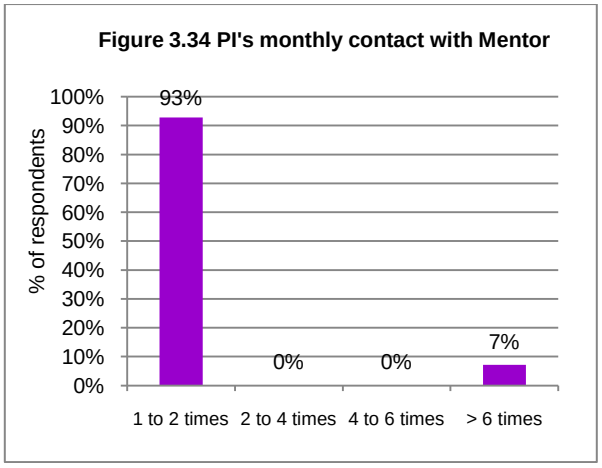
3.2 Evaluation Area: Mentorship Programme

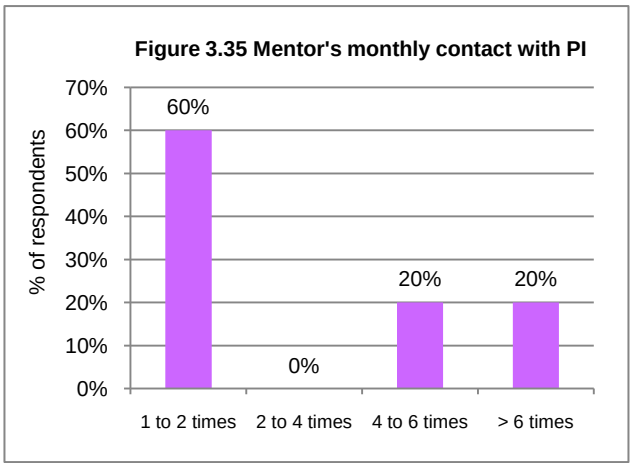
KEQ 2: To what extent did the Mentorship Programme facilitate learning and/or collaboration between emerging and established researchers?

Figure 3.33 shows that the Mentors have had a broad influence on the PIs. Eighty-six percent of the PIs cited 'research methods' as the greatest gain from their Mentors, but 'research theory' (64%) and 'networking' (64%) were also important influences on them. It is clear from the responses that the Mentors have made an impact on all areas key to academic research and field work. 'Other' (14%) includes *"participation in field work to understand the activity a bit, and then to provide general indicators on what we may want to consider as research activity as distinct from implementation work"* and *"taught me how to be a good researcher".*

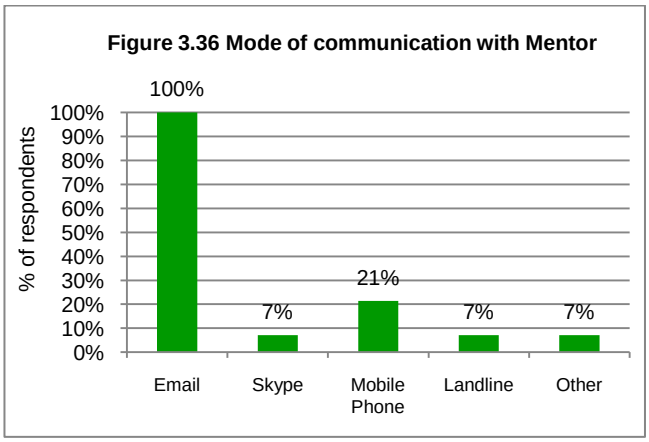


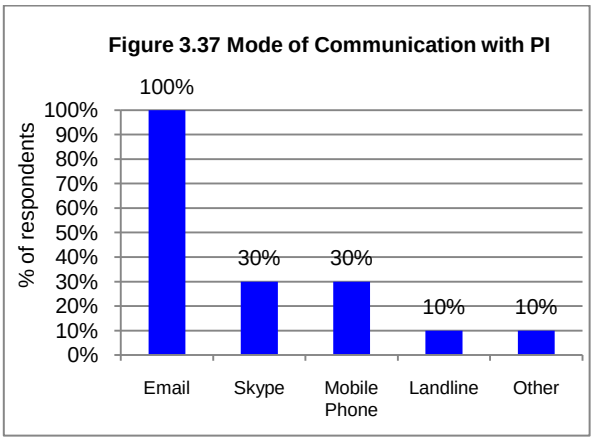
An overwhelming majority (93%) of PIs said that they communicated with their Mentors 1 to 2 times a month (Figure 3.34) compared to 60% the Mentors who said 1 to 2 times a month (Figure 3.35). Forty-percent of Mentors said that communication with their PIs was more frequent, greater than 4 times a month (Figure 3.35)



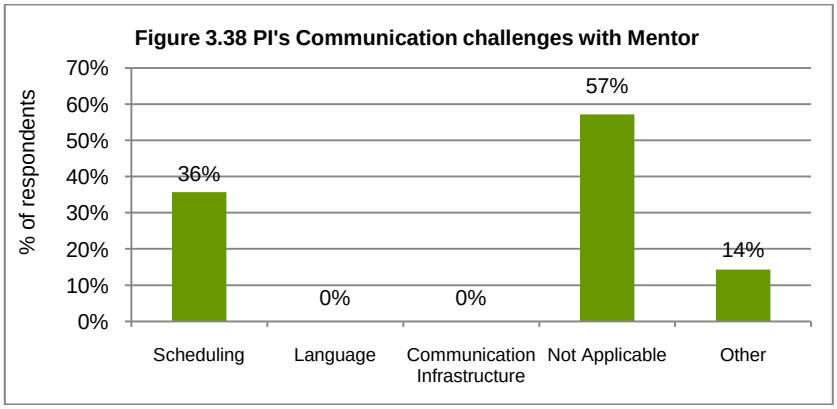


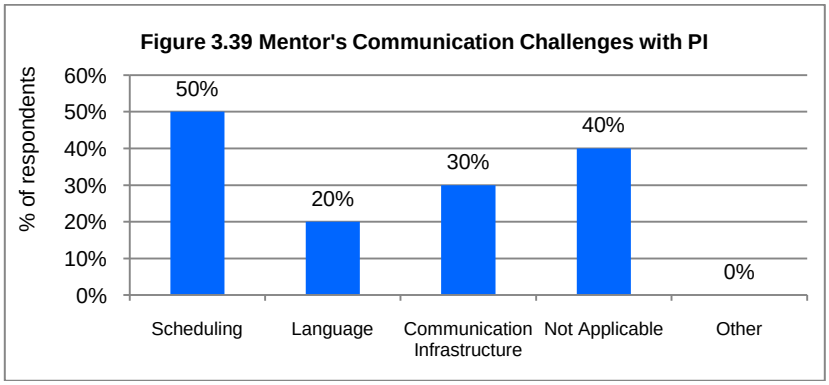
All PIs and Mentors used Email as the main mode of communication, complemented by mobile phones, landlines, and Skype. “Other” means meeting in person (Figures 3.36 and 3.37).



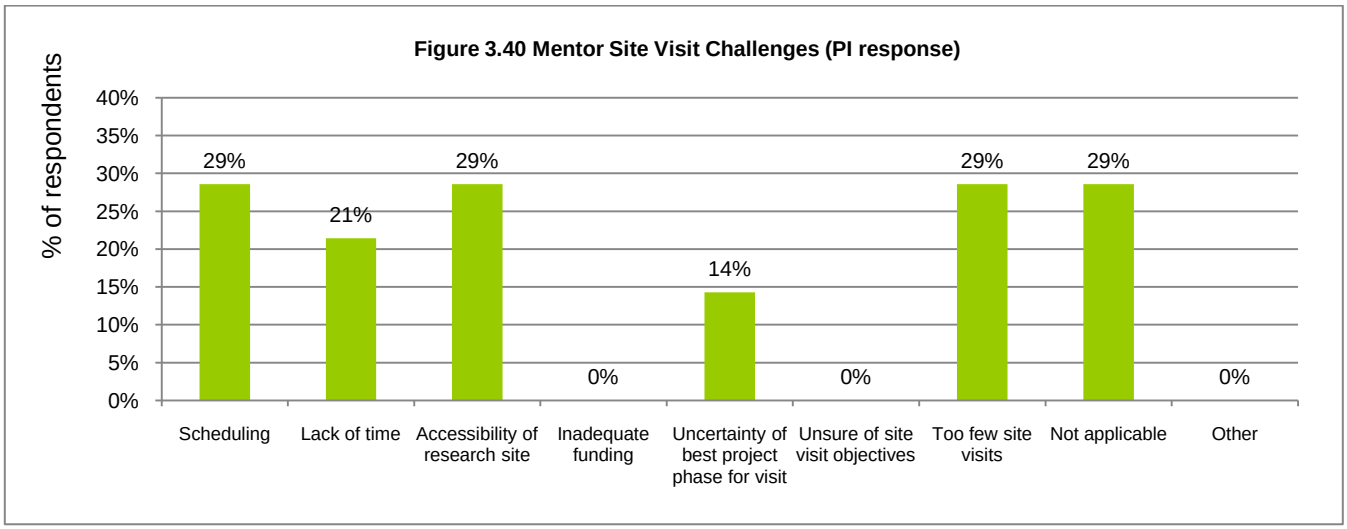


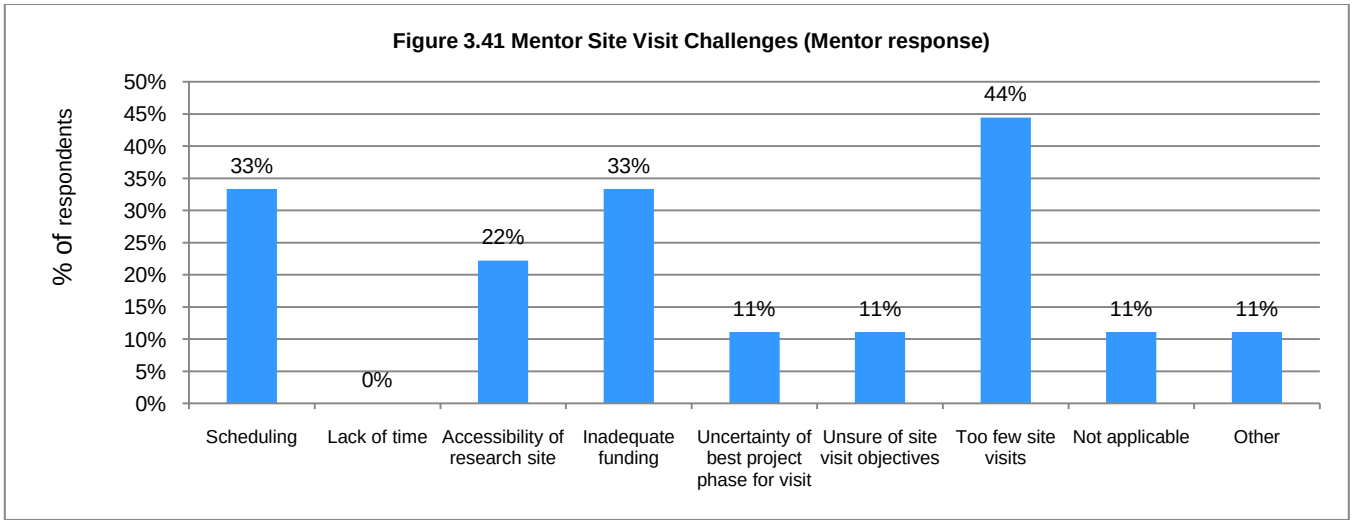
The PIs felt that scheduling was the main challenge in communicating with Mentors (Figure 3.38). PIs and Mentors both have other work that may or may not be related to SIRCA, such as teaching assignments, consultancies or a second job. To arrange suitable times to meet as they multitasked was often difficult for both parties. Mentors cited language (not speaking English) and poor communication infrastructure as other barriers to communication (Figure 3.39). ‘Other’ (14%) from the PI responses mean “*I sometimes replied [to my Mentor] late”* and “*meeting twice (4 times including the SIRCA workshop)”.*



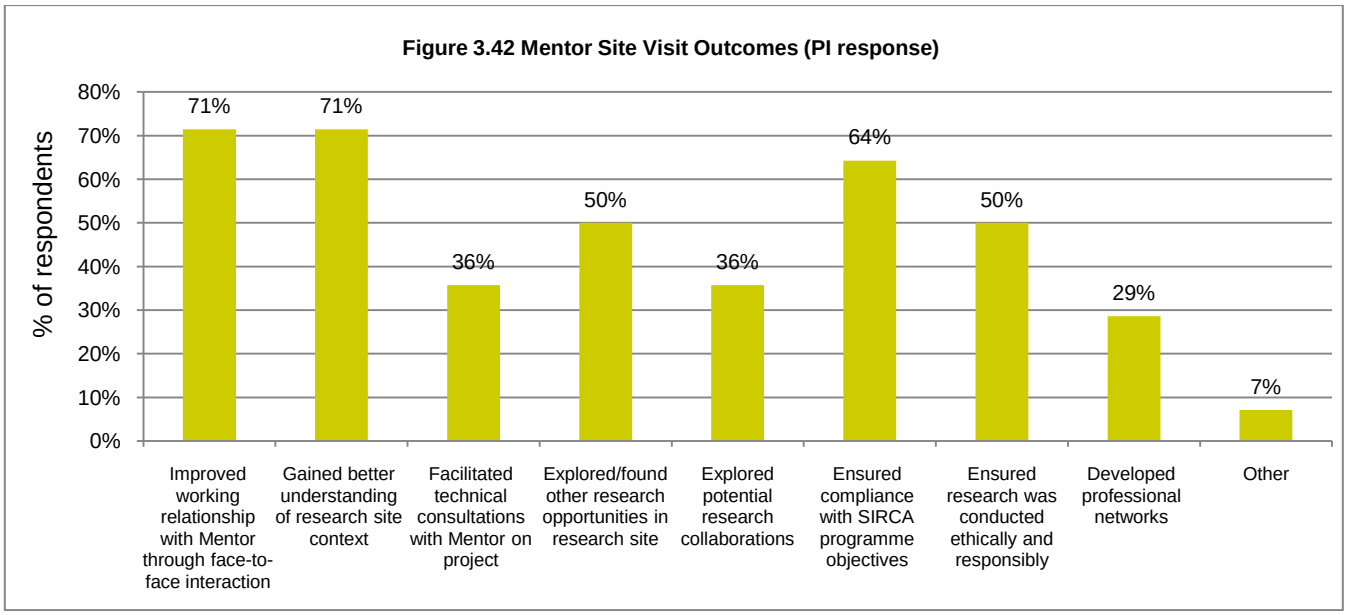


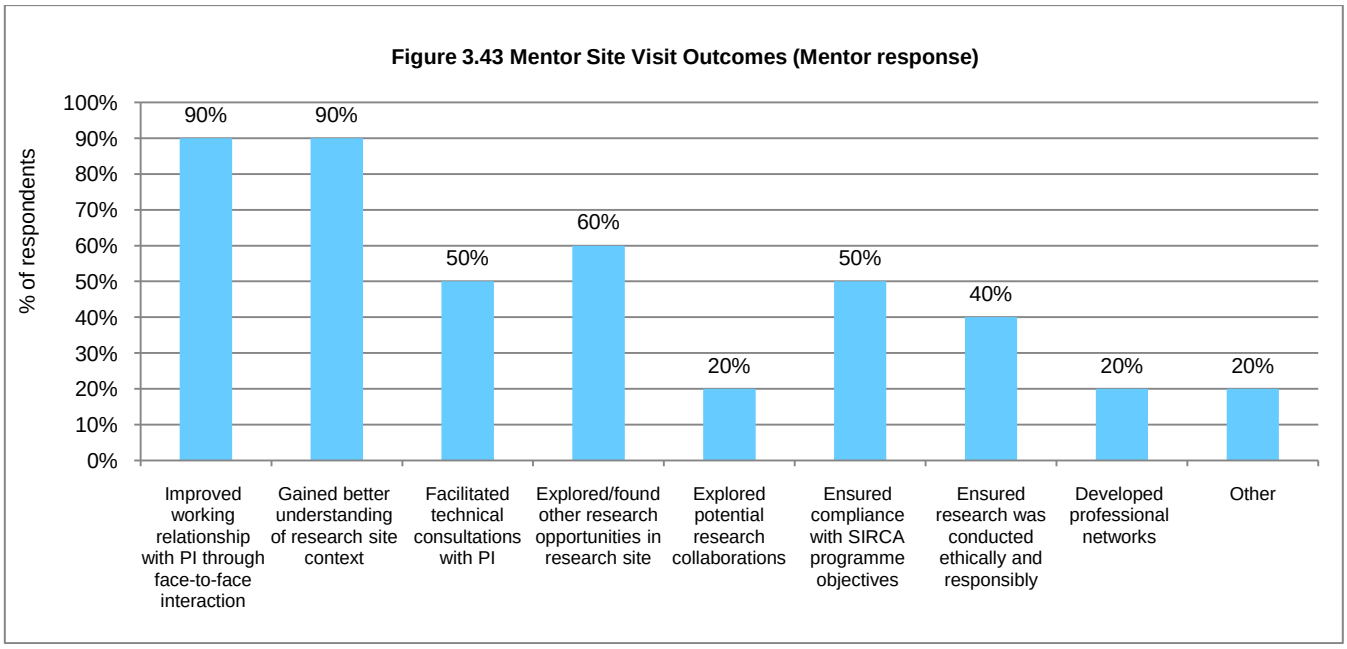
Despite the challenges facing PIs and Mentors to execute the Mentor Site Visit, their outcomes were positive and encouraging (Figure 3.42 and 3.43). 'Scheduling', 'lack of time', 'accessibility of research site', 'uncertainty of the best project phase to visit', and 'too few site visits' were cited by PIs as challenges (Figure 3.40). Mentors shared similar challenges but cited 'inadequate funding' instead of 'lack of time'. The 11% 'Other' responded by Mentors was "personal problems" (Figure 3.41).



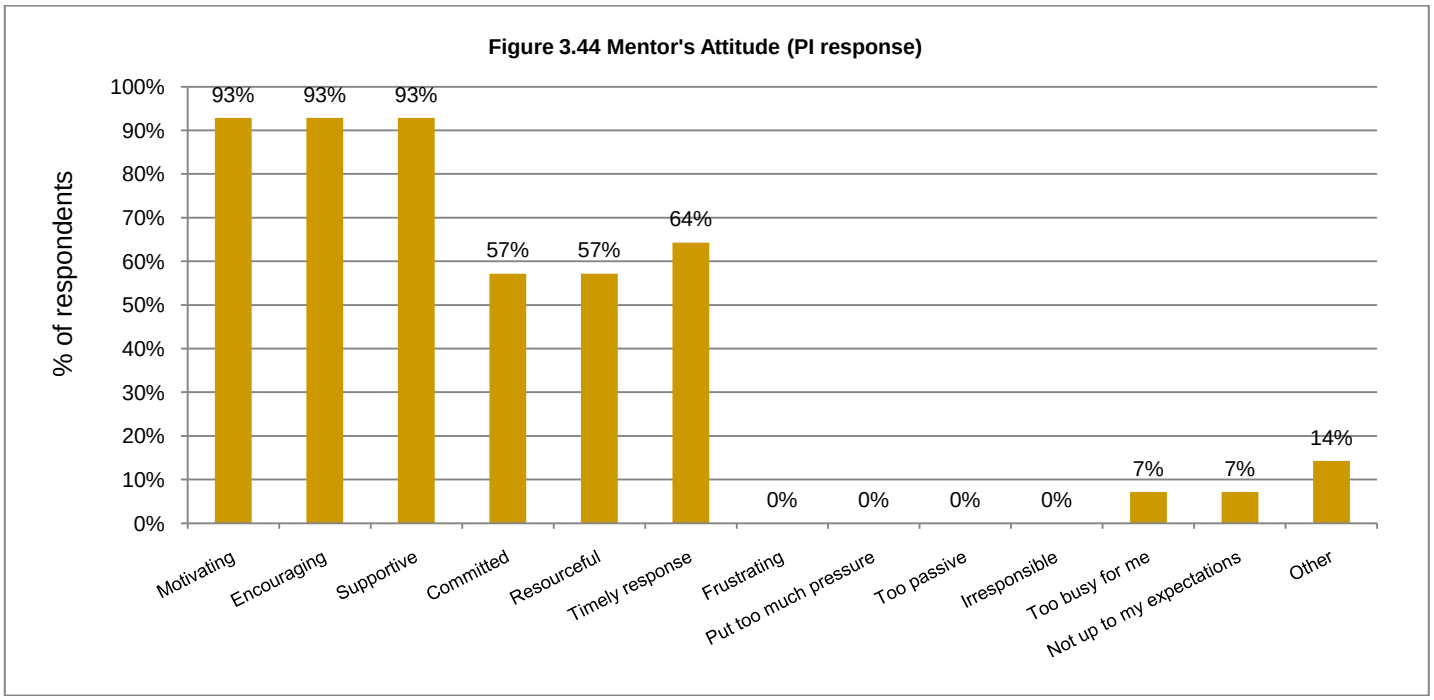


Once a Mentor Site Visit was done, the benefits were tremendous for both the PIs and Mentors. In Figure 3.42, 71% of the PIs said that their working relations with the Mentor improved and they perceived their Mentors to have an improved understanding of their project context. Half of the PIs (50%) found new research opportunities through their face-to-face discussions. The Mentor Site Visit also took care of administrative matters – 64% of the PIs said it ensured compliance with SIRCA objectives and 50% said it verified ethical conduct of research. Seven percent (7%) 'Other" was *"none of the above but general appreciation".* In Figure 3.43, 90% of the Mentors cited 'improved working relationship' with their PIs and 'better understanding of the research site context' as one of the most significant outcomes. Twenty-percent (20%) of Mentors cited 'Other' benefits – being able to address attribution matters and understanding the practical application of the project.





All PIs except one lauded their Mentors with very positive feedback and recognition (Figure 3.44). The "Other" characteristic mentioned was being a "caring" Mentor.



3.2.1 PI's growth

As Figure 3.33 illustrates, the Mentor guided and taught their PIs in a range of research issues such as ICTD theory and theoretical frameworks, research methodology, data collection, data analysis, study design, study site selection, sample size determination, field work, report writing, publication, and tips for future research direction. Close communication between the PI and Mentor (Figure 3.34, 3.35, 3.36, 3.37) considerably helped enrich the PI's experience despite communication challenges and Mentor Site Visit challenges (Figure 3.38, 3.39, 3.40, 3.41).

> *"[The Mentorship Programme] gave me the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions [with my Mentor] about appropriate research methods and/or reference materials that may not be readily available in the local university or in the organization where I work."*

> *"[As a Mentor], I have roped in one of the PIs into a large, global network of scholars on Commons/Openness—since this was amongst her non-SIRCA project research interests---towards the network's Bi-Annual Global Congress, this time being held in India. This refers to IASC Hyderabad 2011 which is also an IDRC supported initiative."*

Figure 3.42 and 3.43 clearly illustrate the bidirectional gains for the PIs and Mentors from the Mentor Site Visits. One PI intends to continue seeking the Mentor's expertise for future work. The Mentorship Programme also provided PIs with crucial intellectual engagement and moral support to overcome the difficulties of field work.

> *"The mentor listened to us, found out the strengths and weaknesses of our research and guided us towards what we should do next."*

> *"I found my mentor to be exceptional in knowledge and helpfulness…. He was extremely patient and kind during all of our difficulties…. we very much appreciated his approach to the work that was more about creating a successful project than to worry only about the research question."*

However, one PI was not particularly satisfied with his Mentor. According to him, it seemed like the Mentor was more interested in co-authoring and publishing a paper than in guiding him.

> *"For most of the year, mentorship meant "let us explore" what comes out and suddenly towards the end of the year mentorship appears to be "what papers can we write together". The problem with this process could also be related probably to a "good project' means outcome of papers" and a "good mentorship means outcome of collaborative papers". This in some sense, like in our case where there are independent researchers who may want to explore a field work activity and in collaboration with other researchers in the field, get distanced by the mentor (as the mentor feels that the SIRCA researchers have distanced the mentor, maybe?). I am wondering if it made sense to get mentors on the condition that they have to mentor but somehow discourage them to be co-authors on the papers that come out…. I have felt that the reason a mentor may have been interested in being a mentor is the opportunities it provides for co-authoring papers (significant for academia)."*

This particular PI, considering himself apt enough to independently look for other research collaborators, felt pressured by the Mentor's vision of co-authorship with him. This ended up in a more distant relationship between the PI and Mentor as the objectives of the PI (seeking independence from the Mentor) and the objectives of the Mentor (seeking academic prestige and recognition through co-authorship) did not converge. While the Secretariat encouraged collaboration and suggested the possibility of co-authorship, it has not stipulated this as a necessary result from the SIRCA programme. There seemed to be a lack of communication and clarity on SIRCA's expected outcomes.

PIs who started out with little research experience were the ones that benefited most from SIRCA. PIs who went to pursue further studies, learned how to write research papers, and how to manage research grants are a testament to SIRCA's success. They had a steeper learning curve but more 'value added' from their experience of the Programme. One Mentor commented about his PI:

> *"In absolute terms, their outputs and performance at the end of the programme will still be low; in terms of the distance travelled and the 'added value', their achievement will be considerable. This contrasts with PIs who are clearly already early career researchers whose outputs are destined to be considerable but whose capacity has not been built half as much."*

They gained "soft skills" such as self-confidence, staff supervision, time and pressure management, networking, and organizational skills. One Mentor suggested

> *"Developing follow-up activities and mailing-lists to sustain their interest and keep them updated about advances in the field – SIRCA may consider an alumni network with specific activities beyond the grant period."*

Whether the PIs gained hard skills or soft skills, the Mentorship Programme was undoubtedly beneficial to their careers.

Recommendation #9
Compile a Mentorship handbook to clarify roles and expectations for Mentors in the SIRCA Programme. It is also a tool that SIRCA can share with other institutions who want to replicate a grant-making programme.

3.2.2 Mentor's advancement

Qualitative responses reveal that the Mentors gained new knowledge, expanded their professional connections and increased collaboration opportunities by being part of SIRCA. These "invisible" gains were more significant than publications and dissemination of their own work. One Mentor was invited to become part of the Advisory Board of the PI's Master of Science course at his university, which is a career advance as well as an opportunity to continue working with the PI beyond SIRCA.

Mentors were attracted to SIRCA for various reasons. One of them was that GRC members were impressed with SIRCA's organization of the GRC meeting and these Reviewers decided to continue their involvement by becoming Mentors. Six out of 11 GRC members (55%) became Mentors.

> *"It seemed like a good idea to follow the work of the SIRCA grantees. I was not keen on the idea of being a Mentor, to start with. But as I went through the evaluation process, I understood the value of it and joined the effort."*
>
> *"The SIRCA team in Singapore has a professional approach that impressed me."*
>
> *"Having served on the Grant Review Committee, I felt like part of the team."*

Some Mentors joined SIRCA because they were keen on learning what *"emergent researchers are up to"*. The learning was particularly great when the Mentor worked with a project in which the topic or geographical region was unfamiliar to him or her. This included learning how to work with institutions in developing countries with different laws, regulations, and cultural assumptions.

One Mentor mentioned that his institution was thinking of developing a similar grant-making program at the national level and he was interested in learning how SIRCA was run. Another Mentor acknowledged the chasm that still existed between practitioners and academic researchers and he attempted to address this through his mentoring role.

> *"[I feel] increased frustration with the barriers that exist between research and practice...My strategy was the other way round; to use my role as SIRCA mentor to influence the dissemination of [the PI's] research – in order to increase its potential for influence on practice – but I am not hopeful of achieving this."*

Learning occurred through the mentoring relationship itself. One Mentor stated that *"disciplinary and conceptual synergy matter more in a research relationship than the specific topic under consideration",* reiterating a general sentiment that even though a match may not be perfect by topic, at least the Mentor's academic training helped move the project forward. Another Mentor learned that the ICTD field needed to be a lot more interdisciplinary, as his PI with extensive research background was not familiar with ICTD. The Mentor realized that capacity building at this point may be open to more experienced researchers.

> "*SIRCA should consider and compare the value of developing research capacity for fairly well-established researchers versus funding an early or mid-career researcher."*

All Mentors did not hesitate to return to SIRCA in the future. SIRCA should tap into the current pool of Mentors who now have much experience guiding PIs. Mentors themselves feel confident that they can do a better job the second time. One Mentor's opinion best summarizes the mutually beneficial experience.

> *"The interaction between the PI and the mentor works both ways in terms of learning, sharing and expanding viewpoints."*

3.2.3 Face-to-Face time

The frequency of communication between a Mentor and a PI throughout SIRCA depended on the PI's level of comfort with research. For a PI who had more extensive research experience, the Mentor did not need frequent communication with him or her, nor did the PI ask for much help. Having the Mentor and PI in the same city or country did not seem to increase the communication frequency. For one PI-Mentor pair, crucial periods like survey construction, making sense of large amounts of data, and planning the Mentor Site Visit were periods when intense communication took place.

> *"I think we talked at least once or twice a month. And in a normal month it was like 5 to 10 times, then during those crunch periods it was like twice a day."*

One PI-Mentor pair in the same country met outside the project site and had a productive and *"intensive, half-day off-site interaction".* There was value to having the Mentor and PI located in the same city or country if both took the initiative to meet, but same city/country did not necessarily increase face-to-face meetings.

Most PIs felt that communicating with their Mentors 1 to 2 times a month through email was sufficient (Figures 3.34, 3.35, 3.36, 3.37). But the PIs who did not feel satisfied with the frequency cited inaccessible internet connection, remote project location, and scheduling as challenges (Figure 3.38). One Mentor suggested phone cards for places with poor internet connectivity. Unfortunately, natural calamities also prevented some visits. According to one Mentor,

> *"By chance, the day of my visit, there was huge storm that prevented me from going. The roads become impassable. I did go see it but it took an entire day just to commute there. By the time I reached there, some of the community people got tired of waiting and had gone home. Later, they got together for us again but I think there was less people. Had there not been a delay on my part, there might have been more people to talk to us."*

The PI also confirmed,

> *"The project site was located in a remote area in Bangladesh which is around 250 KM away from the capital city. The road transportation therefore was a challenge for frequent interaction. In this case SIRCA has nothing to do as it depends on the determination of the Mentor and PI."*

The Secretariat staff has been supportive and patient according to the PIs and Mentors and they appreciated the flexibility given by the Secretariat in terms of extending deadlines and understanding when they had personal problems.

One Mentor cited insufficient communication frequency with a PI who was *"elusive and cited infrastructural issues then personal problems".* His PI also admitted that these were issues outside the control of the Secretariat and there was nothing that SIRCA staff could do. Another Mentor cited that his office internet server was down during a crucial period when the Secretariat was requesting for documents and he worked without electricity and a printer.

The SIRCA Secretariat did its best when there were communication challenges between the PI and Mentor.

> *"Some PIs may feel that their Mentor is not responding promptly enough, likewise for Mentors. When such problems arise, SIRCA would get in touch with the Mentor and PI separately through email or phone calls to mediate the communication process. Most of the time, these misunderstandings can be resolved once both parties are aware of each others' expectations."*

More than one Mentor Site Visit would have compensated for the lack of frequent communication. *"Email is kind of frustrating"* said one Mentor. *"We worked so hard in the 3 days [that] we got done what*

could be done over email in 3 months." The Mentor Site Visit was the only way for some Mentors to understand the project and to be able to give appropriate advice.

> *"Took a long time to read between the lines in email, only made sense after visit."*
>
> "*Sponsorship of a second round of site visits would be useful for guidance on analysis and research-writing, beyond the first site visit which focused on design and implementation of data-collection."*

Due to a misinterpretation of the MOU, Mentors thought that they only had one funded Site Visit and they had to decide when to go for their single visit given their busy schedules and the PI's project stage. Earlier clarification that more than one site visit was allowed would have increased their options and facilitated planning. A compulsory Mentor Site Visit in the beginning of the projects would also have benefited the PIs. Many Mentors, due to scheduling problems, were completing their field visits towards the middle or end of the project which was not the most helpful stage for a researcher in needed of extensive guidance. Two PIs have commented,

> *"SIRCA could have made it clear that the visit is a part of the mentoring process in the initial stages both to the mentor and the PI."*
>
> *"If it is possible, we would like to have two times of mentor site visit during conducting the research."*

As Mentors understood better the project context after the Site Visit, virtual communication between the PI and Mentor improved after the Mentor had left the project site. Thus, the Site Visit had long-lasting benefits to the PI-Mentor relationship.

3.2.4 Moments of Enlightenment

Research design, site selection, sample selection, field work, and execution were the most frequently cited topics of "enlightenment" by the PIs. Not all PIs had a "moment of enlightenment" while having a discussion with their Mentors, but there was much appreciation on what they learned if they had a spark of insight. They are mostly specific and project-related rather than broadly conceptual or theoretical.

Moments of enlightenment occurred when a new topic branched out from the PI's current project, such as *"the integration of climate change into the research project"* for one PI working on landslide disasters. The Mentors' own experiences in the field further helped the PI overcome the challenges encountered:

> *"When he shared with me his own experiences from conducting fieldwork in rural places, and I could relate to it after I had been on my first fieldwork. This gave me the assurance that he understood what I was experiencing and gave me confidence to do better in my second fieldwork."*

It was often during a one-on-one discussion with the Mentor that the PI understood how to do data analysis or how to inspect their research framework from a different angle. Most realizations occurred during the Mentor Site Visit, further attesting to the importance of face-to-face interactions at the project site. *"Everything came together"* for one Mentor and PI during the Mentor Site Visit. This Mentor had communication infrastructure problems because the PI's institution did not allow Skype and the internet café down the road did not have stable internet connection. Thus, the intense, 3-day face-to-face meeting was the only opportunity to get work done, from data collection, analysis, to writing and dissemination. The physical environment with the presence of co-PIs, research assistants, colleagues and project beneficiaries often inspire fruitful discussions, instill creativity, and give momentum to the project.

Several Mentors had enlightened moments. For one Mentor who was working with a PI in an area different from his expertise, he came to realize that the project was having a simultaneous impact on the participants. He called it the *"Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle"*, whereby *"the act of investigation is actually influencing the phenomenon being studied."* Another Mentor realized that the PI's project expanded from the 'Development' field to 'Education'. This came about when the project was applied in the classroom setting to teach students using the data collected from the project. The same project was further requested by government officials to be scaled up and used at the national level. The initial research objectives expanded in scope and went beyond both the PI and the Mentor's expectations to a *"dream come true"* project. Another Mentor had theoretical realizations, one of them referring to Amartya Sen's theory of *Development as Freedom*.

> *"[The PI's] use of Sen's capability approach and representation of development as a form of freedom gave me a lot to think about. I'm not sure I'd call it a moment of enlightenment because my conclusion was that I don't agree with it, but it helped me to come up with an alternative perspective that I'm still developing."*

A third Mentor said that the PI's project reached a wider agenda, moving beyond the study of landslides and soil erosion to the global issue of climate change - *"how ICTs (particularly GIS) can help improve the planning of adaptation and resilience actions in the face of climate change-related events".* His PI also corroborated this sentiment, as he felt enlightened about the *"integration of climate change"* into the research project. A fourth Mentor saw the big picture by realizing that the PI's project could be studied from multiple facets, which together could shed more light on the problem than any of them by itself.

Recommendation #10
Allow for at least 2 Mentor Site Visits to increase face-to-face interaction and support the project outcomes.

3.2.5 PI-Mentor match

Fifty-five percent (55%) of the Mentors considered their match to the PI suitable. It facilitated their mentorship roles greatly when the topic, geographic region, and research methodology were aligned with the PI's project. One Mentor confirmed that his PI was *"in the same professional position I was in 13 years ago*". His PI also reported the benefits when his Mentor worked in the same field and geographic region.

> *"I was very glad to have [my Mentor] since I referred many of his previous works in my previous studies. In summary, his works were my inspiration to conduct this study."*
>
> *"I mentioned this to the Director/CoDirector of the programme at the sidelines of the meeting: that after seeing all the presentations, the two PIs assigned to me were perfectly matched!"*

Forty-five percent (45%) of the Mentors felt that the match could have been better. One Mentor guided 2 PIs though he had different experiences with them.

> *"I had two projects to mentor. One was very well suited, as it was directly in my line of work. The second one was peripheral to my main line of work, however, of some interest to me."*

One Mentor in particular felt that he was well-matched by region but,

> *"Unfortunately, while that bit matched well, in terms of disciplinary and conceptual focus, there was not much of an overlap, so while I hope I've been able to provide some assistance to the project, there hasn't really been a basis for a strong ongoing relation."*

Interestingly, one PI-Mentor pair had different opinions about the match. While the PI said *"9 out of 10, with 10 being the highest score"* about the suitability of his Mentor, the Mentor said:

> *"I would say that the project that I was eventually matched to was not a perfect fit because it was on education and ICTD…I think health would have been a much better fit, but I think they had to go with the number of mentors and projects…But I would say the fit in terms of methodology and other types of execution of the project that there was good fit because my mentee undertook surveys which is something that I'm pretty familiar with."*

One PI lamented the fact that the Mentor could not provide her with professional networks as he was not an expert in her research topic.

> *"If the mentor's expertise matched my research topic, I assume that he could have provided me with leads to the most relevant and up-to-date references and/or easily hooked me up with other experts in the field who could serve as subject matter experts/resource persons…My mentorship experience could have been improved if I was matched with a mentor whose expertise was somehow related the field that I was studying."*

However, the personal qualities of the Mentor – caring, supportive, resourceful - made up for the lack of topical and theoretical familiarity.

> *"As expected, my mentor was not adept in the theory that would best suit my research…Nonetheless, my mentor was able to provide proper guidance in terms of the appropriateness and correctness of the research methods used. It was also helpful that my mentor was very approachable and generous with his knowledge and time, making effort to discuss my research with his colleagues and relevant organizations, thereby making the mismatch in field expertise almost negligible."*

From the SIRCA Secretariat's perspective who did the PI-Mentor matchmaking, the critical thing was to have a Mentor who understood the challenges of fieldwork, the rigor of academic research, and embraced any "mismatches". The Mentorship Programme still should be

> *"something attractive to the Mentor's own career, the opportunity to expand into an area of their own research. This is adding to the knowledge base to the Mentors. Mentors need to be challenged."*

A good PI-Mentor match also depends on the personal and professional motivations of the PIs and Mentors. From the Secretariat's standpoint, *"getting the right PI"* to join the SIRCA Programme is as important as making the best possible match with a Mentor. In reality, PIs may have other responsibilities besides the SIRCA project.

> *"For some PIs, research may not be their Number 1 thing. It could be their Number 3 or 4 thing. Then a lot of other stuff comes in that gets in the way. You might get the best Mentors and do the best matching but without the right motivation, it doesn't work."*

Once the PI is engaged and well-matched with a Mentor, the outputs and outcomes are bound to be better. When PIs are not really interested in doing research, they underperform and it becomes difficult for the Mentor or the Secretariat to push them. The Secretariat has always stressed that the relationship is informal, built on mutual trust, commitment and responsibility. There is not much else the Mentor or the Secretariat can do to prod a PI who is not fulfilling his or her responsibilities. At the same time, the Secretariat has to move delicately to avoid power imbalances between the PI and Mentor.

> *"Some Mentors are very involved while others take a more removed approach. SIRCA had to be very careful in communicating with both mentor and PI so that there will not be too much of a power relationship – where the mentor wields power over the PI. We constantly had to remind mentors that they have to have regular contacts with their PIs but to also ensure them that we are not expecting them to police the PIs."*

While the PI may be new to the ICTD field, they may already be established in another discipline and hold a senior level position at their institution. When such a PI is matched to a mid-level career mentor, the relationship can become strained because the roles are reversed. Matching is not merely a CV and application appraisal exercise. SIRCA has to consider the softer aspects of relationships, such as the power imbalance described above. The Secretariat could consider asking for submissions from PIs at the point of application with names of Mentors whom they would like to work with. That would make the PIs learn about the Mentor's work. At the same time, this could help the Mentor recruitment process with more Mentors onboard. A good match also depends on how comfortable both parties feel when working with each other. One Mentor says,

> *"Ultimately, what makes a mentoring relationship work or not work is the combination of personalities of the two parties involved, and the motivations they find they have for the project once the actual focus for that project become clear. There is nothing much one can do to guide or regulate that in advance – it's organic and by and large it either happens or it doesn't."*

Recommendation #11
Allow PIs to recommend their own Mentors for the projects or allow PIs to pick their "top 3 Mentors" if SIRCA posts the Mentors' profiles on its website. SIRCA can also consider circulating awarded projects to Mentors for them to choose a project they would like to work with. It is preferable to have the PI and Mentor located near each other to ease guidance.

3.2.6 A sense of isolation

> *"I think in some ways I felt disconnected from the general experience, not because of SIRCA or the mentor but because we were in a place where for a while our ability to communicate with others was so limited by electricity outages."*

A physical and virtual sense of isolation was prevalent among PIs, particularly for those working in remote areas. The PIs also felt more communication was needed amongst themselves (despite the fact that they had each other's email addresses) as they were well aware of the great resources other Mentors and PIs brought to the Programme. Sometimes the only opportunity they had to talk to each other was at the SIRCA workshops. The sense of isolation was stronger for PIs and Mentors who were unable to attend the workshops.

A few SIRCA staff expressed their sense of isolation accompanied by a lack of understanding of the reality on the ground. One staff recounted,

> *"Sometimes [Mentors and PIs] do feel that they are alienated from us and there's not much communication between us and the mentors, and the mentors and PIs, but sometimes even that gap is a lot because of the busy schedules they both have."*

The Mentors in particular, dispersed across different time zones, were more distant as they were only intermittently in contact with the Secretariat when they signed off on a PI's progress report and completed quarterly feedback surveys. The PIs were more frequently in touch because of the progress reports, financial reports, feedback surveys, and other deliverables they handed in to the Secretariat at least once a month. Mentors have voiced their willingness to interact with other grantees, SIRCA staff, Trainers, and GRC Reviewers.

Although there was an attempt to dispel the isolation using Wikipedia, Flickr, and the e-Newsletter on the SIRCA homepage, the majority of the PIs did not take the time to contribute. Wikipedia had to be closed down in January 2010 for lack of participation. Flickr allows photo/video uploads and comments but its platform is not interactive enough to allow for extensive discussions. A different kind of online platform that allows discussion boards, announcements, postings, photo and video could be used such as Facebook. A "SIRCA Facebook Group" can be created and members can grow with SIRCA alumni being part of the virtual community. PIs and Mentors can avail themselves of experts beyond their matched counterpart. This can further help in dissemination and raise the profile of the researchers.

Recommendation #12
To connect people and to reduce the sense of isolation, SIRCA can consider creating a Facebook page where communication is dynamic among all SIRCA stakeholders. A Facebook icon that says "Follow us on Facebook" can be placed on the SIRCA website for anyone in the public interested in following SIRCA events, projects, and announcements. Facebook can be moderated and kept private or public depending on the settings. Facebook is currently very popular among internet users and a convenient platform to connect people, add photos and videos. It is also a way to market the SIRCA Programme. SIRCA can start inviting current PIs, Mentors, GRC members, Trainers, IDRC stakeholders and "SIRCA Associates" in the website to its Facebook page. The e-Newsletter on the current SIRCA website serves to update and inform the general public about SIRCA but its function as a dynamic "connector" of SIRCA stakeholders/alumni is minimal.

SIRCA management believes that part of the effort to make SIRCA a success is to build a community with highly qualified Mentors. The SIRCA Secretariat has received feedback from Mentors that the honorarium was too low in comparison to other international consultancies. The amount was decided randomly without much research into the labor market. Making the Mentor's compensation more competitive can assist in bringing more senior researchers. As one staff has put it,

> *"If you want senior people, the senior people wouldn't really bother…I mean what we paid was not enough to attract any. It's really minimum wage if you talk about payment. Rather than paying people to get the best, I think we should make [the SIRCA Programme] such that somehow people want to sign up and be part of it, so we make our program interesting so that people will want to sign up [for it]."*

For some Mentors, especially those early in their research careers, compensation might not be very important as long as the experience is worthwhile. Senior mentors, however, are highly sought after by other institutions. The SIRCA Secretariat acknowledges that the salary has to be higher if they want to run a global research program.

Quality matters but so does quantity. A community cannot be dynamic and interactive if there aren't enough people. A bigger supply of Mentors with diversity in topic and region would further improve the PI-Mentor match. Thus far, the Mentor recruitment was done through personal networks from IDRC, SiRC, and SIRCA staff, mainly as a result of the lack of time during the programme start-up. Although this is commendable given the overall satisfaction that the PIs have expressed with their Mentors, it simultaneously failed to reach out to other ICTD and non-ICTD networks, as ICT is essentially a multidisciplinary field. According to one SIRCA staff, there was under-representation of Mentors from North America, Latin America and Africa. A fair amount of ICTD research occurs in these regions and SIRCA can explore these regions to recruit top-notch intellectual capital that will strengthen SIRCA's mandate.

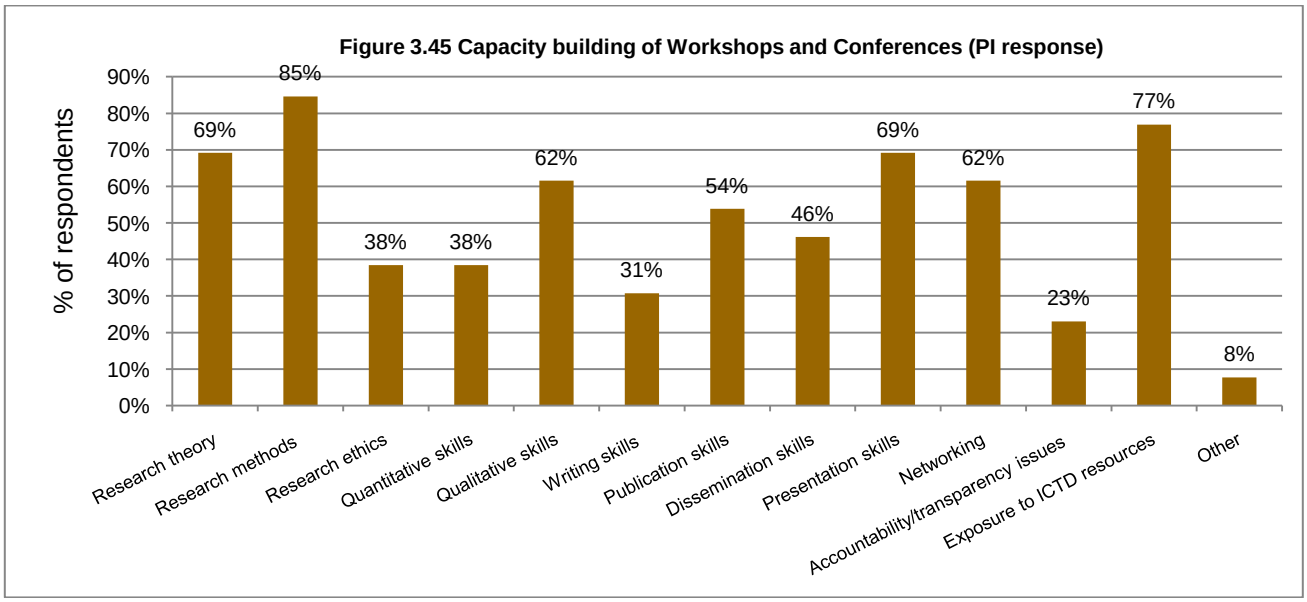
Recommendation #13
To ensure a large and diverse pool of qualified Mentors, SIRCA should maintain a database and mailing list of Mentors obtained through personal networks, PI recommendations, leading ICTD journals, other IDRC sponsored programs in ICTD, conferences, and institutions so that they can be tapped into for the variety of roles that SIRCA has to offer (Mentor, Reviewer, Trainer, Speaker, Observer, etc.). The list should include people from all regions of the world (Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America, and Oceania).

Recommendation #14
Increase Mentor's compensation to attract senior researchers.

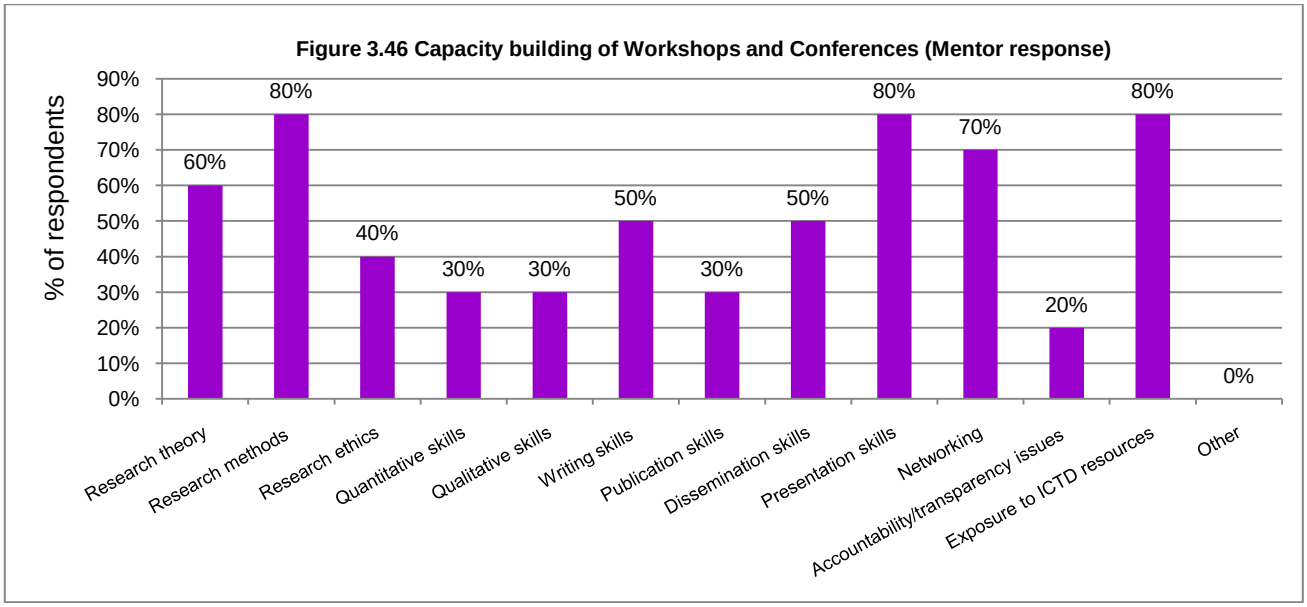
3.3 Evaluation Area: Workshops and Conferences

KEQ 3: To what extent did the Workshops & Conferences facilitate the publication and dissemination of research findings?

SIRCA's workshops were the most direct way to build capacity of PIs. SIRCA held a 2-day workshop (Workshop 1) for PIs in July 2009 where 4 trainers were invited to teach ICTD theory, quantitative data analysis, qualitative research methods, mixed methods, and research ethics. Workshop 1 further included 4 small group break-out sessions by topic that were each chaired by 1 trainer (Agriculture/Rural, Education/Political participation, Socio-economic psychological development, and Healthcare). SIRCA held a 1-day workshop in June 2010 (Workshop 2) which focused on presentation skills, publication, dissemination, and one-on-one consultations with Mentors. Figure 3.45 illustrates the PIs responses on what they have gained from participating in these workshops.



The Mentors were asked their perception on what the PIs learned at the workshops. It is interesting to note that the Mentors expressed high percentages for the same items (Figure 3.46).



Half of the PIs felt that the thematic group sessions in Workshop 1 was 'Very Useful' and a quarter felt that it was 'Extremely Useful' (Figure 3.47). Almost 40% felt that the 3-minute practice presentation of their work for the Mobiles Preconference was 'Extremely Useful' and about a third of the PIs thought it was 'Very Useful' (Figure 3.48).

Figure 3.47 Small group break-out session (Workshop 1)

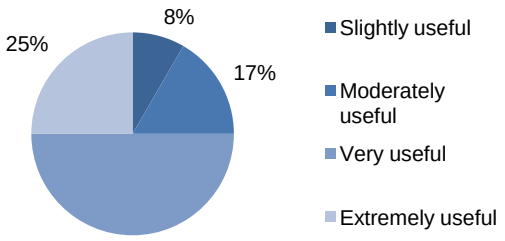
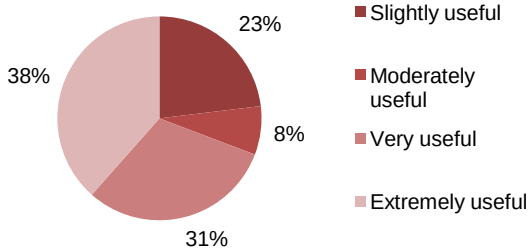


Figure 3.48 3-minute presentation (Workshop 2)



One-on-one consultations with Mentors were 'Extremely Useful' to 55% of the respondents and 'Very Useful' for 36% of the respondents (Figure 3.49). The panelist session on publication and dissemination of work had more mixed results with 38% for 'Extremely Useful', and 31% for 'Very Useful' (Figure 3.50).

Figure 3.49 One-on-one PI-Mentor consultation (Workshop 2)

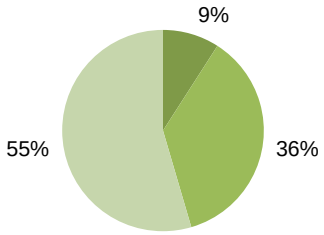
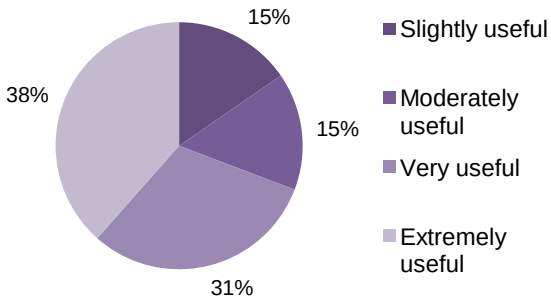
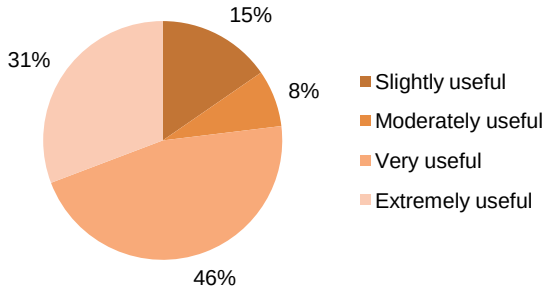


Figure 3.50 Dissemination Panel (Workshop 2)



Capacity building is not just about knowledge and skills but also about expanding one's professional network and increasing "people resources". Thus, the Secretariat included networking activities such as a city excursion and a boat cruise dinner in the workshops. These informal and relaxing networking activities were 'Extremely Useful' to 31% and 'Very Useful' to 46% of the PIs (Figure 3.51).

Figure 3.51 Networking activities



3.3.1 Breadth and Depth

The PIs felt that they gained a broad range of skills and knowledge through Workshop 1 and Workshop 2, the most significant ones being research methods, exposure to ICTD resources, presentation skills, and networking (Figure 3.45). Mentors also felt that these were the skills the PIs gained the most (Figure 3.46). Although SIRCA attempted to cover the basics for research in the workshops, there were additional topic suggestions from PIs, Mentors, Trainers and SIRCA staff, including more geographic and ICTD specificity. Below are suggested workshop topics:

- ICTD theoretical frameworks (e.g. International Development, e-governance, e-health)
- ICTD as a multidisciplinary field
- ICTD agendas and priorities
- Comprehensive overview of ICTD literature
- ICTD in Asia, Africa, North America, Latin America, Oceania
- ICTD research methodologies
- Data collection, ethnography, inference, deduction
- Data analysis: Qualitative and quantitative
- Project Management: Leadership roles, team/staff management, audit, risk analysis, grant management
- Research conceptualization and design
- Practical and ethical challenges
- Project sustainability
- Exit strategy
- Project Evaluation
- Publication Strategy: Writing, publishing, presenting and dissemination to academic and non-academic audiences (e.g. use of multi-media technology, journalists)
- Publishing and editing journal articles (invite editors as guest speakers)
- Hierarchy of peer-reviewed journals, non-scholarly press, discussion of different journal styles (language, tone, content, audience)
- Influencing policy and practice (inviting policy makers and practitioners as guest speakers)
- Joint publications/co-authorships
- Public speaking and dissemination
- Effective PowerPoint slides and poster displays
- Professional ICTD associations and networks for memberships
- Seminars/Courses for skills upgrading
- Pursuing a research career: Bidding, writing, reviewing, dissemination conferences, visits, exchanges, networking
- Managing Mentor-PI relationships and responsibilities
- Bring trainers/experts in the PI project theme/region for workshop break-out sessions
- Sharing project outcomes and experiences with other SIRCA participants
- Post-SIRCA trajectory and transition (what to do after SIRCA, finding another grant, pursuing further studies, job market)

To one PI, *"capacity building is all about skills".* Several respondents including Mentors felt the topics needed more depth, and generally more time to interact with other participants. An option is to hold longer and deeper but less frequent workshops, such as a week-long course. Some topics in the list above are not "hands-on" and can become themes in conferences.

> *"Workshops should be sharper themed, and deeper. Allow PIs to work on specific projects/cases to understand better a method or theory. Perhaps encourage a peer-review process and culture."*

"The workshops should be more focused. They should be narrow and deep on a particular topic. For instance, 2 hours for all quantitative techniques is too little. Two days for one specific technique, like regression analysis or structured equation modeling, would really work."

"Training workshops could be redesigned to give principal investigators more time to present their proposals, thus helping them improve or validate their research plan. Principal investigators can also gain much insight hearing about the proposed work of fellow investigators. Thus, a plenary session of proposal presentations before "trainers" or resource persons would be ideal."

Recommendation #15
Breadth: Consider more topics to present/teach at the workshops as suggested by the respondents and by gauging their interest. If not all topics can be covered in workshops, topics can be presented in "packaged" form via webinars, online courses, videos, and Mentors can be encouraged to discuss these topics with the PIs throughout their project mentorship.

Recommendation #16
Depth: Consider deepening the workshops topics by allowing more time per topic. An intensive workshop can be extended to a 1 or 2 week course, perhaps adjoined with the "Pre-Project Workshop". Facilities such as computer labs, library resources, and e-journals can be made available depending on the topics.

Mentors could also prepare presentations for the PIs and share their own experiences with other PI-Mentor pairs. Some Mentors felt there was a lack of opportunity to talk to each other. A suggestion by one Mentor was to group them together by topic or methodology and allow them to go on an informal dinner to share their experiences. This could happen during a workshop for the PIs. It would be valuable for them to share their experiences with each other, the challenges encountered, and learn about each other's projects.

Recommendation #17
Allow Mentors to present their topic/region of expertise during a workshop.

Trainers also benefited by teaching at Workshop 1. None of them hesitated to return to SIRCA as Trainers or in other capacities. Again, IDRC's reputation was an attractive quality that prompted them to apply to SIRCA.

"Definitely knowing and getting connected to other people, increased understanding of ICTD, increased network of professionals, also to keep up to date with research"

"SIRCA engagement allows me to work in the three spheres that I should be involved in as a member of the academe: teaching (helping train early-career researchers), research (helping develop the research design of early career researchers) and social involvement (helping produce knowledge for solving social problems; being part of a community of researchers)."

"Knowing the people behind SIRCA and being part of the epistemic community being supported by IDRC's Pan Asia prompted me to send my application to be a trainer."

PIs were asked to prepare a 3-minute PowerPoint presentation about their projects for Workshop 2 and a poster display for the Mobiles Preconference 2010 in Singapore. They said that the Secretariat provided them with constructive feedback and ample time to prepare them. One PI expressed his appreciation for the guidance:

> *"Guided all the way from 'scrap' to 'standard' to preparing and presenting the PowerPoint."*

Another felt that the Secretariat's guidance was

> *"Too much. The innovative aspects of poster which we created was basically destroyed by the Secretariat."*

There was confusion about 'what is a poster', particularly the size and format of presentation. Poster presentations are an effective way to train PIs for international conferences. In the future, SIRCA could consider sending them a photograph of past poster displays or post a picture on the website to show them the atmosphere of a poster session and the expected poster format.

The 3-minute practice presentation in Workshop 2 helped PIs gain confidence in speaking publicly. Figure 3.48 shows that 31% found the practice session 'Very Useful' and 38% found it was 'Extremely Useful'. All PIs, except one, failed to present their ideas in 3 minutes and the Secretariat helped them shorten their presentations.

> *"The mock presentation at the NLB in Singapore was particularly helpful. However, I think, and I've discussed this with some of my colleagues, that the length of time could have been expanded to 5 minutes to allow a proper introduction to the study and the research findings. The 3 minutes was rattling for many researchers, especially those who could not express themselves well (and fast) in English."*

One PI thought the entire exercise was futile because, in his opinion, it was practically impossible to talk about their projects in such a short period of time and with only 3 slides. He felt the time would have been better used for one-on-one consultations with the Mentor with unlimited time.

> *"The 2nd workshop was a complete waste of time as it was a silly exercise to see how a presentation could be done in 3 min at the pre-conf and there was no other activity time ascribed to project discussions."*

PIs still had slides in the Mobiles Preconference that were not visible with too much text on one slide, small font size, and poor color choice (for example, navy blue text on dark gray background). Presentation skills can be taught in workshops.

Recommendation #18
Workshops need to include a session on presentation skills – speaking in public and creating visible and captivating PowerPoint presentations.

Recommendation #19
To help PIs prepare PowerPoint presentations and poster displays, and to avoid numerous "back and forth" emails and misunderstandings about the format, SIRCA can consider posting a picture of a sample poster (or create a fake, cartoon poster if concerned about curtailing creativity) and the general poster session atmosphere from Workshop 2 to inspire the PIs.

Recommendation #20
Since many PIs were frazzled by the 3-minute PowerPoint presentation in Workshop 2, SIRCA can consider extending the presentation to 5 minutes per person. Practice sessions are, however, necessary and beneficial.

3.3.2 Timing and Frequency

Qualitative responses reveal that the timing and frequency of workshops depended mainly on 2 things – the PI's own 'starting point' as a researcher, and the project stage. A general consensus is that SIRCA needs to hold at least 2 workshops and at least 1 conference during one programme cycle, or about one workshop per year (as most projects are 1 to 2 years). A workshop very early in the program is necessary to get them grounded and started off on the same page. Some PIs regretted that the first workshop was held 6 months into their project. A second workshop could take place in the middle of the term during or after the data collection stage, and a third workshop towards the end when major fieldwork activities have been undertaken and researchers are in the writing process. Less experienced PIs wanted a workshop *"every 6 months."* SIRCA can consider more than 2 workshops per year depending on the interest shown by PIs. If SIRCA cannot accommodate all topics, Mentors can be encouraged to discuss some of the topics with their PIs throughout the project. One SIRCA staff said,

> *"My sense is that we could have smaller meetings if enough PIs asked for it. In other words, we could have like 2 regular Workshops – certainly at the start [of their projects], that one was quite important to set a benchmark for everyone so we know what is expected of them, for surveys, for interviews, quantitative research, to know what is expected. And then one [Workshop] towards the end when the report is about to be written, how is it written for conferences, papers, for publication, so that could be helpful there. In between, I can imagine one [workshop] where they talk about difficulties in the field work, how can they learn from each other, bring some people in who have gone out to the field and understood the context, perhaps one there, but it would really depend on the PIs and what they are encountering. So that one [workshop] in the middle would depend, would be really situational…."*

A PI corroborated this view:

> *"[PIs] could design what they want during the workshop and SIRCA can make sure they get all the time for these activities."*

The Secretariat staff commented that workshops take much time and effort to organize. While PIs suggested having Mentors present at all gatherings, not everybody has the time to travel abroad due to other job commitments. SIRCA could accommodate this by holding online workshops or webinars where participants, as long as they had internet connection, could log in and listen to speakers or

participate in virtual courses. An idea of "packaging" workshops with digital technology was mentioned. These could be posted online.

Mentors, SIRCA staff and GRC members have admitted that not all PIs were at the same starting point as researchers. Some PIs had more research experience than others. This situation could make organizing workshops more challenging since experienced researchers may find basic topics uninteresting. This is a function of the selection process and the GRC has to look carefully into who is being awarded the SIRCA grant and why. There was an opinion that the workshops could be opened to non-PIs, such as co-PIs and other research colleagues.

> *"If you are talking about building research capacity, it doesn't necessarily have to be restricted to just the PIs and Mentors, especially if you have a small number and the Workshops can accommodate more [participants]. I think we should open up to the colleagues of the PIs who can then benefit from it also. Because you are talking about emerging researchers, their colleagues would also be emerging researchers. So in a way, adding value there with very little marginal cost."*

Indeed, one PI at the Mobiles Preconference felt that his co-PI instead of himself should have attended Workshop 2 because the co-PI was younger, starting on a research career and would have benefited more from international exposure. SIRCA could think about allowing 2 attendants per project for workshops in the future. One PI was unable to attend the conference due to the monsoon rains. Although difficult, SIRCA could consider these climatic factors when planning the calendar for workshops.

One Mentor suggested including a 'publication strategy' discussion early in the workshops. There have been questions from PIs about which journals they could publish their work in and wanted assistance from SIRCA to shortlist them. The Mentor commented,

> *"Insofar as the programme intends to develop 'young' researchers starting out on their research and academic careers, I would suggest that the process of publishing research is moved closer to the beginning of the process rather than being an issue that was not introduced seriously until most of the research had been completed. Academic careers depend almost completely on research publications (at least in the better universities). The top academics achieve their positions of status by publishing in the top journals of their discipline. This is not done by accident and it should be acknowledged in this regard that not all journals are equal. Accordingly, their starting point is often the selection of the journal in which they wish to publish; even before considering the nature and the topic of the research they will pursue. This forms part of their publication strategy. Therefore, I would suggest that the SIRCA programme involves the mentors in helping PIs develop their publication strategy prior to embarking on their research projects. This could involve workshops/seminars on the publication process; analyses of the target journals – their policies, rankings, review quality, turnaround time for submissions, topics of key interest, etc. It seems that the publication process in the programme so far has not been approached in this manner and that neither PIs nor mentors were involved in the publication process."*

Respondents thought that conferences were a good opportunity to see the big picture and bring everybody together for intellectual exchange. They could be held at least twice per programme cycle, including one towards the end of their projects. PIs often mentioned their own project topics as being part of the conference agenda. Below are conference topic suggestions from the survey respondents:

- ICTD and climate change
- ICTD and sustainable development
- ICTD and gender
- ICTD and poverty
- ICTD and ethnic culture
- ICTD and youth

- Mobile health (m-health) in developing countries
- ICTD policies and regulations around the world
- Panel session of scientists/academics/scholars, policy-makers/practitioners, journalists, industry leaders
- Post-project conference to look back and reflect on SIRCA experience
- "SIRCA Alumni" conference after 6 months to 1 year to reunite people and discuss ICTD issues, where they are, what they are currently doing
- Presentation of projects from all SIRCA PIs
- Combining with another major international event such as the ICA conference

Recommendation #21
To cater to participants who were unable to attend workshops, video recordings of workshops can be posted on YouTube by creating a SIRCA YouTube channel. SIRCA can video record 30-second PI self-introductions during workshops and post them on the web to get their "instant reactions" to the workshops or their SIRCA experience so far. IDRC PanAsia Network and PanAsia both have their own channel where workshop videos are uploaded. This is in line with SIRCA's open data policy to share their learnings and outputs with others. YouTube can also be used by PIs if they have a recording device to create a video and upload it on the "SIRCA YouTube channel." The Secretariat can send the PI's projects to each other and Mentors for inspiration and update. PIs can be encouraged to use technology to market their own projects.

Recommendation #22
Bring the discussion about the PI's publication strategy early in the programme in the first PI workshop and also invite Mentors to this workshop.

Recommendation #23
Pre-Project Workshop

Several concerns raised in the qualitative responses suggest that a workshop before the actual start of the projects – a Pre-Project Workshop – can be helpful to PIs, Mentors, and the Secretariat. Conceptually similar to a student orientation in a university, one could envision several activities during the Pre-Project Workshop:

Conduct ice-breaking sessions, introductions and initial networking of all PIs and Mentors.

Present the geographical and topic diversity of all SIRCA awardees, and geographical span and expertise of Mentors and workshop Trainers.

Survey the PIs with the topics they would like to see in future workshops. SIRCA can teach the topics that are most popular throughout the Programme cycle.

Allow Mentors and PIs to frankly discuss scheduling issues (many Mentors and PIs teach at universities and their semesters are packed), expectations, responsibilities, and potential challenges such as geographical remoteness, lack of amenities like internet, electricity, communication infrastructure, and even personal issues if these may potentially affect the progress of the project. There have been drop outs from SIRCA awardees due to family illness and personal financial/employment issues. SIRCA can announce broad timelines for deliverables to guide the discussions, and remind PIs and Mentors that they can make use of the funds to get phone cards to overcome internet communication challenges.

(Recommendation #23 continued)

Allow Mentors and PIs to discuss the ideal number of Mentor Site Visits, deciding on what project stages would be best for them, and let them present their decision to the Secretariat. Alternatively, SIRCA can divulge the number of Site Visits that can be funded and PI-Mentor pairs can work within these parameters.

The SIRCA Secretariat could clarify the expectations of the programme, such as co-authorships and joint publications which are encouraged but not mandatory. One Mentor said *"Would be valuable to build [publication] in as an expectation early on in part to create another strand of shared involvement and greater depth of understanding. Building some kind of structure, either for a joint mentor publication to disseminate capacity building issues or more reasonably using mentor/PI publication would be a major incentive to drive closer links."*

Explain some administrative issues such as the importance of adhering to deadlines. The Secretariat could briefly describe the process of organizing workshops and the rationale for asking timely information from the participants, such as flight itineraries. As one PI in this first round of the programme delayed sending all required documentation, his per diem was not ready by the time he arrived to Singapore. In order to avoid unnecessary frustration and a chain reaction of delays, SIRCA staff could stress the importance of having everyone's cooperation. Furthermore, two PIs got lost in the city during Workshop 2 and the Mobiles Preconference: *"Since the place was new for me, I expected that SIRCA would provide transportation or guide for any distance travel. For instance, me and another SIRCA awardee struggled to find our way back to the Hotel after the ICA conference."* The Secretariat could provide PIs with free maps from the Singapore Tourism Board in the Workshop kit but it can only advise the PIs not to stray away too far from the conference venue as it is not responsible for anyone getting lost. The participants move at their own risk. While explaining administrative issues, the Secretariat can clarify the MOUs, TOR, Guidelines, Site Visit checklist and other contractual matters. If there were any queries from the PI in regards to revising their proposals, making changes to their projects, financial or administrative matters, this may be an opportunity.

Recommendation #24

Workshop format: The panelists in Workshop 1 and Workshop 2 are sitting in front of an audience in a row of chairs or behind a table. The Q&A sessions were not as interactive and dynamic as one would hope. To encourage PIs to speak up, SIRCA can consider changing the physical format of the sessions and make it a "round table" where speakers/Mentors/panelists are at the same level and PIs sit around a table in a more intimate setting (or place chairs in a circle). Workshop 1 panel sessions, in particular, took place in a lecture theatre and looked like a classroom. There were not many questions from the PIs and the moderator was doing the most speaking and questioning to move the discussions forward.

3.3.3 A broader horizon

The SIRCA Secretariat received feedback from post-conference surveys and by word-of-mouth that the Mobiles PreConference 2010 was one of the highlights of the SIRCA experience for the PIs and Mentors. It was an opportunity for the PIs to broaden their horizons by interacting with social scientists around the globe. The success of the Preconference was in large part a result of holding it right before one of the largest gatherings in the ICT community, the International Communication Association (ICA) annual conference. The ICA Conference was held in Singapore this year and attracts hundreds of participants every year from all over the world. The PIs appreciated this singular opportunity as it allowed them to take advantage of both events.

> *"[We met] other people interested in our work due to the large gathering which may lead to future collaboration. Also of interest was the interaction and appreciation by other junior and senior researchers."*
>
> *"I was able to attend a number of sessions with presentations that focus on topics that are relevant to my study. This allowed me to compare and contrast my research, as well as clarify some of the methods questions that I have."*
>
> *"[Participation in the Preconference helped with] (1) Fine tuning conceptual framework, (2) Refining data collection tools, (3) Networking, (4) Scouting resources."*

The Preconference was "SIRCA ++", according to one SIRCA staff, in the sense that it was the moment for the SIRCA programme to go beyond its immediate mission of ICTD research capacity building in Asia. While not all papers presented at the Preconference was ICTD/development related, it was a great opportunity to showcase the Programme in an international forum.

> *"We need to put SIRCA on the map, nurture, enable emerging researchers to get global audiences, give experience for the PIs, create a broader horizon. We may not have this opportunity always. SIRCA piggy-backed the Preconference to the ICA. We also had some money for this. In the future, we need to do more planning. We should look out for such opportunities…Something that extends beyond SIRCA, to private sector, industry, civil society, private players, government players, and this is all part of the SIRCA mandate to have that impact, to reach out to a broader universe, and it's also for the PIs, to show them this is how research dissemination is done."*

From an organizing standpoint, however, there were some challenges of combining Workshop 2 with an international conference. One SIRCA staff confided that they needed more time, resources and manpower.

> *"Time and resources were stretched in the planning of both the conference and the workshop. While there was a rationale for these to be conducted consecutively, in future, there could be earlier planning and more resources/manpower allocated to these activities so that the outcomes and goals are clearly identified, aimed for, and achieved."*

There were also administrative issues, as one staff said that not all staff

> *"put in equal effort in making the event was successful. In the future, all staff's roles and levels of commitment will need to be documented".*

An additional suggestion was to do a dry-run of the event at the venue to familiarize staff with the sequence of activities and the logistics on the actual day. SIRCA's planned final dissemination conference in April 2011 with PIs presenting their work before specialists from a variety of fields is another opportunity for SIRCA to step up to the limelight.

3.3.4 Research and Practice: Bridging the Gap

SIRCA invited Mr. Alex Siow, Vice-President of Singapore's leading media company Starhub TV, to be the keynote speaker for the Mobiles Preconference 2010. Mr. Siow addressed academics and non-academics in the audience about the ubiquity of mobile phones in daily life, such as in the domains of business, education, entertainment, politics, trade, and environment. His opening address was a poignant reminder of how research informs policy and practice.

A question was thus posed to Mentors, Trainers and the SIRCA staff in the surveys about the value of a research capacity building programme like SIRCA to connect academic research and the "real world" of policy and practice.

On the one hand, some respondents felt that SIRCA was not in a position to address this gap. SIRCA's main objective was, according to them, to nurture emerging researchers and to get them published in peer-reviewed journals. In their opinion, it was more important to get recognized in the academic community before addressing practice or policy issues.

> "*I think SIRCA should focus on building research capacity for emerging researchers in ICT4D. These researchers will go on to become policy makers and influence practice in the future. Sure, a certain exposure, through perhaps a workshop, would be fine, but that should not become the focus of SIRCA."*
>
> *"We first have to ensure the high-quality researcher is groomed, produced, generated. Policy is a separate world."*
>
> "G*iven resource, timeline and financial constraints, SIRCA needs to focus first on the primary objective – developing research capacity. Policy and practice can be secondary objectives for the future."*

There was also skepticism about the willingness of SIRCA to strive for this 'research to practice' gap.

> *"Not all projects might have been hand-in-hand with governments…not all research would have policy implications. Some of them are highly theoretical".*

Policy does not always equal "government" because policy can be developed by other entities besides the public sector. Broadly speaking, policy is how research evidence is absorbed by decision makers and translated into action to help people. Even though a study may be highly theoretical, a researcher should still be able to justify the relevance of the study to the real world, particularly to donors and funders who look for solutions to problems.

Another respondent felt that SIRCA should remain in academia while forming a partnership with a policy advocacy organization and a policy analysis organization. In his view, 'policy advocacy' as part of a wider campaign of 'policy analysis' of donor-funded programmes might be more effective than SIRCA "going it alone" and attempting all three roles.

Some respondents felt that practical implications should be a decision left to the Mentor and PI, depending on the project context and on the PI's initiative. Below are comments from two people:

> *"This is both a trendy and attractive possibility but we would benefit from being prudent. Your proposal depends entirely upon, first, the nature of the project, and, second, the nature/capacity of the researcher—as only some, in either case, may lend themselves to policy work."*
>
> *"When SIRCA started, the focus was on really the research. The expectations were, frankly, quite low in a sense that for us we thought the main thing was to get the research done and then to get it published. So I would say that it depends on the context. So in my case….the project*

> *went well and there was time to explore the policy and practice implications. I think for other projects, they may not have run so well and so smoothly, and a policy and practice implication may not have risen. So it's partly a contextual situation, but certainly I think if this were highlighted, the Mentors would be looking out for such opportunities more so than if it wasn't highlighted.*

SIRCA staff acknowledged that the Programme objectives are not related to policy or practice and it is not emphasized during the project selection process.

> *"It is important to realize that policy implications of their research are currently not considered a KPI of the SIRCA project, so if such implications are going to be measured, then this would impact the evaluation and selection of proposals right from the start. So SIRCA has to be clear on what it is looking out for, and what it is setting out to achieve. If we are to go in this direction, we would need to clearly define measures for policy impact and practice implications."*

On the other hand, several respondents felt that the SIRCA Programme should bridge the research-to-policy divide because the Programme's broader mandate is to shed light on development issues through ICT. Social science research, which IDRC and SIRCA fund, is inherently practical and this is also one of the selection criteria in the Project Assessment Decision Matrix.

> *"Absolutely. We are conducting social research and any social research will at some level have practical implications. Many of our PIs work with communities and they need to know that they have to act responsibly in order not to hurt the very people they are trying to help."*

> *"Projects with clear policy and practice implications should be assisted in this regard. SIRCA should ensure that reports be submitted/findings be communicated to the relevant bodies. In this sense, SIRCA should make sure that research DOES make a difference."*

Some respondents suggested looking specifically at the country's context, such as local and international policies, to consider policy implications.

> *"SIRCA should try its best to provide as much of exposure and knowledge as possible to their PIs. This is to equip emerging PIs not only the skills to conduct research but also aware of the policies governing research locally and internationally."*

> "*[Look at] linkages within the [PI's] contexts, something concrete in their own sector and country, and recognizes different levels of familiarity and capacity amongst PIs".*

Reaching policy and practice circles takes strategizing. This is even more reason to introduce the idea early on in the career of emerging researchers. SIRCA does not need to view research and practice as mutually exclusive, nor sequentially. In the Mentor's panel discussion on publication and dissemination in Workshop 2, one Mentor felt that the PI had to make a choice – whether to take the scholarly or non-scholarly publication track. Other Mentors felt that thinking about where to publish early on would assist in planning the disseminate path and how to be influential the field. The same material or different section of the project findings can be used for a variety of mediums such as newspapers, press releases, book chapters, blogs, even more so because many

> *"good quality material does not enter top-notch peer-reviewed journals. There is a tendency to put all things into one report."*

The important factor was for the PIs to increase their writing and dissemination capacity. One Mentor suggested having a "glossy magazine" that is accessible to the general public and that publicizes SIRCA's important research work, as well as a YouTube channel to post videos of projects.

> *"No outlet is too small. Share with as many parties as you can."*

> *"Don't think 'my research'. Think 'my contribution to research'".*

One PI participating in the Mobiles Preconference provided his insight as a professional journalist that many of the academic papers presented at the conference could actually become brilliant news pieces (e.g. mobile phones and foreign domestic workers, mobiles phones and disabled persons, mobiles phones and rural women's status, mobile phones and the elderly).

One Mentor said that ICT4D is precisely about reducing poverty and bringing development. He acknowledged that a lot of energy and work expended in academia is totally ignored by practitioners. Decision makers, policy makers, and senior officials do not have the time to read peer-reviewed journals and technical reports. According to him, publication is the start, not the end, of influencing policy and practice. In order to bring positive change to the "digitally denied", SIRCA should make it acceptable for academics to talk about other forms of dissemination. Mentors can become a bridge while collaborating with a PI, particularly if he or she is a practitioner.

> *"There are serious social issues involved here and practitioners face a range of challenges that good quality research, such as that under the SIRCA programme, can help with. Among them, it is evident that policy makers and their advisers need a more enlightened understanding of the circumstances under which ICTs can be used to alleviate the more serious effects of poverty, not the least because policy issues play a key role in achieving this."*

Fortunately, SIRCA can already tap into its Mentors as they work or have worked with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nations, UNICEF, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, and international NGOs, among other reputable development institutions.

SiRC promoted a talk by Dr. Tikki Pang, Director of Research Policy and Cooperation of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland.[12] Dr. Pang taught in academia for 18 years before moving to WHO where he is also currently the Secretary of the Research Ethics Review Committee and Secretary of the WHO Advisory Committee on Health Research. He talked about bridging the gap between "knowing" and "doing" since policy makers know that good policy should be informed by scientific evidence.

> *"Researchers and policymakers often live in different worlds, have different values, speak a different language and often do not trust one another. When the gap has been narrowed, dramatic results are possible."*

It is encouraging to see that SIRCA has inspired several PIs to initiate contact or working relations with non-academic stakeholders. Some PIs who have been working with the community in projects administered by NGOs and government institutions have presented their findings to the respective management boards.

> *"I have met several Government officials and Institutes or NGO during the course of field visit and interviews; Discussed some pre-findings with government officials...and some NGO people. They asked us for a copy of the final report, which they can discuss in their policy meetings."*

Another PI specifically mentioned the outcomes expected in relation to policy:

> *"Another expected outcome is for the project to offer policy makers and educational practitioners research results and recommendations that will inform their decision making. The Department of Media and Communication….has already been attracted by the potential benefits of the research results and has agreed to sponsor the printing of 500 copies of the research results in a 45-paper research report format…There is potential reach of the research report to a wide range of local*

[12] Dr. Tikki Pang, talk on "Knowledge Translation: The Bumpy Road from Research to Policy". S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 23 March 2010.

stakeholders through these dissemination channels, and it is hoped that these stakeholders can make use of the results and recommendations according to their needs."

SIRCA PIs have dissemination findings to several non-academic audiences for local partnerships, collaboration, and project sustainability. Below is a list of entities compiled from the survey responses:

- Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Education Program (NGO - Bangladesh)
- Shelter (NGO - Bangladesh)
- Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID) (private sector)
- National Information Communication Technology Development (NiDA) (Government of Cambodia)
- Ministry of Health, Cambodia
- Open Institute (NGO - Cambodia)
- Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) (NGO)
- UDAAN Welfare Foundation (NGO - India)
- Nyaya Health (NGO - Nepal)
- Brainstorm Foundation, Inc. (NGO - Australia)
- University of Canberra, Australia

One PI commented on his experience working closely with an NGO:

"I believe the lessons or experiences from ongoing SIRCA impact study will guide [the NGO] to design and to implement their charitable project in an effective manner. The objectives of the collaboration are: a) To create access for the rural students to information and communication technology (ICT), b) To promote uses of computer among the teachers and students, c) To mitigate potential risks of terrorism among the students of Madrashas (religious academic institution), d) To expose rural students to new and modern technologies (computer, internet) to develop skills and capacity, e) To give special attention to the female students to make them familiar with the uses of modern technologies. This collaboration through a newly setting up ICT project in rural Bangladesh will act as 'proof of concept' of our SIRCA findings/recommendations."

While some respondents feel that SIRCA's mission should be kept to capacity building of researchers, many PIs have already begun to apply their findings within the community or entities they work with. It is a natural consequence of social science research, especially in ICTD, where problems that the PIs investigate are connected to problems in people's livelihoods. It is possible that SIRCA will drift towards policy and practice depending on the projects that the Programme decides to fund in the future.

Recommendation #25
Diversify workshop speakers and trainers with people from different professions and regions such as journalists to talk about writing styles and dissemination, and practitioners from development agencies and NGOs to talk about research, practice and policy. These speakers can come deliberately from the country where the PI will be conducting the project to link the PI to that practitioner or journalist in the future.

Recommendation #26
Bridging research and practice: (1) SIRCA could consider adding a "Policy Recommendation" or "Policy and Practice Implications" section in the progress report and final reports. This will allow PIs to think about their social science research findings more closely to the community or beneficiary, and guide their publication strategies.

3.4 SIRCA PI Outcomes

Below are the responses of PIs who listed details of their outcomes such as publications and conferences they attended or presented, as well as institutions they have worked with during the course of their SIRCA research work. The list is not comprehensive as PIs are still working on paper submissions. It also includes events where the SIRCA project or findings were presented tangentially. Many PIs have touched upon their SIRCA works as examples for their presentation/lecture. Thirteen of the 14 SIRCA PIs presented their projects in the Mobiles Preconference 2010 organized by SiRC in Singapore on 21- 22 June, titled "Innovations in Mobile Use".

A. Peer-reviewed publications:

- *Journal of eHealth Technology and Application.* ISSN: 1881–4581, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2009. **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- "Design and Research of Decision Support System for Hospital Managers Based on HIS". *Chinese Medical Equipment Journal,* Vol. 30, No.9, 2009. **(Wansong Zheng - China)**

B. Paper accepted to journals/conferences but not yet published:

- *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries (EJISDC)* **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- "Agriculture Market Information Services (AMIS) in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs): Nature, Scopes, and Challenges." In M. A. Wimmer et al. (2010) (Eds.). IFIP e-Government Conference 2010, Lausanne, Switzerland, 30 August – 2 September 2010, Proceedings. Springer Lecture Notes in Computer Science #6228, 109-120. **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**
- "Factors influencing the adoption of mobile phones among the farmers in Bangladesh: Theories and practices." In press for publication in the forthcoming issue of International Journal on Advances in ICT for Emerging Regions (ICTer) **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**

C. Paper submitted for review for journals/conferences:

- ICTC 2010 IEEE/ACM International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development, London, United Kingdom, 13 - 16 December 2010. **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh) / (Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- 2 working papers for submission **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- International Communication Association Conference, Boston, MA, 26 - 30 May 2011. **(Peou Chivoin – Cambodia)**
- "Internet for Cambodia University Students: Motivations, Attitudes & Academic Internet Use". *International Journal of Education and Development Using ICT,* Special Issue: Impact of ICT on Teaching and Learning in Asia. University of West Indies Open Journal System, 2010. **(Peou Chivoin – Cambodia)**
- IEEE Healthcom2011 Conference **(Phal Des – Cambodia)**
- "Healthcare information systems in China" *(***Kanliang Wang/Wansong Zheng - China)**
- "How social factors influence doctor's intention to share EMRs: An empirical investigation in China" **(Kanliang Wang/Wansong Zheng - China)**
- Media Asia Journal (Vol. 38 No. 1), Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia **(Komathi Ale – Singapore)**
- "Towards an m-service evaluation framework: A case study on rural Bangladesh". Media Asia journal, Singapore Internet Reseach Center, Nanyang Technological University **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**
- "The impact of mobile phones on the farmers in Bangladesh: A capability development approach". Media Asia journal, Singapore Internet Reseach Center, Nanyang Technological University **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**

- Hechanova, M.R., Tuliao, A.P., Velasquez, P., Garabiles, M. Clemente, K. & Melgar, I. "Issues, Coping and Responses of Male Filipino Migrant Workers to Online Counseling". *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development.* Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) **(Ma. Regina M. Hechanova – Philippines)**
- Hechanova, M.R., Tuliao, A.P., & Melgar, I. "Counseling Filipino Migrant Workers using Computer-mediated technology". *Living the Philippine Information Society* (Conference Proceedings) **(Ma. Regina M. Hechanova – Philippines)**

D. Paper presentations in conferences:

- "Evaluating health behaviour outcomes of an ICT project, results from research in three villages in Bangladesh". IEEE International Conference on e-Health Networking, Application and Services (Healthcom2009), Sydney, Australia,16 – 19 December 2008. **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- "Integration of GIS and local people's conception for environmental planning". Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association (GSDI) World Conference, Singapore, 19 - 22 October 2010. **(Pham Huu Ty – Vietnam)**
- "Decent Work in ICT Sector: An Indian Case" at the E-Asia Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2 – 3 December 2009. **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- "Mobile Phone and Impact on Status of Women in Rural India" Mobiles Pre-conference Workshop, Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia (SIRCA), Singapore Internet Research Centre, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 21 - 22 June 2010. **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- "Factors influencing the adoption of mobile phones among farmers in Bangladesh: theories and practices," 4th Annual Conference of the International Network for Postgraduate Students in the Area of ICT4D, London, UK,11 – 12 September 2009. **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**
- **"**Issues, Coping and Responses of Male Filipino Migrant Workers to Online Counseling". Migration Conference, University of the Philippines, 10 January 2010. **(Ma. Regina M. Hechanova – Philippines)**
- "OFWOnline: Supporting the Filipino Overseas Worker using ICT." Living the Information Society Conference 2, Philippine ICT Research Network, Ateneo de Manila University, 28 October 2010 **(Ma. Regina M. Hechanova – Philippines)**
- "OFWOnline: Counseling the Filipino migrant worker", Psychological Association of the Philippines National Conference, Psychological Association of the Philippines, 19 August 2010 **(Ma. Regina M. Hechanova – Philippines)**
- Ale, K.,& Chib, A. (2009). How can it trigger? Student-centered framework for assessing ICT influenced educational content in Asian rural primary schools. Paper presented at the 18th Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) conference in New Delhi, India. **(Komathi Ale – Singapore)**

E. Conferences attended:

- Panel speaker at post-graduate strand at ICTD 2010, Royal Holloway, London, United Kingdom, 13 December 2010. **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**
- Panelist at "Public stewardship of private providers: the role of health information systems", Prince Mahidol Award Conference 2010, Global Health Information Forum, 27 – 30 January 2010. **(Phal Des – Cambodia)**
- GCamp (Google) seminar: *"Gathering of local and regional experts to explore how to improve the detection and response to emerging disease in South East Asia with the use of mobile device and telecommunication tools."* **(Phal Des – Cambodia)**
- Once **(V.L.V. Kameswari/Devesh Kishore – India)**
- Bogazici University **(T.B. Dinesh – India)**
- 3 conferences attended, 3 presented (all) **(T.B. Dinesh – India)**

F. Non-scholarly dissemination outputs:

- Philippine Daily inquirer (30 May 2010, newspaper): http://business.inquirer.net/money/topstories/view/20100530-272979/Counseling-OFWs-online **(Ma. Regina M. Hechanova – Philippines)**
- Online counseling website: http://ofwonline.net **(Ma. Regina M. Hechanova – Philippines)**
- Department of Media & Communication, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia – 500 copies of research results in a 45-page report **(Peou Chivoin – Cambodia)**
- Economic Times **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- Hindustan Times **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- Online article http://docs.google.com/View?id=dgt2gdgx_673g6pxhd **(T.B. Dinesh – India)**
- Brainstorm Bangladesh *Online Working paper series. www.brainstorm-bd.com.* **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- "ICT for Development (ICT4D) in Bangladesh: Achieving Strategies through Research Initiatives." *Voice of Business* (magazine) **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- Chib, A., Ale, K., Lee, J. Y., & Hoe, H. H. (2009). Why Not: Empowering Athletes with Disabilities Through Increasing Social Athletic Identity. Changing Media, Changing Societies: Media and the Millennium Development Goals. 17th Asian Media Information and Communication Centre Conference Theme Book. AMIC: Singapore. **(Komathi Ale – Singapore)**
- RJ Marmol, Philippines, 06 April 2010. "Is Your Blog Self-Serving?" was written in connection with the call for blog reader survey participants. **(Mary Grace Mirandilla – Philippines)**

G. Reviewer or Editor of a journal:

- Reviewer for 2nd International Conference on M4D, Kampala, Uganda, November 2010. **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**
- Reviewer for Special Issue of Information System Journal (ISJ) Reflecting on the Theories and Practices that have shaped E-Government Research. Editors: Vishanth Weerakkody, Yogesh Dwivedi, Gurpreet Dhillon and Ali Montazami **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- Reviewer for Information Systems Frontiers, Special Journal Issue on Adoption and Use of Information & Communication Technologies in the Residential/Household Context. Editors: YK Dwivedi, M.D. Williams and V. Venkatesh **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- Reviewer for International Conference on Information Systems 2009 **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- Reviewer for European Conference of Information Systems (ECIS) 2009 **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**

H. Journals being considered for submission of SIRCA project findings:

- *Social Science Computer Review*
- *Information Society*
- *New Media & Society*
- *Information Technology of Development*
- *Active Learning in Higher Education*
- *Information Development*
- *Educational Studies*
- *IEEE*
- *Springer*
- *ScienceDirect*

I. Cited by others scholars:

- PI cited 3 times for: "Design and Research of Decision Support System for Hospital Managers Based on HIS". *Chinese Medical Equipment Journal,* Vol. 30, No.9, 2009. **(Wansong Zheng - China)**
    - Hao, W. et al. The Research of Design Clinical Pathway Based on Decision Support System. *China Digital Medicine*, (5:4), 2010.
    - Tang, L. et al. The Clinical Decision Support Systems in chinese hospitals. *Medicine and Education,* (10:3), 2010.
    - Bin, L et al. The design of nurse management system, *Medicine and Education,* (10:3), 2010.

J. Awards and recognitions resulting from SIRCA project:

- ICTD 2009, Doha scholarship **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- Endeavour Award, PhD study at the University of Melbourne (Internet and Youth issues) **(Peou Chivoin – Cambodia)**
- Amy Mahan Research Fellowship, "Assess the Impact of Public Access to ICT" (2010 - 2011) - 22,000 Euro **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- IDRC India Social Science Jury Recognition, 2009 **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- Paper registration and accommodation scholarship. "Knowledge Management." 4th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV2010), Beijing, China, 25 - 28 October 2010. **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**
- Swedish Business School of Orebro University, PhD study (self-funded). **(M. Sirajul Islam – Bangladesh)**
- Entered PhD programme in Geosciences, Utrecht University, Netherlands, funded by NUFFIC Programme (Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education) **(Pham Huu Ty – Vietnam)**
- Yes **(V.L.V. Kameswari/Devesh Kishore – India)**

K. Research Assistant "trickle down" effects resulting from SIRCA project:

- Paper presentation scholarship - International Graduate Students Conference in Seoul, Korea **(Mary Grace Mirandilla – Philippines)**
- University teaching position **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh) -** PI employed 2 graduate students in Master of Business Administration curriculum, 3 undergraduate students in Bachelor of Business Administration and Bachelor of Science in Economics

  "In the current academic setup of Bangladesh, undergraduate and post-graduate students of both public and private universities get less chance to participate in practical research works or to build up their research capacities. SIRCA research project in Bangladesh has opened an opportunity for the students to get involved in an applied research work which eventually helped them to learn research approach/methodology, research design and so on. Further, these students as researchers getting access to the world's well recognized journals through NTU library access only for the SIRCA research purpose. These activities will help to develop next generation quality researchers for the country who can make substantial contribution towards research."

- PI employed 2 undergraduate students in Media and Communication. Paper presentation in Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) Conference, Singapore, June 2010. **(Peou Chivoin – Cambodia)**
- PI employed 44 undergraduate students from Mass Communication research course, Department of Media and Communication, and taught them interview methods for data collection **(Peou Chivoin – Cambodia)**

- PI employed 1 graduate student from Delhi University (Master in Economics), 2 graduate students from Central University, Hyderabad (PhD Economics), 1 graduate student from Jamia Milia University Delhi (Economics) **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- PI employed 6 undergraduate and 2 graduate students (Computer Science major) **(Phal Des – Cambodia)**

L. Teaching opportunities related to SIRCA project:

- "ICT and Education" seminar in graduate course - Information Technology: Planning and Impact **(Komathi Ale – Singapore)**
- Lecturer, Utrecht university, the Netherlands (June 2010) **(Pham Huu Ty – Vietnam)**
- Workshop leader, Asia Pacific Ubiquitous Healthcare Research Centre (APuHC), University of New South Wales **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- Two research discussions with the academics and researcher in own universities and a local NGO **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- Lecturer, Media Journalist diploma course, Press Institute of Bangladesh, Government of Bangladesh **(Md. Mahfuz Ashraf - Bangladesh)**
- Lecturer, Management Information Systems class, Royal University of Phnom Penh **(Phal Des – Cambodia)**
- Workshop leader, ICT and Healthcare Services, Royal University of Phnom Penh **(Phal Des – Cambodia)**
- Lecturer, IT Engineering undergraduate course, Computer Science Department, Royal University of Phnom Penh **(Phal Des – Cambodia)**
- Lecturer, PhD level at Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- Lecturer on research methodology, National Labour Institute, Noida, UP **(Balwant Singh Mehta – India)**
- 11th Libre Software Meeting,"School Information Management for Teachers" seminar, France, 6-11 July 2010. **(T.B. Dinesh – India)**
- Once **(V.L.V. Kameswari/Devesh Kishore – India)**

It is important to consider the influence that SIRCA is having on people surrounding the PI, namely, the research assistants, colleagues, and students whom the PI teaches. It is apparent from the outcomes below that the research assistants from different disciplines have benefited by working alongside the PIs. The PIs have been imparting the knowledge gained during the SIRCA project to other people through teaching opportunities at universities and non-academic settings.

One PI and Mentor have sown the seeds for the founding of a climate change research center at Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry which will be built on the PI's project to use ICTs for climate change monitoring. The counterpart Mentor established a project in his university in the UK, winning a 2-year funding grant from IDRC.

One Mentor was able to recruit and supervise 3 undergraduate students from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information for two SIRCA PI projects. The students presented their findings in the following international conferences:

- Enabling Informal Networks "Guanxi" via Information and Communication Technologies: Reaching Rural Doctrs in Xi'an, China". IAMCR2010, Braga, Portugal, 18-22 July 2010.
- "Manoeuvring in the mountains: Exploring the potential of an information and communication technology system for community health care workers in Nepal". IAMCR2010, Braga, Portugal, 18-22 July 2010.

- "Barefoot and mobile: Utilizing informal Guanxi networks to reach rural health care service providers" "Media Diversity 2010" Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 18 - 19 March 2010.

A second Mentor assisted a group of engineering students to enter into an international competition in Poland with a project related to SMS in Africa. The students were finalists in the championship. The Mentor has linked up the team to his PI as the group was interested in continuing their work with the Mentor.

Institutions outside of Singapore that are keen to replicate the SIRCA model have been taking advantage of SIRCA's "open data policy" and requesting templates, guidelines, programme management/operations material as well as advice and recommendations from the Secretariat. SIRCA can consider having these materials available on its website. Below are two institutions that have set up their own grant-making programmes modeled after SIRCA:

- Amy Mahan Fellowship Programm www.upf.edu/amymahan
- Centre for Media and Transitional Societies, Carlton University, Ottawa, Canada

Recommendation #27
Monitor/track PI and Mentor outcomes more consistently. PIs have had tremendous outcomes, some fully related to SIRCA projects, and some that have tangential relation to SIRCA but nevertheless inspired by their participation in the Programme. Both kinds of outcomes are important to monitor because it demonstrates that SIRCA has had a broad influence on their careers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This formative evaluation of the SIRCA Programme used the Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach to focus on three areas identified by the *Primary Intended Users* as most worthy of an in-depth assessment – the Grant Review Process, the Mentorship Programme, and the Workshops and Conferences. In light of SIRCA's key objectives – to enhance research capacity in Asia, to create a space for discussion on ICTD in the region, to connect emerging and established researchers, and to disseminate research findings – the *Primary Intended Users* were facilitated by the evaluator to think of the *primary uses* of the evaluation, and to converge on questions they felt would yield actionable findings and recommendations. The three key evaluation questions were:

1. To what extent did the Grant Review Committee select the most appropriate candidates for the SIRCA grants given the time and resources available to them?
2. To what extent did the Mentorship Programme facilitate learning and/or collaboration between emerging and established researchers?
3. To what extent did the Workshops & Conferences facilitate publication and dissemination of research findings?

The Singapore Internet Research Center did a solid job in managing the Grant Review Process despite staff shortage, and legal/administrative delays during SIRCA's start-up. The Programme successfully made the "Call for Proposals" that resulted in more than 100 registrants and almost 60 submissions. The Grant Review Committee selected a diversity of project topics – in healthcare, rural development, education, agriculture, environment, political science, psychology, and migration. The evaluation confirmed the verbal feedback received by the SIRCA staff that more than 1 week of review time with 5 to 10 proposals per reviewer were the ideal conditions for a careful and thorough reading of applications. By the end of the Programme, 12 of the 15 awarded PIs successfully completed their projects. In considering the 3 PIs that dropped out of the Programme, more screening criteria to assess the applicants' priorities may be helpful to cull out PIs who did not have the motivation to pursue SIRCA's rigorous research work.

The Mentorship Programme laid the foundations for future professional collaborations between emerging and established ICTD researchers. SIRCA can build on this network to develop a community of ICTD researchers using virtual platforms that connect and reduce the sense of isolation felt by PIs, Mentors, Trainers and Grant Reviewers dispersed across continents. Despite some Mentors being matched to a project outside of their expertise, they were still able to provide sound advice to PIs on research methods and linked them to professional circles. Mentors learned and appreciated this mentoring experience. Meanwhile, the PIs used SIRCA as a career launching pad and went on to pursue further studies or disseminated their work in universities and organizations they worked with. The Mentor Site Visit was ultimately the highlight of the mentorship as they triggered creativity, productivity, enlightenment about the project, strengthened the PI-Mentor relationship, and reinforced bidirectional learning.

Workshops and conferences were the pillars to SIRCA's immediate capacity building efforts. The PIs gained exposure to ICTD theory and research tools. The workshops were so beneficial that the PIs wanted more – more workshops, more topics, and more time. Workshops can be ideal venues to bring speakers and trainers from academia, civil society, government and the media to teach PIs how to publish and disseminate their work as widely as possible. Like the Mobiles PreConference 2010 which was tagged to the International Communication Association (ICA) Conference, it is worthwhile to combine a workshop with a conference so PIs can disseminate their work to a wider audience. Workshops and conferences helped PIs prepare for or actually publish their work but more effort can be put to increase the diversity of dissemination outlets.

5. LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Grant Review Process

Strategic Recommendations
Main SIRCA Stakeholders: Director, Assistant Director, Senior Manager, IDRC

HIGH PRIORITY

Recommendation #7 for the future: SIRCA needs to be clear about its target applicants, objectives and mission. Will it fund emerging researchers or experienced researchers that can impact the ICTD field? This will affect the GRC selection process.

Recommendation #5 for the future: Maintain the Grant Review Committee external to SiRC and without overlap with the Selection Committee. GRC Reviewers have read the proposals in great deal and consequently may want to Mentor a particularly interesting project, thus deliberately selecting the project for a grant. Alternatively, knowing about the project in great deal can subconsciously influence, positively or negatively, the outcome of the proposal. It is better to maintain mutual exclusivity between the 2 committees and avoid bias.

MEDIUM PRIORITY

Recommendation #4 for the future: It is not necessary to hold an on-site GRC meeting if SiRC decides to accept assessment decisions from reviewers electronically. If SiRC decides to hold a GRC meeting, teleconferences with reviewers located abroad is a possible avenue of communication. SiRC can collate Q & A from reviewers and send them out weekly to clarify inquiries from GRC members during the review period.

Recommendation #2 for the future: Scrutinize the PIs' motivations to do research through more screening criteria in the written application or through personal interviews. SIRCA can consider including age, professional occupation, and other personal elements to get more background information about applicants.

Operational Recommendations
Main SIRCA Stakeholders: Senior Manager, Staff

HIGH PRIORITY

Recommendation #3 for the future: Have a large and diverse body of Reviewers – people from academia, government, private sector, think tanks, and civil society – as this diversity is also reflected in the topics and countries of applicants. Having practitioners and policy makers in the body of Reviewers will help to maintain relevance to development and social science research. More Reviewers in the GRC group will ease the burden per Reviewer to assess many proposals.

Recommendation #8 for the future: Have an application form to equalize the application process regardless of the applicant's research background or experience. Application content can reflect the items on the GRC Project Assessment Decision Matrix which is the basis for scoring. All applicants need to present the same information to the Grant Review Committee instead of free-writing the application. In the future, SiRC may consider creating an online template for applicants to fill out, as done in many university applications.

MEDIUM PRIORITY

Recommendation #1 for the future: While most research is based in universities and academia, more advertising to non-academic entities doing development work such as government bodies, multilateral organizations, think tanks, and professional communities can be done as SIRCA is inherently aiming to understand and/or resolve development challenges using ICT.

Recommendation #6 for the future: Keep GRC members informed and involved with SIRCA, updating them with the latest news/e-Newsletter. GRC members are resource persons that can play other roles in the Programme in the future.

5.2 Mentorship Programme

Strategic Recommendations
Main SIRCA Stakeholders: Director, Assistant Director, Senior Manager, IDRC

HIGH PRIORITY

Recommendation #10 for SIRCA: Allow for at least 2 Mentor Site Visits to increase face-to-face interaction and support the project outcomes.

Recommendation #14 for the future: Increase Mentor's compensation to attract senior researchers.

Recommendation #11 for the future: Allow PIs to recommend their own Mentors for the projects or allow PIs to pick their "top 3 Mentors" if SIRCA posts the Mentors' profiles on its website. SIRCA can also consider circulating awarded projects to Mentors for them to choose a project they would like to work with. It is preferable to have the PI and Mentor located near each other to ease guidance.

Operational Recommendations
Main SIRCA Stakeholders: Senior Manager, Staff

HIGH PRIORITY

Recommendation #13 for the future: To ensure a large and diverse pool of qualified Mentors, SIRCA should maintain a database and mailing list of Mentors obtained through personal networks, PI recommendations, leading ICTD journals, other IDRC sponsored programs in ICTD, conferences, and institutions so that they can be tapped into for the variety of roles that SIRCA has to offer (Mentor, Reviewer, Trainer, Speaker, Observer, etc.). The list should include people from Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America, and Oceania.

LOW PRIORITY

Recommendation #12 for the future: To connect people and to reduce the sense of isolation, SIRCA can consider creating a Facebook page where communication is dynamic among all SIRCA stakeholders. A Facebook icon that says "Follow us on Facebook" can be placed on the SIRCA website for anyone in the public interested in following SIRCA events, projects, and announcements. Facebook can be moderated and kept private or public depending on the settings. Facebook is currently very popular among internet users and a convenient platform to connect people, add photos and videos. It is also a way to market the SIRCA Programme. SIRCA can start inviting current PIs, Mentors, GRC members, Trainers, IDRC stakeholders and "SIRCA Associates" in the website to its Facebook page. The e-newsletter on the current SIRCA website serves to update and inform the general public about SIRCA but its function as a dynamic "connector" of SIRCA stakeholders/alumni is minimal.

Recommendation #9 for the future: Compile a Mentorship handbook to clarify roles and expectations for Mentors in the SIRCA Programme. It is also a tool that SIRCA can share with other institutions who want to replicate a grant-making programme.

5.3 Workshops and Conferences

Strategic Recommendations
Main SIRCA Stakeholders: Director, Assistant Director, Senior Manager

HIGH PRIORITY

Recommendation #15 for SIRCA: Breadth: Consider more topics to present/teach at the workshops as suggested by the respondents and by gauging their interest. If not all topics can be covered in workshops, topics can be presented in "packaged" form via webinars, online courses, videos, and Mentors can be encouraged to discuss these topics with the PIs throughout their project mentorship.

Recommendation #16 for the future: Depth: Consider deepening the workshops topics by allowing more time per topic. An intensive workshop can be extended to a 1 or 2 week course, perhaps adjoined with the "Pre-Project Workshop". Facilities such as computer labs, library resources, and e-journals can be made available depending on the topics.

Recommendation #25 for the future: Diversify workshop speakers and trainers with people from different professions and regions such as journalists to talk about writing styles and dissemination, and practitioners from development agencies and NGOs to talk about research, practice and policy. These speakers can come deliberately from the country where the PI will be conducting the project to link the PI to that practitioner or journalist in the future.

MEDIUM PRIORITY

Recommendation #22 for the future: Bring the discussion about the PI's publication strategy early in the programme in the first PI workshop and also invite Mentors to this workshop.

Recommendation #21 for the future: To cater to participants who were unable to attend workshops, video recordings of workshops can be posted on YouTube by creating a SIRCA YouTube channel. SIRCA can video record 30-second PI self-introductions during workshops and post them on the web to get their "instant reactions" to the workshops or their SIRCA experience so far. IDRC PanAsia Network and PanAsia both have their own channel where workshop videos are uploaded. This is in line with SIRCA's open data policy to share their learnings and outputs with others. YouTube can also be used by PIs if they have a recording device to create a video and upload it on the "SIRCA YouTube channel." The Secretariat can send the PI's projects to each other and Mentors for inspiration and update. PIs can be encouraged to use technology to market their own projects.

LOW PRIORITY

Recommendation #23 for the future: Pre-Project Workshop (see page 53)

Operational Recommendations
Main Stakeholders: Senior Manager, Staff

HIGH PRIORITY

Recommendation #18 for SIRCA: Workshops need to include a session on presentation skills – speaking in public and creating visible and interesting PowerPoint presentations.

MEDIUM PRIORITY

Recommendation #26 for SIRCA: Bridging research and practice: (1) SIRCA could consider adding a "Policy Recommendation" or "Policy and Practice Implications" section in the progress report and final reports. This will allow PIs to think about their social science research findings more closely to the community or beneficiary, and guide their publication strategies.

Recommendation #27 for SIRCA: Monitor/Track PI and Mentor outcomes more consistently. PIs have had tremendous outcomes, some fully related to SIRCA projects, and some that have tangential relation to SIRCA but nevertheless inspired by their participation in the Programme. Both kinds of outcomes are important to monitor because it demonstrates that SIRCA has had a broad influence on their careers.

LOW PRIORITY

Recommendation #19 for SIRCA: To help PIs prepare PowerPoint presentations and poster displays, and to avoid numerous "back and forth" emails and misunderstandings about the format, SIRCA can consider posting a picture of a sample poster (or create a fake, cartoon poster if concerned about curtailing creativity) and the general poster session atmosphere from Workshop 2 to inspire the PIs.

Recommendation #24 for the future: Workshop format: The panelists in Workshop 1 and Workshop 2 are sitting in front of an audience in a row of chairs or behind a table. The Q&A sessions were not as interactive and dynamic as one would hope. To encourage PIs to speak up, SIRCA can consider changing the physical format of the sessions and make it a "round table" where speakers/Mentors/panelists are at the same level and PIs sit around a table in a more intimate setting (or place chairs in a circle). Workshop 1 panel sessions, in particular, took place in a lecture theatre and looked like a classroom. There were not many questions from the PIs and the moderator was doing the most speaking and questioning to move the discussions forward.

Recommendation #20 for SIRCA: Since many PIs were frazzled by the 3-minute PowerPoint presentation in Workshop 2, SIRCA can consider extending the presentation to 5 minutes per person. Practice sessions are, however, necessary and beneficial.

Recommendation #17 for the future: Allow Mentors to present their topic/region of expertise during a workshop.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. SIRCA Theory of Change

Annex 2. Scope of Service for evaluator

Annex 3. Survey/Interview Questions

Annex 4. Project Assessment Decision Matrix

Annex 5. Individuals Consulted by Stakeholder Group

Annex 6. List of Key Documents

Annex 1. SIRCA Theory of Change

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS (ribbon-cutting, buy or budget $)	OUTCOMES (behavior change)		IMPACT
			Short-Term	*Intermediate*	
Financial resources Administrative resources Human resources Knowledge resources / Libraries / Databases Pool of ICTD experts Pool of emerging or experienced researchers in Asia Technology/ website or Internet platform	Develop Grant Administration Process • Develop Project Assessment Matrix • Select Grant Review Committee (GRC) members • Organize GRC meeting	Proposals with high quality ICTD research potential	Developing broad-based, high-quality, multidisciplinary social science research in ICTD in Asia	Influencing national, regional & global policy discussions in ICTD	Improve livelihoods in developing countries through ICT for Development
	Develop Mentorship Program • Select Mentors • Match Mentors to Projects • Fund Mentor Site Visit	PIs with strong fieldwork skills & research management capabilities guided by Mentors' expertise Mentors & PIs with strong professional networks to the ICTD discipline/ community	Recognizing SIRCA program/Asian-based researchers through diverse venues and dissemination / discussion platforms	Making better evidence-based decisions by local, national, regional and / or global decision makers	
	Select Proposals/Principal Investigators (PIs) Organize capacity building Workshops & Conferences	PIs with knowledge & skills to conduct rigorous ICTD research, to disseminate results widely, and to collaborate with other PIs, Mentors & the ICTD community			
	Develop SIRCA Publications	Media Asia Journal, other SIRCA-generated publications			
	Develop program management & monitoring system	SIRCA program management & monitoring system SIRCA staff with knowledge, expertise, program management & monitoring skills to ensure program effectiveness, sustainability and accountability			
	Develop SIRCA/SiRC website	SIRCA/SiRC website with ICTD resources, Milestones & Achievements, platform for networking & dissemination			

Annex 2. Scope of Service for evaluator

Consultancy Agreement: Scope of Evaluation Service for NTU SIRCA Programme

A. Planning phase

1. To propose and develop, together with IDRC/SIRCA, an approved evaluation plan for the SIRCA programme, identifying clearly topics and/or components that will be evaluated

2. Attend up to two (2) regional evaluation meetings of all PAN projects. The expenses incurred for these meetings (*e.g. travel expenses such as air tickets, accommodation)* will be borne by project.

B. Implementation phase

3. Implement the approved workplan including data collection and data analysis

4. Document lessons learned at each stage of the evaluation. If required and in discussion with IDRC and SIRCA, propose necessary changes to workplan.

C. Post-implementation period

5. Write final report, which should include but not be limited to:

a. Documenting of findings from the evaluation and their corresponding analyses;

b. Proposing sound recommendations on how to improve the SIRCA Programme

Annex 3. Survey/Interview Questions

Questions to Principal Investigator:

Mentorship Programme

I. QUALITY OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

1. How has SIRCA's Mentorship Programme benefited you?

2. How suitable was the Mentor matched to your project?

3. How has your SIRCA Mentor had an influence on you? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*

   a. *My Mentor advanced my:*
      1) Knowledge in ICTD research theory
      2) Knowledge in ICTD methods
      3) Fieldwork skills
      4) Writing skills
      5) Publication skills
      6) Dissemination skills
      7) Knowledge and skills in accountability and transparency issues
      8) Knowledge in research ethical issues

   b. *My Mentor connected me to:*
      1) Professional communities in the ICTD discipline
      2) ICTD literature and ideas

   c. *Other*_____

4. Did you have a specific "moment of enlightenment" during a discussion with your Mentor? Please elaborate.

5. How else could the Mentor have supported you as an ICTD researcher?

6. How else could SIRCA Secretariat have improved your mentorship experience?

II. COMMUNICATION WITH MENTOR

1. Every month, I communicate with my Mentor: *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*

   a. 1 - 2 times
   b. 2 - 4 times
   c. 4 - 6 times
   d. > 6 times

   Through:
   e. Email
   f. Skype
   g. Mobile Phone
   h. Landline
   i. Other_____

2. How sufficient was this frequency of communication to your research progress?

3. What challenges have you encountered when communicating with your Mentor? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*

   a. Scheduling problems
   b. Language problems (e.g. Mentor has a heavy accent or a poor command of English)
   c. Communication infrastructure problems (e.g. lack of internet connectivity or electricity, unreliable phone lines)
   d. Not applicable
   e. Other_____

4. How could the SIRCA Secretariat have helped resolve the above communication challenges?

5. What challenges did you face when coordinating the *Mentor Site Visit* with your Mentor? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you):*

   a. Scheduling with Mentor
   b. Lack of Time
   c. Accessibility of research site
   d. Inadequate SIRCA funding
   e. Uncertainty of the best phase at which to plan visit
   f. Unsure of objectives of Mentor Site Visit
   g. Too few Mentor Site Visits
   h. Not applicable
   i. Other_____

6. How could the SIRCA Secretariat have helped to improve the above *Mentor Site Visit* challenges?

7. What positive outcomes were attained through the *Mentor Site Visit*? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*

   a. Improved working relationship with Mentor through face-to-face interaction
   b. Gained better understanding of research site context
   c. Facilitated technical consultations with Mentor on project
   d. Explored/found other research opportunities in research site
   e. Explored potential research collaborations
   f. Ensured compliance with SIRCA programme objectives
   g. Ensured research was conducted ethically and responsibly
   h. Developed professional networks
   i. Other (please elaborate) _____

III. MENTOR'S ATTITUDE

1. Throughout my project, my Mentor was *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you):*

   a. Motivating
   b. Encouraging
   c. Supportive
   d. Committed
   e. Resourceful
   f. Timely in his/her responses to my queries
   g. Frustrating
   h. Put too pressure on my work
   i. Too passive
   j. Irresponsible
   k. Too busy for me
   l. Not up to my expectations
   m. Other _____

Workshops and Conferences

1. How have *Workshop 1 (July 2009)* and *Workshop 2 (June 2010)* built your capacity in terms of: *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*

   a. ICTD research theory
   b. ICTD research methods
   c. Research Ethics
   d. Quantitative/Data analysis/Statistical analysis skills
   e. Qualitative data analysis skills
   f. Writing skills
   g. Publication skills
   h. Dissemination skills
   i. Presentation skills
   j. Networking skills

k. Accountability and transparency issues in research
l. Exposure to ICTD Resources (people, associations, websites, or literature)
m. Other_____

2. How useful to you were the following SIRCA Workshop activities? *(Please mark an "X")*

	Not at all useful	Slightly useful	Moderately useful	Very useful	Extremely useful
a. Small group break out session (Workshop 1)					
b. 3-minute PowerPoint presentation practice (Workshop 2)					
c. One-on-one PI-Mentor breakout session (Workshop 2)					
d. Panel discussion on dissemination of research results (Workshop 2)					
e. Networking activities (e.g. site-seeing, dinner cruise) (Workshops 1 & 2)					

3. Please fill in the matrix below for the *ideal frequency* for SIRCA to organize Workshops/Conferences, their *ideal theme(s)*, and the *ideal PI project stage* to hold them (beginning, middle, or end of your project).

Frequency of Workshops	Workshop Theme(s)	Frequency of Conferences	Conference Theme(s)	PI Project Stage

4. How did the SIRCA Secretariat guide you with producing the following deliverables? Please elaborate.

a. Mobiles Preconference Poster Display:
b. Workshop 3-minute PowerPoint presentation:

5. How have your participation in the *Mobiles Preconference 2010* and the *ICA 2010 Conference* (Day 1 sponsored by SIRCA) help you in your research?

6. How else could the SIRCA Secretariat improve your experience in its Workshops and Conferences?

Capacity Building Outcomes

1. Please list:
   a. Number and nature of publications in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals:
   b. Number and nature of publications/media broadcasts in non-scholarly outlets (e.g. books, magazines, newsletters, newspapers, TV/radio programs, etc.):
   c. Number of times cited by other scholars:
   d. Number of times invited as a Reviewer or Editor for a journal, and nature of journal:
   e. Number of awards/recognitions you obtained as a result of your SIRCA project, and monetary amount (e.g. fellowships, scholarships, further studies, other grants):
   f. Number and nature of awards/recognitions your Research Assistants obtained as a result of the SIRCA project, and monetary amount (e.g. fellowships, scholarships, further studies, other grants):
   g. Number and nature of teaching opportunities as a result of your SIRCA project (e.g. lecture for a university class discussing issues arising from SIRCA research):
   h. Number of times attended Workshops/Conferences, and nature of Workshops/Conferences:
      - Number of times within these attendances that you presented your research work:

Questions to Mentor:

Mentorship Programme

I. QUALITY OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

1. Why did you decide to become a SIRCA Mentor?

2. How suitable was the PI project matched to your expertise?

3. What did you learn from guiding and supervising an emerging ICTD researcher?

4. Did you have a specific "moment of enlightenment" during a discussion with your PI? Please elaborate.

5. Did your role as SIRCA Mentor have an influence on: (Please elaborate in the space provided)

   a. Publication of your own research work?
   b. Dissemination of your own research work?
   c. Collaboration with other ICTD researchers?
   d. Increased understanding of ICTD discipline?
   e. Increased your professional circle of ICTD colleagues?
   f. Other?_____

6. Should SIRCA play a role in exposing the PIs to any potential policy or practice implications of their research projects? Please elaborate.

7. What else could the SIRCA Secretariat have done to improve the Mentorship Programme?

8. Would you Mentor another project for SIRCA? Why?

II. COMMUNICATION WITH PI

1. Every month, I communicate with my PI: *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*

   a. 1 - 2 times
   b. 2 - 4 times
   c. 4 - 6 times
   d. > 6 times

   Through:
   e. Email
   f. Skype
   g. Mobile Phone
   h. Landline
   i. Other_____

2. How sufficient was the above frequency of communication to fulfill your mentorship duties?

3. What challenges have you encountered when communicating with your PI? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*

   a. Scheduling problems
   b. Language problems (e.g. Mentor has a heavy accent or a poor command of English)
   c. Communication infrastructure problems (e.g. lack of internet connectivity or electricity, unreliable phone lines)
   d. Not applicable
   e. Other_____

4. How could the SIRCA Secretariat have helped to resolve the above communication challenges?

5. What challenges did you face when coordinating the *Mentor Site Visit* with your PI? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*
   a. Scheduling with PI
   b. Lack of Time

c. Accessibility of research site
d. Inadequate SIRCA funding
e. Uncertainty of the best phase at which to plan visit
f. Unsure of objectives of Mentor Site Visit
g. Too few Mentor Site Visits
h. Not applicable
i. Other_____

6. How could the SIRCA Secretariat have helped to improve the above *Mentor Site Visit* challenges?

7. What positive outcomes were attained through the *Mentor Site Visit*? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you)*

   a. Improved working relationship with PI through face-to-face interaction
   b. Gained better understanding of research site context
   c. Facilitated consultations requested by PI on the project
   d. Explored/found other research opportunities in research site
   e. Explore potential research collaborations
   f. Ensured compliance with SIRCA programme objectives
   g. Ensured research was conducted ethically and responsibly
   h. Developed professional networks
   i. Other (please elaborate) _____

Workshops and Conferences

1. 1. What did you find most useful from participating in the following activities? *(Please elaborate in the space provided)*

   a. Workshop 2 (June 2010):
   b. Mobiles Preconference 2010:
   c. ICA Conference 2010 (Day 1 sponsored by SIRCA):

2. SIRCA Workshops have built the capacity of PIs in terms of: *(Please mark an "X" next to the item)*

   a. ICTD research theory
   b. ICTD research methods
   c. Research Ethics
   d. Quantitative/Data analysis/Statistical analysis skills
   e. Qualitative data analysis skills
   f. Writing skills
   g. Publication skills
   h. Dissemination skills
   i. Presentation skills
   j. Networking skills
   k. Accountability and transparency issues in research
   l. Exposure to ICTD Resources (people, associations, websites, or literature)
   m. Other _____

3. Please fill in the matrix below for the *ideal frequency* for SIRCA to organize Workshops/Conferences, their *ideal theme(s)*, and the *ideal PI project stage* to hold them (beginning, middle, or end of project).

Frequency of Workshops	Workshop Theme(s)	Frequency of Conferences	Conference Theme(s)	PI Project Stage

4. How did your PI grow as an ICTD researcher over the course of the SIRCA project?

5. How else could the SIRCA Secretariat improve its Workshops and Conferences?

Questions to Grant Review Committee Members:

Grant Review Process

1. What do you feel is the optimal amount of time for one GRC member to review project proposals before the GRC meeting? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you):*

   a. 1 week
   b. 2 weeks
   c. 3 week
   d. > 3 weeks
   e. Other_____

2. What do you feel is the optimal number of proposals that one GRC member should review given the time you have idealized above? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you):*

   a. 1 proposal
   b. 2 - 5 proposals
   c. 5 - 10 proposal
   d. > 10 proposals
   e. Other _____

3. What do you feel is the optimal amount of time for the GRC to select grant awardees? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you):*

   a. 1 day
   b. 2 days
   c. 3 day
   d. > 3 days
   e. Other _____

4. How would you rate the GRC documents? *(Please mark an "X")*

	One of the worst	Below average	Average	Above average	One of the best
a. GRC Terms of Reference					
b. GRC Memorandum of Understanding					
c. Assessment Framework Guidelines					
d. Project Assessment Framework (Excel)					

5. How would you rate the planning and logistics of the GRC meeting? *(Please mark an "X")*

	One of the worst	Below average	Average	Above average	One of the best
a. Pre-meeting interaction with SIRCA Secretariat					
b. Flight arrangements					
c. Hotel accommodation					
d. Meals					

6. To what extent were the criteria in the *Project Assessment Framework* adequate to select the best proposals? (*Please refer to the Excel spreadsheet attachment)*

7. How else can the SIRCA Secretariat improve processes for the next GRC round?

8. How did your participation in the GRC influence your career?

9. Would you return to SIRCA as a Reviewer in the future? Why?

Questions to SIRCA Staff:

Grant Review Process

1. What do you feel is the optimal amount of time for one GRC member to review project proposals before the GRC meeting? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you):*

   a. 1 week
   b. 2 weeks
   c. 3 week
   d. > 3 weeks
   e. Other_____

2. What do you feel is the optimal number of proposals that one GRC member should review given the time you have idealized above? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you):*

   a. 1 proposal
   b. 2 - 5 proposals
   c. 5 - 10 proposal
   d. > 10 proposals
   e. Other _____

3. What do you feel is the optimal amount of time for the GRC to select grant awardees? *(Please mark an "X" next to the item that applies to you):*

   a. 1 day
   b. 2 days
   c. 3 day
   d. > 3 days
   e. Other _____

4. How would you rate the GRC documents? *(Please mark an "X")*

	One of the worst	Below average	Average	Above average	One of the best
a. GRC Terms of Reference					
b. GRC Memorandum of Understanding					
c. Assessment Framework Guidelines					
d. Project Assessment Framework (Excel)					

5. How would you rate the planning and logistics of the GRC meeting? *(Please mark an "X")*

	One of the worst	Below average	Average	Above average	One of the best
a. Pre-meeting interaction with SIRCA Secretariat					
b. Flight arrangements					
c. Hotel accommodation					
d. Meals					

6. To what extent were the criteria in the *Project Assessment Framework* adequate to select the best proposals? (*Please refer to the Excel spreadsheet attachment)*

7. How else can the SIRCA Secretariat improve processes for the next GRC round?

Mentorship Programme

1. How can the Mentor recruitment process be improved to attract the most qualified Mentors?

2. How can the Mentor-PI matching be improved to achieve SIRCA's objectives?

3. What were the main challenges that the SIRCA Secretariat faced in managing the Mentorship Programme? How did SIRCA anticipate or resolve these challenges?

Workshops and Conferences

1. Please fill in the matrix below for the *ideal frequency* for SIRCA to organize Workshops/Conferences, their *ideal theme(s)*, and the *ideal PI project stage* to hold them (beginning, middle, or end of project).

Frequency of Workshops	Workshop Theme(s)	Frequency of Conferences	Conference Theme(s)	PI Project Stage

2. What were the main challenges in organizing *Workshops 1 and 2*? How did SIRCA resolve them? What can SIRCA do next time to anticipate these challenges?

3. What were the main challenges in organizing the *Mobiles Preconference*? How did SIRCA Secretariat resolve them? What can SIRCA do next time to anticipate these challenges?

4. Should SIRCA play a role in exposing the PIs to any potential policy or practice implications of their research projects? Please elaborate.

Questions to Trainer:

1. Why did you decide to become a SIRCA Trainer?

2. Did your role as SIRCA Workshop Trainer have an influence on: (Please elaborate in the space provided)
   a. Publication of your own research work?
   b. Dissemination of your own research work?
   c. Collaboration with other ICTD researchers?
   d. Increased understanding of ICTD discipline?
   e. Increased your professional circle of ICTD colleagues?
   f. Other?_____

3. Please fill in the matrix below for the *ideal frequency* for SIRCA to organize Workshops/Conferences, their *ideal theme(s)*, and the *ideal project stage* to hold them (beginning, middle, or end of Principal Investigator's project).

Frequency of Workshops	Workshop Theme(s)	Frequency of Conferences	Conference Theme(s)	PI Project Stage

4. Should SIRCA play a role in exposing the Principal Investigators to the potential policy and practice implications of their research projects? Please elaborate.

5. How else could the SIRCA Secretariat improve your experience as a Workshop Trainer?

6. Would you return as a SIRCA Trainer? Why?

Annex 4. Project Assessment Decision Matrix

INSTRUCTIONS	PROJECT NAME
Relevance	
1. ICTD Research GAP	Does the research proposal identify a research gap?
2. ICTD Research Outcomes	Does the research proposal clearly articulate and describe expected research outcomes?
3. Beneficiary Community Relevance	Is the project relevant on a beneficiary community level?
4. Sustainability	Does the project promote sustainable development (e.g. economically competitive, environmentally sound and socially responsible) of ICT use?
5. Contributions of Outcomes to Beneficiary Community ICT Practices	Will the outcomes of the project contribute to the improvement of current ICT practices within the beneficiary community?
	SUBTOTAL RELEVANCE
Influence and Knowledge Transfer	
1. Beneficiary Community Support and Commitment	What level of commitment and support have the beneficiary community made to this proposal?
2. Practical Application/Impact	How much does the proposal discuss the potential influence or impact the results (or the lack of results) may have?
3. Contribution to New Knowledge (Uniqueness)	Will the proposal contribute to new knowledge and understanding with respect to advancing ICTD research?
4. Sharing of Results	Does the proposal include plans for the communication and dissemination of research findings through the various strategies and avenues beyond those offered by the program, such as the SiRC website, the program's annual conference and peer-reviewed journal?
	SUBTOTAL INFLUENCE & KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER
Feasibility	
1. Objectives clear	Are the proposal outcomes and objectives clearly set out?
2. Method competent	Are the methods appropriate and well described?
3. Value for Money (Cost Benefit)	Will the planned outcomes provide sound value for money benefits?
4. Achievability	Are the proposal outcomes achievable within the proposed budget and timelines?
5. Risk Management	Does the proposal address relevant risk and limitation issues?
	SUBTOTAL FEASIBILITY
	NAME OF PROJECT
WEIGHTS USED	**TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE**
RELEVANCE	35%
ATTRACTIVENESS	30%
FEASIBILITY	35%

Annex 5. Individuals Consulted by Stakeholder Group

Principal Investigators
1. Mahfuz Ashraf (Bangladesh)
2. Sirajul Islam (Bangladesh)
3. Peou Chivoin (Cambodia)
4. Phal Des (Cambodia)
5. Kanliang Wang (China)
6. Wansong Zheng (China)
7. Balwant Singh Mehta (India)
8. V.L.V. Kameswari/Devesh Kishore (India)
9. T.B. Dinesh (India)
10. Shefali Oza (Nepal)
11. Regina Hechanova (Philippines)
12. Grace Mirandilla (Philippines)
13. M.J.R David (Sri Lanka)
14. Pham Huu Ty (Vietnam)
15. Komathi Ale (Singapore)

Mentors
1. Alexander Flor (Philippines)
2. Ang Peng Hwa (Singapore)
3. Arul Chib (Singapore)
4. John Traxler (UK)
5. May Lwin (Singapore)
6. Rahul De (India)
7. Richard Heeks (UK)
8. Roger Harris (Hong Kong)
9. Shaikh Abdus Salam (Bangladesh)
10. Vibodh Parthasarathi (India)

Grant Review Committee Members
1. Roger Harris (Hong Kong)
2. Rahul De (India)
3. Erwin Alampay (Philippines)
4. Arul Chib (Singapore)
5. Heather Hudson (US)
6. John Traxler (UK)
7. Jonathan Donner (US)
8. Kathleen Flynn-Dapaah (Canada)
9. Chaitali Sinha (Canada)
10. May Lwin (Singapore)
11. Ang Peng Hwa (Singapore)

Workshop 1 Trainers
1. Alexander Flor (Philippines)
2. Czarina Saloma-Akpedonu (Philippines)
3. Rahul De (India)

SIRCA Secretariat (Singapore)
1. Ang Peng Hwa (Director)
2. Arul Chib (Assistant Director)
3. Yvonne Lim (Senior Manager)
4. Naowarat Narula (Programme Manager)
5. Sri Ranjini Meihua d/o Raman (Programme Officer)
6. Joanna Tan (former Senior Manager)
7. Grace Kwan (former Programme Officer)

Annex 6. List of Key Documents

SIRCA DOCUMENTS

1st Technical Progress Report, August 2008 – July 2009. IDRC Small Grants Program for ICTD Research Capacity Building: Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia (SIRCA). IDRC grant number: 104921-001.

2nd Technical Progress Report, August 2009 – June 2010. IDRC Small Grants Program for ICTD Research Capacity Building: Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia (SIRCA). IDRC grant number: 104921-001.

PAN (IDRC) – SiRC Funding Program for ICTD Research Capacity Building: SIRCA – Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia. Singapore Internet Research Center, July 2008.

SIRCA Annual Report 2009 – 2010. Singapore Internet Research Centre, Nanyang Technological University, June 2010.

Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia (SIRCA) Workshop 1. Singapore Internet Research Centre. CD video-recording. July 2009.

SIRCA Applications (PI)

SIRCA Application Forms (PI, Mentor, Trainer, GRC)

SIRCA MOU (PI, Mentor, Trainer, GRC)

SIRCA TOR (PI, Mentor, Trainer, GRC)

SIRCA Feedback Surveys (PI, Mentor, GRC, Mobile Preconference participants)

SIRCA Mid-Term Progress Reports (PI)

SIRCA Final Reports (PI)

SIRCA Project Amendments (PI)

SIRCA Pre-Workshop 1 Trailers (PI)

"Setting up of SIRCA" Document compilation (SIRCA Secretariat)

OTHER REFERENCES

"American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators". July 2004.
http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesPrintable.asp

AusAID. "Staged Capacity Building Model: A Staged Approach to Assess, Plan and Monitor Capacity Building." Australian Government. 4 May, 2006.
http://www.impactalliance.org/ev_en.php?ID=12788_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Dart,Jessica & Rick Davies. "A Dialogical, Story-Based Evaluation Tool: The Most Significant Change Technique". *American Journal of Evaluation*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2003: 137 – 155.

"Evaluation Capacity Development: A Growing Priority". *Précis.* World Bank Operations Evaluation Department. Number 229, Fall 2002.

Falconer, Liz. “Organizational learning, tacit information, and e-learning: a review”. *The Organization Learning,* Vol., Issue 2, 2006: 140 – 151.

Flaman, Richard. “Evaluation of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT).” ESCAP Programme Management Division, 28 February 2010.

Franke, Todd Michael, Christina A. Christie, & Michelle T. Parra. “Transforming a Utilization Focused Evaluation(UFE) Gone Awry: A Case of Intended Use by Unintended Users”. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, Vol. 29, 2003: 13-21

International Development Research Centre (IDRC). “DECI-UFE Curriculum 2009, Modules 1 – 5” PowerPoint presentation

International Development Research Centre (IDRC). “IDRC grants to institutions: A guide to administrative procedures”. pp. 1-24 http://archive.idrc.ca/admin/Pdf/admin_final_e.pdf

International Development Research Centre (IDRC). “Pan Asia Networking Prospectus: 2006-2011.” IDRC, February 17, 2006.

Imas, Linda G. Morra, & Ray Ris. *The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations.* Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2009.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU). “Measuring the Information Society: The ICT Development Index”. Geneva, Switzerland, 2009. http://www.itu.int/net/pressoffice/backgrounders/general/pdf/5.pdf

International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS). “Internationalization of Evaluation”. https://communities.usaidallnet.gov/fa/system/files/Internationalization+of+Evaluation.PDF

Joaquín Navas & Ricardo Ramírez. “Facilitating UFE step-by-step: a process guide for evaluators – Module 1: Steps 1-3 of UFE checklist” and “Module 2: Steps 4-6 of UFE checklist” PowerPoint presentations. December 2009.

Lindquist, Evert A. “Discerning Policy Influence: Framework for a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Research”. School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, 1 September 2001. http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/10359907080discerning_policy.pdf

“Logic Model Development Guide: Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation, and Action.” W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, Michigan. January 2004.

“Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development in Africa”. *Précis.* World Bank Operations Evaluation Department. Number 183. Spring 1999.

Pang, Tikki. Talk on “Knowledge Translation: The Bumpy Road from Research to Policy”. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 23 March 2010.

Patton, Michael Quinn. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008.

Ramírez, Ricardo. “Developing Evaluation Capacity in ICTD (DECI)” DECI Brief. Feb 2009.

Ramírez, Ricardo. “Evaluation in Practice: Use and Outcomes in ICT4D Research, Kuala Lumpur, 8 – 9 December 2007.” UFE Workshop Report, International Development Research Centre, December 2007.

Ramlow, Mary E. “The Program Evaluation Standards: Summary of the Standards”. The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI. http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html

Segone, Marco & Ada Ocampo (eds).“Creating and Developing Evaluation Organizations: Lessons learned from Africa, Americas, Asia, Australasia and Europe”. *International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation*. Lima: Centro de Estudios y Promocion del Desarrollo, November 2006. http://www.ioce.net/download/case_studies/IOCE_EvalOrgPack_Jan2007.pdf

Solomon, Chelladurai. “Basics of qualitative research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques”.

Sumner, Andy, Nick Ishmael-Perkins & Johanna Lindstrom. “Making Science of Influencing: Assessing the Impact of Development Research”. IDS Working Paper Volume 2009, Number 335.
UNDP. “Generic UNDP Guidelines for Meta-Evaluation.”
http://cfapp1-docs-public.undp.org/eo/evaldocs1/eo_doc_307125412.doc

UNICEF. “UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards.” Evaluation Office - UNICEF NYHQ, September 2004.
http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/UNICEF_Eval_Report_Standards.pdf

SIRCA Website http://www.sirca.org.sg/

SiRC Website http://www.sirc.ntu.edu.sg/Pages/default.aspx

IDRC Pan Asia Networking Website http://www.idrc.ca/panasia/