

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1991, CANARI has operated five small grants facilities to (i). support projects that increase community participation in natural resource management and (ii). enable organisations to implement useful strategies, methodologies and lessons learned as developed by CANARI as part of its mandate. Between 1991 and 2006, CANARI has provided small grants to 64 projects implemented by 48 organisations in 13 countries.

The CANARI-HIVOS Technical Assistance Grant Facility “Improving Governance and Civil Society Participation in Natural Resource Management in the Caribbean” (March 2004 – July 2006) was CANARI’s most recent Fund. It was conceptualised as part of a larger CANARI capacity-building project funded by the European Commission and the Humanistic Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS).

The objective of the HIVOS Facility was to provide small grants to civil society organisations to reinforce their participation in and contribution to the equitable and sustainable use of natural resources, as a means of strengthening democratic processes in selected Caribbean countries. Topic areas for the Facility emanated from the results of a 2003 survey implemented under the larger HIVOS project to identify the issues and challenges facing key CANARI partners in natural resource management. The HIVOS Facility targeted the 13 civil society organisations that responded to the 2003 survey.

CANARI was able to disburse a total of US\$118,490.76 via five grants ranging from US\$17,543 to US\$33,900; the maximum grant ceiling was US\$35,000.

Over the years, CANARI has undertaken several assessments of its small grants facilities. The purpose of the final evaluation of the HIVOS Facility was to (i). determine whether project and Fund objectives were achieved, (ii). identify project and Fund impacts and (iii). make recommendations to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of future Funds. The evaluation was based on telephone interviews with grant recipients and key CANARI staff, an examination of key documents (e.g. project proposals and reports) and the 2005 CANARI-HIVOS Mid-term Evaluation report.

2. FINDINGS

A. THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CANARI’S SMALL GRANTS FUND

The HIVOS Facility targeted 13 civil society organisations in 11 countries in the English, French and Spanish speaking Caribbean. Eventually, five organisations¹ in four countries

¹ Organisations receiving CANARI-HIVOS small grants were the Agency for Rural Transformation (ART) in Grenada; the Centro par la Conservacion y Ecodesarollo de la Bahia de Samana y su

received funding. As a result, CANARI, was able to attract new and repeat grant recipients and extend its small grants fund to the Dominican Republic, a country that had never benefited from previous Funds. Targeting organisations in non-English speaking countries raised the challenge of translating documents.

Over the years, CANARI has sought to determine the best management structure to oversee its various small grants facilities for maximum impact. In mid-2005, it introduced a new management structure whereby CANARI's Technical Officer partnered with the Finance Officer for administrative, technical and financial oversight of the HIVOS Facility. The new management structure allowed for (i). greater efficiency in the execution of duties (ii). a good pollination of technical and financial skills for Fund oversight (iii). a better understanding of the "bigger picture" relating projects and Fund to CANARI's overall mandate and (iv). a deeper familiarity with the Fund by two persons within CANARI permitting Fund oversight to continue in the absence of any one person.

CANARI specifically targeted only the 13 organisations that had responded to the 2003 survey to solicit proposals. The strategy worked well with ten of the organisations responding by the submission of concept notes.

CANARI utilised a more rigorous project preparation process for the HIVOS Facility than for previous Funds. A two-step project proposal preparation process (i.e. submission of a concept note, logical framework and budget for review at a "Preparing for Partnership" workshop followed by the submission of a full project proposal based on the feedback given at the workshop) worked well. The two-stage process (i). allowed for the early detection of deficiencies in project design and incorrect fit of some project activities to Fund criteria and (ii). helped project applicants build their capacity for proposal preparation and project design, organisational self-analysis and an analysis of the project situational context. CANARI also strategically encouraged the early consideration of factors contributing to project success and sustainability.

The "Preparing for Partnerships" Workshop successfully brought project applicants together to discuss their project concept notes with CANARI staff and to help them understand the Fund criteria and requirements better. The workshop provided a valuable opportunity for networking and identifying links between projects.

One problem that surfaced during the grant application and project proposal preparation process was the short time frame for completing projects before the originally envisaged termination date of the HIVOS Facility (May 2004 – July 2005)² which necessitated a

Entorno (CEBSE) and the Consorcio Ambiental Dominicano (CAD) in the Dominican Republic; the Environmental Awareness Group (EAG) in Antigua and Barbuda and the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (JCDDT) in Jamaica.

² The original time frame for project implementation was May 2004 to July 2005. However, a Fund extension was eventually granted in 2005 to July 2006.

short project preparation process³ for a quick disbursement of grants. Another key problem that arose related to human capacity challenges which forced some applicants to revise project activities to address their own institutional deficiencies rather than building the capacities of other organisations. In addition, although complementary links between projects were highlighted at the “Preparing for Partnerships” Workshop, time limitations prevented participants from following up with the necessary discussions to incorporate concrete activities into the project proposals.

Unfortunately, five of the ten project applicants were unable to complete the project preparation process as a result of encountering specific problems (e.g. limited human resources to prepare the project proposal) outside of CANARI’s control. Despite this, all grant recipients were satisfied with CANARI’s role in the grant application and project proposal preparation process and with the eventual design of their projects.

A number of factors influenced project design and contributed to project success and sustainability including the fact that the projects (i). supported ongoing organisational, local and national activities (ii). clearly fitted within the grantees overall programme, mandate and vision and (iii). were strategically embedded within a larger project.

The HIVOS Facility experience showed that a maximum grant ceiling of US\$ 35,000 was adequate to attract the necessary co-funding for organisations to implement projects that reinforced their participation in natural resource management. Overall, HIVOS Facility was able to act as a catalyst to generate more than an equal amount of co-funding (US\$ 164,063.92) when compared to total grant disbursements (US\$ 118,490.76).

The extension of the HIVOS Facility deadline for the termination of projects from July 2005 to May 2006 allowed grantees more time to implement projects. The extension underscored the need for adequate project time frames for future grant funds.

Overall, project implementation for three of the five projects proceeded as planned. CANARI’s flexibility in allowing the two other grantees to refocus project activities to address emergencies that arose and to receive project extensions ensured that the grantees were still able to realise valuable benefits from the HIVOS Facility grants.

The HIVOS Facility project proposal and reporting formats allowed for the capturing of risks and assumptions that could effect (or subsequently effected) project implementation. Key risks and assumptions that surfaced included the continuance of organisational stability, “political” will for participatory natural resource management and adverse weather conditions (e.g. hurricanes and heavy rains).

³ Grant recipients had five weeks to prepare project concept notes for submission to CANARI and 12 ½ weeks (from the call for proposals) to complete the full project proposal application process and start their projects. Twelve-and-a-half weeks seemed adequate to develop and start projects but the development of projects in a participatory manner and the two-step project proposal preparation process are time consuming exercises during which time project applicants were also required to attend the “Preparing for Partnerships” Workshop.

For the most part during project implementation, grantees found it more cost effective to source technical assistance within country than to use CANARI resources. However, CANARI did provide valuable technical advice regarding the refocusing of two projects and was proactive in providing “mini-grants” from the HIVOS Facility budget to allow grantees to benefit from technical assistance via a series of training workshops designed to address any significant capacity gaps that emerged during project implementation.

One strategy that worked particularly well during project implementation was the Fund’s flexibility in allowing grant recipients to obtain funds for the payment of personnel, labour and contracts. Grant recipients spent 45.97% of the total grant disbursement on personnel/labour (27.11%) and contracts (18.86%) indicating the importance of human resources in building capacities in the niche area supported by the HIVOS Facility.

Grant recipients experienced a few problems during project implementation. For example, the actual HIVOS Facility grant disbursement (US\$ 118,490.76) was less than the total amount originally expected to be disbursed (US\$ 154,751.21) at the start of the projects because three grant recipients under-spent on their projects. Reasons for under spending included the restructuring of project activities to address emergencies, the subsequent contraction of target audiences, and project start delays resulting in less time for the implementation of project activities.

In comparison to previous small grant facilities, CANARI encouraged more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of projects during the HIVOS Facility⁴. The strategies worked well and no major improvements to the systems are necessary for future Funds.

CANARI’s strengthened management structure enabled it to undertake a deeper analysis of the technical and financial aspects of projects and to give useful and greater feedback to grant recipients. On the down side, CANARI was unable to develop objectively verifiable indicators at the overall level of the HIVOS Facility due to time constraints.

Not all of the grantees initially followed the format for the interim and final reports making it more difficult for CANARI to navigate the documents and assess project achievements based on the indicators listed in project logframes. In addition, the revision of monitoring and evaluation strategies was somewhat overlooked by two grantees during project restructuring after a crisis. As a result, both organisations were lapse in the monitoring and evaluation of their restructured projects. The experience provides a warning for future Funds to ensure that grantees revise and enforce monitoring and evaluation systems during project restructuring or re-implementation following a crisis.

During the HIVOS Facility, CANARI introduced a number of systems⁵ to encourage greater communication of project experience and lessons learned. The proactive

⁴ CANARI (i). introduced the logframe format (ii). asked grantees to develop procedures for monitoring and evaluation at the project design stage (iii). introduced a budget line in project budgets for monitoring and evaluation activities (v). asked grantees to assess project achievements against their objectively verifiable indicators recorded in their project proposals and (vi). commissioned a mid-term and final evaluation of the HIVOS Fund.

consideration of adequate monitoring and evaluation and communication systems at the project design stage was a new experience for most of the grant recipients. It helped them build their capacity for proactive thought in areas previously unconsidered by many NGOs and CBOs in the region.

The “Procedures for Communicating Project Experiences and Lessons Learned” emerged as a useful reference tool during project implementation. Reporting on communication activities helped grantees to reflect on their achievements in this area.

In addition, the “Preparing for Partnerships” workshop, the “Final Partnership” workshop and additional CANARI training sessions provided grant recipients with useful networking opportunities. Although the opportunities did not translate into concrete links between HIVOS Facility projects, information was exchanged both as it relates to HIVOS Facility projects and to overall grantee experience in implementing projects in the region. The CANARI workshops were of tremendous value in allowing grant recipients to meet, learn from and secure support from other like-minded people within the region who are also experiencing similar problems (e.g. limited budgets, lack of support etc.). The “Final Partnership” workshop was extremely useful for providing feedback on the various HIVOS Facility projects. The only draw back of the meeting was the one-and-a-half day time frame which limited the discussion of project experiences.

Grantees were unable to establish links between projects despite the networking opportunities arranged by CANARI and the provision of a budget line for communication activities because of the (i). time consuming nature of the exercise (ii). heavy workloads associated with organisational mandates and (iii). lack of human resources to undertake the extra workload involved with establishing and maintaining links between project.

The communication of project experience and lessons learned at the overall level of the Fund remained CANARI’s weakest area in the management of the HIVOS Facility. Time constraints and the lack of human and financial resources prevented CANARI from providing information to grantees on other HIVOS Facility projects, the larger HIVOS project and CANARI’s overall programme and visa versa in any depth.

B. PROGRAMME AND PROJECT IMPACTS

All of the projects funded under the HIVOS Facility are still ongoing and their impacts are continuing even though HIVOS Facility funding has ended. Overall, projects helped to (i). address the goal of the HIVOS Facility (i.e. to reinforce the participation of civil society in strengthening democratic processes) (ii). tackle some of the key issues and

⁵ The systems included (i). more rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to capture project experience and lessons learned (ii). the development of procedures for communicating project experiences and lessons at the project design stage (iii). the allocation of monies for communication activities in the project budgets (iv). asking grantees to report on communication activities in their project reports (v). the provision of networking opportunities at the “Preparing for Partnerships” workshop and “Final Partnerships” workshop and (vi). the identification of specific links between projects at the project design stage.

challenges highlighted in the 2003 survey and (iii). realise significant benefits within the objective of the HIVOS.

Key project impacts on grant recipients included (i). increased institutional capacity (technical, administrative, financial) to carry out organisational mandates (ii). new and deepened partnerships with other organisations (iii). improved understanding of partners and their needs (iv). improved systems for resource monitoring (v). improved participatory planning mechanisms (vi). the establishment of good internal governance policies (vii). strengthened transparent systems that ensure accountability to constituents (viii). improved understanding of organisational visions and mandates, organisational contexts and stakeholders' perception of the organisations (ix). improved methods for information management, dissemination and sharing (x). improved understanding of how to use existing legislation to challenge the disconnect between rhetoric and reality and rhetoric and practice and (xii). the generation of additional funding for spin-off projects.

Key impacts on project beneficiaries included (i). enhanced dialogue with partners (ii). facilitation of the participation of grassroots organisations in natural resource management (iii). improved community development and organisation (iv). improved institutional capacity (technical, administrative, financial) (v). improved understanding of the role of various stakeholders (vi). increased community participation in natural resource management (vii). improved understanding of the legal issues pertaining to natural resource management and (viii). improved awareness of the natural environment.

Five grant applicants did not complete the project application process. However, they still benefited from the exercise via an (i). improved capacity for project proposal preparation along and (ii). improved understanding of the situational context of their projects and the interventions necessary to address the problem.

HIVOS Facility projects also had impacts on other projects in the country by (i). allowing grantees to play a role in larger projects (ii). allowing useful tools and methodologies developed during HIVOS projects to be replicated by other projects and (iii). the development of spin-off projects. Other projects in the country also influenced HIVOS Facility projects by providing (i). useful tools and methodologies for replication by HIVOS projects and (ii). frameworks for the easier implementation of HIVOS projects.

CANARI was able to realise significant benefits from the operation of the Facility since it (i). increased CANARI's commitment to the development of civil society organisations in the region (ii). increased CANARI's contact with new organisations and deepened their relationships with existing partners (iii). improved CANARI's credibility and image (iv). confirmed the feasibility of using various strategies and methodologies developed by CANARI (v). improved CANARI's understanding of the constraints facing NGOs and CBOs and (vi). improved CANARI's capacity to manage future small grants funds.

Overall, HIVOS Facility projects will likely be sustainable over time. All of the projects are replicable with components of some projects already in application elsewhere.

Key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats emerged in relation to the HIVOS Facility. These included the provision of money under topics that few other agencies provide (strength), the lack of time, human and financial resources to maximise the impacts of the Fund (weakness), the provision of financial resources to implement the methodologies and lessons highlighted by CANARI (opportunity) and the possibility that donors cease to provide money to CANARI for future Small Grants Funds (threat).

3. CONCLUSIONS

A. SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CANARI'S SMALL GRANTS FACILITY

The next Small Grants Fund will be extremely human resource intensive based on the experience of the management team in overseeing the HIVOS Facility and the recommendations made in this report to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future Funds. As a result, CANARI will have to weigh the human resources and financial costs of Fund oversight against the size of future grants and the objectives it wants to achieve. A proactive approach to Fund coordination well in advance of the launch of the Fund will help to mitigate the management team's workload once a new Fund has started.

CANARI now has a 15-year history of experience of operating small grants funds. Therefore, it is in a position to adapt the workable formula developed for the HIVOS Facility to widen and deepen partnerships whilst at the same time soliciting an adequate number of suitable proposals irrespective of the maximum grant ceiling and focus of future Small Grants Funds. However, CANARI needs to play an even greater role than it did during the operation of the HIVOS Facility to ensure that grant applicants complete the development of concept notes into full project proposals and are able to overcome obstacles during project implementation. A longer period for project proposal development (21 weeks as against 12 ½ weeks) would allow CANARI to undertake a deeper analysis of project applicants needs and constraints before project development.

Donor organisations bought into the concept of the HIVOS Facility objective with enough commitment to follow through with co-funding. This speaks to the catalytic nature of the HIVOS Facility, a very attractive prospect for CANARI and future funders.

The risks and assumptions identified during HIVOS Facility implementation provide invaluable information for future grant recipients. A deeper analysis of this important aspect of Fund experience could further elevate future CANARI Small Grants Funds above that of other small grants programmes in the region whilst also providing attractive prospects for addressing key challenges to civil society organisations in the region.

CANARI seemed to have struck the right balance during the HIVOS Facility with respect to the provision of technical assistance, which it offered only where required, allowing organisations to recruit persons in-house and in country as necessary. This was extremely

important given the regional trend where consultants are often from the funding agency's country and capacities built via projects do not remain in-house and/or in county.

CANARI's procedures to ensure greater monitoring and evaluation of projects and its new management structure greatly improved the monitoring and evaluation of individual projects. However, monitoring and evaluation was still weak at the overall level of the Fund. Simultaneously, communication of project experience and lessons learned remained the weakest aspect of the HIVOS Facility, especially at the overall level of the Fund, because the exercise is time consuming if the learnings from projects are to be incorporated in any meaningful way into other projects. A proactive strategy to put as many systems in place as possible must be done before any new Funds start.

A number of lessons emerged from the operation of the HIVOS Facility. Key amongst these is that (i). there are significant internal capacity constraints even amongst those civil society organisations classified as the more sophisticated in the region (ii). the process of capacity-building for effective community participation in natural resource management is a lengthy one that may require several projects to address the situation with each project building on the previous one and (iii). projects will be more easily implemented with greater impact and sustainability if they are country-driven; based on local and national priorities and needs; fit within the context of national policy; are strategically imbedded within a larger project; fit within the implementing organisation's mandate and Strategic Action Plans; are pitched at the correct level required to address the problem based on the situational context of the project and the organisational context; designed to be flexible enough with adequate monitoring and evaluation systems to address emerging needs as they arise and to adjust project direction as necessary if risks and assumptions become a reality and finally if they are designed with adequate human, technical, financial and physical resources to implement project activities.

One key lesson that emerged pertaining to NGO and CBO success and sustainability is that when organisations apply for grants only within the area of their mandate, they avoid the mistake of implementing projects outside their area of influence, expertise and experience and therefore avoid spreading themselves "too thin". The lesson is especially important for organisational sustainability and is crucial in the event that there are staff changes within the organisation. Another key lesson indicates that NGOs and CBOs are more successful when they focus on their institutional health first in order to ensure sustainability before investing heavily in building the capacity of other organisations, which requires time and effort.

Difficult lessons from CANARI's perspective include (i). the impacts of future CANARI's Small Grants Facilities depend on how much staff-time can be dedicated to Fund activities and (ii). it is not enough for coordinators of small grants funds to assess project feasibility based on the current capabilities of project applicants but rather they must somehow undertake adequate research with regards organisational stability throughout the life of the project.

The overall conclusion from CANARI's perspective in operating the HIVOS Facility is that several factors are required for an efficient and effective small grants fund. These factors include (i). strategic targeting of organisations (ii). a user-friendly grant announcement and project application and reporting process (iii). an adequate management team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities (iv). an adequate human resources and overhead budget for administrative, technical and financial oversight of the Fund (v). adequate lead up time for participatory project development and CANARI review of proposals (vi). an adequate project implementation time (vii). adequate systems at both the project and Fund levels for administrative, technical and financial oversight, monitoring and evaluation and communication (viii). the provision of opportunities for networking and links between projects and (ix). the exhibition of flexibility with regards project extensions, changes in project direction and activities wherever possible without compromising fund criteria and boundaries.

B. SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO PROGRAMME AND PROJECT IMPACTS OF CANARI'S SMALL GRANTS FACILITY

Several factors set the HIVOS Facility apart from other Small Grants Funds in the region and helped to maximise Fund and project impacts. Factors included (i). the niche areas of the HIVOS Facility (ii). the participatory nature of the Fund (iii). CANARI's unique position in being able to provide technical assistance and (iv). CANARI's flexibility in making allowances for the payment of personnel, labour and contract costs and in allowing organisations to restructure projects as necessary and extend project deadlines.

Fund impacts were also maximised since the topic areas of the Facility fitted closely with NGO and CBO priorities, needs and mandates, CANARI's priority programme areas and the larger HIVOS project. The HIVOS Facility also spread the potential impacts of the larger HIVOS project to a wider number of beneficiaries.

Key to maximising the uniqueness of future Funds would be to address the gaps emerging from the operation of the HIVOS Facility. Gaps included (i). the lack of a "pot of emergency" funds to "rescue" projects where grant recipients had underestimated the cost of crucial project activities, required extra funding to address unexpected events affecting project success or where emerging project success demanded additional activities not originally envisaged during project design (ii). significant capacity gaps (CANARI addressed this by the provision of "mini-grants" to grantees) and (iii). the lack of financial capacity on the part of some technical officers designing project proposals and preparing project reports for submission to the HIVOS Facility.

Key areas for future small grants funding could include (i). continued focus on the HIVOS Facility topic areas (ii). addressing the disconnect between the financial and technical aspects of projects (iii). addressing organisational stability and sustainability, succession planning and NGO and CBO working environments (iv). encouraging NGOs and CBOs to adopt a more business-like approach to their work whilst remaining Not-for-Profit organizations and (v). assisting organisations to adequately analyse and

document past and ongoing project experiences and lessons learned from the wealth of knowledge and information stored in-house using user-friendly formats

The experience of the HIVOS Facility suggests that future monies channelled to a combination of technical assistance related activities and small grants leads to the best combination for maximising project impacts. Technical assistance provides much needed technical information that may not be resident within the organisations but small grant funding allows organisations to implement projects and test theories.

General observation of the downturn in funding to NGOs and CBOs in the region suggests that future Small Grant Funds should targeted NGOs and CBOs rather than to Government agencies that have more funding options. Exceptions include cases where (i). CBOs do not have the capacity to receive funds directly but are working closely with Government agencies to implement initiatives and (ii). Governments will be implementing projects that have an impact on sustainable livelihoods within the community (e.g. forestry and fisheries related projects).

C. WIDER CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CANARI'S SMALL GRANTS FACILITY AND PROGRAMME AND PROJECT IMPACTS

The usefulness and relevance of Small Grants Fund depends on the maximum grant ceiling and the focus and topic areas of the Funds. At the level of grantees, Small Grants Funds (i). provide valuable funds especially in light of the economic downturn in the region and the shifting priorities of donor agencies (ii). allow grantees to contribute useful methodologies and lessons learned to other projects in the country and replicate useful methodologies tested by other organisations (iii). allow grantees to test methodologies and new ideas on a small scale before scaling up to larger projects and (iv). allow grantees to test their internal and external systems and institutional capacities within a set framework rather than in the wider, more diffused setting of daily operations.

Simultaneously, Small Grants Funds allow funders to (i). spread the potential of their larger agenda to a wider number of beneficiaries (ii). realise greater returns on the money allocated to the Fund via co-funding (iii). identify useful project experience and lessons learned that may be useful to their wider programmes (iv). expand contact to new organisations and deepen relations with existing partners (v). improve their understanding of their target beneficiaries (vi). identify gaps within their own operations that emerge during the operation of the Funds and (vii). raise their profile amongst their clientele.

In addition to the above, the HIVOS Facility experience suggests that there are some circumstances where small grants are more relevant than others. Such circumstances include (i). addressing niche areas (ii). facilitating projects that complement other ongoing initiatives and (iii). facilitating critical aspects of an agencies work.

The HIVOS Facility experience showed that grantees might best maximise the potential of a small grant to achieve objectives related to their mission and strategic objectives by

(i). using the project to build credibility, external image, visibility and accountability (ii). using the grant to go beyond “talking” and being “reactive” to fostering proactive, hands-on action to solicit “buy-in” for their mandate (iii). being clear on their mandate and only seeking funds for projects in keeping with mandates and Strategic Action Plans and (iv). using the project for the long-term sustainability of their organisation, to leverage co-funding to support other activities that may be outside the Fund criteria but under the mandate of the organisations, to “open doors” in other areas of their work, to widen and deepen strategic partnerships and to build organisational capacities that will be useful to other areas of their mandate.

A cause for concern throughout HIVOS Facility operation was the low stability and sustainability of some of the organisations that applied for funding. CANARI started to address this crucial aspect at the “Final Partnership” workshop but a more in-depth analysis is required if future Funds are not to be affected. Reasons why relatively few Caribbean civil society organisations have successfully attained stability and sustainability include the fact that (i). some organisations have very wide mandates leading to overwhelming workloads and inefficiency (ii). some organisations lack organisational vision, operate without Strategic and Action Plans and sometimes solicit funding outside their mandates (iii). some organisations have evolved from particular ideological backgrounds and there is a disconnect between operating in a more business-like manner and holding to the philosophical not-for-profit thinking of the past (iv). some Board of Directors are not fully committed to the mission of the organisation (v). few organisations have done an in-depth analysis of the path taken to get to the present point (vi). few organisations have engaged in succession planning and may be overly dependent on one or a few key individuals (vii). some organisations lack the resources to properly achieve their mandates (viii). some organisations have weak administrative, financial and monitoring and evaluation systems and may lack accountability and (ix). many organisations hire people for their skills rather than for their values; people can gain skills but values are intrinsic and are harder to impart via training.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CANARI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SMALL GRANT FACILITIES TO IMPROVE THE DESIGN, EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF THE FUNDS

General

CANARI has yet to determine the focus of any future Small Grant Funds. However, the HIVOS Facility topic areas remain very relevant to NGOs and CBOs in the region and to their partners. As a result, CANARI should consider lobbying for Stage 2 of the Facility or should at least try to incorporate some of the topic areas into future funds also addressing, if possible, the areas identified as gaps during the operation of the Facility. Future Small Grant Facilities should provide the following irrespective of their focus and objectives- (i). avenues for improving human, technical and financial capacities for implementing collaborative and participatory arrangements (ii). solid financial advice and

information for programme and organisational sustainability and (iii). lessons learnt from which experiences can be shared or used for training and institutional development.

CANARI should channel future grants to NGOs and CBOs, except in a few cases to Government agencies, and into a combination of technical activities and small grants.

The following key recommendations are suggested to improve next technical assistance grant facility and maximise its impact. Unless specified otherwise, the recommendations below should be apply to any new Facility irrespective of the maximum grant ceiling.

Geographic Spread and Range of Organisations Targeted

The list of countries and the target organisations highlighted in the project document signed between CANARI and future funders will determine the geographic spread for new Small Grants Funds and the range of organisations targeted. However, CANARI should decide whether it wishes to use new Facilities to penetrate into new countries or to cement its foundation in countries where it has worked with groups in the past. In addition, CANARI should determine whether it wishes to target new organisations or whether it wants to target known groups with which it already has a relationship. The objective of any new Fund and the timeframe for project development and grant disbursement should determine CANARI's decision. The shorter the timeframe, the more CANARI should target countries and organisations with which it is familiar.

In addition, CANARI should consider whether it wishes to target non-English speaking countries for future funds given the time required to translate documents.

The Use of Staff Time and Resources

The greater the grant ceiling for the projects and the greater the number of projects, the greater will be the workload to oversee the Funds. Thus, CANARI should determine the true cost of operating future small grants facilities by reviewing the figures for human resources, travel and overheads in the HIVOS Facility budget and comparing the figures to the actual cost of running the Facility. Next, CANARI must decide on the extent to which it wishes to maximise future Fund impacts. Then it should determine the number of person-hours required to execute the appropriate tasks. CANARI may find that it may have to scale down expectations of Fund impact to suit the staff situation or adjust the staffing situation to achieve the desired results.

CANARI should employ a similar management set-up to that utilised during HIVOS Facility oversight for future grant facilities of similar scope, project portfolio size and maximum grant ceiling. CANARI may have to consider additional strategies (e.g. the provision of a capacity building grant to a competent NGO to assist with specific tasks) if any given Fund is larger than the HIVOS Facility.

Procedures for Soliciting Proposals

In deciding on the procedures to solicit proposals, CANARI must consider whether it wishes to deepen relationships with well-known partners or explore new linkages with organisations that are not so well known. CANARI may achieve the former via a closed call for proposals to specific target organisations and the latter by circulating the grant announcement to a wider organisational base. Funds, where the maximum grant ceiling is above US\$15,000 – US\$20,000, could be used to deepen relationships with known partners with known track records whilst Funds with a grant ceiling below US\$15,000 could be used to develop new partnerships.

Grant Application, Project Proposal Preparation and Project Design

CANARI should avoid a short proposal development phase, especially if utilising a two-stage project preparation form and organising a project preparation workshop. Ideally, CANARI should allocate at least five months (if possible) for project preparation.

CANARI should avoid making the grants too small so as not to compromise their usefulness. A grant range of US\$5,000 – US\$10,000 is useful for organisations who need only a small amount of funding to make crucial interventions or who are less experienced at project management. By comparison, grants of above US\$10,000 are useful for larger, more experienced organisations. A mixture of grant Funds would be ideal.

For Funds where the maximum ceiling of the grants is above US\$15,000 – US \$20,000, CANARI should use a two-step proposal preparation process. Where the ceiling is under US\$15,000, CANARI should use a simple project brief with pertinent questions.

Irrespective of the grant size, all project proposal forms should include information relating to total project cost, amount requested from CANARI plus NGO and other contributions both cash and in-kind to allow for an appreciation of the true value of the project and to encourage project applicants to value their input and time.

Potential grant recipients should discuss their project concepts with CANARI first to ensure project fit to fund criteria before developing proposals irrespective of the size of the grant ceiling; “Preparing for Partnerships” workshops provide a useful mechanism.

CANARI may wish to allocate planning grants of up to US\$2,000 to assist groups with full project proposal preparation for projects above US\$15,000 – US\$20,000. Such grants are useful when organisations do not have the technical capacity for the required background research and interaction with stakeholders to inform proposal development but can assure CANARI that they have the capacity to undertake project activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

For Funds with a maximum grant ceiling of over US\$15,000 – US\$20,000, CANARI should continue to utilise the rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems introduced during HIVOS Facility operation. In addition, CANARI should continue to consider the reporting process as a tool for capacity building and should therefore challenge grantees

to make a more in depth analysis of their projects, irrespective of the maximum grant ceiling, without being too demanding for smaller grants.

At the level of the overall Fund, CANARI should develop indicators to measure Fund performance to ensure that future Facilities will not be placed on the “back burner” as other duties compete for staff time.

CANARI should ensure that the budgets of future Funds reflect adequate monies for monitoring and evaluation activities including a mid-term review and a final evaluation of each Fund, irrespective of the maximum size of the grant ceiling, and a “Preparing for Partnerships” workshop and a “Final Partnership workshop ” for Funds over US\$ 20,000.

Communication of Project Experience and Lessons Learned and Links with Other Programmes

A number of key recommendations are suggested to improve the communication of project experience and lessons learned between grant recipients, between grant recipients and other organisations, between grant recipients and CANARI and between CANARI and other Small Grants Funds in the region. Firstly, CANARI should identify the information that it needs from grant recipients to analyse and document project experiences and lessons learned in order to feed the information into CANARI’s overall programme and to partners. Next, CANARI should consider developing a communications strategy for future Grant Facilities.

In addition, CANARI should consider producing guidelines on useful and replicable approaches and/or case studies that have emerged from its small grants experience (and from CANARI’s overall programme) that may be of use to future grant recipients. CANARI should also continue to highlight links between complementary projects and encourage persons to explore links at future “Preparing for Partnerships” workshops; participants should receive training at the workshop on how to identify lessons learned along with the type of information useful for communication and how to package that information in a user-friendly manner.

Key to successful communication will be the identification of adequate budgets at both the project and overall Fund levels for the dissemination of experiences and lessons.

CANARI should summarise the details of future small grants projects into one page user-friendly abstracts (or key words) for posting on its website with links to each organisations’ website where the full project proposals, reports etc should be lodged.

CANARI should hold a “Final Partnership” workshop to bring grant recipients together to discuss project and Fund experiences and to present lessons learned. CANARI may also wish to invite other Small Grants Fund Coordinators in the region to foster collaboration between Funds.

Programme and Project Impacts

CANARI should continue to ensure that it designs all future Grant Funds to fit closely with the objectives of the larger projects of which they may be a part and with CANARI's overall programme whilst at the same time addressing local needs and priorities and ensuring that projects are country-driven, based on local and national priorities and prepared with the participation of stakeholders.

CANARI should be aware that grantees do not always report as fully as they should when filling out project reports. As a result, valuable data may be lost pertaining to project experiences and lessons learned. Thus, CANARI must do a proper diagnostic of the reports, following up with telephone conversations with grantees if necessary.

CANARI should continue to provide "mini-grants" for grantees to attend capacity building training sessions and should continue to host "Preparing for Partnerships" workshops and "Final Partnership" workshops to bring grantees together for information sharing to maximise impacts.

CANARI may wish to develop case studies based on successful projects and/or compile Small Grants Fund experiences into a report and/or undertaking an overall case study on the impacts of its Small Grants Fund over the years, concentrating on the learning experience, the usefulness and relevance of Small Grants Funds and how grantees can maximise the potential of a small grant to achieve objectives related to their mission and strategic objectives. Such a report would be useful to donors in the region and its compilation would inform CANARI's learnings on the operation of its own funds.

CANARI should also consider bringing the Coordinators of other Small Grants Funds together for a round-table discussion to harmonise funding strategies in the region.

Finally, CANARI should consider providing "Project Replication Grants" to grantees of successful projects to allow them to produce a booklet entitled "How to Replicate the Project" for circulation to other organisations interested in replicating the project. In many cases, grantees have the material and expertise for other organisations to replicate their project but the information is not in a format that is easily useable by others.

Overall Recommendations

The operation of CANARI's Small Grants Facilities has led to a number of methods and approaches that are useful for strengthening the operations of the new funds. CANARI should also examine its library of participatory natural resource management approaches to determine which ones may be beneficial within the framework of new Funds. Key to the success of the Funds will be adequate staffing arrangements and technical support, suitable financial resources for the operation of the funds, an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework and the communication of experiences and lessons learned.