

SS4: Volunteerism in the Digital Age

PART I: KEY FINDINGS

1.1 Lessons Learned

Voluntarism is very important to help people in need to create opportunities for better life using ICT. ICT without human capital is not enough, so building opportunities creating network and solidarity is easier if we have a tool, so called "ICT".

"Coordinating volunteers is like herding cats". You have a lot of good will but it comes and goes.

1.2 Visions, Innovations and Trends

- To make more volunteers in coming years, 1000000 people by 2017
- Leverage training model
- Collaboration/strategic partnership
- Grass roots efforts will be the trend

1.3 Priorities / Potential for Action

The Ennobling Nature of service:

- 1) those who serve,
- 2) and those who are being served.

1.4 Burning Questions / Questions to be deepened further

How do you explain that ICT4D is as important as:

- 1) Food
- 2) Clean Water
- 3) Medical Care; Etc

Or that it is not just about training programmers

2.2 Details of Session/Panel

Event: *Parallel Panel session 3*

Date/Time/Venue: *Wednesday, 12 December 2007, 14.00 – 15.30, Room 401-402, Level 4*

Organiser: *Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and Global Alliance for ICT for Development (UNGAID)*

Panel Speakers:

Barbara Waugh, Director University Relations, Hewlett-Packard Company

Paul Jhin, Director of Special Initiatives, Peace Corps Headquarters

Quinn Sutton, Executive Director, Digital Alliance Foundation

Ahmad Sobri, Secretary General, ASEAN Youth committee

Moderator:

Viola Krebs, Executive Director, ICVolunteers

Rapporteur:

Muhsin Spahic [Bosnia] - Rapporteur, Le Reve Translation

Herlina [Indonesia] - Rapporteur, Le Reve Translation

2.3 Summary of the session incorporating the Question & Answer Session

Key Questions

1. What major trends and changes can be expected in the next decade regarding volunteerism given the interplay of technologies, markets and people?
2. What are the main initiatives in ICT volunteerism worldwide?
3. What are the key challenges in ensuring the sustainability of ICT volunteerism for development today?
4. What are the measures that must be put in place to address the challenges and how must volunteer organisations adapt in the digital age?
5. What are the roles and responsibilities of the non-profit sector, private entities, civil society and even public sector – in this changing landscape?
6. What are the options for volunteer-based networks within the new trends and practices of a multi-stakeholder partnership?
7. How can advocacy on ICT volunteerism be enhanced worldwide?
8. How can the best practices in the field of ICT volunteerism be shared for the benefit of others?
9. This session will focus specifically on the key role of innovation in volunteerism and collaboration among volunteer organisations with emphasis on the interplay between people, markets and technologies.

Key Innovation Aspects

This session will focus specifically on the key role of innovation in volunteerism and collaboration among volunteer organisations with emphasis on the interplay between people, markets and technologies.

Opening of the Session

Sarbuland Khan, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT for Development (<http://www.un-gaid.org>) opened the session, stressing the importance of volunteerism for the attainment of the Millennium Goals (MDGs) (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>) and development more generally speaking.

Introduction by the Moderator

Viola Krebs presented herself and the organisation she is directing: ICVolunteers (<http://www.icvolunteers.org>) is an organisation working with a network of close to 10,000 individuals, partners and volunteers active in the field of communications (cybervolunteering, languages and conference support), originally from some 100 countries, speaking 130 languages.

Krebs then went on to introduce the session by pointing out that if volunteers were to all be put into one nation, they would represent the 5th largest world economy. This is significant, yet volunteers are often operating in the shade, not being noticed because they work in informal contexts, she underlined. In the case of ICT volunteering, they may be developing software, training trainers and contributing to local contents development. How does cybervolunteering and new forms of technology-oriented volunteering relate to job creation, linguistic diversity in cyberspace or issues such as the brain drain? These are some of the questions on the table when discussing new forms of volunteerism, she said.

Panellist 1

Barbara Waugh, Director University Relations, Hewlett-Packard Company

Barbara Waugh focused on four projects in which **Hewlett-Packard** (HP) (<http://www.hp.com>) is involved in: 1) the International Telementorship Program; 2) Global Giving; 3) MentorNet; 4) the UNESCO-HP Brain Gain in SEE & Africa.

She explained that HP is involved in helping volunteers around the world. Specifically, the **International Telementorship Program (ITP)** (<http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/globalcitizenship/gcreport/employees/volunteerism/casestudies.html>) connects students with professionals from companies around the world. Currently, more than 130 HP mentors from seven countries volunteer with ITP.

The **Global Giving** initiative (<http://www.globalgiving.com>) provides an opportunity to US citizens to offer support to those who need it globally. In this case, the incentive for supporters is double-folded: for one, they are able to provide concrete assistance to causes and populations in need and can, at the same time, get the giving deducted from their taxes.

The **MentorNet** (<http://www.mentornet.net>), an email-based program, provides help and suggestions to over 100 nations about ICT. MentorNet is a non-profit organization working to further women's progress in scientific and technical fields through the use of a dynamic, technology-supported mentoring program. MentorNet aims to advance women and society, and enhance engineering and related sciences, by promoting a diversified expanded and talented workforce.

Last project presented by Waugh is the **UNESCO-HP Brain Gain Initiative** (<http://www.globalgiving.com>), which aims to help reduce brain drain in Africa by providing grid computing technology to universities in Algeria, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe. The project aims to re-establish links between researchers who have stayed in their native countries and those that have left, connecting scientists to international colleagues, research networks and funding opportunities.

Panellist 2

Paul Jhin, Director of Special Initiatives, Peace Corps Headquarters

Paul Jhin started of his presentation with two quotes and linked them in the context of volunteerism and new technologies: "I hope we can work together to make this world more prosperous, more secure, more harmonious, and more developed through Information Communications Technology", said Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. **Ban Ki-moon**. President **George W. Bush** phrased the **US Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI)** (<http://www.dfi.gov>) as "a world wide effort that showcases the best that the United States has to offer in information and communications technologies and bring their transformational power to bear on international development challenges." Jhin went then on to briefly present his organization, the **United States Peace Corps Volunteers** (<http://www.peacecorps.gov>) that, around the world, have explored the integration of ICT in all development sectors and at all levels of project training and implementation. Through training and community activities, volunteers translated their basic ICT familiarity into development-focused context-culturally appropriate and accessible for audience in a variety of urban and rural setting.

Jhin went then on to link the mission of the **Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID)** (<http://www.un-gaid.org>) to a concrete proposal / action plan. The GAID's mission is "to contribute to transforming the spirit and vision of **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)** (<http://www.itu.int/wsisis>) into action and promoting the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>). This translates into three main points: 1) ESTABLISH and/or expand Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Programs in 60 developing countries by 2012. 2) ASSIST countries requesting participation to develop or update their Five Year ICT Plans By 2012, 3) ENGAGE the local ministries to raise awareness and bear

the cost for repairing and preparing the computers to generate the feeling of ownership on the part of the recipients.

Paul Jhin stressed the need for focus around the following areas: 1) Refurbished and new computers; 2) Software providers; 3) Transportation; 4) Technical Assistance (Consortium of Universities); 5) Volunteer Organizations. He then provided some concrete examples of what is already being done in the various areas. He stated that he expects 10 to 13 developed countries for the UN ICT initiative to collect 500,000 refurbished computers by 2012. He proposed that strategies should be outlined for 2008, taking into account the following actors and initiatives:

- CompuMentor (San Francisco, CA) (<http://www.compumentor.org>)
- Computer Recycle Center (San Francisco, CA) (<http://www.crc.org>)
- World Computer Exchange (U.S. & Canada) (<http://www.worldcomputerexchange.org>)
- Computers for Schools (Canada) (<http://cfs-ope.ic.gc.ca>)
- Computer Aid International (United Kingdom) (<http://www.computeraid.org>)

Jhin pointed out that the Peace Corps Volunteers have many partners which will help them achieve their goals, one of them being Microsoft Corporation. He concluded by quoting Ambassador Gunnar Garbo of Norway who pointed out that it is all about “help us to help them help themselves”.

Panellist 3

Quinn Sutton, Executive Director, Digital Alliance Foundation

Quinn Sutton briefly presented the goals of the Digital Alliance Foundation (<http://www.ictefa.org>), which is aiming to train 1,000,000 people by 2017. It is thus focusing on a leveraged training model, working through grass-roots efforts and collaboration. Quinn made the public laugh when he compared volunteer coordination to herding cats. The hint was well understood: volunteers without training are not going to be very effective. Coordination and streamlining of energies is thus essential. Sutton emphasized in particular the importance of accessibility, advocacy, alleviation, and ability for all people, in order to achieve their education to have a successful life. ICT is seen as a tool to provide opportunity and connection for people. Quinn stressed that ICT was not only about computers, but rather to be seen as tool to reduce the digital divide, creating an atmosphere where people can share knowledge and educate other people, providing knowledge and skill, they can in turn use. Quinn put the following question and challenge to the audience: “How do you explain that ICT4D is as important as food, clean water, medical attention, etc.?” he asked. He encouraged all those working in the field of ICTs to think about good a answer to this question, as indeed, ICT is about much more than just training programmers.

Panellist 4

Sobri Ahmad, Secretary General, ASEAN Youth Committee

Sobri Ahmad introduced the Cyber Development Corps (CDC). Its objectives are to 1) serve as a means of capability building for youth; 2) establish a global community of practice; 3) help evaluate what global knowledge sharing has achieved to date and is aiming to do in the future to bridge the digital divide. He announced the CDC program by establishing CDC centres, maintaining a CDC portal online (<http://cdc.miwsys.com>), training trainers and volunteers, organising seminars and workshops. The target is to increase the number of capable trainers and volunteers, who can utilize the information portal and develop training modules. The methodology used would include the following steps: 1) Establish CDC Network for national/regional & international chapters; 2) Produce trainers; 3) Produce trained volunteers; 3) Utilize web portal; 4) Formulate modules; 5) Create media & publications. He

concluded by announcing the longer-term CDC target, to be attained by 2012, which is to have more than 11 million beneficiaries through 1,500 centres in the ASEAN region.

Questions from the audience

Question 1:

How to convince organizations in a country that ICT is important? What is the message you deliver to them?

Answer 1:

We do not need to deliver any message to them, organizations are well aware that they need ICTs. Local community and government want websites, learn about the technology and computers. The demand is out there. We just need to guide them to help them figure out what they need to do.

Question 2, asked by a young person from Nigeria:

How do organizations respond to the need of computers in poor country? Can you actually provide cheap computers to poor nations?

Answer 2:

There are programs that give away second hand computers by some organization and companies. However, this is not enough, as the main issue is not hardware but soft skills to know how to use the hardware. This is where volunteers come into play.

Comment by Adama Samassékou, former Minister of Education of Mali and president of the ICVolunteers Federation:

Cybervolunteerism is important in particular when it comes to linguistic diversity. He referred to Maaya – the Network for Linguistic Diversity (<http://www.maaya.org>).

Conclusions:

Sarbuland Khan closed the session by pointing out that all could not be discussed in one hour and a half and that the point of the session was to serve as a catalyst for further exchange and discussion both within GAID and GKP.

2.4 A precise and concise key message of each panellist or speaker's

Presentation or text

ICT Volunteerism provides one of the solutions to the problem of building human capacity that helps nations harvest the benefits of the digital age for development purposes. It also helps under-served communities to be part of the Information Society, particularly in developing countries, by enabling sharing of valuable ICT skills and knowledge.

2.5 Elaboration on the Panellist/Speaker's message

Volunteering is a mass social phenomenon and an expression of solidarity in development action involving hundreds of millions of people worldwide. In an era when the international community and decision makers are grappling with the challenges of spreading opportunities for human development as widely as possible, it is timely to consider the role and contribution of Volunteerism in the Digital Age. Rapid advancement in the field of ICT has made the world more connected. It has also led to a vast divide between those with ICT access and skills, and those without. Without ICT access and skills, people are unable to connect and reap opportunities presented by a networked world, and are thus in danger of being left behind. ICT Volunteerism has a crucial role to play in furthering the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in bridging this divide.



2.6 Key quotes from role players

- “Let’s make a difference by making opportunities to bring smiles on faces.” (Quinn Sutton)
- “Coordinating volunteers is like...herding cats” (Quinn Sutton)
- Our world would be better place if we use ICT to develop better economic system across the globe. (Paul Jhin)

2.7 Partnership Initiatives discussed/announced/launched

To create a working group on ICT Volunteerism beyond this conference, building on the networks of GAID and GKP.

Key words:

Cybervolunteering, volunteerism, employment creation, capacity building, online involvement, youth, integration of marginalized populations