

Position paper for Capacity Building
Under the UN-DESA Global Alliance for ICTD

~ Development of Capacity Building Roadmap ~

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1.0 Genesis

Large scale development programs all over the world witness a strange but pervasive phenomenon. In spite of best efforts of the governments and associated international agencies, the ultimate beneficiary is unable to obtain full/desired benefits of the intended development. ICT is emerging as a potent enabler of development goals but as most of the development initiatives start with a certain target in mind and offer what the development agency has to offer or can offer rather than looking at what the targeted beneficiary would need or assimilate, thereby creating a persistent divide between provision of services and utilization of services. To put it in context of large scale ICT programs, a slight glance on findings and indicators such as the UN e-readiness and e-government reports will justify what is meant here.

I often use the “library & its attendant” metaphor to compare development agencies and beneficiaries. A University puts several thousand books and encyclopedias in library near proximity of this man who is the attendant. Thus in principle, enormous resources are available for his advancement and theoretically the chances of progression are very bright. But his actual advancement will depend on many other factors including:

1. Need
2. Interest
3. Desire
4. Motivation
5. Action
6. Assimilation
7. Retention
8. Appropriate usage
9. Environmental conditions etc.

The same applies to the development beneficiaries. The e-MGD matrix and portal is a promising venture to achieve a certain ICTD momentum. However, there is a need to

prevent any likelihood that this might end up delivering sub-optimal benefits to the real beneficiaries and practitioners. Very much like the several thousand books in the library which the ‘attendant’ may not appreciate, remain aloof. (No offence meant please, only an illustration)

2.0 Capacity Building Roadmap

Analyzing the factors mentioned in Para 1.0 above, we would realize that the interventions need not be only be technical or for that matter the problem is not only knowledge creation, aggregation, presentation and delivery mechanisms but it goes even beyond. There is a need to achieve a higher degree of sensitization of the actual beneficiaries in order to suitably utilize the resource provisioned. It is therefore proposed that a Capacity Building Roadmap be created. The purpose of the Capacity Building Roadmap will be to proactively address needs, develop Interest, Desire, Motivation, Action, Assimilation and Retention across the range of development beneficiaries including practitioners.

It is visible that the approach taken towards e-MDGs portal is pivoted on what various agencies, associates, members can bring to the table and harnessing their capabilities; this though well-intended, can suffer from the same paradox that is discussed above.

The need of the hour is to do a handholding of various agencies, practitioners and even governments in the developing countries to bring them to the ICTD mainstream. Going ahead, there is a need to create a comprehensive Capacity Building Roadmap for activities under GAID starting with eMDG portal initiative. Thus we would be in a position to link the ambitious initiatives to the actual beneficiaries and involve all stakeholders appropriately.

It should not be assumed that the development needs of all stakeholders are same; hence a uniform mechanism may not address all stakeholders optimally. Diversified skills, understanding and capabilities are required at the policy, program and project levels to foster and employ ICTD. Therefore, it’s important to do a diligent identification of development needs and further imbibe them suitably in the eMDG portal catering to the diverse stakeholders suitably.

3.0 The way ahead

Much of the work required for the success of the eMDG portal will have to be done not “inside” the portal but “outside” the portal and not “on” the portal but “away” from the portal.

The proposed Capacity Building Roadmap will help in better understanding the entire ecosystem; and degree to which various available intervention options be exercised so as to make the entire initiative “***Demand driven rather than Target driven***”.
