

WSIS Thematic Meeting on Multistakeholder Partnerships for Bridging the Digital Divide

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The Role of Partnerships in the Information Society

Partnerships are an integral part of the inclusive, people-centric Information Society, and an essential element of its success. The Information Society is actually a global Information ecosystem that depends upon having implicit and explicit partners. Each partner has a role that builds on its strengths and abilities, and contribute to the whole. These stakeholders include:

- individuals, artists, civil society groups, governments, the media and others that create and/or utilize information or content, and who promote freedom of expression and other human rights,
- service and application providers that offer capabilities to store, process, and transport information for use by people. These include not only telecom, information and applications service providers but other industries such as libraries, publishing, and media.
- equipment suppliers who provide devices and systems that support the end-to-end capabilities needed to meet peoples needs, and
- governments (local and national) that can create an enabling environment that
 - o empower people to create, innovate, innovation and expression themselves freely,
 - o stimulate investment in infrastructure and applications to address user needs, and
 - o promote research and development that lead to capabilities that sustain and grow the Information ecosystem
- academic institutions that educate and train people to allow them to develop their skills and contribute to society
- industry groups and international organizations that encourage cooperation, quality and interoperability with this ecosystem.

This understanding of how integral the concept of partnerships are within the Information Society suggests that achieving the Millennium Declaration Goals is not something that can or should be left to a single stakeholder group alone..

Rather, multistakeholder partnerships have the potential to

- draw upon the distinctive, and in some cases, unique strengths and capabilities of the partners to
- increase the results of the resources applied in a multiplicative not an additive manner and to
- accelerate the pace of progress in bringing the benefits of the Information Society to people, society and nations globally.

Given the role of partnerships and the power of Information and Communications Technology to change the way people work, learn and live, multistakeholder partnerships have the potential to

not only create a people-centric, inclusive Information Society but to be transformative and to hasten the achievement of the Millennium Declaration Goals.

Purpose of this WSIS Thematic Meeting

This WSIS Thematic meeting calls upon all of us to share our experiences, challenges and best practices related to multistakeholder partnerships, as well as ways to measure success. The discussions today and tomorrow can collectively help each of us here and the WSIS in Tunis to identify the conditions, arrangements and processes that can

- 1) improve the partnership projects in which we are already involved,
- 2) strengthen relationships with partners to scale partnerships to serve more people, and
- 3) hopefully, serve as a catalyst to stimulate new partnerships

I hope to contribute to that learning process by sharing Cisco perspectives.

A Cisco Priority: Human Capacity Building

Cisco's efforts to contribute to achieving the internationally-agreed goals in the Millennium Declaration have focused especially on partnerships in the area of human capacity building. Our CEO, John Chambers' observation that "The two great equalizers in life are the Internet and education" and his personal involvement and leadership in projects drives this throughout Cisco. In Cisco, we have tried to leverage the potential of both of these equalizers to make the Information Society more inclusive, and improve the lives of people around the world.

We are fortunate that we have found many others in civil society, academia, business, government, and international organization who share this vision. Among them has been UN Secretary General Kofi Annan who observed that "Brain power is the one commodity that is equally distributed among the world's peoples". Thus, it is not surprising that Cisco has partnered with or is in discussion with almost every UN entity.

Before sharing some of Cisco's ideas about the challenges and lessons learned related to multistakeholder partnerships, I would like to describe a few to provide a context. Time permits me to offer a few. All of our partnerships are important and these are only intended to be exemplary and assist the later discussion.

Cisco Partnerships

Asia Pacific Initiative

The Asia Pacific Initiative (API) provides a means for cooperation among universities and research institutions in the Asia-Pacific region in order to develop online educational materials related to human development and environmental sustainability. The initial focus of this project has been on research and development related to design and enhancement of the online collaboration in the Asia-Pacific region on the topic of environmental research.

The API was initially conceptualized by LEAD Japan and Keio University as an open platform designed to facilitate collaboration and institutional innovation. The UN University and Cisco Systems (Japan) joined the initiative at the end of 2002. Other universities and research institutions in the region including the Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand), the Institute of Global Environmental Strategies (Japan), the University of Hawaii (USA), Tsinghai University (China) and TERI (India) have been involved in this effort.

The API has the advantage of linking closely to the LEAD international network of programs (particularly those in Japan, China, Indonesia, India and Pakistan) and to the UNU global network of research and training centers.

Cisco Networking Academies

The Cisco Networking Academy Program grew out of early efforts to help wire schools to link them up to the Internet. We soon learned that we needed to train school personnel to design, build, operate and maintain networks. It began in 1997 and is now a 280-hour comprehensive e-learning program, which provides students with the Internet technology skills essential in a global economy. The Networking Academy program delivers

- Web-based content in 9 languages,
- online assessment,
- student performance tracking,
- hands-on-labs,
- instructor training and support, and
- preparation for industry standard certifications.

Cisco partners with many other stakeholders to establish Cisco Networking Academies around the world. I will describe a couple of these that focus on least developing countries.

In 2000, the Least Developed Country (LDC) Initiative was established with initial objectives to:

- Provide students in LDCs access to the same IT training as those in other countries
- Develop human resources capacity to establish and manage new internet infrastructure
- Enable businesses and governments to compete in the global Internet Economy
- Quickly demonstrate the benefits of the program and the power of ICT applications for economic and social development

Partners included UNDP, UN Volunteers, USAID, and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency as well as governments and educational institutions in the countries in which the academies have been located..

In 2001 the ITU Internet Training Center Initiative was established with similar objectives.

The initial objectives of these programs were soon supplemented by a Gender Initiative and have received the strong support of UNIFEM and others. As the Director of the ITU Development Bureau, Hamadoun Toure, said “There is a critical need to increase the involvement of young women in the field of information technology. This is especially important if they, their communities and their countries are to reap the benefits of the IT society we live in”.

The goal within the Gender Initiative is to achieve 30% participation by women. Despite excellent support for the program, this objective was thought by some to be too ambitious given the circumstances for women in many developing countries. I am pleased to report today that

- 1) the LDCI has about 200 academies in 60 countries with 600 instructors trained and about 8000 students.
- 2) the ITI ITIC has more than 50 academies in universities in about 50 countries. In addition, 20 additional Academies are being placed in the training centers for government ministries and regulators in developing countries to extend the benefits to another important population.

Furthermore, both of these programs have achieved the objective of 30% female participation.

The impact of the programs on people can be appreciated when you realize that at the end of the program students can take a certification exam. The result is that 78% of the graduates seeking employment are employed in country

Other business partners have been brought into this program to add “sponsored curriculum” to the Cisco Learning engine on other topics:

HP – Operating Systems

Sun – Unix

Adobe – Web Design

Panduit – Cable wiring

And in the last couple of years, Cisco has added wireless and security courses to the curriculum.

Today globally Cisco Networking Academies are in more than 160 countries, in more than 10,000 educational institutions, and have more than 25,000 instructors and 450,000 students currently enrolled. More than 35,000 tests are taken daily.

Jordan Education Initiative (JEI)

The Jordan Education Initiative (JEI) is an initiative of the World Economic Forum (WEF) that is a global-local, public-private partnership whose objectives are to:

- improve the development and delivery of education in Jordan while in the process achieving a vision of education as a catalyst for social and economic development
- encourage the development of an efficient public-private partnership model to accelerate educational reform in developing countries
- build the capacity of the local ICT industry to develop innovative learning solutions partnering with world class organizations
- leverage national government commit and corporate citizenship to build a model for reform that could be exported replicated

With the strong support of King and Queen of Jordan, in the approximately two years since its launch, the JEI has already engaged over 45 active partners (global and local; public and private), developed a full Math e-Curriculum for grades 1 through 12, had in-classroom technology and training deployed in 50 Discovery Schools (progress being made to have 100 Discovery Schools), seen the transfer of targeted financial resources to local companies as part of the JEI.

Math Online sponsored by Cisco Systems is the first of several e-curricula and has been deployed, as a blended learning model, in a wireless environment (see Annex 2).

Additional e-curricula are under development and include ICT sponsored by Microsoft, Arabic sponsored by France Telecom, English sponsored by the US State Department NYD, and Science sponsored by Fastlink.

The Math Online e-Curriculum developed jointly by Cisco Learning Institute and Rubicon with funding from Cisco is leading the way and supporting the other e-Curricula through the local team’s input at the workshop.

In addition to activities in Jordan, the JEI, is a model that is the basis for implementing extensions into other areas in the Middle East region. In addition, discussions have begun with more than 12 countries in the region.

While JEI is an initiative of the World Economic Forum, it has also been studied extensively by others in establishing the Global e-Schools Community Initiative (GeSCI) which is working with a number of companies around the world.

UN ICT Task Force

This brings me to my last example of a multistakeholder partnership, the UN ICT Task Force, which provided the catalyst for establishing GeSCI and the GESCI secretariat. The Task Force was established following the Millennium Summit under the patronage of the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan as a high-visibility, multistakeholder partnership to address ICT for Development and achieving the Millennium Declaration Goals. It has created global and regional networks of people working towards this end and has served as the catalyst and resource for many efforts including mainstreaming ICT into the UN System, and the Digital Opportunity Index that you will hear about tomorrow.

The Task Force has also advanced multistakeholder discussion on important topics by sponsoring Global Forums on a number of topics including Enabling Environment, Education, Internet Governance contributing to the WSIS process.

The Task Force sunsets at the end of this year. UN Secretary General Annan has asked the Task force to develop a proposal for a Global network or Alliance of the multiple stakeholders to build on the past efforts and to progress ICT and development. Tomorrow afternoon Sergei Kambalov the Task Force Deputy Coordinator will discuss this further.

Challenges Experienced, Lessons Learned and Attributes of Successful Programs

I would like to identify some of the biggest challenges experienced, lessons learned and attributes of successful programs.

Challenges

- Absence of Physical Infrastructure for schools and universities to access the Internet
- High Internet connection costs in countries where competition is not present
- Insufficient “political will” that can create an implementation gap, i.e., the rhetoric is greater than the reality.

Best Practices

- Take a long-term perspective on the broad program vision and stay the course
- Focus on time-bound measurable results
- Focus on long term sustainability/impact and develop models that can scale
- Train for the skills necessary for employment
- Understand the geo-political situation
- Promote transparency, accountability
- Build relationships in-country
 - o Governments, private sector, academia
- Serve as a catalyst for cross functional activities
 - o Ministry-ministry; public-private; academia-private

- Change mindsets
 - o Equality, partnership not aid, policy, fast vs slow

Lessons Learned (Characteristics of successful programs)

- Clear, well-articulated vision and objectives
- Partners are motivated and aligned, and provide sufficient resources to do the job
- Enabling government and social conditions
- Program utilizes each partners skills and promotes synergies
- Effective project management that establishes strategies, tactics and plans while align partners
- Effective mechanisms for coordinating efforts
- Regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation

Conclusion

The 2003 World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva highlighted that ICT and the Information Society can benefit people in many ways, for example,

- through educational opportunities,
- through their ability to address health and other needs,
- through the exercise of human rights in such areas as freedom of expression and gender equality
- through the delivery of government information and services,
- through increased productivity in peoples' work lives,
- through the ability to innovate and create information and knowledge,
- through the ability of people to sustainably maintain and support themselves their families and the environment around them, as well as be part of human, social and economic development, and
- through the ability of international organizations to provide occasions to discuss important issues and to promote cooperation.

I hope that I have contributed to this WSIS Thematic Meetings learning process by sharing Cisco perspectives on multistakeholder partnerships, and that we can work together for partnerships that can provide even greater benefits to people into the future.

Thank you.