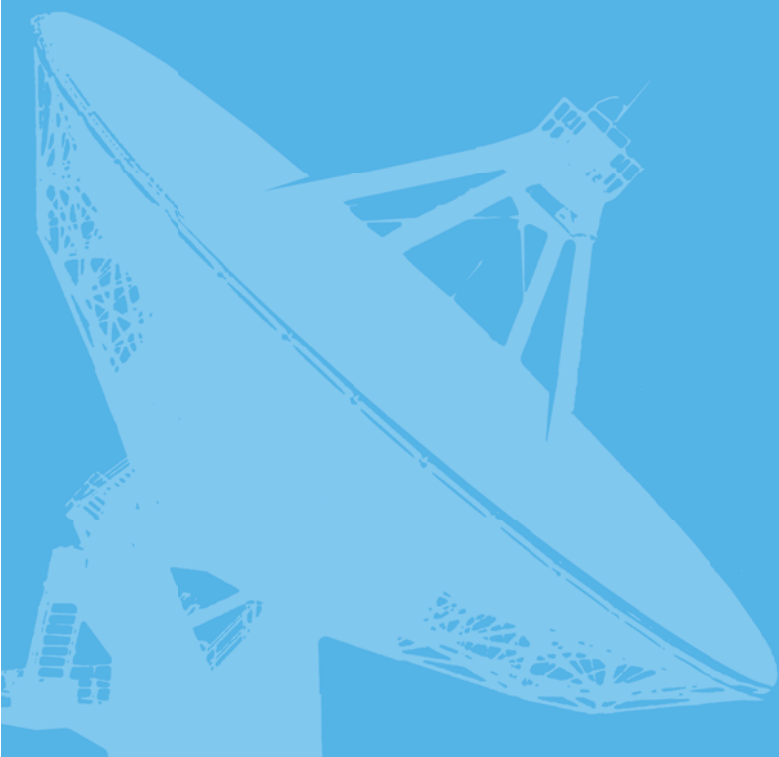


MAKING THE DIFFERENCE
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGIES AS KEY ENABLERS FOR
EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT





EDITORIAL: **BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE FUTURE**

The information revolution presents a tremendous opportunity for development. This is reflected in the accelerating convergence of global development initiatives, particularly the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the UN Millennium Project. They recognise that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can play a key role as enablers for sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This brochure aims to show how and where ICT can make a difference. It argues that it is as an overarching enabling platform rather than simply an instrument for reaching individual development objectives. The power of ICT can most effectively be harnessed through participation and cooperation of all stakeholders and all sectors of society – government, civil society and the private sector. Only by combining their particular competencies and resources can the massive roll-out of innovative ICT-based services and the scale-up of development interventions be achieved which are necessary to make a lasting developmental impact.

Since its foundation in 1997, the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) has grown into the leading international network in the area of ICT for development (ICT4D). With some 90 members from over 40 countries it is devoted to building cross-sectoral partnerships and sharing knowledge among all stakeholders with a view to fostering effective and innovative use of ICT in development.

As an important part of its strategy, GKP regularly and successfully acts as the convener of multi-stakeholder activities at the local, regional and international levels. In addition to raising awareness among decision makers about the enormous potential of ICT4D, events such as the ICT4D Platform at WSIS Geneva, the Global Knowledge Conferences and the GKP International Forums provide platforms for members and partners to share experiences, develop collaborative programmes, and keep abreast of important trends and innovations.

Rinalia Abdul Rahim

Executive Director, Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP)

MEETING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Global development initiatives are increasingly set to converge. There is already a strong correlation between the quest for an inclusive and equitable information society and the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In both processes Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) play a key role as enablers of sustainable human development and poverty reduction.

The year 2005 presents an historic opportunity to further consolidate and strengthen these linkages and synergies. The five-year review of progress toward the achievement of the MDGs at the Millennium Summit + 5 (M+5) in New York in September and the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis in November are ideal platforms to mobilise political will and action around a common understanding of the nature and scope of the challenges and opportunities involved.

Some building blocks for a common approach are already in place. Thus, the discourse on ICT has shifted its focus away from mainly technological issues to an emphasis on the human and development dimensions of information and communication technologies. As a result, the definition of ICT has been broadened to include not just digital technologies such as computers and the Internet but also more traditional technologies such as telephones, radio and television. At the same time there is growing agreement

among actors that ICT should not be viewed in terms of their economic potential alone, but rather as an enabling platform for building an equitable global information society and for reaching individual and overarching development goals.

Strategic factors for development

As we argue on the following pages, ICT through their generic and transformative power can make a difference in a number of crucial areas. This is in addition to their contribution to achieving specific development goals in individual sectors such as health or education. Namely, ICT can help to meet the following challenges:

— **Poverty reduction:** ICT can significantly contribute to poverty reduction by facilitating the efficient, scalable, affordable and pervasive delivery of goods, services and information flows between people, governments and firms and by enhancing empowerment, opportunity and security.

— **Scaling up:** ICT can facilitate the scale up of development investments and initiatives, both in terms of planning, implementation and monitoring of a great number of interventions simultaneously as well as in terms of broadening access to essential services.

— **Civil society participation:** ICT can facilitate the strategic involvement in public debate and policy formulation of a diverse range of actors from social

movements to local entrepreneurs, civil society organisations and researchers, public policy makers, political analysts and journalists, students and teachers.

— **Good governance:** By improving efficiency, transparency, accountability and participation, ICT can contribute to realising fundamental principles of good governance.

— **Harmonisation:** ICT can help increase aid effectiveness by facilitating the coordination of all different actors and the sharing of information and knowledge.

Integrating ICT in broader development strategies

In order for ICT to foster development goals, they must be employed where relevant, appropriate and effective. Their positive potential does not accrue automatically.

ICT need to be firmly aligned with and anchored in broader development and poverty reduction strategies. The starting point for any policy discussion on the role of ICT for development must be how they will contribute to the broader end of poverty reduction and sustainable development, not simply how much they will increase access to ICT. Achievements should be measured by developmental outcomes, not ICT inputs.

Although important strides have been made in making ICT a part of mainstream development discourse, there is still a long way to go. Especially on the national


level (i.e. on the level which owns and drives development and poverty reduction processes), ICT are still undervalued and underutilised as a strategic component.

Building awareness is thus an immediate priority. Another is the further accumulation of experience and evidence, which helps to better understand and predict the impact and potential of ICT for development processes.

“We (...) declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilise and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life (...).”

*World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS),
Declaration of Principles, Geneva 2003*

Most important, however, is creating a common understanding of ICT for development as well as agreement on the approaches, governance structures and implementation mechanisms for moving forward. Only by combining all actors – governments of developed and developing countries, the private sector, civil society and international organisations – in a broad global network can ICT be scaled up to unleash their full potential for development.



KEY CHALLENGE: POVERTY REDUCTION

“Extreme poverty, growing inequality between countries, but also within countries themselves, are great challenges of our times, not least because they are a breeding ground for instability and conflict.”

1.1 billion people worldwide still live in extreme poverty. To reduce poverty is the main challenge faced by the international community today – as a prerequisite for sustainable long-term development and as a safeguard for lasting peace and security.



MAKING ICT WORK FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

ICT can make a difference in reducing poverty and in contributing to reaching the MDGs. Projects around the globe demonstrate its potential for enhancing empowerment, opportunity and security. However, to make a significant impact on poverty levels, ICT need to be firmly anchored in broader, more comprehensive and demand-driven development strategies.

— **Enabling environment:** ICT can help promote economic growth, create economic and social opportunities, make institutions and markets more efficient and responsive. A condition for this potential to be realised is an enabling policy environment, including freedom of expression, free flow of information, competition in ICT infrastructure provision, creation of local content and the use of cost-effective software and hardware solutions. At the same time targeted pro-poor regulations and policies are essential if a deepening of already existing divides such as between rich and poor or urban and rural is to be avoided.


— **Focus on poverty reduction:** ICT need to be embedded in poverty reduction and related development strategies. They facilitate the participation of the

poor in the policy formulation process itself. By mainstreaming ICT into national as well as sectoral strategies, synergies and scalability across sectors and from the grassroots to the national levels can be realised.

— **Locally adapted technology:** As a result of rapid technological progress, costs have been reduced dramatically thus helping to lower the barriers to ICT access. To be useful for the poor and make an impact on poverty, technology choices and applications have to be contextualised and take into account established communications flows. Thus, combining more traditional communication technologies such as radio and television with computers and Internet have often proved to be appropriate in meeting specific local needs.

“Though lack of access to ICT is clearly not a primary problem of poverty compared to the basic, urgent needs of the poor like food and shelter, ICT can be seen as both an accelerating and driving force for progress as well as an outcome of human development itself.”

Innovation and Investment: Information and Communication Technologies and the Millennium Development Goals – Report Prepared for the United Nations ICT Task Force in Support of the Science, Technology & Innovation Task Force of the United Nations Millennium Project (2005)



KEY CHALLENGE: SCALING UP

“The need to scale up arises from the limited impact of pilot projects, or ‘islands of excellence’ amidst a sea of inertia – small projects implemented at local or district levels without a measurable impact on national indicators.”

In its report *“Investing in Development – A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals”* (2005), the UN Millennium Project recommends a significant up-scaling of development investments, initiatives and interventions as a precondition for achieving the MDGs.

Implementation on the basis of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy faces two main challenges. One is the sheer number and range of interventions that need to be realised simultaneously. The other is the need to bring a broad range of essential services to most or all of the population – quickly, equitably and sustainably.

EFFECTIVE SCALE-UP OF DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

While the need to scale up development interventions and initiatives is widely accepted, the role of ICT in the context of development strategies has not yet been fully recognised by development decision makers. However, given the limits of financial resources, aid flows, foreign direct investment, national capital markets and skilled human resources, there is an urgent need to make innovative use of ICT.

— The managerial challenge

Scale-up is a major managerial challenge for many developing countries. ICT can play an important role in effectively managing the complex tasks of planning, implementing and monitoring the various activities. In particular, it can greatly facilitate communication and coordination among all stakeholders and partners involved. By harnessing ICT's potential for dynamic knowledge sharing and networking, and by building on economies of scale, successful pilot projects and approaches can be multiplied and scaled up.

— ICT as core infrastructure

ICT are also part of the core set of physical and social infrastructure investments that are necessary not only to permit the delivery of various types of services such as access to government information and public services but also to attract private investment and facilitate activities in various areas of the economy.

For example, investments in ICT can help reduce the burden of inadequate

infrastructure particularly in the area of transportation. Similarly, ICT increasingly provide producers at all levels with the means to coordinate activities, avail of national and global opportunities as well as withstand competition in their domestic markets. Even in the case of the "informal sector", the source of livelihoods for most of the world's poor and for a large percentage of women, ICT can assist with strengthening coping strategies and income generation.

— Cost-effective delivery of public and private services

ICT can facilitate a scale-up through permitting a joined-up/integrated approach to the delivery of services. Rural populations, who are typically relatively underserved in terms of infrastructure and services, have in various instances seen a decline in access in recent years. ICT enable populations, both rural and urban, to participate more actively in the benefits offered by public and private services.

"Investing in core infrastructure, human capital, and good governance (...) accomplishes several things: • It converts subsistence farming to market-oriented farming. • It establishes the basis for private sector-led diversified exports and economic growth. • It enables a country to join the global division of labor in a productive way. • It sets the stage for technological advance and eventually for an innovation-based economy."

"Investing in Development – A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals" (2005)



KEY CHALLENGE: NON-STATE PARTICIPATION

“Achieving development goals requires strategies that are locally owned and developed, with full participation from all relevant constituents, including civil society organisations, the private sector, and other key stakeholders. Without their full involvement, the goals cannot be implemented.”

Development challenges are complex and cannot be addressed effectively by a single “one size fits all” solution. But there is one common denominator that consistently enriches development processes and contributes to their sustainability: participation, at the levels of policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.



FOSTERING PARTICIPATION OF NON-STATE ACTORS

A paradigm is needed where policy formulation and implementation is influenced by the perspectives and voices of the communities and citizens affected. When used creatively and carefully, ICT can facilitate the strategic involvement of a diverse range of actors from social movements to local entrepreneurs, civil society organisations, and researchers, public policy makers, political analysts, and journalists, students and teachers.

ICT can be used to foster the participation of non-state actors in state-led development processes in three main ways:

— **Integration of ICT as a tool in development policy planning and formulation:** State and non-state actors can make use of ICT to support policy formulation through knowledge sharing. They can ensure a transparent and inclusive policy-making process by inviting comment on draft policy and using a mix of traditional and new communication technologies to raise awareness of the goals and progress of the policy process. They can also use ICT to facilitate communications and data management among the people most actively involved in drafting the policy.

— **Using ICT in implementation:** Traditional and new ICT, from radio to interactive websites and databases, can be used to make policy documents and targets accessible. Informing the media, citizens, communities and organisations

of the steps involved in policy implementation enables them to play a monitoring role. They can come forward as active participants through, for example, transparent tendering and procurement processes.

— **Dissent, dialogue and debate:** Processes that do not provide opportunities for the expression of dissent are not truly participatory. ICT are a tool that can be used by the media and by activists to challenge the state, and other non-state actors involved in development processes.

Simply making information available “online” does not, however, ensure access or participation. The means of participation has to respond to the context of the people that need to be included. Ultimately, the strength of participation that is achieved through the integration of ICT rests on the political will of the state actors leading and implementing development processes. But inclusion, free and active debate with non-state actors, and an involved and diverse media can contribute to ensuring that decision-makers remain accountable, and in that way, can help build the political will and public participation without which sustainable development is not possible.



KEY CHALLENGE: **GOOD GOVERNANCE**

"A commitment to good governance is indispensable for creating an inclusive information society and for the scale-up of investment strategies to achieve global development goals."

Upholding the rule of law, promoting human rights, particularly civil liberties and political freedom, and guaranteeing equitable access to public services are some of the hallmarks of good governance. It exists when the interrelation and division of roles between the state, civil society and the private sector are founded upon some important principles: participation, transparency, non-discrimination, effectiveness and reliability of public affairs.



IMPROVING EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION

The ability to characterise government or governance as “good” hinges not so much on the application of ICT, but rather on the intent and capability of the governance processes and government operations to produce public value. With such intent and capability in place, ICT can become a powerful tool. In some respects, ICT offer a unique possibility to transform traditional approaches to governance and government.

— **Quality and efficiency:** ICT can revolutionise the way in which information in governments and relations between the government and the public is managed, transmitted and delivered. This can translate, for instance, into better availability of public information, greater responsiveness of public administration, better quality of public services and into broadening the loop of those who can benefit from them. In many situations, ICT allow governments to deliver more with less. They make government operations more efficient.

— **Participation:** When put in the context of appropriate rules, ICT tools and applications can deal successfully with the deficit of deliberative resources from which citizens suffer the world over. They can facilitate participatory consultative processes on all levels of government.

— **Transparency:** The potential of ICT in curbing corruption has been demonstrated in practice. But ICT-augmented transparency cannot be the main anti-

corruption measure because it needs an enabling context: a culture that does not tolerate or reward corruption with high social status; a strong civil society and strong democratic institutions; multi-party democracy; a free press; legal protection of whistle-blowers.

— **Knowledge creation:** As in any shared space for knowledge production, also within the units of public administration and within public administration as a whole, ICT can add the prefix “mass-” to knowledge creation and utilisation. This requires “more” ICT as well as making knowledge creation part of public problem solving. This entails the acceptance that knowledge creation has its own dynamic and that all employees are creative beings and are the storage medium for tacit and explicit knowledge.

— **Networking:** Transforming public hierarchies into public networks is by and large uncharted water, though arguably, this could constitute the most important ICT application a public administration can build. This may have far-reaching consequences for the emancipation of people, along with a shift in control of power and resources. If the use of modern ICT has the capacity to dismantle and build at the same time, arguably, it can achieve the most extensive impact by reshaping human society and by enabling all – people, governments and businesses – to operate as networks.



KEY CHALLENGE: **HARMONISATION**

"Today all ODA donors combined fund more than 60,000 development aid projects per year, host more than 1,000 missions to monitor the work and have to present 2,400 quarterly reports on progress."

Enhancing aid effectiveness is among the major challenges faced by international development cooperation. Aligning donor programmes to the needs of recipient countries, simplifying procedures, and enhancing transparency and accountability are essential contributions to the MDGs and the overarching goal of poverty reduction.

Starting with the Rome Declaration in 2003 and taking a significant step further with the Paris Declaration in 2005, aid harmonisation has been gaining momentum with donor countries as a more effective way to deliver development aid.

INCREASING AID EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Information sharing and communication between the different actors is crucial for the harmonisation of development aid. ICT can and should not replace debates, reporting, face-to-face meetings and personal contacts. But they are key instruments to facilitate and support information and communication processes and to transform them.

— **Information and knowledge management:** E-Mail and the Internet are the most important communication tools used in development organisations today. They allow for much faster, more efficient and more inclusive information delivery and communication among all actors and thus facilitate a better alignment of their activities. They also provide the technological basis for comprehensive knowledge management strategies across institutional boundaries.

— **Transparency and accountability:** ICT are decisive in enhancing transparency at all levels of the development system. Information on aspects such as strategies, policies, programmes, principles of funding, allocations of funds or monitoring and evaluation can be made easily accessible to partners and the public at large. Such systems of mutual accountability also help to strengthen public support in donor and recipient countries.

— **Ownership:** ICT can contribute to the ownership of development processes – the one key to success. By encouraging

and facilitating through ICT the participation of civil society and the private sector in the definition of their development policies and strategies, developing countries can achieve a broadly based consensus and exercise effective leadership.

— **Managing for results:** In this area, ICT are crucially important because managing for results means that decision-making, resource management and country programming is directly linked to the desired results and makes use of all the relevant information. It also means that developing countries strengthen the linkages between national development strategies and the annual and multi-annual budget processes. ICT provide the tools to all decision makers for that kind of management. They can, more specifically, contribute to establish results-oriented reporting and assessment frameworks that monitor progress against key dimensions of national strategies.

“We acknowledge the potential contribution of modern information and communication technologies to promoting and facilitating harmonisation – already demonstrated by the use of audio and videoconferencing facilities in the staff work on harmonisation, the Development Gateway, the Country Analytic Work website, and the early work on e-government, e-procurement, and e-financial management. We commit to further efforts to exploit these technologies.”

*Rome Declaration on Harmonisation
25 February 2003*

THE GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE PARTNERSHIP (GKP)

The GKP is the leading international multi-stakeholder network committed to harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) for sustainable and equitable development. Ranging from grassroots practitioners to policy-makers, GKP members and partners are innovators in the practical use of ICT for development.

Through the GKP, governments, business and civil society organisations share their experience, ideas, issues and solutions to unleash the potential of ICT to improve lives, reduce poverty and empower people. While fostering meaningful exchanges and learning, GKP also provides the platform for building effective multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) to generate innovative and practical solutions to development problems, and creates opportunities for scaling up ICT initiatives and spreading their benefits. Working together, GKP members increase their organisational influence and visibility.

The GKP's activities focus on:

- Convening knowledge sharing events with products and innovative solutions
- Brokering multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) for knowledge sharing and increasing effectiveness of ICT for development initiatives
- Promoting innovation in the use and appropriation of ICT for development initiatives and knowledge sharing
- Facilitating mobilisation of investments in ICT for development at local, national, and global levels
- Influencing policy, regulatory frameworks and public opinion

Founded in 1997, GKP continues to grow and now comprises some 90 members from over 40 countries, covering all continents. It is governed by an elected Executive Committee and supported by a Secretariat based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



GKP MEMBERS (as of September 2005)

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- Association for Progressive Communication (APC)
- British Council
- Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
- Commonwealth Secretariat
- European Commission (EC), Belgium
- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)
- International Federation of Library Association & Institutions (IFLA)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- OneWorld International
- Orbicom
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- World Bank
- Digital Divide Data (DDD), Cambodia
- ECOTA Fair Trade Forum (EFTF), Bangladesh
- High Level Commission for Information Technology, Nepal
- Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA), Sri Lanka
- M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), India
- MailStation Net, Philippines
- MIMOS Berhad, Malaysia
- MITRA Technology Foundation, India
- NatureSoft Private Limited, India
- OrphanIT, Philippines
- Propoor Infotech Centre, India
- PROSHIKA, Bangladesh
- Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Sri Lanka
- Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India
- Small & Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), Pakistan
- Thai RuralNet (TRN), Thailand
- TVE Asia Pacific (TVE), Sri Lanka
- Young Asia Television (YATV), Sri Lanka

AFRICA

- African Centre for Women, Information and Communications Technology (ACWICT), Kenya
- Fantsuam Foundation, Nigeria
- National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC), Mauritius
- PROTEGE QV, Cameroon
- SchoolNet Africa, South Africa
- Slums Information Development and Resource Centers (SIDAREC), Kenya
- Youth for Technology Foundation (YTF), Nigeria

ASIA

- Bangladesh Friendship Education Society (BFES), Bangladesh
- Cebu Distance Learning Institute (CDLI), Philippines
- Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS), India
- Datamation Foundation, India
- Development Alternatives (DA), India
- Development through Access to Network Resources (D.Net), Bangladesh

EUROPE

- Commonwealth Network of Information Technology for Development (COMNET-IT), Malta
- Department For International Development (DFID), United Kingdom
- Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources, Ireland
- DiploFoundation, Malta
- Earth Council Geneva, Switzerland
- Information Society of Ukraine (ISU), Ukraine
- Institute of the Information Society, Russia (IIS.RU), Russian Federation
- International Institute for Communication & Development (IICD), Netherlands
- ITDG, United Kingdom
- Panos Institute (Panos), United Kingdom
- Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA), Sweden
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

- Ecole Supérieure de Management et des Technologies de l'Information (DIDACTICA), Algeria
- Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), Egypt
- Regional Information Technology and Software Engineering Center (RITSEC), Egypt
- Science and Arts Foundation (SAF), Islamic Republic of Iran

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

- Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Colombia
- Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL), Ecuador
- Fundación Acceso, Costa Rica
- Fundación ChasquiNet, Ecuador
- Fundación Cisneros, Venezuela
- Fundación Omar Dengo (FOD), Costa Rica
- Fundación Redes y Desarrollo, Dominican Republic
- Third World Institute (TWI), Uruguay

NORTH AMERICA

- Bellanet, Canada
- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada
- CompuMentor, USA
- Global Development Network (GDN), USA
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada
- International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Canada
- Microsoft Corporation, USA
- TakingITGlobal (TIG), Canada
- World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), Canada

OCEANIA

- 2020 National Communications Trust, New Zealand
- Computer Services Limited (CSL), Samoa
- The Foundation for Development Cooperation (FDC), Australia
- ITC Services – Government of Fiji, Fiji
- National ICT Committee of Samoa, Samoa
- Rural Development Volunteers Association (RDVA), Solomon Islands
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Fiji

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Want to read more?

The role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in meeting global development challenges is also the subject of a forthcoming book published by the Global Knowledge Partnership. It will provide in depth analyses by leading development experts and makes a convincing case for building ICT into local, national and global development strategies.

The book will be available in November 2005 from GKP.

More about the book and order information: www.globalknowledge.org

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