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*Responding to the United Nations Secretary General's call to move from
Advocacy to ACTION*

MDG eNabler

The virtual engine for MDG Achievement

Executive Summary

1. Overview and Background

We all share a strong belief that information and communication technologies have an immense potential for fostering economic development in general, and in the achievement of the MDGs in particular. In recognizing that ICT is a key driver of global economic growth, it has been convincingly demonstrated that the use of ICT as a development tool can and does – if done right – bring measurable, tangible results to governments and practitioners working in all areas of social and economic development.

At the same time, we all witness the overall paradox of the current state of development – a glaring and persistent gap between existing potential and resources (technological, financial, and intellectual), on the one hand - and the reality on the ground, on the other.

To help fill this gap, The Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID) in cooperation with diverse multi-stakeholder partners from governments, industry, international organizations, academia and civil society, is building a “one-stop shop” for governments and development practitioners to help accelerate their progress towards the MDGs. Specifically, we are constructing a free, comprehensive web-based MDG eNabler, which when fully operational will include the following principal components:

Matrix of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) Solutions to Advance the MDGs that captures and presents knowledge about existing ICT-based tools and solutions which can accelerate progress of specific action-oriented development tasks.

A **Computer-Aided Strategic Planner** for developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating problem-specific plans.

A **Meta-Portal** (“Yellow pages”) for quick access to key resources.

A Compendium of Excellence in ICT for MDGs.

Simulations and games that will help build relevant capacity.

Professional and Social Networking to connect development practitioners on a single, global on-line platform and allow them to collaborate and share their experiences on the ground.

This MDG eNabler is intended to be a “one-stop shop” with a pool of informational plus decision-support tools which could be useful for all participants (ICT and non-ICT) involved in development, in particular in developing countries. When fully operational, the eNabler could also enhance transparency and provide a platform for exchange of knowledge/experiences among different players. It will also help Governments in strategic integration of all policy matters related to the use of ICT in national development strategies. The majority of the MDG eNabler content will be user-generated and vetted by experts to ensure it is of the highest quality and relevance for all practitioners.

The prototype of the MDG eNabler has been presented and demonstrated in the WSIS Forum on 12-13 May 2010 in Geneva, at a High-level Seminar organized by the Secretariat-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council on June 14-15, 2010, in Riyadh, and at a country Seminar in Bahrain on August 1, 2010. The presentations yielded very positive feedback and strong support from all stakeholders.

Further progress has been achieved at the UN-GAID Preparatory Meeting, held 1-2 September 2010 in New York and during the High-Level GAID meeting on 21 September 2010 in the context of the MDG Summit. The principal purpose of these meetings was to refine and further develop the design, features, organizational and governance arrangements and content vetting procedures for the project to guide its development moving forward.

2. Comparison with other efforts – how is the MDG eNabler different

We believe that this project is unique, for a variety of reasons. First of all, it has the United Nations as its convener which brings to the project the universality, legitimacy and neutrality of the United Nations. It has strong support of the Secretary-General who is the Honorary Chair of the Alliance.

Second, the project is truly multi-stakeholder: it not only brings together different stakeholders (governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations), but also different players within each of these constituencies, such as ministries of education, health, environment and other relevant entities within each government, and both IT producers and IT users in the private sector, for example. Furthermore, the eNabler is going to be built and maintained as a grand collaboration of partners and participants dispersed globally and contributing in a “managed wiki” process.

Thirdly, the functionalities of the eNabler will give it a very distinctive character and scope. As mentioned above, it will be a “one-stop shop” for ICT-based tools and solutions to address specific development issues and advance MDG progress. It will serve as an intelligent agent in helping development practitioners to make decisions and to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively. It will be user-driven (instead of prescriptive), interactive and customized. It will

enhance its own accuracy, scope and comprehensiveness through an iterative process. It will provide tools for building capacity for development practitioners. And, it will be free – no cost to users.

Our goal is to go beyond the websites that contain marketing materials or portals that serve as document repositories with search capabilities or software development sites that house a collection of disconnected tools. There are, for example, some portals that include MDG indicators and measure the performance of each country towards MDGs. Some of these portals are subject-oriented and others are general such as the MDG Monitor. Another group of portals addresses specific countries such as the local portal for Brazil, for example. There are many other websites and portals that offer guidelines, success stories, documents and resources on MDGs.

The MDG eNabler is unique in that it focuses on the ICT development-related content itself. It aims to put the most practical and innovative ICT tools and solutions in the hands of the development practitioners around the world, thus assisting them in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The key difference between the MDG eNabler and the other initiatives is that the Project's primary function is to present existing, proven, scalable, replicable and sustainable ICT tools and solutions for immediate use on the ground where they can provide tangible benefits. Moreover, the MDG eNabler is designed to provide solutions that specifically address the eight MDGs. By targeting these goals directly, the eNabler will become a most practical, tangible proactive tool in UN efforts to help countries achieve the MDGs within the agreed timetable.

3. Components of the MDG eNabler

- The *Matrix of ICT Solutions for MDGs Advancement* will be the core of the MDG eNabler. It will link the individual Millennium Development Goals and the relevant actions that need to be undertaken in order to achieve the goals with existing ICT-based tools and solutions that could be used by development practitioners for achieving the MDGs. Acting as an 'Amazon.com' - type resource for governments and development practitioners, the Matrix will be searchable based on keywords/tags and will be integrated with the other capabilities of the eNabler (e.g., the Meta Portal and Strategic Planner).

Realizing that an undertaking of such scope and complexity can only be accomplished through a grand collaboration of all stakeholders, (governments and the private sector, international organizations and civil society, academics and development practitioners) the Matrix will be built and populated by its users in an open, wiki-type mode and thus all stakeholders are invited to engage actively in the discussion and development of the Matrix.

The architecture of the Matrix from which the website is being built is presented and described below:

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS	Actions to achieve the MDGs	Barriers and Gaps	ICT Tools, Solutions and Innovations	Major Programmes	Leading Actors	Best Practices and lessons learned	Financial Mechanisms

The logic of the Matrix is the following: For each of the MDGs(Column 1), a hierarchical set of targets/sub-targets and actions necessary to achieve the goals and targets will be presented and searchable by users (Column 2). The official MDG targets will be used and actions will be taken, to the extent possible, from established sources such as the Millennium Project Report. The site will also contain relevant information on the obstacles, barriers and gaps (Column 3) that may complicate actions presented in the column to the left.

After searching and selecting the goal(s), target(s) and action(s) that they are working on the user will be presented with the specific ICT-based tools, solutions and innovations (Column 4) that can help address the specific goals, targets and actions. Contents of the Matrix will be reviewed and vetted by experts to ensure that the tools/solutions that will be presented by the Matrix are, in fact, proven, replicable, scalable and self-sustainable (in terms of resources and capacity).

To complement the specific ICT-based tools, solutions and innovations displayed to the user, the site will also contain information about major existing activities and programmes, leading actors, best practices and financial mechanisms relevant to the user based on their individual preferences. (Columns 5, 6, 7 and 8)

- A **Computer-Aided Strategic Planner** builds on the Matrix content and leverages the latest research in intelligent systems to produce highly customized plans for governments. The Planner integrates the knowledge from diverse sources and produces situation- and country-specific plans. It assembles and customizes solutions based on the type of service (e.g. healthcare-specific or education-specific), country and region (e.g. rural versus urban) and user base (e.g. large versus small).

The Planner will also provide *Implementation Support* in the form of Detailed Planning and ICT Simulation/Business Game Tools for detailed insights. These resources enhance the capabilities of the Strategic Planner and go beyond the reports and point to a wide range of available tools of potential value for governments and development practitioners in their work towards the achievement of the MDGs.

Monitoring Support, in the form of Project Controls and Verification, will also be provided by the Strategic Planner to assure that the deployed services are producing the needed results and continue to work properly.

- A **Meta-Portal** “yellow pages” of ICT for Development websites will be organized and presented to users for quick access to useful knowledge for their specific needs. Many good knowledge-based websites are available but are scattered and often-times hard to search and find, the meta-portal will put all of these sites in one place.

- *A Compendium of Excellence* in ICT for MDGs will present the best ICT based tools and Solutions for achieving the MDGs based on expert and user reviews.

- *Simulations and Games* which support development capacity building and can be used with the computer-aided strategic planner to support the implementation of the developed plans.

- *Professional and Social Networking* will also be available through the MDG eNabler, allowing users to create a personal profile and connect on-line with other development practitioners around the world to share their experiences and collaborate in their respective work.

4. Project Timetable

The current version (v. 0.1) is a very preliminary prototype that will be gradually developed into a powerful instrument as the site is further developed and the content is compiled. Specific checkpoints are:

March 2011: Demonstration of MDG eNabler 1.0 (the production version) for widespread use.

January 2012: Announcement of MDG eNabler 2.0 (a much richer version based on one year of field use) for extensive use.

January 2013 and later: Announcement of MDG eNabler 3.0, 4.0 and so on (once a year, with more powerful capabilities than the year before).

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: *What will be the Governance Structure for the MDG eNabler that will define the roles and responsibilities of various players (e.g., UN, government agencies, international organizations such as the Red Cross, inter-governmental agencies, private sector, NGOs and the Civil Society)?*

Answer: An advisory committee of experts will manage the further development of the MDG eNabler and thematic and regional coordinators will be designated to cover specific MDGs sectors to oversee the content development. Relevant UN agencies will be sought out to lead the thematic coordination.

Question: *How will the MDG eNabler, especially the Planner, be used in practice?*

Answer: Development practitioners will use the MDG eNabler to find and actively use online the ICT based tools and solutions and available knowledge and information relevant to their particular work towards achieving the MDGs. The Planner will be primarily used by government officials to plan, implement and monitor actions towards achieving the MDGs.

Question: *How will the needed content be created quickly and updated and improved gradually?*

Answer: Content will be user-generated in a wiki-type process, built upon the knowledge and

experience of members of GAID and the broader ICT for Development community. Consultations will continue and users will be asked to provide feedback to ensure that the site is user-friendly and up-to-date. It is expected that the number of users of the MDG eNabler will grow overtime as the word gets out about the site and that these users will then contribute relevant content.

Question: *How will the plans generated by the planner be checked and maintained for quality?*

Answer: Implementation and monitoring support is also provided by the planner for this purpose.

Question: *How will success of this MDG eNabler be assured and what type of approaches will be used?*

Answer: ‘Success’ of the MDG eNabler will be defined by its users and thus the project’s development and long-term maintenance must rely on constant inputs and feedback from them to ensure that they are getting a product that they easily use on a day-to-day basis for the long-term.

Key Features Suggested

Note: These suggestions are based on the highly interactive consultative discussion sessions in Geneva, Riyadh, Bahrain and in New York during the PrepCom and High-Level meetings on the MDG eNabler. All of these suggestions will be reviewed and considered for incorporation in the future releases of the MDG eNabler.

- 1: Education and training must be an important part of the MDG eNabler. An executive program is needed for on-going education and training.
- 2: Ongoing technical support of the MDG eNabler is an important part of the eNabler operation and should be considered early in the development process
- 3: The eNabler should provide advisory and capacity building support services to help the developing countries
- 4: An ICT News Agency relevant to MDGs will be part of the eNabler for on-going news of interest to the users
- 5: Guidelines for country specific applications need to be developed
- 6: eNabler should provide region-specific applications
- 7: Each government should designate a focal point in each ministry authorized to make changes in the country pages
- 8: The data in the eNabler must be properly authorized, comprehensive and useful
- 9: The users should be able to override the factors reported by international organizations such as the World Economic Forum (WEF). This suggestion was based on the observations that

sometimes incorrect data is intentionally reported to international organizations, for various reasons. The users should be, if needed, able to override the external data with their own data that they know is more accurate.

10: Most countries have their own development plans. The strategic planner should be able to include these development plans

11: International standards must be used in the tools provided by the eNabler

12: Statistical modeling and analysis tools such as provided by SAS should be used where possible.

13: The eNabler should include ICT infrastructure services (e.g., broadband access, cloud computing) in addition to eservices in health, education, economic development, etc.

14. The MDG eNabler should draw upon and coordinate with other institutions and on-going activities, including development banks, UN Regional Commissions, InfoDev, Development Gateway's aid management platform, FAO's IMARK and eAgriculture Platform and CETI-D, among others.

15. Gender aspects should be adequately mainstreamed.

16. The energy and creativity of youth should be fully tapped.

17. A social community approach and social networking tools should be employed to ensure sustainability and long-term development.

18. Marketing and outreach efforts to raise awareness should be scaled up significantly.

19. A simplified version of the MDG eNabler should be developed with easy-to-use tools to enhance buy-in, confidence and capacity building; the interface should be user-friendly.

20. A clear identification of the target audience should be made so that governments, development practitioners and end users could all make the best use of it.

21. The use of games and simulations to foster capacity building was strongly supported and it was suggested that this component should be further developed.

22. The large numbers of tools currently available in the area of ICT for development should be included in the resources.

23. GAID should coordinate and collaborate with other MDGs-related programmes and processes, including financial and field-oriented programmes, to ensure maximum uptake and use.

24. An information guide and an operational manual should be prepared.