



## UN-GAID

### GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR ICT AND DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORTED BY UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

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Dear friends and colleagues,

On behalf of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development, I invite you all to join us in a major new endeavor: building a web-based eMDGs Portal that will present, in a comprehensive, user-friendly and dynamic manner, proven tools, solutions, resources, references and best practices in using ICT to assist governments in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

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 in fighting against poverty and hunger, promoting gender equity, fighting disease and in other priority development areas.

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, intellectual), on the one hand - and the reality on the ground, on the other. Indeed, technological solutions now exist for most development problems - from increasing crop yields to renewable sources of energy to treatment of most diseases - and yet, poverty, hunger, disease and inequity persist. Similarly, in ICT for development area technology has matured to the extent when "there is an app" for most development challenges and needs. The basic guidelines for making effective use of ICT have been mostly defined based on accumulated experience, both positive and negative. And yet, can we really say that we have actually harnessed the potential of ICT for promoting development and reaching the MDGs?

There are of course many factors that hinder progress in this area. However, there is reason to believe that one major factor contributing to inadequate overall developmental impact of the use of ICT is a disconnect between relevant knowledge available *in principle* – and knowledge that can be *used* by practitioners.

There exists a massive amount of information that needs to be processed, packaged and presented to those who need it, and thus become usable knowledge. Moreover, to be effective, such provision of knowledge must not be a static one-shot presentation but a dynamic, systematically updated source. It is only logical that web-based knowledge source is the optimal vehicle for such repository of knowledge.

We are aware that there are numerous web-based repositories of information about ICT4D. Our intention is not to duplicate them or compete with them but to build, with your collaboration and input, a web-based eMDGs Portal that will add value to existing resources and serve as a practical, usable tool for development practitioners around the globe.

The concept of an eMDGs Portal was conceived by me and proposed during discussions in the GAID Meeting in Monterrey, Mexico (September 2009). In early February 2010, I had the honour to present the concept of the Matrix of ICT Solutions for MDGs Advancement to the United Nations Secretary-General who had endorsed the initiative and graciously extended his personal patronage to the project.

The current prototype is the result of work of a group of experts and colleagues from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The eMDGs Portal will include four principal components:

- 1. **Matrix of ICT Solutions for MDGs Advancement** 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.
- 2. **Meta Portal** will display the content of major portals relevant to ICT4MDGs. It will also provide "yellow pages" functionality for quickly finding such portals.
- 3. **Computer-Aided Strategic Planner** will provide integrated decision support capabilities such as computer-aided strategic planning, guides and support tools for assembling and customizing best practice solutions, automated advisory and consultant services, and tutorials on ICT leadership education. It will also include Simulations, Games, and Educational Resources.
- 4. **Compendium of Excellence in ICT for Development** will present ICT4MDGs tools and solutions that will have been endorsed by users and experts as embodying the highest standards of effectiveness, scalability, replicability and sustainability in fostering the achievement of the MDGs.

The Matrix of ICT Solutions for MDGs Advancement will be the core of the eMDGs Portal. It will be searchable based on keywords/tags and will be integrated with the other capabilities of the eMDGs Website (e.g., the Meta Portal and Strategic Planner). We fully realize that an undertaking of such scope and complexity can only be accomplished as 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 in an open, wiki-type mode through web-based contributions of diverse dispersed partners and discussion forums, including using social media.

With this message, we launch a process of consultation and collaboration, both web-based and physical, to seek your feedback, comments, criticisms, suggestions to develop the Matrix from its current prototype form to a working tool and, ultimately, to organize an inflow and processing of your inputs for populating the Matrix with information and knowledge. I invite you all to engage actively in the discussion and development of the Matrix.

The **first physical consultation on the Matrix**, as well as the presentation of the **Computer-Aided Strategic Planner**, will take place in the context of the WSIS Forum in Geneva on **12 and 13 May 2010**.



To launch the iterative process of discussion and development of the Matrix, we present a prototype of the architecture of the tool ([click here http://tinyurl.com/ICT4MDGsMatrix](http://tinyurl.com/ICT4MDGsMatrix); the headings of the table below are retained in this letter only for ease of reference to the outline 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 proposed sequencing of columns is the following. For each of the MDGs (Column 1), a hierarchical set of targets/sub-targets and indicators will be presented in Column 2. The formulation of the targets and actions in this column will be taken, to the extent possible, from established sources such as the Millennium Project Report but you are of course welcome to propose your own formulation of a specific action to achieve a specific MDG.

Column 3 will identify obstacles, barriers and gaps that may complicate action presented in the column to the left.

The next column is central to the Matrix: it presents **specific** ICT-based tools, solutions and innovations that can help address **specific** action listed in Column 2 and, if required, related obstacles of Column 3. Modalities of peer review need to be developed for filtering (vetting) inputs received 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).

The next two columns contain information about major existing activities relevant to the entries in columns to the left, and on major actors (organizations, providers of services/equipment, etc.)

The next column "Best practices and lessons learned" may include examples. The last column will present options for securing funding for action of Column 2 and use of tools and solutions of Column 4, including resourcing through public-private partnerships.

Please share with us by clicking [here \(http://tinyurl.com/GAID-OnlineForum\)](http://tinyurl.com/GAID-OnlineForum) [to register for the online forum] your **views and proposals** on the architecture and components of the Matrix and on possible mechanisms for peer review of inputs.

If you wish to submit information on an ICT-based tool/solution to populate the Matrix, please find a **template for submissions** by clicking [here \(http://tinyurl.com/ICT4MDG-Survey\)](http://tinyurl.com/ICT4MDG-Survey).

I look forward to your active engagement in this initiative that promises to provide a much needed boost to the global effort to reach the Millennium Development Goals. We can make a difference and contribute tangibly towards bringing dignity, prosperity and peace to all humanity. Let us do it, together!



Talal Abu-Ghazaleh  
Chairman

