

THE GLOBAL FORUM ON BUILDING INCLUSIVE INTERNET ECONOMY: DEVELOPING COUNTRIES PERSPECTIVES

Executive Summary of Forum Proceedings
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Executive Summary

Pockets of digital excellence have emerged in some developing nations in the form of R&D clusters, design and manufacturing bases, and markets for a new wave of Internet technologies which are more applicable in developing countries than saturated developed countries. The convergence of the Internet and mobile ecosystems is likely to allow some developing nations to leapfrog into new levels of sophistication in comparison to more linear growth models in developed countries.

But the rise of Internet viruses, spam and cyberattacks from developing and developed countries can challenge the foundations of the global Internet (examples: reported cyberattacks from Russia; spam from Nigeria; IloveYOU virus from the Philippines; sustained Internet attack on Estonia). Many LDCs such as most of the Pacific island states are in real danger of being caught in the broadband digital divide. The real “hard slog” is still ahead, in areas like training and change management. There are larger vested interests who do not want to change things and make it easier for the consumer, eg. converged services.

Factors for e-enabling overall social and economic welfare

Key success factors include regulation of telecom sector, competition, investment, education, and affordability of Internet access. At the national level, it is important to adopt and design policies which are customised to individual developing countries and not directly copied from elsewhere. Simpler policy steps should also be followed instead of big over-ambitious steps. Leadership and project execution are the range of skills needed here.

Convergence

The current roadblocks to enabling converged services include a failure of policy makers to understand the reality and potential of convergence itself. Many governments block VoIP: thanks to vested interests, eg. incumbent telcos. Laws and regulations also take time to change in developing nations. Governments are scared of the power of operators, and many mobile operators are wary of new consumer conveniences, eg. many do not want mobile VoIP.

Creativity

Investment is needed in training for human capital development, focused not just on IT professionals on giving everyone basic skills on how to use IT, along with 21st century skills. Widespread access to the Internet is important here. People should be able to see the Net and play with it, in order to innovate. New business models also need to be devised to harness traditional art, culture and music. In addition to design creativity, capacity building in project management needs to be enhanced. The diaspora population should also provide vital creative stimuli to the local societies.

Confidence

Vulnerability in developing nations is perhaps be greater -- privacy is a less valued commodity and the low level of understanding and fragmented administration creates potential for security holes.

Cooperation between developing and developed countries for an inclusive global Internet

Meaningful participation in international fora devoted to ICT issues is critical to the future of developing countries, the evolving shape of globalisation, and the degree to which these new technologies either bring together or push farther apart the world rich and poor. International fora on ICT will play a decisive role in setting many new norms and standards on topics from privacy and information security to intellectual property and key development priorities.

An often overlooked factor in the IT race in developed and developing countries is the question of e-waste, and the tendency of developed nations to dump e-waste on developing nations as well as the unhealthy practice of e-waste treatments in developing countries.

Panelists and Keynote Speaker

Keynote speaker

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