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participatory learning and action

Change at hand: Web 2.0 for development

participatory learning and action

Participatory Learning and Action, (formerly *PLA Notes* and *RRA Notes)*, is published twice a year. Established in 1987, it enables practitioners of participatory methodologies from around the world to share their field experiences, conceptual reflections, and methodological innovations. The series is informal and seeks to publish frank accounts, address issues of practical and immediate value, encourage innovation, and act as a 'voice from the field'.

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Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an umbrella term for a wide range of approaches and methodologies, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Learning Methods (PALM), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Farming Systems Research (FSR), and Méthode Active de Recherche et de Planification Participative (MARP). The common theme is the full **participation** of people in the processes of **learning** about their needs and opportunities, and in the **action** required to address them.

The methods used range from visualisation, to interviewing and group work for the promotion of interactive learning, shared knowledge, and flexible, yet structured analysis.

In recent years, there has been a number of shifts in the scope and focus of participation:

- emphasis on sub-national, national and international decision-making, not just local decision-making;
- move from projects to policy processes and institutionalisation;
- greater recognition of issues of difference and power; and,
- emphasis on assessing the quality and understanding the impact of participation, rather than simply promoting participation.

Recent issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* have reflected, and will continue to reflect, these developments and shifts. We particularly recognise the importance of analysing and overcoming power differentials which work to exclude the already poor and marginalised.

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Roxanna Samii blog

This blog talks about development, knowledge management, change management, organizational behaviour, ICT, rural livelihoods, leadership, management and other related subject matters

SATURDAY, 7 MARCH 2009

Mobile phones: the silver bullet to bridge the digital divide?

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimates that there are 3.3 billion mobile subscribers. The vast majority of these mobile users never part from their ubiquitous mobile phone. For those living in developed countries, the mobile phone started off as a status symbol and a cool gadget to have. Today, however, the mobile phone is also our mobile office. It is our oxygen, our livelihoods, an object that is more than an object; it is an extension of ourselves. If we happen to 'forget' our mobile phone, we feel completely lost and disoriented. This is because our little hand-held device has our daily appointments, our address book, our emails, photos of our children, our favourite music and allows us to access the internet.

The mobile phone is also the lifeline and an equally important source of livelihood for our brothers and sisters in developing countries. It has revolutionized the lives of millions of urban and rural poor by connecting and involving them in viable economic activities.

Mobile telephony is a success story because the handset is an affordable, scalable, self-sustaining and empowering tool which is paving the way for men and women to achieve socio-economic goals and provide food security to their family. It is a tool that provides a wide range of services at a reasonably low cost.

It is a success because it is providing timely, localized and relevant access to knowledge which in turn has led to reducing production and transaction costs. For example, poor rural people use mobile telephony to get commodity price information via Short Message Service (SMS), gather market intelligence and find out the market needs so that they can make "targetted" trips and save on travel and transportation costs.

As the predominant mode of communication in developing countries, it has contributed substantively to the reduction of the digital divide, something other ICTs such as computers did not manage to achieve. They are definitely more appealing a more viable tool than the $100

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RT @pugerup Free Aung San Suu Kyi now! Today is her birthday, sadly she is 'celebrating' in prison. Sign up http://64forsuu.org/index.php about 4 hours ago

watching Khamenei's sermon on TV. not a single woman in sight. no Khatemi nor Mousavi

***PLA* 59 author Roxanna Samii has also published her article on mobile phones on her personal blog. Source: www.rsamii.blogspot.com**

editorial

Welcome to issue 59 of *Participatory Learning and Action.*

We would first of all like to thank our readers for their patience. *PLA* 59 is the December 2008 issue although it was actually published in June 2009. We hope that you find it was worth the wait!

This year promises to see some exciting developments for the *PLA* series. We are planning a major programme of monitoring and evaluation activities as well as a review of the format of the series, including our website. The aim is to ensure that *PLA* is a leading resource for participatory practitioners in style, format and content. We will update our readers about forthcoming activities in the next issue.

In addition, in November 2008 we had a successful launch of issue 57 *Immersions: learning about poverty face-to-face*, which was held at the UK Department for International Development (DfID) in London. The launch included a short ActionAid film, 'Immersions in action, Uganda – personal and host family experiences,' introduced by Kate Carroll (ActionAid), as well as presentations and a panel discussion. We are grateful to Josh Levene of Praxis-UK for helping to organise the event, Mark Robinson of DfID for chairing the discussions and to panel members Robert Chambers (IDS), Dee Jupp (independent social development consultant), Sonja Ruparel (ActionAid) and Katy Oswald (IDS). For those of you with online access, this issue is now available to download free of charge online.[1]

Since 2007, recent issues of *PLA* have also been published online with IngentaConnect. Since then, downloads of free material has been steadily increasing. All our subscribers have free access to new and recent issues of *PLA* online, as soon as they are published. Why not visit the IngentaConnect website and activate your online subscription?[2]

We have also been working hard on the next issue. *PLA* 60 will be a special edition on community-based adaptation to climate change and will be published in time for the next United Nations Climate Change Conference Copenhagen (COP15) in December 2009.

While all of the articles included in this edition are themed, *PLA* 61 will be a collection of articles of general interest. Please continue to send us your contributions! Guidelines for authors can be found on the inside back cover of each issue.

Themed section

Change at hand: Web 2.0 for development

This special issue has been co-published by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA).

There are dozens of emerging interactive web services and applications, sometimes referred to as the 'participatory', 'social' or 'read-write' web, but more commonly known as Web 2.0. Together, they are radically changing the ways we create, share, collaborate and publish digital information through the Internet. These new technical opportunities bring challenges as well as opportunities that we need to understand and grasp.

Most of the themed articles are based on presentations made at the the international Web2forDev conference, 25th–27th September 2007 at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) headquarters in Rome, Italy.[3] [4]

The conference was the first international event focusing specifically on how Web 2.0 tools could be used to the advantage of Southern development actors, operating in the sectors of agriculture, rural development and natural resource management.

The articles in this special issue have been peer-reviewed by members of the *Participatory Learning and Action* series International Editorial Advisory Board. We are also very grateful to members of the Web2forDev Conference Steering Committee for their comments and reviews.

The cover image for this issue depicts two hands supporting a 'tag cloud' – a collection of keywords or terms generated by Internet users to describe online content.[5] The tags represent both Web 2.0 tools for development and some of the most popular keywords or tags that are used to describe them. The hands represent the potential benefits that come from the participation of

[1] See: http://tinyurl.com/pla57

[2] See: http://tinyurl.com/plaonline

[3] The organisations involved were: Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA), International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP Secretariat), Association for Progressive Communications (APC), University of British Columbia Okanagan, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Euforic and Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR).

[4] The term 'Web2forDev' is short for participatory Web 2.0 tools for development.

[5] For a definition of 'tags' and 'tag clouds' see the glossary on p.123.

Participants and panellists at a plenary session at the Web2forDev conference.

Photo: Giacomo Rambaldi

people brought together using these tools. For the guest editors, this special issue was an opportunity to help 'demystify' Web 2.0 and Web2forDev and share learning and reflections. We hope that it will help to bring Web2forDev to a wider audience of development practitioners and academics: inspiring you to give Web 2.0 tools a go and share your successes and challenges.

Introducing the guest editors

The guest editors for this special issue are Jon Corbett, Ben Garside, Giacomo Rambaldi and Holly Ashley.

Jon Corbett is an assistant professor at the Centre for Social, Spatial and Economic Justice at the University of British Columbia Okanagan, Canada, and also a member of the Web2forDev Steering Committee. Jon Corbett is also an assistant professor in the Community, Culture and Global Studies Unit at UBC Okanagan. Jon's community-based research investigates participatory mapping processes and tools that are used by communities to help express their relationship to, and knowledge of, their territories and resources. Specifically, Jon's research interests explore how digital multimedia technologies can be effectively combined with maps to be used by remote and marginal communities to document, store, manage and communicate their culture, language, history and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Jon's research also examines how using these technologies can strengthen communities through the revitalisation of culture and traditional environmental management practices, as well as externally through increasing their influence over regional decision-making processes.

Ben Garside is a researcher with a strong background in information and communication technology, including participatory web development. Ben works with the Sustainable Markets Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), where he has been working on global food and agricultural research and policy projects. Ben is currently working on a pilot project to explore the use of Web 2.0 tools to facilitate devolved collaborative working in development. He is also leading a new IIED project on how to better measure the impacts of ICTs and their impact on livelihoods for the poorest, including combining new and traditional communications techniques to reach non-literate marginalised groups.

Giacomo Rambaldi is senior programme coordinator at the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA) based in Wageningen, the Netherlands. CTA operates in 78 ACP Countries. Giacomo has 27 years of professional experience in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean where he worked for a number of international organisations including the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Italian Aid to Development, the ASEAN Regional Center for Biodiversity Conservation and the Asian Development Bank. Giacomo has been active on the Internet since 1999 when he launched his first website.[6] He coordinated the organisation of the Web2forDev 2007 international conference and has since been involved in exploring and promoting innovation in the domain of online collaboration and publishing.

Unusually for a special issue of *PLA*, series co-editor **Holly Ashley** is also one of the guest editors. Holly previously worked closely with Jon and Giacomo on *PLA* 54 and was invited to attend the Web2forDev conference as part of the conference

[6] See: www.iapad.org

Members of the Web2forDev conference media team meet. From left to right: Liliane Kambirigi, Pierre Antonios, Hilde Eugelink, Noel Kokou Tadégnon, Gnona Afangbedji and Brenda Zulu.

Photo: Jon Corbett

media team, interviewing participants and writing reports for the conference blog. Prior to the conference, Holly had limited experience in using Web 2.0 tools for development. The conference provided an exciting opportunity to learn more about and experience first-hand many of the numerous Web 2.0 tools and their potential application in development, as well as learning more about the emerging Web2forDev community of practice.

Tips for trainers

Web 2.0 tools: a series of short introductions

In this issue, we present a series of short introductions to a selection of Web 2.0 tools and concepts. Drawing on lessons learnt from articles in the special issue and other resources, these introductions give a brief description of each tool and how they can be used for development purposes, along with links to where applications can be downloaded online and further information. A glossary describing Web 2.0 tools and concepts is also included on page 123.

REGULAR FEATURES

In touch

Much of our In Touch section is devoted to online resources related to Web 2.0 tools for development – including information about the new Web2forDev Development Gateway. This is a new initiative which aims to act as a starting point for Web 2.0 learning and sharing experience in the context of development work.

RCPLA pages

Find out the latest news from partners and colleagues from the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network.

Strategic Editorial Advisory Board news

We are pleased to welcome two new members to the *PLA* strategic editorial board.

David Satterthwaite works in the field of poverty reduction and environmental problems in urban areas. He is a senior fellow at IIED and also on the teaching staff of the Development Planning Unit (University College London) and Honorary Professor, University of Hull. He is also the Editor of *Environment and Urbanization*, a leading international journal on urban development issues. His current work is on the potential role of urban poor federations to address their needs and develop partnerships with government agencies – and on why the scale and depth of urban poverty is under-estimated by most governments and international agencies. He contributed to the Third and Fourth Assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and received the Volvo Environment Prize in 2004.

Cath Long started with IIED in April this year. Before this, Cath worked with forest communities and people using forests in Africa, Latin America and the UK for over 15 years. Cath has lived and worked in Uganda, South Africa and Sierra Leone and for the past seven years has worked closely with partners in the Congo Basin region and in the Andean Amazon (principally in Peru). Her work has always been focused on supporting forest people to secure their rights to control and use forest resources and protect their forests. Cath has a PhD in forest ecology and a long history of working with community-led groups on practical forest management projects as well as campaigning and advocacy on forest rights.

We also say farewell – but not goodbye – to **Peter Taylor** from the Participation, Power and Social

Change (PPSC) team at IDS. Peter is joining IDRC in Ottawa, Canada. Peter has been an active member of our strategic editorial board for the last year. However, Peter will remain on our international advisory board so we look forward to working with him again in the near future.

New International Advisory Board member

We are pleased to welcome Jasber Singh to our international advisory board. Jasber recently co-guest edited *PLA* 58: *Towards empowered participation: stories and reflections*. Jasber is a visiting research fellow for the International Institute for Environment and Development and Newcastle University. Jasber learnt the nuances of participation with British youth minorities in the North of England. Here he used techniques such as participatory video, sport and music with young minorities to analyse and change their lives and to effectively deal with racism. He was also Deputy Director of Cooperative Inquiry for Newcastle University developing a range of participatory projects on science and environmental issues. Recently he worked with an NGO to develop environmental justice programmes with marginalised British youth in inner-city London. Currently he is based in India with two NGOs using a participatory action research approach to investigate the interplay between food sovereignty and energy productions (agro-fuels) with marginalised communities.

Forthcoming: *PLA* 59 English and French multimedia CD-ROM

In addition to this special issue, we will be producing a multimedia CD-ROM. It will contain PDF versions of articles from this special issue in English and French as well as other key multimedia resources, including video and audio clips. Selected articles will also be available in Spanish. Copies will be free to subscribers of *PLA*. This issue will also be available via the CTA online catalogue.[7] Subscribers to the CTA Publications Distribution Service can order both the printed and CD-ROM versions with their credit points.

About CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA) was established in 1983 under the Lomé Convention between the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Group of States and the European Union Member States. Since 2000, it has operated within the framework of the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement. CTA's tasks are to develop and provide services that improve access to information for agricultural and rural development, and to strengthen the capacity of ACP countries to produce, acquire, exchange and utilise information in this area. CTA is funded by the European Commission.
CTA, Postbus 380, 6700 AJ Wageningen, The Netherlands
Website: www.cta.int

Next issue

PLA 60 will be a special issue on community-based adaptation to climate change, and is guest edited by Rachel Berger of Practical Action at the Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development, Terry Cannon and Hannah Reid of IIED's Climate Change Group, with Mozaharul Alam.

Final thoughts

We would like to thank both the authors and guest editors who have contributed so much to this special issue. Producing this special issue has not been without its challenges. Several of the case studies featured here recount what are relatively new experiences of working with Web 2.0 tools – within a relatively new community of practice. As such, several authors found it a challenge to provide in-depth analysis and critical reflections of their experiences. To an extent, the authors here are pioneers, exploring the field while many of us may remain hesitant to embark on our own Web2forDev journey. As Anja Barth and Giacomo Rambaldi note in their article about the conference,

The greatest challenge that most practitioners identified was encouraging organisations to adopt Web 2.0 applications and implement a 'Web2forDev' culture across the development arena – and more importantly, in the South.

We hope that this special issue provides a useful reference and learning tool for those of you who wish to learn more about Web2forDev.

[7] See: http://catalogue-en.cta.int

Theme section

Part I: Overview

The two articles in Part I of this special issue provide an introduction to Web 2.0 and the concept of Web2forDev and share learning and reflections on practice.

In the first article, **HOLLY ASHLEY, JON CORBETT, DAVID JONES, BEN GARSIDE** and **GIACOMO RAMBALDI** explore the use of Web 2.0 tools for development – and introduce readers to the concept of Web2forDev. Web 2.0 tools are radically changing the ways we create, share, collaborate and publish digital information through the Internet. Participatory Web 2.0 for development – or Web2forDev for short – is a way of employing web services to intentionally improve information-sharing and online collaboration for development. Web 2.0 presents us with new opportunities for change – as well as challenges – that we need to better understand and grasp. The authors share learning and reflections from practice and consider the ways forward for using Web 2.0 for development.

In the second article, **CHRIS ADDISON** describes how the concept of Web2forDev can be visualised as an image of two hands. The left hand represents the main Web 2.0 tools. The right hand represents the issues we need to address when using them, considering people, access, participation, content, and impact. Based on the reflections of the Web2forDev conference participants, Chris discusses issues such as access and connectivity, the 'scale of change' as new tools are developed – and how approaches to using Web 2.0 need to be interdisciplinary.

THEME SECTION

1

Change at hand: Web 2.0 for development

by HOLLY ASHLEY, JON CORBETT, DAVE JONES, BEN GARSIDE and GIACOMO RAMBALDI

Introduction

There are dozens of emerging interactive web services and applications, sometimes referred to as the 'participatory', 'social' or 'read-write' web, but more commonly known as Web 2.0. Together, they are radically changing the ways we create, share, collaborate on and publish digital information through the Internet.

The first generation of websites represented a mostly hierarchical approach to disseminating information. Most websites were static, with users unable to interact online with either the content or its producers. Interactivity resided mainly on email discussion lists and web-based message forums. In contrast, Web 2.0 tools herald a new, more informal approach to information-sharing, shifting from a top-down to a more participatory approach to online communication – using tools that are typically free or low-cost to use (see Box 1).[1] For Web 2.0 advocates, these applications are also more transparent and accountable, because users themselves participate in 'weaving a web of knowledge, information and perspectives' (**Christian Kreutz**, this issue).

Web 2.0 is a form of information communication technology (ICT) that was created for – and thrives on – the participation of people and empowerment of users. This is not to say that Web 2.0 tools are somehow better or more appropriate than more traditional ICTs or any other form of communication. Yet as the title for this special issue suggests, Web 2.0 tools and approaches present us with new opportunities for change – as well as challenges – that we need to better understand and grasp in order to make considered and informed choices:

- the underlying processes involved in implementing and using Web 2.0 applications, giving consideration to issues of power in the process and the impact of participation;
- the quality of the methods and processes of participation used;
- how these are integrated with Web 2.0 applications;
- the practical outcomes of such approaches; and
- critical analysis of the lessons learnt, the challenges, and ways forward.

As development practitioners have began to recognise the huge potential of Web 2.0 tools for promoting participatory development and to experiment with them in their work, a body of learning and experience has started to accumulate. In September 2007, the international conference on Participatory Web 2.0 for Development, or 'Web2forDev' was held at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

[1] Throughout this special issue, we make reference to Web 2.0 'tools', which includes applications, platforms and services.

Guest editor and conference organiser Giacomo Rambaldi at the Web2forDev Share Fair participants' space.

Photo: Jon Corbett

headquarters in Rome, Italy.[2] The Web2forDev conference sought to bring practitioners together to further explore how we can exploit this potential. Most of the articles here are written by conference participants. All were developed especially for *Participatory Learning and Action*.

Structure of the special issue

This special issue is divided into five parts. Although the articles include some technical information about the Web 2.0 tools used, we have deliberately chosen to focus on how they have been integrated with development approaches. In Part I, we introduce both Web 2.0 tools and the concept of Web2forDev. In Part II, the articles examine some of the uses of specific Web 2.0 tools for development purposes. In Part III, the articles focus on the integration of multiple Web 2.0 tools to address specific issues. The articles in Part IV discuss theory and reflections on practice, including lessons learnt from experience, challenges identified, and ways forward. In Part V Tips for trainers, we provide a collection of short introductions to Web 2.0 tools, which give more in-depth descriptions of how some of the most commonly-used tools work, including tips on getting started and links to further information. Also included here is a glossary of Web 2.0 terms.

For the guest editors, this special issue was an opportunity to help 'demystify' Web 2.0 and Web2forDev and share learning and reflections. We hope that it will help to bring Web2forDev to a wider audience of development practitioners and academics: inspiring you to give Web 2.0 tools a go and share your successes and challenges.

[2] For a full list of conference organisers, see Editorial, p.3 (this issue).

Box 1: What is Web 2.0?

Although the term 'Web 2.0' suggests a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to an update to any technical specifications, but to changes in the ways software developers and end-users utilise the Web. Web 2.0 refers to web development and design that facilitates interactivity, communication, information-sharing, cooperation and collaboration on the World Wide Web. It includes web-based communities, hosted services, applications and platforms that support them, for example, social networking websites, video- and photo-sharing websites, social bookmarking websites, RSS, wikis, blogs and some VoIP services (Voice over Internet Protocols).[3]

According to Kabissa, successful Web 2.0 websites appear to share several key elements:

- They have a **clear purpose** and real utility;
- They create a **community** around that purpose;
- They are **free to use** or very affordable (usually tiered pricing with free lowest tier of service);
- They are **easy and fun** to join and use;
- They **connect** to or build on other Web 2.0 sites;
- They allow **anonymous** (or pseudonymous) use;
- Contributors **own and control** their content and identity.

Adapted from sources: Wikipedia and Kabissa Wiki

What is Web2forDev?

Participatory Web 2.0 for development – or Web2forDev for short – is a way of employing web services to intentionally improve information-sharing and collaborative production of content for development.[4]

The distinction between Web 2.0 tools and Web2forDev is that Web2forDev is about the active use of these tools in development. It is about how development actors can relate and connect to other stakeholders, produce and publish their own material, decide on levels of access to information and redistribute pieces of content released by others. Web2forDev is about integrating, combining, aggregating, generating, moderating and mediating development information, ideas and perspectives – and there are multiple examples of how this can be done. For more information on how these tools work and where to get started, see the glossary and Tips for trainers, this issue.

- Interconnected networks of bloggers who share common interests can improve the spread of ideas and discourse on particular development topics or themes.
- Online social networks help connect communities of practice, especially those that are dispersed, in order to share relevant information and resources related to development in one place.
- Web 2.0 tools allow users to attribute their own tags or keywords to online content – and collectively create a system of bottom-up, collaborative social classification (also known as folksonomies). There are many collections of popular development tags used by others.
- Social bookmarking websites such as Delicious.com enable people to 'bookmark' web pages which they find interesting or of relevance in order to share with others. Increasingly development content is being bookmarked by practitioners.
- RSS feeds allow content to be automatically distributed between websites, platforms and devices such as mobile phones. RSS feeds allow users to easily keep track of news and new content from multiple websites because updates are delivered directly to them without the need to visit each of the websites in turn. Content can be aggregated into one place, or manipulated either using filters – to increase relevance – or through mash-ups – to combine sources of information, thereby adding value to the original content. Many development websites are utilising this powerful tool to improve their own websites, as well as share their work with others.
- There are tools which allow you to filter and manipulate content from RSS feeds, using keywords or search terms to find relevant information. Some development websites such as Global Voices use people – as well as software – to filter new online content as well as translating and adding context.
- The increasing use of RSS feeds and widgets is allowing users to create their own 'mash-ups' of online data from multiple sources. A mash-up is a web page or application that combines data from two or more external online sources.
- Mobile phones continue to develop as devices to receive and send information – both in terms of what the phones themselves can do, and new support structures and projects being built around them. More applications are being developed to support their use, increase their potential and integrate them with Web 2.0 platforms and services.

"The distinction between Web 2.0 tools and Web2forDev is that Web2forDev is about the active use of these tools in development."

[3] See glossary p.121.

[4] The Web2forDev Development Gateway is a new initiative which aims to become the hub for Web 2.0 learning and sharing experience in the context of development work. See: www.web2fordev.net

Journalists Brenda Zulu, Ramata Soré, Gnona Afangbedji and Noel Kokou Tadégnon blogging during the Web2forDev conference.

Photo: Holly Ashley

The Web2forDev conference

Web2forDev was the first international event of its kind and brought together more than 300 people from over 40 countries in Africa, Europe and Latin America.[5] The conference focused specifically on how Web 2.0 tools could be used to the advantage of Southern development actors, operating in the sectors of agriculture, rural development and natural resource management. The conference aimed to address issues such as:

- How can Web 2.0 applications be integrated with development approaches?
- How can they facilitate and contribute to people's participation and decision-making?
- What are the challenges and barriers to people's participation?
- How do we address factors such as access, equity, control, and oversight?
- Can Web 2.0 applications challenge fundamental social inequalities?

Prior to the event, the organisers adopted a host of Web 2.0 and other ICT tools to create online collaborative spaces. The organisers were able to jointly elaborate the structure and programme for the conference using tools such as wikis, VoIP applications such as Skype and online discussion groups (**Anja Barth** and **Giacomo Rambaldi**, this issue).

The conference itself was unlike any event held at FAO before. It had a vibrant and informal atmosphere. The combined use of plenary discussions, small group sessions and presentations allowed participants to share information, experiences and ideas. The day before the conference began, a 'taster day' allowed many participants to learn about and experiment with some Web 2.0 tools, such as wikis, mobile phones and a host of other applications. There were also busy participants' spaces including a Share Fair. A democracy wall enabled participants to share their reflections with one another.[6] These spaces were often occupied by a group of journalists and other bloggers – writing reports, interviewing other participants and sharing what they learnt almost immediately via the Web2forDev blog.[7]

"There was a tangible sense of excitement about the potential for what people can do with these applications. Web 2.0 tools are more than just ways of communicating. They are highly social tools."

There was a tangible sense of excitement about the potential for what people can do with these applications. Web 2.0 tools are more than just ways of communicating. They are highly social tools. They help foster new networks and build communities of practice. They can improve how we organise, structure and share information with one another. Above all, Web 2.0 is not just about laptops and broadband. A striking element of the conference was the repeated emphasis on the power of mobile phones. Mobile telephony is a global communications revolution that is bringing more and more inclusion to people from all over the world in ways previously unforeseen.

As **Chris Addison** (this issue) describes, the concept of Web2forDev can be visualised as an image of two hands.[8] The left hand represents key Web 2.0 tools. The right hand represents the issues we need to address when using them, considering people, access, participation, content, and impact. Chris provides useful insights based on the participants' own reflections, including issues such as access and

[5] Participants included ICT specialists, information and communication experts, researchers, trainers, application and system providers, software developers, policy makers, enablers and others working in the agricultural, rural development and natural resource management sectors.

[6] A democracy wall is a structured open space where people can post their ideas and opinions in a free, focused and concise manner. Participants write their observations on large sheets of paper. It generates a written, shared pool of reflections which can be used for further participatory analysis and provides on-the-spot feedback during an event, helping to rapidly adjust facilitation to emerging realities and changing circumstances. See *PLA* 58 'Democracy walls' Tips for Trainers (Rambaldi, 2008). Read free online: http://tinyurl.com/c8gkn3

[7] See: http://blog.web2fordev.net

[8] Chris's article summarises the final plenary session at the Web2forDev conference, which was based on comments and reflections made by the participants.

The cover image of this special issue represents the two hands of Web2forDev and some of the more widely-used keywords or 'tags' associated with it. The analogy, if you will, is that the power to use these tools appropriately for change is at hand.

Image: Regina Doyle and Andy Smith

connectivity, the 'scale of change' as tools develop – and how approaches to using Web 2.0 need to be interdisciplinary.

Web 2.0 tools are like any other set of tools – and their selection and use should be based on considerations of power in the process.

A key aim of the Web2forDev conference was to foster a new 'more committed, interlinked and dedicated community of practice' (Barth and Rambaldi, this issue). Two conference surveys, immediately after and one year after the event, have helped to assess what impact the conference has had on changing the ways of working of participants and helping to form and maintain a new Web2forDev community of practice.[9] As one respondent wrote,

Attending the conference gave me the confidence and evidence to back up the recommendations I put forward [to my organisation] in investigating these new tools.

Beyond the digital divide: towards good practice

In many parts of the world, access to the technologies and the Internet is still very limited. As the articles in this collection demonstrate, despite the potential of Web2forDev, fundamental issues remain. Access, connectivity, people's capacity to use the tools, the appropriateness of content for different audiences (both language and style) and creating targeted services are challenges we must collectively seek to address.[10] Even with the use of e.g. audio and video blogs, without the literacy skills to access that information online in the first place, you are still excluded (see e.g. Deh, this issue). Other, more accessible forms of communications may be more appropriate – from email discussion lists to regular, face-to-face meetings. Zuckerman emphasises the use of 'simple tools for smart people' – selecting the most appropriate Web 2.0 tools for development purposes.

During the production of this special issue, one of the *PLA* Editorial Board members commented on the repeated references to 'people' and 'anyone' being able to participate in using Web 2.0 technologies. One could argue that because much information online is dominated by developed countries, Web 2.0 tools are increasing exclusion of Southern actors because of the digital divide. There is a sense that being able to participate in using Web 2.0 tools implies a level of privilege that many are denied. So we need to understand issues of usage and benefits: who is using ICTs/Web 2.0 tools, what are they using them for, and how is that improving their lives? As **Ethan Zuckerman** (this issue) points out, 'lots of the world is still suffering from basic infrastructure problems that make it very difficult to participate in many of the high bandwidth activities that we are talking about.' **Prince Deh** (this issue) also describes some of these inherent challenges in using Web 2.0 tools in countries such as Ghana, where Internet access is still mostly limited to urban areas.

In addition, the sheer volume of online content can leave users feeling overwhelmed. What is important? Whose voices do I want to hear? How can I find those voices? For users where access and connectivity is both limited and costly, this is a particularly important issue.

In fact, Web 2.0 tools can help to **reduce** the amount of time people need to be online – and **improve** access to information – offering us an 'opportunity for better use of limited connectivity' (Esterhuysen, this issue). This is happening in several key ways. Filtering online content for relevance, meaning and context is becoming increasingly important – and the emergence of trusted, expert online editors and aggregators will help users to manage the huge proliferation of content available online (Zuckerman, this issue). In the

[9] Read the one-year post conference survey results online: http://tinyurl.com/656qyn

[10] Targeted services are bundles of tools that are put together differently according to a 'needs assessment' with user groups. The needs assessment would ideally be done in a participatory way to give the user communities input into and ownership of the design process.

"These tools have helped to increase the spread of information and ideas – as well as shifting the balance of power between producers and consumers of information."

same way, the use of social bookmarking websites is helping to create valuable repositories of information, where people bookmarking development content is helping to signpost relevant information for easier access and retrieval. RSS feeds allow users to more easily keep track of news and new content from multiple websites – and information is also no longer confined to its original source. These tools have helped to increase the spread of information and ideas – as well as shifting the balance of power between producers and consumers of information.

The mobile phone revolution

The rising popularity of mobile telephony is another growth area that is helping to bridge the digital divide. In developing countries, people are making innovative uses of mobile phones, enabling them to simultaneously bypass 'the landline, the laptop and the need to connect to the Internet' (**Roxanna Samii**, this issue). Across the world, the mobile phone is becoming a more accessible, affordable and convenient means of communication than the Internet and computers. Expanding areas of service provision in telecommunications infrastructure is helping to reduce costs and improve access to both mobile phone services and the Internet (see also **Jon Corbett**, **Guy Singleton** and **Kado Muir**, this issue). Particularly in Africa, as the cost of services and handsets continues to reduce, mobile phones are increasingly becoming the preferred tool for accessing and sharing information.[11] As the impacts of this new 'revolution' are starting to be assessed, Samii argues that mobile phones have the potential to become the first universally accessible information communication technology.

One example is the way in which integrated online platforms can blend the use of the Internet and mobile phones to send and receive information (see **Ory Okolloh**, this issue). The rising popularity of the mobile phone also demonstrates how some Web 2.0 tools are more appropriate in some

[11] For example, through improved access to market information, they are helping to reduce transportation and transaction costs and introducing new forms of income-generation (Samii, this issue).

Author Ednah Akiiki Karamagi exchanges contact details with another conference participant after her presentation on enhancing knowledge-sharing in rural communities using Web 2.0 tools.

Photo: Holly Ashley

settings than others. **Ednah Akiiki Karamagi** and **Mary Nakirya** describe the work of the Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI) in Uganda. BROSDI works with a network of farmer organisations to generate, collect and share local information about effective agricultural practice. BROSDI integrates a range of Web 2.0 tools and more traditional approaches – from blogs, mobile phones and digital radio to regular Knowledge Sharing Forums and working with Village Knowledge Brokers.

People before technology

When using Web 2.0 tools and applications for development, it is important not to become sidetracked by a technology-driven hype, where excitement about the tools drives their usage, rather than what **people** can do with them. So it is important to reflect on some of the lessons learnt from previous experiences of using information communication technologies for development – and consider the strategies, issues and challenges related to integrating Web 2.0 technologies into development approaches.

For example, **Anriette Esterhuysen** explores the lessons learnt in the paradigm shift from information communication technologies for development (ICT4D) to Web2forDev. ICT4D helped to mainstream ICTs into development thinking and highlight the scale of the issues of access and connectivity in the developing world. Yet ultimately, ICT4D was driven by technology hype and a narrow approach to the appropriation of the tools, with 'too much emphasis on new technologies, and too little on the need to integrate with other tools and skills, and with development theory and practice'. In contrast, Web 2.0 tools have enabled many people to explore these new technologies 'on their own terms' – mostly because these tools have a stronger focus on social and decentralised networking rather than on strategic imple-

Maize farmer Elizabeth Chikusu sending an SMS message.

Photo: Alex Price

mentation by organisations. Web 2.0 technologies have also experienced their fair share of technology-driven hype and arguably they, along with the ICT4D field in general, are learning from early mistakes and are becoming more people-focused and user-driven.

Many donor-funded projects have a history of focusing on technology supply without fostering demand. Clearly, key issues still remain: access, connectivity, capacity-building, literacy and language. Pilot projects often supply equipment and Internet access without building community outreach services that work in conjunction to build local capacity, content and acceptance. The success of a pilot project is often hard to replicate because it is based on simplistic indicators such as user numbers. Contextual factors such as translation of materials into local languages are not taken into account. 'To be sustainable, technologies need to factor in social realities' (Garside, 2009). Esterhuysen argues that we need to 'holistically appropriate, adapt and integrate these technologies for development in our work with people, information and technology.'

In development circles, there is also the risk of assuming that market forces will provide the basics for Web 2.0 tools to flourish – infrastructure, access and appropriate applications. We need to ensure that we begin to 'appropriate these platforms in the context of challenging fundamental social inequalities,' (Esterhuysen, this issue). The challenge is to factor in capacity building – adopting Web 2.0 tools involves learning what the technologies can do as well as understanding what they can offer. As Zuckerman writes, 'using the appropriate tools, for the right job at the right time, is something that we all have to understand.'

Web 2.0 tools for improving advocacy and governance

Proponents of Web2forDev point to the increased transparency and accountability that Web 2.0 tools can bring to online 'conversations'. For Kreutz, blogging represents a radical shift from a more traditional, top-down mode of communication to a more 'publicly open and transparent' one. A blog (short for 'web' and 'log') is a website like an online journal. It is an easy way to publish content for people with Internet access. Deh also reflects on the use of video blogging for information-sharing and advocacy purposes by the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS). Similar to a blog, a video blog – or 'vlog' for short – contains short segments of video content, which you can watch online without having to download them. Usually in the form of interviews, these vlogs help members to share information about ongoing work and experiences. For Kreutz, 'this bottom-up approach to speaking out about social, economical or political issues has the potential to engage a broader public sphere in the development sector.' Yet while the use of blogging for development is beginning to gain popularity, there are relatively few of them.

In fact, most early adopters of Web 2.0 tools for development have been activists, either appropriating the tools for their own use or devising new tools to satisfy a need (Zuckerman, this issue). Web 2.0 tools – many created specifically for recreational purposes – can also be used for more innovative purposes. Zuckerman's view is that governments are reluctant to prevent people from using them because these tools have a 'social cost' to attempt to control or prohibit. One example is publishing photos with captions on photo-sharing websites that document human rights abuses that people might otherwise be unable to communicate to the global community. Social networks – such as MySpace and Facebook – were created so that people could network with friends and family online. Yet campaigning groups are also appropriating these tools to network with one another and to alert people to causes.

Web 2.0 tools and mobile phones are also helping to promote the spread of citizen journalism, particularly in political activism – helping to generate an overview of shared realities, experiences and perceptions, which can also be used to help hold governments and institutions to account (see e.g. Okolloh; Zuckerman; Kreutz, this issue). For example, before the widespread use of blogs, Indymedia, a volunteer-run international network of citizen journalism news websites, radically altered the way in which anyone – individuals, activists and campaign organisers – could publish their own

Jon Corbett and Tim Kulchyski on the panel of a plenary session at the Web2forDev conference.

Photo: Guy Singleton

news online and share information. By providing a news platform that allowed anyone with Internet access to instantly publish their reports and pictures without the need to register, they opened the doors to self-publishing. Then, as now, demonstrators were often demonised in the press and dissenting voices marginalised. Indymedia provided platforms where alternative voices could be heard, people could collaborate in publishing breaking news and protest reports, and space for political discussion and discourse. Volunteers made widespread use of wikis and online instant messaging to coordinate reporting and mobile phones and SMS for gathering and distributing news. This revolution in citizen journalism earned Indymedia UK the New Statesman New Media Award for Advocacy 2002.[12] [13]

Similarly, **Ory Okolloh** (this issue) describes how in Kenya an innovative website was developed for sharing information. During the election crisis in 2007, a media blackout meant that citizens were unable to access information about events unfolding on the ground. So a group of Kenyan activists created the Ushahidi website. Ushahidi (meaning 'testimony' in Swahili) enabled citizens to send in news reports either via the Internet or mobile phones. This 'crowdsourcing' helped to create an immediate overview of events, as well as a time-indexed repository of reports. Ushahidi has now been redeveloped to improve its potential for application in humanitarian crisis situations – an excellent example of a mash-up, which integrates a series of Web 2.0 applications including e.g. web-based interactive maps that allow users to track reports from specific locations to monitor hotspots of activity.

It should be remembered that a tool does not make a campaign. Web- and mobile-based advocacy, like any other advocacy campaign, requires people, planning, time and resource commitments, and capacity building. Arguably, Web 2.0 tools can also be used for propaganda and misinformation – by activists, corporations and the state alike. Particularly with mass participation, there are also issues of verifying data and creating trusted sources of information. Yet as Okolloh writes, 'Information in a crisis is a patchwork of sources. You can only hope to build up a full picture by having as many sources as possible.'

Increased transparency also presents its own challenges

[12] The New Statesman is an award-winning UK current affairs magazine. The New Media Awards celebrate UK new media projects that benefit society, government or democracy. See: www.newstatesman.com/nma
[13] See: www.indymedia.org.uk

(Zuckerman, this issue). 'Letting everybody speak to a potentially global online audience is extremely threatening.' This applies equally to repressive states, organisations with vested interests, and the individuals or groups publishing information.

Developing and adapting appropriate Web 2.0 tools

Many Web 2.0 tools are free or low-cost 'off-the-shelf' and as Zuckerman argues, appropriating these tools for development can be more cost-effective than developing whole new applications, for example online photo-sharing platforms. Given the resources involved in software development, it is also often unrealistic to design completely new tools.

However, we may also need to consider adapting them and if necessary develop new tools for development purposes. And although many Web 2.0 tools have a participatory use there is also the issue of the design processes for these tools – which are often less participatory. Many can participate in using them, but mostly have no control in how they are designed, or what they are designed for.

The increasing use of open source software (OSS) has led in many cases to a much more open process around software development.[14] Because OSS code is available in the public domain it has encouraged the development of common programming interfaces. These interfaces plus the non-commercial nature of the software allows other people to rapidly add to and adapt these tools and drives development forward: people make improvements to software and make them publicly available. Many Web 2.0 platforms have been developed using OSS.

In fact, Web 2.0 has helped to foster an increasing participatory culture in software development – with greater potential for user feedback and collaboration. While more progressive software developers have always solicited feedback from users through email and online discussion forums, it is now almost obligatory for developers to have their own blogs, informing users of planned developments, responding to problems and engaging in dialogue with users over the software development process.

Activists were often the first people to start playing with, hacking and combining tools to produce new services to fulfil an immediate need. This approach has now become a mainstream activity for software developers. Increasingly, publishers of tools, software, and platforms encourage the development of third party applications (plug-ins and add-ons) which enable new functionality to be easily added or integrated into the original product. In a similar way there has been an explosion in 'widgets': mini portable applications which can be easily added to a website to provide additional functionality and dynamic content. Widgets can also be combined to create new functionalities.

Web 2.0 tools have also made content much more portable on the Internet, allowing users to create their own 'mash-ups' of data from multiple sources. At its simplest, a mash-up could be just creating a page that pulls in different content from multiple RSS feeds, be it text, pictures, or videos. Users can either do this themselves, or use a platform designed specifically for creating customisable personal start-pages, such as Pageflakes or iGoogle.[15] A more advanced mash-up is one that actually combines data sources to produce a new set of data or service that was not provided (or necessarily intended) by the original publisher. A good example is how data about events can be combined with online maps (see e.g. Okolloh, this issue). In this way, users themselves are adding value to existing data and creating a new resource.

Learning to share: collaborative online spaces

One fundamental benefit of using Web 2.0 tools is the enhanced ability for people to collaborate and work together online. Applications like wikis can facilitate greater interaction e.g. on documents or developing collections of online resources and materials (see e.g. Rambaldi and Barth, this issue). Wikipedia is a phenomenon that clearly demonstrates the power of wikis. The content generated on the multiple different language versions of Wikipedia has been created by literally hundreds of thousands of people – and anyone who has an Internet connection and who is literate can edit and contribute to the project (Zuckerman, this issue).

Web 2.0 tools can also be particularly useful for projects aiming to revitalise culture and enhance community development. **Jon Corbett**, **Guy Singleton** and **Kado Muir** discuss how an innovative project sought to find ways to help bridge the generational divide between Aboriginal community elders and youth through the use of Web 2.0 and other digital tools. Particularly successful was a participatory digital video project, where the project team and community elders worked with a group of youths to produce a short video which was then published on video-sharing websites. The video subsequently went on to win international acclaim, demonstrating the power of the tools for advocacy purposes and to positively engage youth in such activities.

[14] For more information on OSS see glossary, p.122 (this issue).

[15] See: www.pageflakes.com and www.google.co.uk/ig

Online social networking websites are another phenomenon that development practitioners are recognising as increasingly useful. Online social networks are a new generation of community platforms which are similar to websites but offer specific interactive features and tools. An online social network brings people together and enables them to find others who share common interests and/or activities and who are interested in learning more about each other and what they do. They can be used to target, create or enhance networks or communities of practice. For example, **Duncan Macqueen** describes the development of the Forest Connect online social networking website.[16] Members of the international Forest Connect Alliance had expressed a strong demand for greater information-sharing about state-of-the-art practice in small and medium-sized forest enterprises. Since its creation, the online social network has attracted an increasing number of genuinely active members. In addition, the website utilises the power of social bookmarking and RSS feeds to enhance the ways in which people are able to categorise, find and share relevant information via the website itself.[17]

Because the tools are easy to use and accessible, Web 2.0 tools can quickly fulfil a need, e.g. in response to crises or an urgent or clear need for information. But however useful the tools, people still need to be motivated to participate in using them – whether they are donors, development agencies, community organisations or individuals. Simply making these tools available is not enough. We also need to create – and learn to value – a culture of information-sharing. The application of these tools needs to have a clear utility and purpose that is both appropriate and demand-driven. For example, the process of organising the Web2forDev conference has contributed to building a community of practice (Barth and Rambaldi, this issue). However, the organisers also faced challenges such as hesitancy to explore new tools, choosing from the many Web 2.0 applications available, and the steep learning curve involved in testing and adopting them.

Many Web 2.0 websites are established with the best of intentions, yet care needs to be taken that they are kept pertinent, resourced and moderated. Good intentions and the low cost of establishment are not sufficient in themselves to ensure the long-term upkeep and relevance of the services offered. As Kreutz emphasises in relation to blogging, 'Attention and visitors are not guaranteed. You need to persevere to find the audience or help the audience find you.' This is also echoed by Corbett and Kulchyski (this issue). In their experience, allocating adequate resources to maintaining and updating information on blogging websites is crucial to ensuring the community's interest in using it. Likewise, Okolloh (this issue) compares the success of the Ushahidi platform in Kenya to its less successful deployment in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This may have been for a number of reasons: a lack of public motivation to participate; wariness of possible reprisals; or a reluctance of humanitarian agencies to share crisis information.

"Building and maintaining vibrant online communities for development requires capacity building, time and resources."

Building and maintaining vibrant online communities for development requires capacity building, time and resources – and these requirements are identified throughout the articles in this collection. One challenge is to understand and contribute to collaborative online spaces for development, to share and holistically generate relevant, timely and above all useful content. Yet there are other fundamental issues we also need to be aware of.

Intellectual property, privacy and security

As we have seen, Web 2.0 tools have the potential to enhance the ways we interact and share information online. However, a word of caution is required. Issues such as who has access to the information generated need careful consideration. It is also important to consider issues of safety in the process. Is the information being uploaded culturally sensitive? What are the implications of making this information available to a broader audience? Who may be put at risk by sharing this information? Who is using this information without your knowledge – and for what purposes?

Increasingly, commercial sectors are using these tools for social marketing and to promote brand images. Often, people concede their privacy and/or intellectual property rights over information to online service providers without realising it, for example when content is uploaded to websites like Facebook or YouTube or location-specific data is entered on Google Maps. **Jon Corbett** and **Tim Kulchyski** discuss the importance of intellectual property rights when using Web 2.0 tools for development. In this new era of 'social computing', information that is shared on the Internet is usually publicly accessible. The authors describe a project working with Hul'q'umi'num'-speaking communities

[16] See www.forestconnect.ning.com.
[17] See also our short introductions to social networking, social bookmarks and RSS feeds, Tips for trainers, this issue..

based in Canada to revitalise their language. The project used a range of approaches – including participatory video and Web 2.0 tools – to develop language learning materials. Here, the authors describe how the project participants strategically chose to retain much of their valuable cultural knowledge within their own communities. For example, only selected video segments were uploaded on public video-sharing websites. In addition, access to the community's blog was limited to registered users only. In this way, the project limited access to these important cultural resources for people outside of the Hul'q'umi'num' communities.

We need to be clear about who owns the information that we enter and upload on our social networking websites and as with anything on the Internet always be careful about uploading personal information. Always check the terms of service before joining an online network – some service providers retain the right to use your material without your permission. Find out what rights the service provider has in terms of using your data and what rights you have to recall/delete your data.[18] There have also been some concerns expressed regarding the use of Facebook and many other social networks as a means of surveillance and data mining – people have been blacklisted, lost their jobs and even imprisoned as a result of information they have published. In addition, there have been instances where such services have shut the accounts of particular individuals or online groups without warning (see e.g. Lee, 2007; Mishra, 2009). Some states have also banned the use of Facebook in their countries for promoting criticism of authorities.[19]

There is also the issue of backing up your data. Best practice is that digital data should always be safely stored (or 'backed up') somewhere else offline – it is not advisable to trust that information you have uploaded online will remain there. In addition, when subscribing to third party applications and services, the service may alter, malfunction or disappear – in such instances, subscribers are not in control of what happens to their information. And while third party online social networking platforms can create a vibrant online community, you cannot 'back up' a social network. So if securing data is a major issue, using a more sophisticated content management system (CMS) that can be run on your own server space may be more appropriate than using third party platforms.[20]

[18] For example, Facebook and YouTube retain the rights to use any information uploaded by members. In addition, some websites such as Facebook retain a permanent archive of all material uploaded – even after deleted by the member from their own profile page. See also Social networking, this issue.
[19] For more discussion, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Facebook
[20] For more information about CMS see Social networking, p.112 (this issue).

"Implementing these tools requires a careful consideration of who can or cannot participate – and who will benefit. Multidisciplinary approaches to integrating Web 2.0 tools into development projects and processes are key."

Evaluating effectiveness

Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of these tools is fundamental. Implementing these tools requires a careful consideration of who can or cannot participate – and who will benefit. Multidisciplinary approaches to integrating Web 2.0 tools into development projects and processes are key. How do we decide whether and what tools are appropriate in individual contexts?

One example of a people-focused, needs-based approach to adopting Web 2.0 tools within local communities is provided by the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) within East Africa. The ALIN approach builds community trust by involving existing traditional social networks and empowers communities to drive their own information needs. Local outreach volunteers – who both train and act as 'info-mediaries' – are available, along with a wide range of ICT-based and traditional tools, including community radio and drama, focal groups, participatory video, computers with Internet access, a cross-network online web portal, mobile text message services and newsletters. ALIN communities have a strong, sustained interest in ICTs and Web 2.0 technologies – importantly driven by them defining and owning the combinations of tools which are appropriate for them. This involves a strong element of local capacity building, a slow introduction to new technologies, and techniques put in place to monitor the 'success' of the tools.

In terms of evaluating 'success' of a particular tool or information resource, the important question here is what are we trying to monitor and evaluate – are we attempting to monitor outputs such as numbers of users? For this simple type of monitoring there are a range of website statistics tools (unique visitors, number of document downloads etc.) and third party website statistics providers such as Google Analytics.

A more nuanced definition of 'success' means looking at outcomes rather than just outputs – who has benefited from these tools and in what way? For example, what are

the outcomes of introducing new Web 2.0 market pricing tools in a local farming community? To understand this better it is useful to have knowledge of our existing (non-Web 2.0) social network membership as a baseline reference and applying a range of techniques to monitor change in outcomes (e.g. behavioural change) that then can be implicitly linked to development impacts.

One promising approach that has been used within local communities to understanding outcome changes is to use tools to analyse social network structures. These provide a proxy for a 'knowledge map' of information flows. Within communities and across business relationships, these social structures act as information distribution networks. They are a trusted source of new knowledge. Mapping them provides a guide for introducing Web 2.0 tools in a socio-culturally sensitive way, as well as a template to better measure who uses the technologies and whether development benefits arise from it.

Practical techniques to perform mapping have been pioneered by organisations such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). And there are a host of non-ICT workshop-based activities that can be used, such as the Net-map Toolbox (Schiffer, 2007). This makes social network mapping accessible to development practitioners. Once the local social networks have been mapped, we can better understand how changes to these social networks are effected when new Web 2.0 tools (such as SMS and web-based market pricing systems) are introduced.

When it comes to more anonymous and widely dispersed social networks with hundreds, possibly thousands of users, measuring outcomes is extremely challenging. However, evaluation needs to at the very least infer direct involvement (e.g. leaving comments) or else how the website content is repurposed, tagged, bookmarked, linked to, mashed-up and shared down the line. This helps to demonstrate how interesting and socially relevant a website and its information are to users of the network. A variety of approaches from user surveys, to harvesting information from user profile data, and webpage visitor patterns can be used to gain more information about the network users and their changing behaviours. Additionally, many Web 2.0 tools and platforms provide the ability to order and rank popularity, instances of use or the number of times items or pages are linked to.

The reality is that because Web 2.0 is relatively new and impact is difficult to infer from the mere existence of information networks, we have not developed mature formal mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impacts of Web 2.0 tools. In the broader field of ICT for development there are some useful frameworks emerging, particularly in measuring the effects of newly introduced ICTs on pilot communities.[21] These frameworks are useful in approaches to assessing outcomes where there is direct physical access to communities using Web 2.0 tools on the ground. They are less useful where the tools are used by a network of geographically dispersed and often anonymous users – such as an NGO using an interactive website for advocacy purposes. Here the automated tracking, participatory activity monitoring, and survey tools mentioned are aids to inferring outcomes and development impacts.

"The most successful approaches to implementing development programmes are those that become self-sustaining – shifting away from a reliance on donor funding to become demand-driven. This would apply equally to initiatives using Web 2.0 tools."

Ways forward

The most successful approaches to implementing development programmes are those that become self-sustaining – shifting away from a reliance on donor funding to become demand-driven. This would apply equally to initiatives using Web 2.0 tools (Garside, 2009). As the articles in this collection demonstrate, this can happen if the services that these Web 2.0 applications and tools offer are perceived as relevant, that they offer important and up-to-date information in a way that builds on technologies that are low-cost and already in use (such as mobile phones), and if the impacts are monitored and evaluated for effectiveness.

We should also not assume that market forces will provide the basis for supporting the development and infrastructure for Web 2.0 for development. Privately-run Web 2.0 services may become profitable. But we cannot assume that these services will extend to wherever there is a need. So it is still vitally important for donors to continue to support the implementation of services beyond using simplistic indicators such as profitability.

In addition, many within the development community may

[21] For example see 'Impact Assessment of ICT-for-Development Projects: A Compendium of Approaches' www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/idpm/research/publications/wp/di/di_wp36.htm

still need further convincing about the power of Web 2.0 tools to harness change. As Corbett, Singleton and Muir write, 'There is a gap between what community members consider valid evidence to support what they see as the impact of ICT and Web 2.0 usage within the community, and the comparative academic evaluation of such findings.' Further work is needed to demonstrate the benefits and identify both best and worst practice if these tools are to be better mainstreamed into development work. This means bringing together multidisciplinary groups of practitioners that include social scientists, economists, as well as computer scientists to develop better and more robust monitoring and evaluation techniques.

In fact, from our experience in working with authors to create this collection of articles, what has become apparent is that for many of them, their experiences of using Web 2.0 tools for development are still relatively new. As with any new and emerging community of practice, lessons are still being learnt. Some areas of experience are more mature than others. What is clear is that the use of Web 2.0 tools for development is not yet widespread within development circles – but we hope that this collection of articles will demonstrate both the wider potential as well as critical reflections on the challenges and ways forward.

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2

The two hands of Web2forDev: a conference summary

by CHRIS ADDISON

Introduction

It is not often when summing up at a conference that you find yourself with a summary which becomes a useful mnemonic for day-to-day work in the field. Yet this was the case at the Web2forDev conference in 2007. A complicated conference was summarised by two hands.[1] The left hand represents the tools needed in Web 2.0. The right hand represents the issues we need to address in our approach to how we use them.

In every training event since, I still find myself using the two hands to explain Web 2.0 to the development sector (see Box 1).

Box 1: The two hands of Web2forDev

The topic of Web 2.0 for Development is like the fingers of two hands. Each finger represents one component of development work. When working with Web 2.0 tools, we need to consider the interaction between each finger of each hand.

First, we find ourselves with a left hand full of Web 2.0 tools:

- Blogging
- Wikis and social networks
- Tagging and social bookmarking
- Feeds
- Mash-ups

However, these tools are no use for development if we do not use our right hand of approaches. These approaches were provided by a number of conference participants:

- People
- Access
- Participation
- Content
- Impact

Left hand of Web2forDev: five key Web 2.0 tools

At the Web2forDev conference, Pete Cranston of Oxfam provided a useful story from a previous conference about the need to know five key tools to understand Web 2.0.[2]

- **Blogging**: blogs and video blogs are used to publish our own content in words, speech or images. A **blog** (short for **Web log**) is a website, usually maintained by an individual. It contains regular commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as photos or videos. To 'blog' means to maintain or add content to a blog.
- **Wikis and social networks**: these tools are used to jointly develop and exchange ideas. A **wiki** is a page or collection of web pages designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify content. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites and to power community

[1] This article is based on the comments and observations of the conference participants, which were brought together during the final plenary session. For more information about the conference, see the overview, p.8 and also Barth and Rambaldi, p.95 (this issue).

[2] Pete Cranston explains the five tools at http://blip.tv/file/406897/

The 'two hands' image, created by Jon Corbett during the Web2forDev conference for the final plenary session.

websites. **Social networking tools** focus on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities.

- **Tagging**: we also use tags and bookmarks to order our thoughts. A **tag** is a keyword or term assigned to a piece of information. Tags are chosen informally and personally. Tags help describe an item and allow it to be found again by browsing or searching using that keyword. A collection of online user-generated tags is often referred to as a 'folksonomy'.[3]
- **Feeds**: **RSS (Really Simple Syndication)** feeds are used to spread the word to other websites and across the Internet. RSS feeds allow you to see when websites add new content. RSS feeds aggregate links to new content e.g. headlines and articles in one place, as soon as they are published, without you having to search for them manually on the Internet.
- **Mash-ups**: mash-ups help to bring a view of the web together for ourselves and others. A mash-up is a web application that combines data from more than one source into a single integrated tool, e.g. using text, photos, videos and audio files.[4]

During the conference, we heard from Prince Deh in Ghana and Ednah Karamagi in Uganda – about how blogging and video blogging (**vlogging**) could play their role in communicating development issues (see Deh and also Karamagi and Nakirya, this issue). Working together through **wikis** and **social networking platforms** was presented by Development Seeds in their description of the systems they had built for development agencies. Oxfam showed how they reach northern audiences through the **social networking platforms** MySpace and Facebook.[5] **Tagging** was described by Euforic in the way they had built an entire website around the **social bookmarking** tool Delicious.[6] Ethan Zuckerman explained how **RSS feeds** were used to bring together different perspectives from around the world into one website, to produce Global Voices (see also Zuckerman, this issue).

Right hand of Web2forDev: five key approaches

However, these Web 2.0 tools are no use for development if we do not use our right hand of approaches:

- **People**: we need to look at the people we use the tools with and for, considering their needs. Are the tools appropriate?
- **Access**: it is important to remember issues of access, connectivity and language. Who does and does not have access to the tools? Who can or cannot read or listen to the information you want to share using these tools?
- **Participation**: we need to support participation and consider motivations. How do we facilitate participation? Who can or cannot participate, and why?
- **Content**: it is important to consider issues of content (style, media and type). What information is being shared? With whom? For what purposes?
- **Impact**: lastly – and most importantly – none of this is worth while without measuring impact. Are these tools contributing to a positive change of progress and innovation? How do we measure impact?

[3] For a definition of 'folksonomy' see glossary, p.121 (this issue).
[4] The descriptions for these Web 2.0 tools are adapted from entries in Wikipedia, a free online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit. See: http://en.wikipedia.org

[5] See: www.myspace.com and www.facebook.com
[6] See: http://delicious.com

Throughout the conference participants emphasised how important it is not just to promote the tools but to start with the people involved – and to decide which tools are relevant and necessary. We heard repeatedly how certain tools were better matched than others to different groups of people. One of the most successful tools – considered by some as 'Web 2.0 before Web 2.0' – is DGroups, with over 100,000 registered users. This was not because it was the latest software and most sophisticated tool – but because it matched its users' needs.[7]

Matching the left and right hands: tools in action at Web2forDev

The final session drew out some lessons learnt from participants at the conference. Participants had been encouraged to write their thoughts and observations on the conference democracy walls.[8] Using these and other comments made in the final workshop, their comments were then summarised and matched against the components of the two hands model.

Why use Web 2.0 for development?

One participant observed that while a lot of Web 2.0 tools were thought to be for entertainment, they can also be used for business. Ethan Zuckerman (this issue) made the point that because many Web 2.0 tools are in mass use they are difficult to ban. Because so many Internet users want to use these tools for uncontroversial, mainstream social purposes, authorities are reluctant to block access to them. For example, Ethan Zuckerman (this issue) spoke about how the popular photo-sharing website Flickr allows anyone to put captions on their photos to share with others – but this also means that Internet users can use these captions to post politically sensitive texts online, which some governments might otherwise block people's Internet access to.[9] Anriette Esterhuysen (this issue) talked about the trade-offs and benefits of using Web 2.0 for entertainment. From a development perspective, those with sufficient access to them can use the tools to facilitate livelihood benefits. But equally, 'fun' draws users in and provides an interest factor.

A snapshot of participants' comments on one of the Democracy Walls at the Web2forDev conference.

Photo: P. Pirani, Euforic

Blogs

For many at the conference, blogs allow you to reach as many people as possible with your ideas and use them to highlight unread material (see also Kreutz, this issue). Because bloggers like to link between each others' websites, and because authors tag their comments and blog entries, blogs create useful networks between related websites. Video blogging, or vlogging, seemed particularly useful to civil society organisations because of its immediate visual appeal (see Deh this issue).

Wikis

The conference wiki provided a way to structure our thoughts in preparing the conference, to provide an annotated schedule during the conference and to form a report after the conference (see also Barth and Rambaldi, this issue). The introductory session the day before the conference showed many how to use this useful tool for the first time. Perhaps the wiki was not used as much as expected by participants to add content, but it certainly became an important reference point. One participant commented that they found the wiki to be 'exciting, immediate, and empowering – everyone has a say'.

Tags

Participants' observations on tagging materials on the web were more limited than on other tools and approaches. This still seemed to be an area where few of the participants were working. However, the interesting thing was to see how

[7] DGroups is an online platform offering tools and services for groups and communities interested in international development. See: www.dgroups.org
[8] A democracy wall is a structured open space where people can post their ideas and opinions in a free, focused and concise manner. See *PLA* 58 'Democracy walls' Tips for Trainers (Rambaldi, 2008). Read free online: http://tinyurl.com/c8gkn3
[9] Flickr is a free to use image and video hosting website and online community platform, where users can upload, view and share images and video clips. See www.flickr.com. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flickr

Internet users use tagging in different ways. For example, Christian Kreutz explained how tagging is used to create non-hierarchical folksonomies. These folksonomies, or collections of popular tagging keywords, emerge as commonly-used words are used over and over again as people 'tag' material they upload to the Internet, and start to use popular keywords used by others to describe similar content.

Another emphasised the opportunities for sharing. 'Tags have a social dimension, organising information better for other searchers who use those keywords.' Taxonomy is normally derived to serve a broader community and has developed to assist classification, avoid ambiguity of items and provide a structured method of retrieval.[10] Tagging allows the author to organise their articles, structure them in a blog, and allows their content to be featured on other websites by any online community that actively seeks content tagged with particular keywords, or tags. Tagging is often used for navigation whilst keywords and taxonomy have emerged for retrieving information.

Participants were encouraged to tag all items related to the conference which they uploaded onto the Internet as 'Web2forDev'.[11] This led to a vast repository of ideas and opinions around the meeting (see also Barth and Rambaldi, this issue). The only issue with this was the need for guidelines to decide the best way the tag could be used.

Feeds

RSS feeds help to filter the sheer volume of content available online. They aggregate links to new content in one place e.g. headlines and articles, as soon as they are published, without you having to search for them manually on the Internet. Many participants felt there was a need to move to RSS feeds to unlock valuable new content from websites. They also felt that many organisations were resisting using RSS feeds to share new content – and that this was due to a misunderstanding of what – and how – feeds share information. Feeds are a form of marketing and advertise your content to others, because by gathering together links to new content and 'feeding' them to other interested Internet users, this helps bring new audiences to your website. They do not just give content away.

[10] Taxonomy is the practice and science of classification. A taxonomy is a particular classification arranged in a hierarchical structure. Adapted from source: Wikipedia.

[11] For example, conference participants were encouraged to tag any comments they had written about the conference when writing posts on blogs such as http://blog.web2fordev.net and www.crisscrossed.net. See also Tagging, p.117 (this issue).

Mash-ups

Using Web 2.0 tools, 'mash-ups' allow users to combine, restructure and reuse different types of information – and from different sources – that are already available online, such combining maps with text, photos, and/or videos.[12] We saw intriguing examples ranging from websites to maps. One participant made an interesting observation. 'In my mind [these] are all facets of the same phenomenon: that information and presentation are being separated and then restructured in ways that allow for novel forms of reuse.' The key point for the future is how individuals 'mash-up' their own view of content without the need for in-depth technical knowledge. An example of this is a user's personal website start-page. iGoogle is an example we often use on our training courses.[13] For an example of the combined input from blogs, wikis and tagged documents through the use of feeds, see the page opposite.

People

The people-centred approach was emphasised by comments from two participants in the final wrapping up session.

It's not about the tools – it's about the people who are connected by these tools.

Again and again we heard, 'It's all about people'. We should not get lost in the hype over the new technologies. Without the people to generate the content, both the content itself and means of sharing this content/knowledge is meaningless. Web 2.0 tools and information communication technologies (ICTs) in general, are simply sets of tools that when combined with the right approaches can facilitate benefits to both lives and livelihoods.

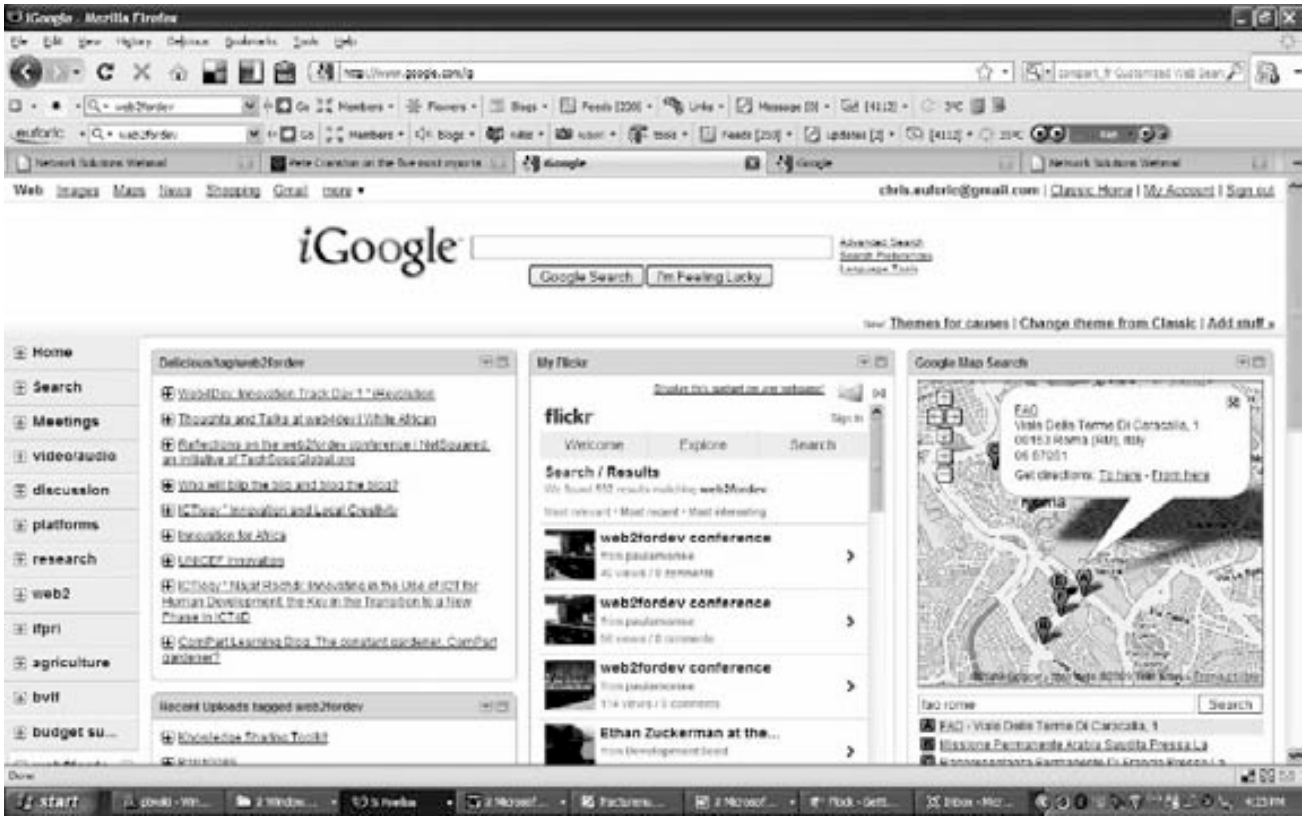
Access

However, you still need access to the tools to use them – no matter how useful they are. Access was illustrated in different ways. Time and again, we heard about variable Internet connectivity across Africa and unreliable power supplies – and how both are affected by business and politics. We heard about other key constraints such as language, with so few Web 2.0 tools available in languages other than English. Even where access was possible, people were looking for the key skills of how to encourage participation and build capacity

[12] For more information on mash-ups, see glossary, p.122 (this issue).

[13] iGoogle is a personalised web start-page. Similiar platforms include Pageflakes or Netvibes. See: www.google.co.uk/ig; www.pageflakes.com; www.netvibes.com.

An example of a 'mash-up' using iGoogle mash-up software. It uses RSS feeds to gather together links to new and existing content from many different websites in one place. See www.google.com/ig



for people to participate. One thing that became clear from the conference was the strong role that mobile phones can play in providing this access (see Samii; Okolloh; and also Karamagi and Nakirya, this issue).

Participation

While many emphasised the important role participation plays in Web 2.0 approaches, some regretted that presentations at the conference did not emphasise this enough. However, it seemed as though that this was the reality for many (although certainly not all) organisations at the time of the conference.[14] While Web 2.0 is also known as 'the participatory web' we need to make a distinction between simply using the 'participatory web' and combining the use of these tools with participatory approaches which generate, collect and share information.

Content

Whatever the new technology, the same concerns about content remain. Some were concerned about how northern information continues to dominate new Web 2.0 services. Others saw the new tools as a way to more readily capture, generate, validate and share local content (see e.g. Karamagi and Nakirya; and Corbett *et al.*, this issue). This worked particularly well for audio and video materials where literacy was less of an impediment to their use. In addition, Web 2.0 tools such as RSS feeds are coming into their own, helping to filter the sheer volume of content available. But the same concerns remain: what content, made and shared by who – and who with? The way we present content will depend so much on the audience we are trying to reach. The new tools provide a completely different way of working, for example allowing many people to work on a document at one time, but there are still times we still need to structure the review and final editing process. Quality, relevance and clarity will still need to be maintained, regardless of the process used, whether using a pencil or Web 2.0 tools.

[14] A good example of a participatory online community is the Open Forum on Participatory Geographic Information Systems and Technologies – a vibrant international community of practice which hosts four distinct online discussion lists: Anglophone, Latin American (Spanish), Lusophone (Brazilian) and Francophone. See: www.ppgis.net

Measuring impact: is it worth it?

The discussions running through the conference focused on a need to measure impact – not just in terms of number of visitors to a website, or how many people use Web 2.0 services – but what impact the information has had on their lives.

I think this point is extremely important. It is about the impact these technologies can have on our lives, from sharing information and knowledge to improve our livelihoods, to building social networks and online communities united in a common cause. Positive change is the goal – not just introducing new technologies. We need to put in place monitoring and evaluation to measure how well – and whether – these tools are having the impact that we have sought. Many participants commented on how this could be done. The two techniques most often mentioned in this context were Outcome Mapping approaches and Most Significant Change. Both are monitoring and evaluation methodologies focusing on the changes around the people in a project rather than outputs from the activity such as reports, publications or networks. Outcome Mapping captures changes in what people do differently (behaviours, actions), while Most Significant Change documents how they perceive and appreciate change.[15]

General conclusions

The general conclusions of the participants in the closing session of the conference stressed the scale of change. So this dialogue was essential. The conference participants were people working in many different aspects of the development sector. And everyone stressed that our approaches to Web 2.0 need to be interdisciplinary. There was particularly an emphasis that often anthropology and technology were needed in combination: good practice requires careful consideration of process, inclusion, transparency and accountability. Web 2.0 tools are like any other set of tools – and their selection and use should be based on considerations of power in the process.

"Web 2.0 tools are like any other set of tools – and their selection and use should be based on considerations of power in the process."

Many expressed their enthusiasm to get home and try Web 2.0 approaches. One interesting observation was that participants would still be taking paper home from the conference – noting down email addresses and writing articles on what they had seen – so more traditional forms of communication were not replaced by Web 2.0 tools. In particular, one point resounded with me. Participants needed to experiment to find which tools were appropriate to their situation. There may be a whole array of Web 2.0 tools and opportunities available, but they each match a particular need. And as the story about the hands says, you should be careful how you use them.

We may meet or greet with our hands and different cultures use different gestures. The fingers may represent our tools and approaches, but some combinations may cause offence. Web 2.0 tools should always be supportive of a development action. So when exploring the new web for development, it is useful to remember the toolkit represented by our two hands.

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NOTES
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This article has been adapted from an article on the Web2forDev conference wiki, 'Two Hands of Web2forDev'.
Source: http://wiki.web2fordev.net/index.php/Two_Hands_of_Web2forDev.
Short URL: http://tinyurl.com/web2hands

[15] See Ricardo Ramirez, Impact of Public Access to ICT (IPAI) project wiki: http://tinyurl.com/dz5jat. For information on Outcome Mapping see: www.outcomemapping.ca. For Most Significant Change see: www.mande.co.uk/MSC.htm

Theme section

Part II: Studies of Web 2.0 tools

In Part II, the articles examine some of the uses of specific Web 2.0 tools for development purposes.

First, **CHRISTIAN KREUTZ** explores the potential of **blogging** for development. A blog enables users to engage in two-way conversations and link to one another to form new information-sharing networks. Blogging represents a shift from a more traditional, top-down mode of communication to a more 'publicly open and transparent' one. While the use of blogging for development is beginning to gain popularity, these blogs are still in limited use – and issues of access and literacy remain a fundamental challenge in many parts of the world.

DUNCAN MACQUEEN describes the development of an online **social networking website**. Members of the international Forest Connect Alliance had expressed a strong demand for greater information-sharing. The website provided a platform for members to quickly and easily access and share information about state-of-the-art practice in small and medium-sized forest enterprises. Since its creation, the online social network has attracted an increasing number of genuinely active members. Although donors still need persuasion to fund further website development, early indications are that the initiative is having a positive impact.

Next, **PRINCE DEH** describes the use of **video blogging** by the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS). Similar to a blog, a video blog – or 'vlog' for short – contains short segments of video content. Usually in the form of interviews, these vlogs help members to share information about work and experiences. Deh also considers the potentials of vlogging for advocacy purposes, as well as the challenges inherent in using Web 2.0 tools in countries such as Ghana, where Internet access is still mostly limited to urban areas.

The final article in Part II is by **ROXANNA SAMII**, and reflects on the rising popularity of **mobile telephony** for development purposes. Across the world, the mobile phone is becoming a more accessible, affordable and convenient means of communication than the Internet and computers. Particularly in Africa, as the cost of services and handsets continue to reduce, mobile phones are increasingly becoming the preferred tool for accessing and sharing information. As the impacts of this new 'revolution' are starting to be assessed, Samii argues that mobile phones have the potential to become the first universally accessible information communication technology.

3

Exploring the potentials of blogging for development

by CHRISTIAN KREUTZ

Introduction

Ideas that spread through groups of people are far more powerful than ideas delivered at an individual.
Seth Godin

The World Wide Web has changed dramatically in recent years, not just in its sheer number of users, but in particular, in the new forms of participation it offers. Sometimes referred to as the 'read and write' web, Web 2.0 technologies now make it potentially possible for every Internet user to have a voice and a worldwide audience – linking people from around the world in an unforeseen way. With the first phase of the web, most people could only read information. Now, it is possible for most Internet users to create content and edit websites (see Box 1).[1]

Commenting, editing or writing articles can be at our fingertips – and this shift also applies to development. Grassroots activists were the first to tap that potential – with very few means you can create an online platform for your cause. One example is the village of Nata, Botswana. Villagers there face severe problems due to poverty and HIV/AIDS. Yet the villagers have a blog, where they describe their daily struggles from their own perspectives. Via this blog, supporters worldwide can engage and follow the latest news.[2]

"Slowly, top-down communication is shifting to a two-way conversation. One of the successful key factors of blogging is that it flourishes from volunteer engagement."

Even organisations like the World Bank have joined the publicly open and transparent conversation about the challenges of development via blogs. Shanta Devarajan, Chief Economist of the African region, proclaims in his blog that Africa can end poverty.[3] He discusses ideas, solutions and challenges online with whoever is interested. Slowly, top-down communication is shifting to a two-way conversation. One of the successful key factors of blogging is that it flourishes from volunteer engagement.

Who blogs and why?

In the early years of the Internet, technical constraints limited how we published our own content online. Today, there are multiple websites where users can participate by publishing

[1] For a definition of 'blog', see glossary, p.121. See also Blogging p.106 (this issue).

[2] See: http://natavillage.typepad.com/

[3] See: http://endpovertyinsouthasia.worldbank.org/blogs/shanta-devarajan

Box 1: What is a blog?

A blog, short for 'Web' and 'log', is basically just a website with articles, but with some decisive elements:

- Everyone can easily create his or her own blog and write posts about any kind of topic.
- Most blogs are written by one person in the form of a diary or journal. The author can opt to allow other readers to interact and write their own comments on the blog.
- This offers readers an opportunity to participate by commenting on each other's posts and engaging in discussion.
- Unlike an online forum, blogs start with the newest posts rather than the oldest ones – this gives them a sense of immediacy.
- A blog is a little publishing system, which allows you to add photos, videos and audio.
- The majority of blogs link to each other, forming new networks and information pathways.

Blogs…

- are an expression of personal opinion;
- help trigger discussions online; and
- link to other blogs, picking up on other ongoing conversations online.

their stories, collaborate with others, or simply comment. Blogs have been synonymous with this recent shift in web communication tools towards the 'social web', often referred to as Web 2.0. A global network of blogs has created its own public sphere – known as the blogosphere – where millions of bloggers write their stories worldwide.[4] Although blogs are mostly personal, there are blogs about all kinds of topics, from sharing a hobby or political opinions, to offering information as an expert, campaigning for a cause, or linking co-workers within a project or organisation. Bloggers can write about their insights and opinions – and trigger a discourse or controversy.

All bloggers share the potential opportunity speak to a global audience. Particularly for development, previously unheard people can tell their stories. In the short history of blogging, however, only a minority of people has participated by writing or commenting. Few blogs have a large audience. Few bloggers focus on development, and the existing development blogs are still loosely linked. But there are various fascinating examples offering new ways of information exchange through blogs.

Blogging in action

The connectedness of blogs allows ideas and information to spread quickly throughout the Internet. African citizen journalism is slowly on the rise. Equipped with mobile phones, in

[4] The blogosphere is a collective term encompassing all blogs and their interconnections. Source: Wikipedia

The Nata village blog is a fundraising tool, which also enables website visitors to meet the people of Nata and to learn about their stories and how they live.

Source: http://natavillage.typepad.com

projects such as Voices of Africa, bloggers film interviews and upload stories from around the continent.[5] Another example is the Indian Kisan blog. Farmers can post questions to the blog, which are answered by other farmers or scientists. In this way, the Kisan blog is contributing to sharing experiences of rural farmers in India.[6]

Bloggers connect not only to share information, but also to take action. One interesting phenomenon is that people are blogging in many different languages. In Asia, Africa and Latin America blogs have become important transmitters of news and expertise. In the Arab region, blogs have become a major tool for political activism.[7] Through blogs, human rights activists connect, coordinate and publish information such as incidents of torture or protests not reported in media. Much political debate has now moved to the Internet.[8] However, this has also resulted in increased censorship in

[5] See: http://voicesofafrica.africanews.com
[6] See: http://kisan.wordpress.com
[7] See e.g.: http://aliveinbaghdad.org
[8] See e.g.: http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2008/Mapping_Irans_Online_Public. Or short URL: http://tinyurl.com/iran-online

Initiated by the Voices of Africa Media Foundation, the Voices of Africa project was launched in late May 2007. Reporters gain experience in uploading texts, photos and videos – much of their work is published on this website.

Source: http://voicesofafrica.africanews.com

Crisscrossed is one example of a blog which explores the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) and Web 2.0 tools for development, social change and knowledge management.

Source: www.crisscrossed.net

many countries, restricting freedom of expression, with some bloggers imprisoned for writing about political or social issues (see also Zuckerman, this issue). For example, in countries such as Egypt, China or Iran, bloggers – and the blogosphere – are under surveillance by their governments and increasingly by Internet companies.[9] However, blogs are often one of the few – or only – sources of information available online, particularly in conflict situations (see also Okolloh, this issue).

Accountability and transparency

Compared to normal development websites, bloggers both analyse and link information – and in the process, create meaning. Bloggers are also notified ('pinged') every time there is a new link from another blog to their own posts. It generates interaction between bloggers and also measures the popularity of a blog – e.g. citations and affiliation (i.e. a list of links to other blogs). Bloggers weave a web of knowledge, expertise and perspectives. In a way, blogging means linking conversations and other existing blogs, increasing the ebb and flow of information. This forms hubs or nodes within networks, where bloggers aggregate information, and give orientation and relevance – and also become effective filters of information. They act like fishers, who pick the most relevant pieces of information out of the net.[10] This aggregation is important to find different blog posts with different perspectives.

The advantage of filtering is that these bloggers give an overview on interesting topics. The disadvantage is that a blogger decides that on a personal basis and it might be biased information. Critics such as Andrew Keen wonder where the added value of this growing content lies – compared to professionally compiled information by journalists. Many say that most blogs 'copy and paste' from other blogs or repeat themselves, often ending in an echo chamber of mutual confirmation. Networks of sympathising blogs often do develop where not enough perspectives are heard or discussed. However, blogging proponents underline the strength to **link information from different connections**, disciplines and interests and highlight the possibility for direct feedback. The paradigm shift is that each Internet user is able to link information and can add values and perspectives – Wikipedia and worldchanging.com are good examples.[11]

These networks of blogs and their readers become a large conversation, where everyone can participate. New ideas and interpretations of them find their way to different

[9] For more information see Reporter Without Borders: www.rsf.org
[10] A good example is Technorati, the largest worldwide blogging directory. See: technorati.com. Afrigator is a portal that aggregates many different African blogs that report on topics from different parts of the continent. See: http://afrigator.com

[11] Wikipedia is a free online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit. It is a multilingual, Web-based, free-content encyclopaedia project. The name 'Wikipedia' is a combination of the words wiki (a type of collaborative website) and encyclopaedia. See: en.wikipedia.org

blogs every day. Much of this kind of exchange was already happening through email mailing lists. However, these connections made by blogging are accessible to anyone online: they are not limited to a certain thematic mailing list and so are more transparent.

Examples in development

For development, this linking and exchanging becomes essential. Multidisciplinary approaches are key to tackling complex environmental problems. Blogs have opened up new channels for development communication. One example is the UK Guardian newspaper's ongoing Katine project in Uganda.[12] Villagers, journalists, scientists and aid workers are invited to write openly their perspectives about the project on a blog on the newspaper's website. It entails controversial discussions around development aid, but also shows the complexity of community-driven development projects. For example, on the Katine blog, Richard M. Kavuma writes bluntly, 'The trouble is, the need is much greater than the project budget.' This is a direct comment about the limitations of development aid.[13]

Blogging can allow us to be transparent about projects. It gives more space for opinions, different perspectives and reflections than traditional communication channels. These can help influence the course of a project. But here, the limits of blogging also appear: one blogger made the comment that, 'At its best, the Guardian's reporting allows us to analyse and think about life in Katine in a careful way.' Just blogging does not necessarily have a demonstrable impact on development.

For many organisations, blogging offers the chance to enter into an 'authentic two-way conversation', enabling people to provide feedback in an open manner – and more easily than before. This bottom-up approach to speaking out about social, economical or political issues has the potential to engage a broader public sphere in the development sector. But it seems only a few organisations in the development field have discovered the potential of blogging – and not all appreciate this degree of openness. Unfortunately, many of the existing initiatives are often only randomly linked – they are islands rather than networks.

Yet Allison Fine (2006) argues that future organisations have to embrace this kind of openness and learn to improve their listening skills. For development organisations, which are non-profit and publicly-funded, there is a chance to improve transparency. Although there are examples of increasing political influence of blogs, particularly in the USA, the political blogosphere in most countries is still marginal. The communication power of blogs has not yet challenged development organisations – but they can act as watchdogs. As Daniel Kaufmann, Director of the World Bank Institute writes on his blog,

"These networks of blogs and their readers become a large conversation, where everyone can participate. New ideas and interpretations of them find their way to different blogs every day."

> *Blogs are playing an increasingly important role for improved governance. Blogs do not face the restraints of commercial print media. The blogosphere is a planet apart from traditional PR departments of public institutions, enabling citizens to share unfiltered information, expose misdeeds, and freely express views. Blogs help make governments and public institutions more accountable.*[14]

Blogs and organisational knowledge-sharing

Some organisations, however, are starting to explore blogging for internal knowledge-sharing. They use blogs to keep a community of practice running or to improve a department's communication or even for project management.[15] Contrary to the traditional Intranet, where few write for many, internal blogs allow everyone to participate and be readers and authors. In its informal approach, blogging encourages storytelling and places an emphasis on individual experiences. For project management, it can be used to document the project history in one central place. This helps to highlight the different perspectives and voices of a project in a more horizontal communication approach.

It also has the potential to make the implicit explicit. This offers organisations the opportunity to not only weave a web of organisational knowledge, but also communicate through their blogs with external audiences. Internal blogs are a good way to experiment with blogging and grasp hidden experiences, and also put employees at the centre of internal communication.

[12] See: www.guardian.co.uk/katine
[13] See: www.guardian.co.uk/society/katineblog/2008/nov/10/one-year-on-uganda
[14] 'Blogging for transparency and good governance: on IFIs.' Blog post, 26th April 2008. See: http://thekaufmannpost.net/blogging-for-accountability-good-governance
[15] For example in Egypt, GTZ uses a blog as an internal exchange platform.

Box 2: Some tips on how to start a blog

- There are several free blogging websites available from which you can easily create a blog. Two of the biggest ones are Wordpress.com and Blogger.com
- Blogs can easily be administered from simple web-based interfaces to add applications such as video clips, photos, or other types of information.
- Think of a topic you want to write about and have an audience in mind. Check blogs on similar topics and start by commenting on them if you do not want to start your own blog right away.
- Write interesting content for readers. Add value to existing conversations and write authentically.
- An important key is to link to other blogs for reference. Pick up discussions on other blogs and link to your favourite blogs to become part of a network.
- Do not underestimate the effort of blogging. Writing takes time, but regularly blogging keeps your blog dynamic.
- Blogging needs patience, but can also be seen as a good process of self reflection, where you digest the things you learn online and offline.

Some challenges to be aware of

Since the creation of the first blog, we have witnessed a huge boom. But not all blogs become vibrant spaces for discussion. Many blogs quickly lapse or are rarely updated. Finding an audience is usually a major challenge. Many also underestimate how much time and resources a blog needs. It takes skill and patience to achieve a vibrant blog with an active, commenting audience. Attention and visitors are not guaranteed. You need to persevere to find the audience or help the audience find you (see Box 2).

Issues of access and literacy

For the average, experienced Internet user, you can quickly learn the publishing process for a blog post. It should not take more than three mouse-clicks, including writing the text. But not everybody is as well connected or has the experience to use this tool and its opportunities. The participatory web has opened new ways of interacting on the Internet, but there are obstacles: access, cost, time, literacy and a certain degree of media literacy.

Particularly in developing countries, few people have Internet access or the means (literacy and media competence) to engage in such a conversation. Also, just a few languages dominate and there are very few bridges between them. The majority of online development debates are in English and exclude many groups from participating. Some of these obstacles will remain or might even intensify.

The speed at which innovation is transforming how we use the Internet is breathtaking. Even so, bandwidth is a big constraint. One approach to bridging the online and offline world is social reporting, where knowledge-sharing is documented for the Internet and vice versa. Participants at events act as reporters to present the different opinions and perspectives articulated within a group. The results can be texts, videos or audio presented on a website.[16]

"Blogging can allow us to be transparent about projects. It gives more space for opinions, different perspectives and reflections than traditional communication channels."

Reading blogs also means that the reader has to find content and then also filter it to create their own understanding. It takes a certain level of education and familiarity with different writing styles to do this. Also less 'media literate' people may take blogs as factual and 'trusted sources' in the same way they would a newspaper. Although there are numerous cases of blogging that have helped to empower people – it does not benefit all causes. With all technology, a best fit approach is key: focus on needs. Not all communication solutions need to technological. In the development context, the key question must always be: how can this potential tool help?

Lastly, there is also a risk that the front-runners are far ahead of normal Internet users. I share the author of We-Think Charles Leadbeater's (2008) concern: 'Those already rich in knowledge, information and connections may just get richer.'

Conclusion

Blogging can have a positive impact on communication and empowerment, but nevertheless there are limitations. There is still very little evidence of blogging making a difference for development. In my opinion we are still at a very early stage in this whole movement. So long as the South cannot participate more easily and until northern organisations change their mindsets towards openness, blogs and all these other wonderful Web 2.0 tools will have limited effects.

[16] Social reporting is where a group of participants at an event interactively and jointly contribute to some form of reporting, in text, photos, images or video. The resulting 'social report' is made accessible, usually online, as soon as possible, sometimes as a half-product. This allows others to join in, to extend, to adjust or remix. Joint live blogging is one way of creating social reports. Source: 'What is social reporting?' See: http://ictkm.wordpress.com/2008/12/04/what-is-social-reporting

"With all technology, a best fit approach is key: focus on needs. Not all communication solutions need to technological. In the development context, the key question must always be: how can this potential tool help?"

Blogging is just one form of publishing and interacting. Many Internet users are publishing content on wikis or on social networks such as Facebook, which allow their members to interact and facilitate collaboration. Mobile social networks go in the same direction, letting you interact from your mobile phone wherever you are.[17] Nevertheless one key problem of all these initiatives is that they always struggle to get a spill-over effect to the offline world.

It is not only about publishing, but interacting within your own networks. Enthusiasts see in this open collaboration promising times ahead, where development challenges are tackled collectively. So whether you choose to use blogs or any other Web 2.0 tools – remember, it is the people who form these networks and their exchange that create value, ideas and innovation.

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[17] For example Twitter, a micro-blogging tool, has had far more networking effects and interesting real life effects than ordinary blogging. Users can send and receive short text updates via the Internet or a mobile phone. See Micro-blogging and Twitter, p.108 (this issue).

4

Web 2.0 tools to promote social networking for the Forest Connect alliance

by DUNCAN MACQUEEN

Introduction

Connecting practitioners working on similar issues across the world is the theme of this article. The aim is to explore how a social network was developed and how effective it has been. Described here is the use of a new Web 2.0 platform to share new approaches and tactics, currently used by supporters of small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs). The new Forest Connect website makes it possible for a growing number of these practitioners (currently in excess of 300 from 48 countries) to upload information, event announcements and work opportunities, discuss key issues, access reports and practical manuals, share photos and videos and send personal messages to other site users.[1] For those new to this area of development, it provides a way to quickly and easily get access to information about state-of-the-art practice in small forest enterprise support (see Box 1).

Launched in January 2008, the Forest Connect website has seen a steady increase in membership and use among government, non-government and private sector organisations that support SMFEs.

Box 1. Ram Subedi (Enterprise and Marketing adviser, Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources, ANSAB, the Forest Connect country partner for Nepal) comments on the Forest Connect networking website

SMFEs face a number of problems such as excessive bureaucracy, unstable policies and regulations, poor access to credit, poor market information, inadequate technology, poor infrastructure, and insufficient business know-how. Forest Connect members link these enterprises with markets, service providers and government in several countries. Amongst various other activities, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) have developed a dynamic web portal where every one can share/exchange their ideas with other Forest Connect members around the world.

The global context provides hints as to why this might be the case. SMFEs (forest enterprises with 10-100 employees) make up 80-90% of forest enterprise numbers and 50% of formal forest sector employment in most developing countries (Macqueen, 2008). If the much more numerous informal enterprises are factored in, for example the many timber or non-timber forest product enterprises which operate without formal business registration or outside legal forest licensing laws, it can be that SMFEs dominate forest outcomes. Globally, they add value to an estimated US$130 billion per year. With the twofold clamour to avoid climate-threatening deforestation and reduce poverty, making SMFEs sustainable in environmental, social and economic terms is increasingly seen

[1] See: http://forestconnect.ning.com

Sharing information about Ethiopian SMFE business training events with Forest Connect partners through the website.

Photo: Duncan MacQueen

as a priority. As a result, new SMFE initiatives are springing up all over the world. With them comes the need to develop the capacity of practitioners working to support SMFEs who frequently come to the theme of enterprise and markets fresh, often without any vocational training beyond a technical background in forestry. It is understandable therefore that new practitioners would seek out a website that can bring them up to speed on this area of practice.

Background

Diagnostic work on SMFEs highlights their dominance in the forest sector and the challenges they face (Kozak, 2007). Principle among these challenges is the widespread isolation of SMFEs from four groups of actors: other enterprises with whom to pursue scale efficiencies and bargaining power, markets, business development and financial service providers, and decision makers who determine the business environment (Macqueen, 2007). This isolation was identified by numerous SMFE managers and support organisations at an international meeting on Small and Medium Forest Enterprise Development for Poverty Reduction at the The Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), Costa Rica from 23rd–25th May 2006. As a result of these discussions, IIED and the Community-Based Forest Enterprise Development Programme (CBED) of FAO developed a response. Together with inputs from various country partners, they developed an alliance called Forest Connect dedicated to addressing the isolation of SMFEs. The aim was to strengthen the capacity of national partners to facilitate better linkages between SMFEs, markets, service providers and decision makers. Funded project activities began in early 2007 with partners from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Mozambique and Nepal. By 2008 in-country demand had led to the addition of China, Ethiopia, India, Mali and Laos.

Early Forest Connect activities included diagnostics to raise awareness of the extent and nature of small forest enterprises in each context. Financial and business service providers have been mapped and in some cases, benchmarked. Communication platforms, hosted by Forest Connect partners, that aim to maintain contact with SMFEs are now active or are being established using newsletters, bulletin boards, trade fairs, mobile telephone price and payment services and the Internet to facilitate better links between small forest enterprise associations, markets, service providers and policy makers. Specific training courses to

improve forest product design and business practice have been carried out.

While still in its early phase of development, it has quickly become clear that there is strong demand for greater sharing of knowledge. This demand was articulated in emails and at meetings, both by Forest Connect partners who wanted to know what each other was doing, and by numerous practitioners who support SMFEs in countries that the Forest Connect alliance is unable to provide financial support to. In early 2008, IIED decided to explore the potential of using an Internet platform to develop a social networking website with registration open to all that would enable partners and other interested parties to share information more easily. Funding came from the UK Department for International Development (DfID), Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DANIDA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Norwegian government (NORAD).

Methods and processes

The potential to be more creative in networking partners has emerged through developments of Web 2.0 platforms. Web 2.0 is a term describing new World Wide Web technologies and web design that allow greater information sharing and collaboration with options for both public and private communication between users. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-based communities and hosted services, such as social networking websites, video-sharing websites, wikis and blogs. IIED reviewed and then selected one social networking platform that appeared most useful, Ning.com. The advantage of Ning was that it had pre-designed modules (e.g. for member profiles, messaging between members, text boxes, blogs, discussion forums, video- and photo-sharing) that even the electronically challenged could click and drag to make a presentable and functional website. The blog and discussion forum tools provide a means to publicly add written text, while the messaging tool allows members to communicate directly with one another (albeit in a way that others can see if they look at individual member profiles). Although it does not have a dedicated document repository facility, the website has the capacity to create a virtual library of useful documents through a link to another useful social bookmarking website, Delicious.com.[2]

[2] Social bookmarking website Delicious allows users of a Ning website to create a list of documents already available on the Internet and tag each one with explanatory terms or keywords. These tags can then serve as an index for other users. For example, a document might be tagged with words such as 'manual' or a country name such as 'Guatemala' to allow website users interested in a particular topic or region to find information more easily. See also Social bookmarking, p.119 (this issue).

"In early 2008, IIED decided to explore the potential of using an Internet platform to develop a social networking website with registration open to all that would enable partners and other interested parties to share information more easily."

The co-managers of the Forest Connect alliance targeted a particular audience – civil society groups, government departments and private sector representative bodies – who acted to support SMFE development. Content was designed to build capacity of those organisations by providing guidance on approaches and tactics to supporting SMFEs, as well as national summaries of SMFE activities. The website was not deemed appropriate for SMFE managers themselves, many of whom do not have Internet access, and whose needs are more context-specific. For SMFEs themselves, more accessible country communication platforms have been developed as described above.

Initial discussions within the co-management team were held to determine what features the website should contain and what it would look like. The actual process of converting that design into reality took less than a day, with one IIED team member developing the main framework and then the IIED Forest Connect co-manager stocking the site with a few useful reports and manuals on SMFEs, example blogs and discussion topics, photos and videos to stimulate interest. Forest Connect country partners were then invited to join in late January 2008. In addition, links were made to several existing websites of Forest Connect partners, the content of which had been driven by in-country decisions on the most useful national information on SMFEs in consultation with the IIED and FAO co-managers. Once initial feedback was received from these initial Forest Connect country partners, a wider group of SMFE practitioners and known resource persons were invited to join the website. All new members received a welcome message to encourage them to spread word to others who might find it useful. In two weeks 100 new members had registered, followed by a further 50 more after nine weeks – and another 50 after 20 weeks. In the first two weeks membership came primarily through existing Forest Connect links and relationships, but this dynamic rapidly broadened out to include distant chains of 'contacts of contacts' and those who found the website independently

using Internet search engines when looking for relevant material on SMFEs.

The IIED co-manager of Forest Connect and IIED website administrator at IIED, who had developed it without any prior training, noticed after the first few weeks that repeat visits were limited. In order to encourage repeat visits and new members alike, a threefold strategy was adopted. Firstly, a concerted effort was made by the IIED co-manager of Forest Connect to upload a regular stream of useful new information drawn from the many other institutional websites dealing with SMFEs. Secondly, the project developments within the Forest Connect alliance were edited by the IIED co-manager of Forest Connect into news features (e.g. workshop proceedings, country developments and managerial decisions such as the election of an international steering committee). Thirdly, a short bimonthly email digest was initiated to inform existing members of recent additions and developments, under the headings of: news, resources, discussions, blog posts, photos and videos. By highlighting such contributions, repeat visits by members have greatly improved.

Lessons learnt, critical reflections and analysis

By March 2009 the Forest Connect social networking website had in excess of 300 members, many of whom visit the website regularly (or at least occasionally following the bimonthly digests). Members have started to add blog posts with useful reports, or to post or participate in discussions. Many also use the website to send individual messages to other members. Some post messages announcing financial or consultancy opportunities. Many have added photos of their work. A number have downloaded reports or manuals from the document library. Comments, such as those in Boxes 1-3 indicate that at least some members find the website useful.

Box 2. Yarri Kamara (Enterprise support manager for TreeAid West Africa, the Forest Connect country partner for Burkina Faso) comments on the Forest Connect networking site

The Forest Connect network site is a very useful hub site that allows one to keep up to date on important developments amongst the other Forest Connect project partners without having to necessarily visit all the separate project websites. I also particularly appreciate the different resources that members of the network put up on the site. On relational aspects, having photos of members that rotate on the home page of the site creates a greater sense of a shared community especially when you start recognising some of the faces.

"The potential to be more creative in networking partners has emerged through developments of Web 2.0 platforms."

A number of lessons have been learnt through this process, which others with similar visions might find useful:

- Keeping the confines of content and audience clear has helped to assemble a membership that is genuinely active in this field with useful experience to share.
- IIED management of this online social network (by the co-manager of Forest Connect) has taken considerable energy and time (at least one day per month). The Forest Connect alliance has evolved very much as an organic response to a perceived set of partner country issues, with funding raised along the way, rather than as a top-down and pre-designed project. Given the retrospective understanding of how useful this activity has been, it would be useful to budget time for website management into a Forest Connect alliance project, but this has not yet proved palatable to donors.
- Few members have taken on a proactive role in uploading material unless actively promoted and chased to do so. The IIED site managers suspect that many supporters of SMFEs would appreciate wider exposure of their ideas and materials, but are inevitably time-constrained. While it may be possible in future to build in contractual requirements for funded Forest Connect partners to share their materials on this website, beyond this small contractual group the website manager's knowledge of – and time to pursue – the main actors in the field will be critical to broadening future contributions.
- Keeping the website fresh with new information and periodic updates to members has encouraged greater use and information sharing. The greatest interest seems to relate to new country reports, practical manuals and announcements of financial or consultancy opportunities – these can help to attract repeat visits.
- The document library available through the Delicious platform has been useful (in common with other document archives). However, the existing platform is not fully searchable and requires a careful use of the tags described in the previous footnote to make resources easily available. With hindsight it would have been useful to have given careful thought to the most useful category tags in advance. For example, it now seems best to have a few broad document tag categories such as 'manual', 'report', 'case study'

A screen shot of the Forest Connect social networking website.

Image: Forest Connect Alliance.

'review' supplemented by more specific geographical tags such as 'Ethiopia', 'Burkina Faso' or content-specific tags such as 'finance', 'marketing', 'business development' etc. Setting up such a hierarchy carefully in advance would have avoided the need to retag numerous documents later on, a process which is currently happening, rather laboriously.

- While one or two documents have been made available in Spanish and French, the website itself is entirely in English – primarily because of lack of funds to pay for translation and the lack of an easy format in which to provide translated content. Administrators are currently fundraising for this, but have neither encouraged nor discouraged users from uploading documents in their own languages to date. With members from 48 countries, the linguistic shortcomings of the website are obvious.
- It is a challenge to provide the necessary guidance on how to use the two main avenues for contributing written materials to the website, blog and discussion tools. Several members tried and gave up, either through lack of familiarity or time taken using slower connection speeds, opting instead to send files to the website administrators to upload. Others find the website a bit difficult to navigate, which could be addressed, time-permitting, by adding a 'how to use this website' manual as a featured publication (see Box 3).
- There have been a few instances of mistaken uploads or deliberate attempts at self or institutional promotion, but these can easily be dealt with through private messages to those concerned to indicate why certain types of use might clog the site with inappropriate material – followed by mutually agreed deletion of unwanted content.

The inability to search or sort members alphabetically or by country or institution on Ning websites is a major drawback for those wishing to identify potential contacts in differ-

Box 3. Sharon Ousman (Researcher at Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development, the Forest Connect country partner in Guyana) comments on the Forest Connect website

I have found the website to be very useful in terms of the practical literature and manuals on support to small and medium forest enterprises. This means that many countries don't need to spend an enormous amount of resources to recreate these manuals for training and other capacity building efforts. They just need maybe minor tweaks to make the literature adaptive to particular countries and targeted groups. I do feel like I am navigating in a maze – it is bit cluttered and confusing – however I do eventually get through.

ent institutions or countries. Presently, a search involves page by page scrolling through many hundreds of members.

Ideas for ways forward

Fundraising for time to develop the website further is an obvious priority – for example, providing better guidance for users, doing more translations and chasing up potential resource contributors would help move the website beyond an information source towards the true social network that is still embryonic at present. In addition it might prove possible to build in responsibilities into the terms of reference of Forest Connect alliance partners for scanning and uploading regional documents. This too might help to encourage broader sharing of information. In addition, there are plans to experiment with more opinionated discussion starters to try and invoke more active debate on the website. While the website has not been used for any formal e-conference, this would potentially be possible using a set of considered discussion topics and summaries to which participants could respond.

The limited experience of managing this networking website to date suggests that the technology could potentially be used by other 'communities of practitioners' in other fields. It seems most appropriate to well-connected intermediary organisations rather than local community or private sector groups. Feedback would be welcome from others using alternative Web 2.0 platforms that might provide some of the functionality that constrains the utility of Ning. Budgeting the time for managing such sites is an important consideration.

"Fundraising for time to develop the website further is an obvious priority – for example, providing better guidance for users, doing more translations and chasing up potential resource contributors."

Box 4. Phuong Thao (Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Department of Production and Trade Promotion, the Forest Connect country partner in Lao PDR) comments on the Forest Connect networking website

I found the Forest Connect website a useful source of information on SMFEs and sector development. The way the website is structured is very much user-friendly. Only in one minute, I can already make a quick scan on what is new and what is interesting for me.

Conclusion

The Forest Connect networking website has allowed institutions supporting SMFEs to share useful information pertinent to their field of work. It has put members in touch with one another and helped to create a virtual archive of resources and ideas for practitioners. The technology involved could help other groups of practitioners hoping to achieve similar aims. Launching such websites is relatively easy. Finding the time, budget, and incentives for participating users to contribute and keep them going is more of a challenge!

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5

Promoting information-sharing in Ghana using video blogging

by PRINCE DEH

Introduction

A new wave of opportunities has been presented by Web 2.0 tools.[1] Websites have been transformed and the web is now being used in new and different ways to reach out to people of all races and identities. A video blog – also know as a vlog for short – is one such next-generation web application.[2] This article reflects some experiences of using vlogging as an information-sharing and advocacy tool for development in Ghana.[3]

The Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) uses information communication technologies (ICTs) and Web 2.0 technologies as a leverage tool to share information and knowledge with its membership and audience. GINKS has been popularising the concept of vlogging in Ghana and elsewhere because of how the tool can help promote information- and knowledge-sharing using free or low-cost Web 2.0 tools on the Internet, with the potential to reach a wider audience with minimal cost.

Vlogging is a process of making and publishing videos on the Internet with the intention of sharing information. Like blogs, video entries are relatively short discussion pieces, which aim to share information and trigger debates about particular issues. Entries are displayed in reverse chronological order, where people can comment on the videos and share their ideas, stories and information, linking to other bloggers online and creating new conversations.

"Like blogs, video entries are relatively short discussion pieces, which aim to share information and trigger debates about particular issues."

The vlogging process requires little specialised expertise, which makes it relatively easy for beginners to learn how to do. It does require the use of computer, Internet and video technologies, so a level of literacy and language skills are required. However, vlogging relies less on these skills than written blogs. Vlogs can help to present stories in a relatively simple and attractive format, making information more accessible, particularly if the story is short and interesting. The videos that our members contribute include sharing information and reflections on good practice in their different areas of work. Most of the videos we record are interviews with people and groups who have ideas about good practice about ICT4D they want to share and which we think will benefit at least one of the stakeholders of our network.

[1] For a definition of Web 2.0, see glossary, p.123 and overview, p.8 (this issue).
[2] Here, video blogs are referred to as 'vlogs'. For a definition of both 'blog' and 'vlog', see glossary, p.121. See also Blogging p.106 (this issue).
[3] Visit our vlog online: www.ginks.blogspot.com

Examples of interviews uploaded on the GINKS video blog.

About the GINKS network

The network was founded by a group of 15 organisations in partnership with the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD). GINKS aims to create a platform for institutions and individuals to promote dialogue and share experiences in order to help maximise the potential of ICT tools for socioeconomic development. Before this, ICT professionals, decision makers and advocates in Ghana had very few options for linking up with other colleagues to share information about best practice and lessons learnt, or to network and discuss issues that related to the evolving ICT industry in Ghana.

The GINKS network is an open forum, which helps to bring together individuals and groups who are interested in information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D). Since its official launch in October 2003, membership has doubled from approximately 200 to over 500 members. GINKS offers innovative ways for information and knowledge-sharing among ICT professionals and decision makers on ICT4D across the country. Its aim is to fill the knowledge-sharing vacuum by creating both online and offline spaces where discussions can be held, lessons can be shared and best practices transferred to promote ICT for development in Ghana.

"Asking someone to give you constructive feedback can help to make sure that the video is clear, informative and interesting."

The network is a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, who use the information shared by the network to improve productivity and livelihoods. Members range from stakeholders in the ICT industry, rural development, environmental protection, agriculture, health, gender and youth. Though an open forum, it encourages targeted discussions to meet the needs of particular groups. Thematic forums create specialised spaces for members with a common interest to share experiences across the country.[4] GINKS regularly receives feedback and comments from its members on how beneficial they find the information shared in this way.

The GINKS website is used to share information on ICT4D in Ghana.[5] In partnership with BusyInternet (a cyber cafe and Internet Service Provider in Ghana), GINKS also publishes a monthly newsletter about ICT4D called *Cyber Series*. The network also publishes the *iConnectGhana* newsletter, which remains the topmost media devoted to news on ICT4D in Ghana. Additionally, there is a GINKS DGroups email mailing list with over 430 subscribers, which offers a platform for engagement irrespective of physical location.[6] We also encourage our members to share their experiences of development work with the network by producing short video blogs which are then uploaded to our online blog.

How do you make a video blog?

When creating a vlog about a particular issue or topic, vloggers need to consider what type of information they want to share and how to present it. Recorded video segments are normally five minutes or less – similar to the length of written text you might find on a blog. This helps to keep the videos concise and interesting to watch. It also helps to keep video file sizes small and manageable, both to upload and view online. In our experience, a good format is to record an individual or group interview, e.g. telling a story or illustrating their working practice for a particular issue.

In recent years, the technology required to produce a vlog

[4] For example, the GINKS-Tech Forum focuses on technical issues and GINKS-Women&ICT4D focuses on gender issues related to ICT4D.
[5] See: www.ginks.org
[6] DGroups is an online home for groups and communities interested in international development. See: www.dgroups.org

"Web 2.0 tools such as vlogging have the potential to become an important advocacy and information-sharing tool. The question remains of how to extend the benefits of Web 2.0 tools much wider and beyond the scope of Ghanaian cities."

has become simpler to use and more affordable, requiring comparatively less resources and training. The minimum tools you need to make a vlog are:

- a video camera/camcorder[7];
- a computer with video-editing software;
- an Internet connection;
- a blog account/space; and
- an online video account/space.

Once the interviews have been recorded, the raw video is then downloaded onto a laptop or desktop computer and edited using various video-editing software programmes, which are either free or low-cost and also easy to use.[8] Before posting a video to your vlog website, it is also important to ask someone else to watch it. Asking someone to give you constructive feedback can help to make sure that the video is clear, informative and interesting. It is also useful to transcribe the audio speech into text before you upload it and to also upload this text to accompany the video version.

After editing the video, it is then uploaded onto a video-hosting website on the Internet.[9] We use the GINKS BlipTV space from where we share the video by linking it to the GINKS blog.[10] From here, you can then share your videos with the public. We announce new video links to the GINKS network. Like any other blog, the GINKS vlog also has a feature for members to comment and share ideas.

Challenges for vloggers

The challenges of vlogging are interlocked. The major challenge is connectivity and access to the Internet. In the developing world, this is one of the main hindrances to sharing information and knowledge. Where there is access, it is too expensive for the ordinary citizen to buy. People can access the Internet using cyber cafes, but these can only be located in Ghana's big cities. Accra alone accounts for about 60% of cyber cafes in Ghana. Mobile phones which allow you to connect to the Internet are still too expensive for Ghanaians living in rural areas to afford – however, the use of mobile phones is steadily rising. As both the handsets and call tariffs are becoming more affordable, this may be less of an issue in future (see also Samii; Karamagi and Nakirya, this issue).

Because producing video blogging requires minimum technical skills, we have found it is a useful tool for the network to use when working with communities in rural development contexts. Yet it must be said that these communities have not themselves started vlogging. It is still a tool left in the hands of those that have the resources and connectivity needed to vlog. However, the proposed Community Information Centre (CIC) project may well help in bridging the rural-urban digital divide and provide better Internet access to Ghanaians throughout the country. The CIC project was initiated by the government in partnership with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to help extend connectivity to all parts of Ghana. These centres will be equipped with an Internet connection, at least five computers, printers, scanners and fax machines. Every district of the country is expected to be provided with one CIC. Although this will improve access to both the technologies and the Internet, there are still challenges to consider, such as how many people will be able to access and use the CICs facilities in practice and how practical it is for people to travel to and use them.

There is also the challenge of getting people to share valuable information and knowledge. We need to develop ways

Box 1: Vlogging – an example from practice

The GINKS has used vlogs to capture some interesting experiences from a two-year research project that the network undertook with a community in rural Ghana in collaboration with the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC). The project explored how to enhance information- and knowledge-sharing among underprivileged communities in Ghana by defining mechanisms and tools to generate and disseminate relevant local content using appropriate and acceptable ICT formats.

As an important component of the research, GINKS worked with rural women farmers to use video to document and capture their stories, as they talked about how to cultivate various food crops, process the end products and how to find customers for their products from within and outside their local area. These videos were edited and copies made available to other members of the community at an information and resource centre in the village that GINKS helped refurbish.

[7] At GINKS, we use a digital camera and also mobile phones which have a built-in camcorder.
[8] We have used e.g. Apple's iMovie, Final Cut Pro and Windows Movie Maker.
[9] YouTube, BlipTV and Google Video are all video-sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. See www.youtube.com, http://blip.tv, and http://video.google.com.
[10] See: www.ginks.blogspot.com

of demonstrating the social, political and cultural benefits of sharing information. We have simply not mastered the culture of documenting best practices here in Ghana. Maybe people have not realised how important it is. This is gradually changing with the influx of new, more affordable technologies. As the use of the tools for development purposes continues to grow, sharing information is more and more regarded as a tool for nation-building.

Lastly, the equipment used for vlogging is still a luxury for most people in our part of the world. It is not common to see people with digital cameras – and those who do may not have the Internet access to be able to vlog successfully. What makes Web 2.0 tools thrive is the availability of Internet connectivity. In the absence of that, Web 2.0 – and video blogs – simply cannot exist for those without. So it is important to continue to use low-tech communication methods and techniques, which are more accessible to those who do not have access to the technologies.

The future of vlogging

Web 2.0 tools such as vlogging have the potential to become an important advocacy and information-sharing tool. The question remains of how to extend the benefits of Web 2.0 tools much wider and beyond the scope of Ghanaian cities. The CIC example is only one approach – and it is imperative that government makes conscious efforts to ensure that our rural folk get onto the information highway.

However, it is important to remember that the benefit of this and other Web 2.0 tools to the rural poor – who form the majority in Ghana – depends largely on the issues of connectivity and access. If people are better able to access and share relevant information elsewhere and by other means, they are more likely to use other, more appropriate solutions instead. So it is important to use a combination of approaches to sharing information, both online and offline.

We do believe that vlogging can be used as an effective advocacy tool, helping to project and amplify the voices of the rural poor. We also continue to work towards achieving our aim of bringing information and knowledge to all – and many more rural communities have stories to share with the larger public. Vlogging has the potential of making an impact on policy – if there is clarity in the message being conveyed to both policy makers and the media.

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6

Mobile phones: the silver bullet to bridge the digital divide?

by ROXANNA SAMII

Introduction

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimates that there are 3.3 billion mobile phone subscribers worldwide.[1] The vast majority of users never part from their ubiquitous mobile phone. These little hand-held devices can contain our daily appointments, address book, emails, photos, music and even allow us to access the Internet.

The mobile phone is equally important for our brothers and sisters in developing countries. It has revolutionised the lives of millions of urban and rural poor by connecting and involving them in viable economic activities. Mobile telephony is affordable, scalable, self-sustaining and empowering. Mobile phones are paving the way for men and women to achieve socioeconomic goals and provide food security to their families. They provide a wide range of services at a reasonably low cost. They are becoming more affordable, because of flexible and different pricing models. Handsets cost between US$40-50. Airtime is also affordable – this is why prepaid services are so popular in Africa. If one person in a village has a mobile phone others can use it – a mobile phone is not necessarily confined just to one person.

Mobile telephony is the predominant mode of communication in developing countries. It has contributed substantively to reducing the digital divide – something other information communication technologies (ICTs) such as computers did not manage to achieve. For many, mobile phones are a more appealing and viable tool than previous initiatives like telecentres (see Box 1). And they are the only

Box 1: Mobile phones and the demise of telecentres

The telecentre movement in the late 20th Century aimed to provide access for people in developing countries to ICTs, computing and Internet services. A number of donors funded telecentre projects with the vision of bridging the digital divide.

Telecentres faced a number of challenges. They were mostly located in isolated and remote areas to serve an entire village or community. Villagers usually had a long walk to reach them. Providing basic ICT infrastructure and connectivity was costly and it was hard to service broken equipment because of the remote locations.

However, financial sustainability posed the biggest challenge. Usually, when funding ended, telecentres gradually turned into shabby shacks with broken and/or obsolete equipment. Unlike mobile phones, telecentres did not promote entrepreneurship growth and employment opportunities, such as selling pre-paid airtime cards, renting out handsets, or recharging battery services.

With mobile handsets, poor rural women and men do not need to walk to remote telecentres to access ICTs. Instead, they have simultaneously bypassed the landline, the laptop and the need to connect to the Internet.

[1] ITU is a United Nations specialised agency for telecommunications. ITU collects the most comprehensive range of statistics on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) penetration, accessibility and use. See: www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/world/world.html

"Mobile telephony is the predominant mode of communication in developing countries. It has contributed substantively to reducing the digital divide."

ICT sector where developing countries are catching up with – and in some cases – overtaking developed countries.

Mobile telephony is providing timely, localised and relevant access to information, which has helped reduce production and transaction costs. For example, poor rural people use mobile telephony to receive commodity price information via mobile phone text messages, or Short Message Service (SMS), to gather market intelligence so that they can make targeted trips and save on travel and transportation costs. Mobile phones are also being used to provide medical services such as using SMS to remind patients of medical appointments and vaccinations or to disseminate information about sexually transmitted diseases and to monitor patients.

Mobile phone revolution: the numbers speak for themselves

Every generation needs a new revolution.
Thomas Jefferson

The mobile phone revolution is our generation's revolution. It has changed our culture, economy, and social and political lives. It promises to become the first universally accessible ICT. And it is a unique revolution.

- It is truly global and not limited to a specific country, region or sub-region.
- It has been a catalyst for unprecedented global economic and social benefits.
- Because it is global, it is becoming increasingly more accessible to those who are marginalised and less advantaged.
- It is an early example of a mash-up when this term did not even exist.[2] Mobile phones are now integrated platforms offering both content and telecommunication services. Some models also incorporate cameras and can record videos etc.

Some argue that new ICTs such as mobile telephony increase the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. Yet ITU statistics show that 3.3 billion people (50% of the world population) are mobile subscribers against 1.3 billion Internet users. Approximately 72% of total global telephone subscribers are mobile subscribers. Recent estimates show that in Africa, only 6.5% of people are Internet users, while nearly 281 million people (30%) are mobile subscribers.

In Africa, many countries have completely skipped the telephone landline and have moved directly to mobile telephony. One could argue that this makes mobile technology the first modern telecommunications infrastructure in this continent (see Box 2).

The anecdotal example in Box 2 shows how those previously excluded because of lack of infrastructure can now take an active part in improving their livelihoods thanks to the affordable and different pricing schemes of mobile services. There **are** people who are excluded and may even be worse off because market access now **relies** on inclusion, but mobile telephony has brought more inclusion. The herder in my personal example does not have access to a fixed telephone line, therefore previously he was excluded. Today, thanks to mobile telephony he is not. Although we are still lacking empirical evidence, what we are observing indicates that mobile telephony most probably does not (and will not) create exclusion because it is affordable and easy to use.

Box 2: Out of the blue in Eritrea…

In November 2008 I visited a remote and isolated irrigation site in the Gash Barka region, part of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded Gash Barka Livestock and Agricultural Development programme. During the field visit I stood in awe when the mobile phones of the extension worker and a herder started ringing.

I had not seen any mobile phone signal transmitter towers on the way there. However, there was reception and both the herder and extension worker were able to communicate. The extension worker imparted some technical information to his colleague and the herder inquired about the possibility of taking cattle to the Asmara livestock market on Monday.

Rural connectivity: a revolution within a revolution

The mobile phone can catalyse development and help eradicate rural poverty. Seventy-five per cent of the world's poorest people – 1.05 billion women, children and men – live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods. We may think that for them a mobile phone is a luxury. But guess what? We are wrong!

A recent World Bank study states that 'there is a myth that the rural poor are not able or not willing to pay for mobile telecommunication services' (Bhavnan *et al.,* 2008). Observations in the field are that mobile phone accessibility

[2] A mash-up is a derivative work consisting of two pieces of media joined together. Source: Wikipedia. See also glossary, p.122 (this issue).

Farmers Dina Lungu and Elizabeth Chikusu send an SMS to find out the latest maize prices.

Photo: Alex Price

Market investigator Stanley Mchome uses his mobile phone to help farmers get the best possible prices for their produce.

Photo: M. Millinga

is helping to facilitate previously marginalised groups to take a more active part in the economic and social spheres of their communities and beyond, such as women, landless workers, herders, fishers, small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples and illiterates with no access to basic services.[3] Many poor rural households now spend 4–8% of their income on mobile telephony (Hammond *et al.*, 2007).[4]

Mobile phone growth drivers: a unique business model

A number of enabling socio-economic and political conditions such as ease of use, liberalisation of the telecommunications sector and prepaid services have contributed to the expansion and popularity of mobile telephony, especially in rural areas of developing countries.

Compared to computers, mobile phones are much **easier to use**. They require little or no specialised computer and media literacy skills, unlike the Internet and applications like email. Previously low penetration rates have encouraged service providers to invest in new areas to increase business.[5] There are shorter payback periods on investment both for the private/public sector investors and farmers and low installation costs. All these factors have contributed to the rise of the popularity of the mobile phone.

The **liberalisation of the telecommunications sector** supported by sound regulatory mechanisms has opened the market to competition. This has encouraged private sector investment in developing countries, and increased competition among different operators. As a result, consumers are benefiting from better services at better rates.

In Africa **prepaid subscriptions** accounts for 95% of total mobile subscriptions. The 'pay as you use' business model offers numerous advantages to poor rural people. There is no formal registration or waiting lists. The user does not need to submit financial and physical data and s/he can control costs, especially when savings and incomes are low. Most importantly there is no need to present a credit history, as the prepaid service reaches out to the 'unbankable'.[6]

Innovative use of mobile telephony brings economic prosperity to poor rural people. For the 1.05 billion rural poor people living on US$1.25 a day or less, the mobile phone represents a viable way for improving their lives. It is enabling small entrepreneurs to have direct access to market intelligence, providing employment opportunities and creating opportunities for public and private sectors to invest and modernise infrastructure. World economists may be busy understanding the full impact of the current financial crisis, but they are equally struggling to calculate the macroeconomic impact of the mobile revolution.

Mobile phones and small businesses

Mobile phones have spearheaded a host of new and innovative income-generating activities for small businesses. These include recharging mobile phone batteries, selling prepaid cards, renting out phones and/or airtime and other services such as reading and sending SMS messages. In Africa and elsewhere, occasional labourers put up adverts in village

[3] For example, keeping in touch with family and friends, accessing previously less accessible information – such as weather reports or commodity prices – or simply having a point of contact, which previously was a luxury.
[4] *The Next 4 Billion* shows that 'low-income' does not mean 'no income'. It highlights how expenditure on ICTs and mobile telephony are consistently increasing.
[5] Penetration rates refer to the number of active mobile phone numbers (usually as a percentage) within a specific population.
[6] i.e. those who without the prerequisites to open a bank account, which means many in rural populations.

Twaha-Abdallah communicating commodity prices.

Photo: M. Millinga

centres with a mobile phone number to offer services, or subscribe to receive job alerts via SMS from unemployment centres. Mobile phones can also minimise travel costs allowing people to move when there is a concrete economic opportunity.

A 2005 London Business School study found that 'for every additional 10 mobile phones per 100 people, a country's gross domestic product (GDP) rises 0.5 percent' (Waverman *et al.*, 2005). According to the study:

- In South Africa, a survey of small businesses run by black people showed that more than 85% rely solely on mobile phones for telecommunications. Of these, 15% previously had no access to telephony. Over the last decade the number of businesses using mobile phones in South Africa has increased by nearly 125%.
- In Egypt, 90% of the informal sector (including small retail, manufacturing and service activities) relies exclusively on mobile telephony.
- In South Africa, 62% of businesses (and in Egypt, 59%) said mobile use was linked to an increase in profits.
- In Tanzania, 97% of people surveyed said they could access a mobile phone, while just 28% could access a landline phone.

Mobile phones and access to market information

For producers, access to reliable market information increases income (see Box 3). In the past they relied on governments to provide market information. In addition, transaction chains are long, volumes of goods are often small and of varied quality, and prices are highly unstable. For example, small producers trading in rural areas in Africa face enormous challenges such as lack of access to reliable and up-to-date market information, poor transportation infrastructure and competition. Small producers are vulnerable to unscrupulous traders and middle-men giving them prices at below-market rates. Producers may be reluctant to diversify into different products for fear of not finding a profitable market for their output.

The relatively affordable airtime of mobile phones has made transfer and exchange of information easier. Information dissemination happens either through structured services and subscriptions such as Tradenet.biz and Zambia SMS Market Information Service or through unstructured and informal use of mobile phones – and by blending formal and informal services. People can use their mobile phone both to directly communicate with buyers and also to access commodity prices via SMS (see Box 4).

Cellular banking: the bank of the 'unbankables'

Mobile phones are now providing 'cellular banking' to 'unbankable' clients. For example, millions of poor rural people now use their mobile phones to send money home and to deliver microcredit loans where there are no banking facilities.

Box 3: How new technology can strengthen rural markets

Increasingly, private sector companies are providing market information to farmers. Tradenet.biz is one such enterprise. Although still in its infancy, it already covers 15 countries and 500 markets. It is available to users anywhere in the world. It offers a range of key information to producers, processors and others working along the supply chain: from price updates, harvests, transport, trading offers, disease outbreaks, weather and more.

Tradenet.biz uses markets as a venue to raise awareness about its services. Tradenet agents set up kiosks and offer market information advice, register people for the service and configure alerts on people's mobile phones.

Tradnet.biz also uses new peer-to-peer technology, which allows users to share their resources – in this case information – via mobile phones to create a service. It also links the vast and growing database of market information to cellular networks. See: www.tradenet.biz

Box 4: Mobile phones open up markets for fishermen

On the island of Mauritius, the fishers of the Tamarin community under the IFAD-funded Rural Diversification Programme do not have direct access to the fish market. As a result, they are excluded. However, they use their mobile phones to inform buyers of their daily catch and to take orders. This way they do not over fish and are sure that they will sell their daily catch. This has increased economic efficiencies and also helps to protect fish stock – which in turn has a positive impact on the lagoon ecosystem.

Photo: Roxanna Samii

Remote village in Eritrean Gasha-Barka region lacking running water and stable electricity, equipped with satellite dish.

"In Africa, many countries have completely skipped the telephone landline and have moved directly to mobile telephony. One could argue that this makes mobile technology the first modern telecommunications infrastructure in this continent."

According to the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), approximately 1.5 billion mobile users in developing countries have little or limited access to formal financial services.[7] With limited formal banking infrastructure there are fewer options to transfer money and access banking services. CGAP argues that the mobile phone could potentially provide a low-cost alternative to banking via the Internet, cash machines or point-of-sale, cutting costs by up to 50%. Microcredit and microfinance institutions have enough evidence to unleash the potential of cellular banking and start creating 'branchless banking channels using mobile phones'.

Social cohesiveness and sense of community

In rural communities in developing countries, it is common for one person or a group of people to own a mobile phone handset and rent it to other community members along with reading and writing text message services.

From a social networking perspective mobile phones have also had a positive psychological impact. Connectivity has allowed families and the diaspora to keep in touch. Anthropologists like Dr Mirjam de Bruijn are intrigued by the way mobile users in developing countries have invented mechanisms such as 'beeping', 'bipage' or 'flashing' as codes to alert someone else to call them. Mobile providers are equally struggling to make money by working around the ingenuity and inventiveness of poor rural people.

How can ICTs help poor rural people?

The focus must be on people and their needs. ICTs need to be appropriate, sensible and meet the requirements of poor rural people so that, as a tool, ICTs can increase their bargaining and purchasing power. The uptake of technology can only be successful if it is demand-driven and responds to the needs of beneficiaries.

ICTs and more specifically mobile telephony can continue to contribute to further development if:

- we use participatory approaches, as outlined in the examples below, to find out and understand the needs and challenges of poor rural people;
- national poverty reduction strategies systematically include adoption of appropriate ICTs;
- there is a commitment to build the capacity of communities and local organisations to lead and own the process of appropriation; and
- there is a blending of old and new technology to create a three-tier system of public, private and community.

Examples of mobile telephony in action

The following examples show how farmers have participated in identifying and defining their needs, working with donors and other stakeholders to develop mechanisms to harness the power of mobile phones. This participatory approach allowed farmers to actively take part not only in the design but also to take responsibility in implementing the various projects and activities.

SMS Market Information Service, Zambia

IFAD supports the Smallholder Enterprise and Marketing Programme (SHEMP) in **Zambia**. Working with the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU), it identified the need to provide market intelligence to farmers. In August 2006, the programme introduced an innovative, simple and cost-effective way to access commodity prices, using an SMS Market Information Service. To ensure good governance and provide equitable, fair and transparent services, the ZNFU developed a code of conduct outlining the expectations and rules of engagements for farmers, traders, processors, buyers and

[7] See: www.cgap.org

"By now, policy makers and development agencies should have enough evidence that of all ICTs, mobile phones have the best potential to stimulate growth in developing countries."

ZNFU agents. It also provides detailed contact information to report irregularities. The service provides weather information, business news, up-to-date market prices, and lists buyers for 14 major commodities in a cost-effective, accessible and reliable manner. Extension workers also provide additional training and capacity building. For those with Internet access, the system is also supported by a website.[8]

The SMS system is simple to use. To obtain the best prices for a commodity, farmers simply send an SMS message to 4455 containing the first four letters of the commodity name. Within seconds, they receive a text message with the best prices by buyer using abbreviated buyers' codes. To get best prices in a specific district or province, he or she simply includes the province/district code after the commodity code.

The farmers then send a second SMS message with the selected buyer's code to 4455. A text message is sent back with the buyer's contact name and phone number, the company name and address and simple directions for reaching both. Farmers can then call the contact and start trading. The farmers pay US$0.15 for each text message.

This market intelligence system is continuously gaining popularity. It is empowering farmers to negotiate deals by offering time-sensitive information and fostering transparency in pricing. SHEMP and ZNFU continuously update prices on a daily and weekly basis. To ensure sustainability the system is managed by local institutions. They also conduct public advocacy activities to attract corporate sponsorships.

Over 100 traders and processors are now providing weekly price updates. Website visits and the number of SMS messages are continuously increasing. For example, in 2007 between February and June, 520 weekly SMS were exchanged. Between July and August over 1220 weekly SMS message were exchanged. Smallholders today have the necessary information to know what to grow, where to sell their products and at what price.

[8] See: www.farmprices.co.zm

Shu shu shus in Tanzania

Farmers' inventiveness has spearheaded another phenomenon. Poor farmers in **Tanzania** under the First Mile Project are using mobile phones to access market information in real time.[9] Market 'spies' – known locally as *shu shu shus* – investigate prices and what is selling at local markets, and use their mobile phones to report back to their villages. The commodity prices are then transcribed on village notice boards and also broadcast on radio. In partnership with Tradenet.biz they will soon be using mobile phones to access even more market information. This blend of old and new technology is helping farmers build better and more collaborative market chains from producer to consumer.

Making mobile phones universally accessible

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. It does not matter how slowly you go, so long as you do not stop.
Confucius

By now, policy makers and development agencies should have enough evidence that of all ICTs, mobile phones have the best potential to stimulate growth in developing countries – and that investing in mobile services can contribute to both economic and social development. Phone manufacturers and service providers should recognise that the poorest people have turned out to be one of their biggest markets. Mobile telephony has not only helped bridge the digital divide but has been a catalyst to eradicate rural poverty and improve the livelihoods of the marginalised and poor.

To truly make mobile telephony the first universal access ICT there is a need to:

- put in place sound ICT policy in collaboration with government, civil society, private sector actors and consumers;
- invest more in mobile infrastructures and services in rural and disadvantaged areas;
- strengthen the capacity of rural entrepreneurs and farmers' organisations to better exploit the potential of mobile phones;
- deliver relevant and timely content and further develop peer-to-peer information systems;
- reduce both airtime and handset prices; and
- put in place better and enabling regulations to allow mobile services to thrive and expand.

[9] The First Mile Project is supported by the Government of Switzerland and implemented in collaboration with the Government of Tanzania's and the IFAD-funded Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme (AMSDP).

"Observations in the field are that mobile phone accessibility is helping to facilitate previously marginalised groups to take a more active part in the economic and social spheres of their communities and beyond."

Finally, to really appreciate the power and potential of this revolution, the mobile sector also needs to capture what official statistics are unable to: the 'informal use' of mobile phones – those sharing a subscription within a community.

Given the conducive environment, it should not be long before the private and public sectors join forces and start producing the US$10 handset – with the vision of producing the US$1 handset and further reducing airtime costs. And yes – this can be done through joint private-public and community partnerships, working to identify community needs and to understand their realities and constraints to build systems that are both profitable and work effectively for those communities.

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USEFUL LINKS

IFAD: www.ifad.org

Rural Poverty Portal: www.ruralpovertyportal.org

Tradenet: www.tradenet.biz

Zambia Market Information System: www.farmprices.co.zm

Africa Connect: www.connectafrica.net

Theme section

Part III: Issue-based studies

Here, the articles explore how Web 2.0 tools are being integrated and used to address specific development issues.

JON CORBETT and **TIM KULCHYSKI** discuss the importance of intellectual property rights when using Web 2.0 tools for development. The authors describe a project working with Hul'q'umi'num'-speaking communities based in Canada to revitalise their language. Using a range of tools and approaches including participatory video, the project also developed a series of short language-learning videos which were uploaded to video-sharing websites. However, not all the material generated was made available online. The participants strategically limited how much of their valuable cultural knowledge was made public, retaining much of it within their own communities.

Next, **EDNAH AKIIKI KARAMAGI** and **MARY NAKIRYA** describe the work of the Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI) in Uganda. BROSDI works with a network of farmer organisations to generate, collect and share local information about effective agricultural practice. BROSDI integrates a range of Web 2.0 tools and more traditional approaches – from digital radio, mobile phones and blogs to regular Knowledge Sharing Forums and working with Village Knowledge Brokers.

ORY OKOLLOH explores the potentials for citizen journalism or 'crowdsourcing'. The author describes how in Kenya the innovative Ushahidi website was developed for sharing information during the election crisis in 2007. The website enabled citizens to send in and receive news reports either via the Internet or mobile phones. The Ushahidi platform has now been redeveloped to improve its potential for application in humanitarian crisis situations – integrating a series of Web 2.0 applications.

Next, **JON CORBETT, GUY SINGLETON** and **KADO MUIR** describe how a joint project with the Aboriginal Walkatjurra Cultural Centre in Australia, Curtin University of Technology and the University of British Columbia Okanagan have been exploring the use of Web 2.0 tools to help revitalise culture and enhance community development. This article explores how the use of Web 2.0 and other digital tools has contributed towards this aim – and how using the tools helped to positively engage youth in such activities.

THEME SECTION

7

Anti social-computing: indigenous language, digital video and intellectual property

by JON CORBETT and TIM KULCHYSKI

Introduction

Web 2.0 technologies have been hailed as a new paradigm in Internet communication.[1] They offer a web-based experience that encourages user-generated data, active engagement with the material, and the sharing of ideas, thoughts and information. Often referred to as the 'social' web, Web 2.0 tools are open to anyone to access, critique, comment on and reproduce.

We use the term 'anti-social' because we refer to the fact that using Web 2.0 tools in the context of restoring a declining indigenous language might not always be appropriate. We reflect on how Hul'q'umi'num'-speaking communities based in Southern Vancouver Island, Canada, have experimented with using blog-based mash-up tools – and have subsequently chosen to retain and distribute the information using media that they can control more satisfactorily.

Background

Of the estimated 7,000 languages spoken in the world today nearly half are in danger of extinction and likely to disappear in this century. In fact, one falls out of use every two weeks. New York Times, September 2007

[1] For a definition of Web 2.0, see glossary, p.123 and overview, p.8 (this issue).

Language is the essence of culture and identity. It situates people within the place from which they come. It is the living expression of – and means of sharing – local knowledge and cultural understanding. It is both a bridge to the past and key to the future survival of cultures worldwide.

In Canada, as in many other former colonial nations, indigenous languages are close to being lost forever. The Hul'q'umi'num'-speaking communities – which include Cowichan Tribes, Chemainus First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Lyackson First Nations, Halalt First Nation, and Lake Cowichan First Nation – are no exception. The survival of their language now lies at a critical juncture. As the Hul'q'umi'num' Treaty Group (HTG) website clearly states, 'Assimilationist policies, particularly residential schools, largely wiped out the use of our language.' There remain fewer than 100 fluent Hul'q'umi'num' speakers alive today out of a community of approximately 10,000 – the majority of whom are over 60 years old. Fluency levels continue to decline amongst younger generations.

HTG is an organisation that acts of behalf these First Nations. They have begun a major language revitalisation project in collaboration with researchers from the University of Victoria and University of British Columbia Okanagan. It is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through the Community University Research Alliance programme. The project engages university researchers to test the use of digital multimedia in

Filming Willie Seymour, one of the remaining fluent Hul'q'umi'num' speakers, in Kuleet Bay, in Chemainus First Nation's lands.

language learning. The ultimate aim is to support the reincorporation of the Hul'q'umi'num' language into the community. It is guided by an elders advisory board made up of interested and fluent language-speaking elders from these six Hul'q'umi'num' communities. There are already a number of important and ongoing Hul'q'umi'num' language projects in the community.[1] However, elders recognised the need to take language from a classroom and expert-oriented environment and bring it back into the everyday lives of community members. The interactive digital video disc (DVD) and Web 2.0 components described here have attempted to achieve this goal. Work began in May 2004 and is still ongoing.

Digital technology is becoming easier and cheaper to access, produce and distribute. Many groups are now using new media (including audio, video and text-based materials) to document and communicate their positions and information. Language learning in particular lends itself well to digital multimedia – especially digital video. Video is visually appealing, easily accessible to the viewer and involves a strong creative endeavour. These are important elements for engaging elders and youth in the community in crafting and evaluating language-learning materials. It can increase access to – and visibility of – the language in schools, language classes, communities and to the general public.

They also offer an unprecedented opportunity to help foster an interest in the language and subsequently provide materials to help learn it. The hope is that these tools might help to revitalise the Hul'q'umi'num' language and help bring it back from the brink of extinction.

Methods and processes

The tools used by the project have changed dramatically over the past five years, reflecting the continuing advancements of digital technologies. We began by using a range of digital video tools to produce a series of interactive DVDs to document and communicate the Hul'q'umi'num' language in an engaging and educational manner. Later, we began to experiment with Internet-based Web 2.0 technologies. Throughout each stage, we employed the principles of

[1] Among others these include a Hul'q'umi'num' dictionary project, a language mentoring programme and evening school.

"We use the term 'anti-social' because we refer to the fact that using Web 2.0 tools in the context of restoring a declining indigenous language might not always be appropriate."

participatory video to ensure that the community considered all the digital media productions as their own endeavour – and that they maintained exclusive ownership of the final product (see Lunch and Lunch, 2005). Community members were key decision makers in the design, filming location and content of the DVDs.

The role of the technology intermediaries (in particular the university collaborators) was to provide community members with hands-on training and skills in filming and DVD production. An advisory board was created, comprising of representatives, both men and women, from each of the Hul'q'umi'num'-speaking communities. Perhaps more importantly, the project developed a close relationship with the existing HTG elders' advisory boards. They considered it important that the DVD subject matter would not only focus on language, but also contribute to the revitalisation and strengthening of cultural practices and understanding. They identified themes including documenting traditional forms of public ceremonial speech and cedar-bark harvesting and weaving. These became the principal projects on which we worked.

The advisory board also gave guidance throughout and was instrumental in the approval process for each of the projects. This was particularly important because the first major project that we worked on, Bighouse Speaking, is considered very culturally sensitive (see Box 1). Bighouse Speaking deals with ceremonial protocols and it is one of the principle fora where the Hul'q'umi'num' language remains of central importance. The elders recognised the importance of documenting the language associated with the Bighouse, but the project needed to be approached with great care and sensitivity. It was important to work closely with elders throughout the project, to ensure that the message, content and presentation of the material were correct and appropriate.

With both the Bighouse Speaking and cedar bark projects, the CURA/HTG project partnership wanted to combine language-learning with a cultural activity. The aim is that when both are combined the subsequent materials are more likely to be relevant to and engage community members. The process works directly with local language speakers that are also knowledgeable of the cultural activity. The elders' advisory board worked with the community to identify these knowledge holders through a series of consultations. The knowledge holders (such as Willie Seymour discussed in Box 1) determine the material, content and location for the video and continue to work closely with elders to develop the rough footage into a finished product.

Box 1: The Bighouse Speaking Project

We worked closely with Willie Seymour to produce two DVDs. Willie is one of the most respected bighouse speakers in Southern Vancouver Island and a fluent Hul'q'umi'num' speaker. Willie was raised by his grandparents and his grandfather was a bighouse speaker. He remembers much of his childhood growing up in the bighouse. The project filmed Willie discussing the significance of the language, the role of the bighouse for the Hul'q'umi'num' people, the current state of the language and his hope for its future revitalisation. Willie also described a bighouse naming ceremony. During the filming, Willie discussed his personal experiences and stories told to him by his elders. He would speak first in Hul'q'umi'num' and then in English. Throughout the filming process a community elder was also present to ensure that the material was correct and appropriate.

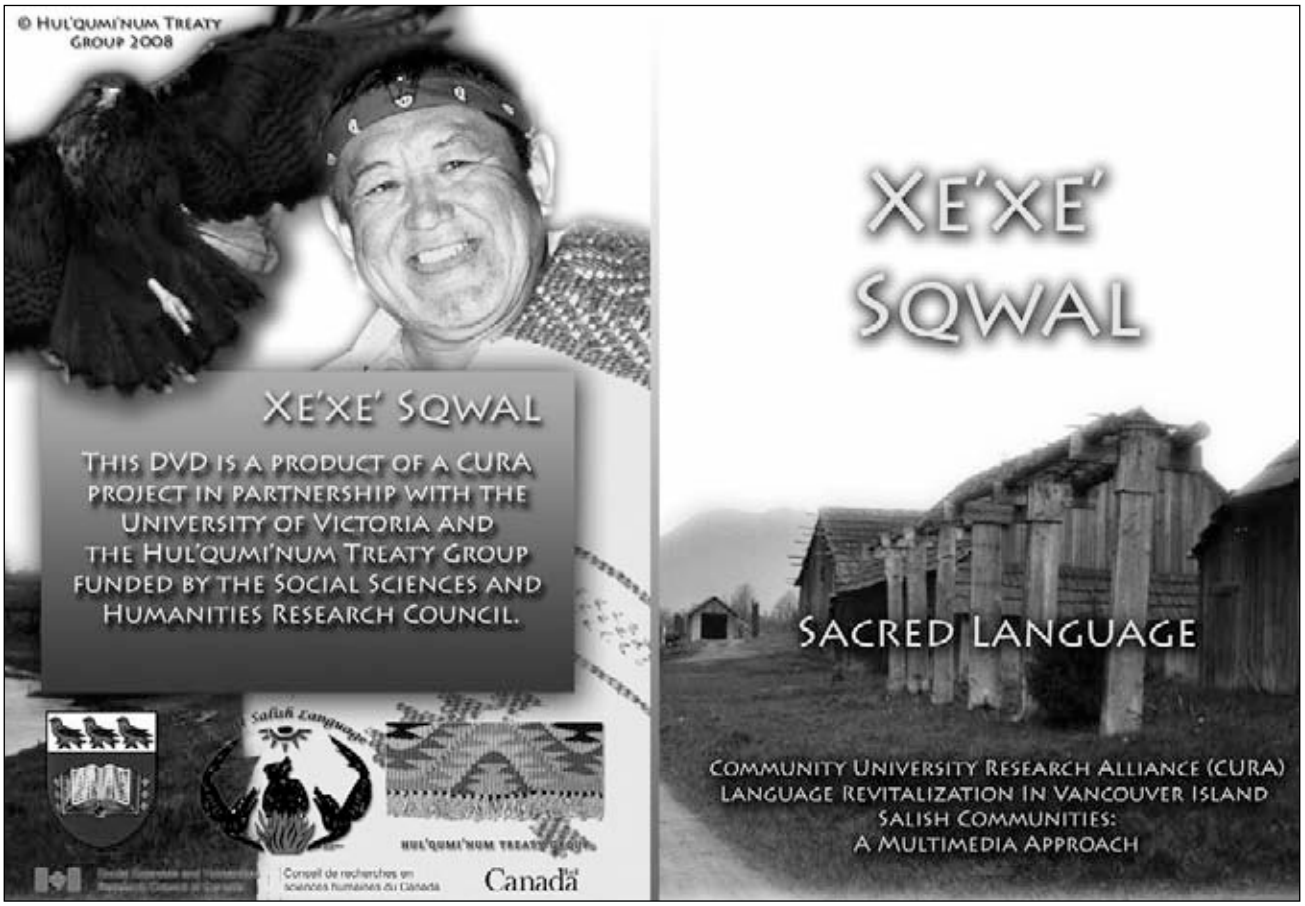
This footage was then captured onto a computer. Language experts in the community transcribed and translated the recordings, to use as subtitles. Stories and other materials were worked into interactive learning exercises that were also included on the DVD.

Although community elders approved and validated the information throughout, we showed the finished product to the wider community for their evaluation and approval. This was an important step in handing over ownership to them. In a series of public screenings, community members would provide feedback and suggest changes. In every session minor recommendations were made and these were immediately incorporated to the DVD materials.

We initially chose to use DVDs rather than Internet-based tools. With DVDs, people can access language-related information in their own homes without relying on costly high-speed Internet access to view or download multimedia content. At that time only 10-15% of community members had access to high-speed Internet access at home, due to poor broadband access on the reserve lands. In comparison, over 90% had access to DVD players. So instead, project collaborators decided to emulate the sort of user interactivity that is more commonly found with web-based technologies.

The digital DVD content includes language drills, word exercises and other user-determined material. The DVD menu allows the user to select the type of information that

Cover of Xe'xe' Sqwal (the Sacred Language) interactive DVD.



they want to access, achieving a high level of user choice and interactivity. In addition, users are unlikely to access all the content in one go. Instead, they can access short sections of information as and when they want. This flexibility makes the DVDs a robust language training tool that can be used easily at home or in the classroom.

The role of Web 2.0 in Hul'q'umi'num' language revitalisation

By early 2007, the collaborators proposed reusing the video materials in a Web 2.0 format. They hoped to increase the range of people accessing the language material. In particular, they wanted to encourage the input of younger community members. Hul'q'umi'num' youth were increasingly using online social-computing technologies for entertainment and communication. More and more people had access to broadband either at home or using publicly accessible computer services (for example in the Cowichan Tribes youth centre).

Community project collaborators began developing a blog-based mash-up.[2][3] It combines photo, video and audio materials housed on Picasa Web Albums and YouTube with text and dictionary-based materials in text form.[4][5] Selected sections of video from the earlier DVD project were reused in this new format. The blog can be easily updated by community moderators. In theory, this provides fresh material on a regular basis, encouraging users to return to the site to access new language material. It can also allow registered users to comment on material on the blog, helping to contribute to a growing online Hul'q'umi'num' language learning community. Initially there was interest and Hul'q'u-

[2] *Blogger* is a free blog publishing tool from Google where you can post text, photos and video. See www.blogger.com
[3] A mash up is a web application that combines data from more than one source into a single integrated tool, e.g. using text, photos, videos and audio files. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup
[4] Picasa Web Albums is a website where registered users can upload, view and share their photos online for free. See www.picasaweb.google.com
[5] YouTube is a video sharing website where users can video clips. See www.youtube.com

Screen capture of the Hul'q'umi'num' blog mash-up.

mi'num' community members made a number of comments. However, populating the blog with fresh material on a regular basis has proven to be challenging because of competing time pressures on the moderators. As a result, community interaction and comments have dwindled.

Lessons learnt, critical reflections and analysis

Since 2004 we have learnt a number of significant lessons. Most important was the need to keep elders and community members involved and up-to-date throughout the process, ensuring that their comments and ideas were incorporated into the final media products. However, community members are geographically dispersed so this was not always easy. We organised a series of open screening sessions, which were advertised in community newspapers and newsletters. Often turnout was reasonable with up to 30 people attending. We screened the DVDs during National Aboriginal Day, when up to 200 people viewed the video materials. These open venues gave community members the opportunity to talk with both community and university project members about the materials.

Our second general lesson was that producing these media products takes substantially more time and commitment than we had initially considered. We (the technology intermediaries) found ourselves working on several projects simultaneously. Our time was often split between different community organisers and knowledge holders. We had to prioritise certain projects, which affected our ability to finalise others. Added to this we needed to involve members from all six of the communities involved and other project partners, in evaluating the finished media. As one team member noted,

Whenever we pushed back a timeline we always ended up pushing it back even more. And that wasn't wrong. If you give projects the time to build on their own and allow them time to develop their own momentum, then that will ensure a successful end.

Lessons learnt: Web 2.0 applications

Undoubtedly the transition from DVD to web-based technologies was good for the Hul'q'umi'num' language revitalisation project. Several obvious benefits included:

- we could reach a broader and far-reaching audience (in particular the Hul'q'umi'num' youth);
- it helped promote and develop an interested online community; and
- the technologies were affordable (i.e. free) and easy to setup, update and maintain by project moderators working on a voluntary basis.

Using Web 2.0 technologies had several other specific benefits. Establishing a 'traditional' static website for the project was expensive. It also took control away from community members. Users on a static website are treated as passive recipients of information, determined by the website creator and designer. With Web 2.0 application users have more influence. Any user can provide feedback, suggest and contribute content, and generally take a more active role in the website's scope and relevance.

Using online video-sharing applications (specifically YouTube) allowed us to repurpose and reuse material that we had already recorded in the project's earlier participatory video phase. We had high quality material – of great community relevance – which had not been used in the final DVD products, such as several stories told by Willie Seymour after filming for the Bighouse Speaking DVD.

When producing the DVDs, we often ended up with long video sections 20 or 30 minutes long, which are not ideal for language learners. On most Web 2.0 video sharing websites you can only upload short videos (e.g. on YouTube, files must be less than 10 minutes long). Initially we saw this as a weakness. However, it was an ideal length for 'learning segments'. They are short enough to maintain attention (particularly with school children). Once online, the user can select the specific

"Language learning in particular lends itself well to digital multimedia – especially digital video."

segments they want to watch. Short videos are also easier to edit and prepare than longer ones, often by using a single video camera (rather than two).

The CURA project funding is beginning to wind down. So using 'out of the box' Web 2.0 applications is very attractive. Both maintenance and the short to medium term management is low cost. The project partners can still use the equipment bought when the project started to record, capture and edit photographs, video and audio material – but rather than have to create and physically distribute interactive DVDs (an expensive and lengthy process) they can post their materials directly online, dramatically cutting distribution costs.

Assessing difficulties and successes

Elements of the project have been highly successful in generating interest in the Hul'q'umi'num' language, particularly the interactive DVDs. However, the Web 2.0 component has not generated as much community interest as anticipated despite initial community enthusiasm, demonstrated by comments made to project staff. Undoubtedly this is because the community and university moderators need to continually update material to maintain the blog. The difficulty is that the blog was not directly funded by the project, but set up and maintained on a purely voluntary basis. We have not been successful in outsourcing the moderating role to other community members.

Despite this, we do feel that the blog has the potential to be a good communication tool, helping to stimulate interest in language using many different forms of media, as well as contributing to developing a cohesive community of people interested in Hul'q'umi'num' language revitalisation. However, this requires hiring a dedicated moderator to act as a marketer and animator for the website. Their role would be to encourage community involvement and ensure that sufficient new content is uploaded to the website. However, our project could not support this position. As a result, the full potential for the Hul'q'umi'num' website has not been fully realised.

A word of caution using Web 2.0

Web 2.0 applications do offer enormous potential. However, there remain several significant issues. So we remain cautious of endorsing this medium for the revitalisation of the Hul'q'umi'num' language. These concerns are specific to the use of Web 2.0 technologies to communicate traditional knowledge and indigenous language materials, and in particular, intellectual property rights. This caution has also been voiced by several community elders. As one team member noted,

> *Just because you can record it, doesn't mean that you actually have to record it and put it on the Internet. We've recorded many things that actually stay with specific families.*

Most significantly, material shared via the Internet is usually considered to be public. There are few controls in place to manage how that material is used, reused, misinterpreted, manipulated, distorted and controlled. This is particularly important when considering the difference between 'information' and 'knowledge'. There is a clear distinction. Information is data that is passive until we interpret and process it (David and Foray, 2002). Much material posted on Web 2.0 websites can be categorised as information – inert, transient and often self-indulgent. Knowledge is the sense that people make of information. As Scoones and Thompson (1993) note,

> *Knowledge is not just ready to be picked like an apple on a tree. It is embedded in social contexts and attached to different power positions.*

Knowledge in society is not objective or static, but ever changing and infused with the values, beliefs, skills, attitudes and practices of those who have it (Panos, 1998). However already, much user-generated information found on Web 2.0 social networking applications is considered by many as transient and unimportant.

The Hul'q'umi'num' language reflects knowledge that has accumulated over time immemorial by successive generations. It is a vital element for community identity and maintaining cultural distinctiveness in the face of colonisation. It is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and ritual. Different types of knowledge exist simultaneously within a community. Although much is common or shared knowledge, held by many, much of it is specialised knowledge, held by a few with special training (IIRR, 1996). Formal traditional systems facilitate the transfer of some of this knowledge, such as ceremonies, festivals and other processes. For example, the Bighouse Naming Ceremony DVD contains sensitive information that is only available (and relevant) to Hul'q'umi'num' speakers – on the request of community elders it is not available for public distribution.

The key point is that the Hul'q'umi'num' language is intrinsic to the identity of a people facing both an accelerating loss of culture and rapid changes in the natural environment. Releasing this knowledge onto the Internet might devalue the significance of the knowledge to the status of information. The knowledge of the Hul'q'umi'num'-speaking communities has been expropriated for generations. Community elders do not want to find themselves in a situation where what remaining information they do control also becomes expropriated.

With DVDs, the information exists in a physical form, which is hard to copy. As with the Bighouse Naming Ceremony DVD the community can regulate who has access to it. If this material is uploaded to the Internet, any level of restriction and control is lost. This is a highly significant issue for many indigenous groups around the world and greatly influences their willingness to use the Internet (and particularly social networking applications) to share important cultural information between community members, or more generally with the public.

A second caution is that language revitalisation is not a short-term venture. Though the Hul'q'umi'num' language has eroded relatively fast (within two generations), to bring it back into everyday use by community members will take an enormous effort, funds and, perhaps most importantly, time. We question whether Web 2.0 applications will continue to be offered as a free service – or even offered at all. This is particularly relevant given the current downturn in the global economy. If services are removed, or universal access is curtailed, what will happen to the materials housed on those Web 2.0 applications? How easily will it be repatriated? Will it simply be lost? Important information should not be stored exclusively on these websites. More traditional systems of data archiving are as important as the ways in which we can distribute knowledge.

"We are conscious that the excitement of working with new tools might create a sense that the technology is the driving force for the project, rather than the need for language revitalisation."

Conclusion

The initial project results suggest that digital multimedia and Web 2.0 applications in particular, have the promise to contribute to the ambitious goal of language revitalisation. However, we are conscious that the excitement of working with new tools might create a sense that the technology is the driving force for the project, rather than the need for language revitalisation and using the best medium by which language-learning content can be delivered. The words of Arthur C. Clarke seem particularly relevant to the role Web 2.0 might play in language revitalisation:

> *Before you become too entranced with gorgeous gadgets and mesmerising video displays, let me remind you that information is not knowledge, knowledge is not wisdom, and wisdom is not foresight. Each grows out of the other and we need them all.*

Realistically, these tools can contribute to helping create community, particularly a community that is interested in language-learning. However, in order for language revitalisation to take place in a meaningful and sustainable manner, community members have to actually engage with the elders in the community. There is no substitute for face-to-face contact.

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8

Tools for enhancing knowledge-sharing in agriculture: improving rural livelihoods in Uganda

THEME SECTION

by EDNAH AKIIKI KARAMAGI and MARY NAKIRYA

Introduction

In recent times, conventional wisdom among government and civil society has been that better farm outputs require the use of modern farming techniques. Although important, these techniques require inputs like hybrid seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and machinery. But how practical is it to implement them in grassroots farming communities in Uganda when farmers live on barely one US dollar a day?

Experience has taught us that farmers themselves hold the information necessary to help improve their livelihoods. They simply require the platforms and resources to enable them to share that information.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI) are striving to bridge this gap.[1] Our approach to sharing farming knowledge is a blend of participatory development approaches with information communication technologies (ICTs) and Web 2.0 tools. In particular, the use of mobile telephone text messaging services (SMS) for sharing information has proved very effective.[2] This article explores some of the ways in which we work with farmers to generate and share local information using these tools.

Background

BROSDI seeks to empower rural communities to exploit their environment using ICTs and other knowledge-sharing methods for sustainable livelihoods. It uses a multi-stakeholder approach, engaging with government, civil society and the private sector. This is done through our education, health and agricultural programmes that primarily target orphan children, youth and women.

BROSDI uses a range of approaches to facilitate the gathering and exchange of information. Web 2.0 and other ICT tools include websites, audio and text blogs, compact discs (CDs), telephone calls and conferencing, mobile phone SMS text messaging services and printed newsletters and brochures.[3] In addition, information is gathered and disseminated during Knowledge Sharing Forums, via the Collecting and Exchange of Local Agricultural Content (CELAC) Programme's District Agricultural Network and Village Knowledge Brokers, and during Annual Knowledge Fairs, where

[1] See www.brosdi.or.ug

[2] Sending a text message via mobile telephone is known as Short Messaging Service, or SMS.

[3] For a definition of 'blog', see glossary, p.121. See also Blogging p.106 (this issue).

Source: United Nations

farmers gather to display or trade produce or other goods and to share information about local agricultural practice.[4]

Collecting and Exchange of Local Agricultural Content (CELAC)

In March 2005, BROSDI began a new agricultural programme. CELAC aims to improve the livelihoods and food security of rural farmers, especially women. In particular, the project promotes the sharing of indigenous farming knowledge and information management of local agricultural practice among grassroots farmers who cannot afford modern farming inputs.

The project facilitates farmer groups to register as community-based organisations, and encourages them to join the project's District Agricultural Network, represented by elected Village Knowledge Brokers. Each group also receives seed funding to begin small income-generating activities. The aim is to foster learning from diverse experiences,

[4] For example in 2007, over 600 farmers from different areas of the country participated in our Annual Knowledge Fair. The fairs are organised in partnership with the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Hivos).

Participants gather at the 2007 CELAC District Farmers Network Annual Knowledge Fair.

Photo: BROSDI

increase work effectiveness, and help farmers engage in more effective problem-solving – and to help ensure that the groups and the network are sustainable in the longer term.

Developing local agricultural content

CELAC collects information about effective agricultural practice and adapts and repackages it into formats that are appropriate for rural farmers, most of whom have not had a basic education. The content consists of both local and outside information.

Knowledge Sharing Forums

Knowledge Sharing Forums are convened to promote the exchange of local agricultural information among farmers, using participatory peer-to-peer education and learning. Farmers, government officials (especially in the agricultural departments) and civil society organisations are all invited to take part in these participatory discussions, to share information about 'how they do it', 'the good and bad practices' and new ideas (See Box 1).

Forums are usually themed around generating information for a targeted crop or livestock type, e.g. goats, chickens, beans etc. The farmers decide on the topic beforehand and also invite other farmers to participate, who they have identified as being knowledgeable about effective farming methods for that particular topic.

The farmers choose amongst themselves a convener, to facilitate the discussions using participatory methods, e.g. group discussions or card sorting. The whole farming process is discussed, from crop preparation to post harvest methods. The project team then helps the group to document the outcomes for later dissemination, using audio equipment, a laptop, a digital camera, pen and paper.

Box 1: Knowledge Sharing Forums in action

Interestingly, with each district visited, we found that knowledge-sharing for personal development is a new concept among farmers. During a turkey-rearing Knowledge Sharing Forum in Budaka District we met Gwiko Geroshom, one of the largest local turkey farmers in Pallisa District. He uses exclusively local methods to treat his turkeys and acquired all his knowledge from his parents and through trial and error. We also met Namutosi Rose, whose livelihood is largely dependent on rearing turkeys. Namutosi had spent large sums of money on medicines for her turkeys. During the Forum, she learnt how to treat her turkeys using plants growing wild on her farmland from a man she already knew – it had never occurred to her that he had practical answers to her challenges. Afterwards, Namutosi said: *Gwiko is my friend, everybody's friend. We all know him and that he rears turkeys. What we didn't know is that he has such enormous amounts of knowledge in turkey rearing. Our turkeys die everyday yet we have the cure in our homes. More so, we call the 'cure' stubborn weeds and keep digging them out!*
Source: http://successstories.wordpress.com

The District Agricultural Network and Village Knowledge Brokers

During the Knowledge Sharing Forums, the project team also invites the participants to join the CELAC District Agricultural Network. Participants select one person from each village to become their Village Knowledge Broker (VKB) and to act as their representative in the network (see Box 2).

Box 2: Village Knowledge Brokers

The project has established village-level community knowledge brokers, empowering women and men with the skills to collect, store, analyse and disseminate agricultural information within their communities. Elected VKBs do not have to be computer literate or able to read and write. The project provides training, support, and information and encourages inter-group adult literacy classes. Farmers are asked to elect representatives who are:
- sociable and willing to share knowledge;
- active and living in rural areas; and
- farmers, preferably women.

VKBs are expected to be the information vanguards of the village they represent. Information generated by the CELAC project is processed and repackaged and then disseminated back to the VKBs, who in turn pass the information on to village members. The VKBs also periodically hold mini-Knowledge Sharing Forums within their communities. We request that they send any information generated to the team, which is in turn disseminated to the other farmers. Before it is more widely distributed, the information received from farmers and VKBs is first tested and verified. This is important because of the potential negative impact on farmers' crops and livestock.

Members of the Masaka District Farmers Network meeting.

Photo: BROSDI

Getting flexible with other tools for sharing knowledge

Once BROSDI and the CELAC project have collected the information generated and documented e.g. from VKBs and other farmers or during forums and field visits, it is then repackaged and distributed. The information is organised into detailed 'How to Guides' (booklets and audio CDs) and single-page summaries for distribution to the network. Audio versions are also uploaded on our audio blog for others to download.[5] We also further summarise the information into mobile phone text messages (SMS), which are sent out to over 400 farmer subscribers on a weekly basis – and our database is growing.

The next section explores how these tools and approaches work in practice.

Sharing agricultural information using mobile phones

Due to the liberalisation of the airwaves, various telecommunication networks have extended their mobile phone services to rural areas and subsidised the costs of mobile telephone handsets – something that rural people have taken advantage of. Text messages are a less expensive and more accessible means of information access and dissemination, in particular for women farmers who are the major family income earners. SMS can be used anywhere provided one has a mobile telephone and access to a network.

The project enables farmers to subscribe to a service to receive information by weekly text messages. The SMS is disseminated in both English and Luganda, a Ugandan local language.

[5] See the BROSDI audio blog: http://audioblog.podbean.com. For a definition of 'audio blog' see glossary, p.121 (this issue).

Photo: BROSDI

Every Monday, we repackage information and send it via text messages to our subscribers, who then disseminate it to other neighbouring farmers (see Box 3). Some post the messages on notice boards in market places, or under jackfruit or mango trees to protect them from the rain. Others use a public address system. They also make a written record of the messages and file them for future reference. Other farmers without mobile phones can then access this information and further disseminate it.

Box 3: An example of 'repackaged' information sent via SMS

Dilute 1 litre of milk with 9 litres of water. Spray the solution every 10 days to prevent mosaic virus in tomatoes, tobacco and sugarcane. Weaker solution of 1 part milk to 10-15 parts water applied every 10 days is effective in controlling mites and plant diseases in many plants e.g. blights, mildew, other fungal diseases and mosaic virus. Spray every 3 weeks to control spider mites and caterpillar eggs.

These are significant information sources for other grassroots farmers in the villages. The service helps them to share and promote better farming practices using local content, e.g. garden preparation, planting, harvesting and post harvesting, marketing and pest and disease control measures. For example, Cissy Serunjogi, a sweet potato farmer in Luwero district, is active in sending SMS alerts to other farmers about approaching dry spells and to remind them to start preparing their gardens for the next season.[6] The SMS sent have no defined word number count. Often, the recipient's phones break the message into six to eight messages due to its long length (see Box 4).

Box 4: Comments on sharing agricultural information using SMS text messages

The SMS sent have been of great significance especially because they give practical solutions to many of our farming challenges that have led to our household development through increasing our income avenues and amounts.
Elizabeth Mpungu, a farmer from Masaka district, during a discussion at a CELAC Village Knowledge Brokers training at the BROSDI Development Centre, Mayuge.

Photo: BROSDI

We don't mind that the SMS is divided into batches. In fact, this attracts other colleagues when they hear my phone ring a number of times.
Mwanja Edwin, Coordinator for the Mayuge CELAC District Farmers Network Chairperson and also the Agricultural Extension Officer in Baitambogwe sub-county.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Sharing on- and offline information: websites, blogs and digital radio

BROSDI used to broadcast a live monthly radio programme, facilitating farmers to travel to the radio station to share information about effective farming practice. However, a survey revealed that 90% of the farmers we directly serve did not listen to the programmes because of a poor radio signal and because they preferred their local FM stations.

Instead, we now record and disseminate the farmers' interviews using audio CDs, digital online radio and an audio blog. For example, farmers are provided with copies of the CDs and audio equipment to enable them to listen to them as a group. Our Web 2.0 audio blog also helps to reach a wider audience.[7] All farmer interview recordings are uploaded to the audio blog, so that anyone with Internet access can download or listen to the different farming prac-

[6] Cissy is also the current Luwero CELAC District Farmers Network Chairperson.

[7] See: http://audioblog.podbean.com

Screengrab from http://audioblog.podbean.com

tises described. This has helped to reduce the production costs of CDs. Through WorldSpace radio, BROSDI now also frequently downloads relevant audio files and uploads them on our website for public access.[8]

We also download text files and education materials to the BROSDI website. CELAC also has a website where the short 'How to Guides' and transcripts from the forums and field visits and case studies can be downloaded in portable document format (PDF).[9] Free printed copies of the 'How to Guides' are also available at BROSDI Development Centre. Similarly, printed copies of information are also available to farmers during Annual Knowledge Fairs.

Another online information-sharing tool is the CELAC text-based blog, where farmers, staff and other agricultural practitioners can post local agricultural-related articles.[10] Using this kind of Web 2.0 application is an effective way of

"Text messages are a less expensive and more accessible means of information access and dissemination, in particular for women farmers who are the major family income earners."

storing, managing and accessing information and enhances networking and sharing. However, it is only accessed by a very small percentage of farmers. Although such tools are very useful, Internet connectivity is limited in rural areas, and often unaffordable to farmers.

To help bridge this gap, we also work to make online information available offline. The project periodically prints out articles and comments from the blog. It distributes them to the Village Knowledge Brokers to share with their communities. Farmers are then able to read and also respond to these blog posts via the VKBs, without having to access them online. BROSDI keeps in touch with both the on- and offline blog authors, mostly using mobile phones. This enables a two-way communication between the distant parties.

Repackaging information like this is time consuming and expensive. Yet the scales have to balance: information must be shared both on- and offline to maintain the flow of information between those who have Internet access, and those who do not.

Overcoming language and literacy barriers

Much of the information we produce and disseminate is in English – so many people in rural populations are unable to read them. We produce information in the local language, Luganda, but those that cannot read are also left out.

BROSDI encourages farmers to take advantage of the free government education programme, Universal Primary Education, or to ask their children to read the information for them. Often, children or fellow farmers rewrite what they can in their local languages. One advantage is that all the Village Knowledge Brokers can read and write English. In addition, the audio CDs help to overcome literacy barriers. These approaches have enabled a wider audience to access the information we send out.

Issues of affordable and accessible tools

The BROSDI CELAC project has shown that sharing indigenous knowledge using ICT methods makes a significant contribution to resolving local problems – and it is the adoption of mobile telephony services which has taken the lead.

[8] WorldSpace radio uses two satellites, AfriStar and AsiaStar, to broadcast more than 100 digital-quality audio channels to people around the world, enabling them to receive digital radio programmes that are not available or rarely found on local, regional or national terrestrial radio. See: www.worldspace.com
[9] See: www.brosdi.or.ug and www.celac.or.ug
[10] See: http://celac.wordpress.com

"Information must be shared both on- and offline to maintain the flow of information between those who have Internet access, and those who do not."

However, there are challenges. Telephones need to be charged. Electricity is not evenly distributed especially in rural areas. Those with electricity often charge exorbitant costs to charge a mobile phone. Also, telecommunication companies tend to install networks in urban centres first. In some rural areas, farmers have to travel long distances to access a mobile phone network or a Village Knowledge Broker with a telephone. Yet even with these challenges, the use of SMS has had a positive impact for rural farmers.

Issues of gender and culture

Although rural communities have information to share, accessing it requires more than just mobilising people. BRODSI have discovered from their experience that many farmers are sometimes unwilling to share information because of pre-existing culturally defined criteria and parameters. Many do not intend to hoard their knowledge, but lack the appropriate forums to share it in. Many grassroots communities are also not used to sharing information so it is paramount that the process is introduced gradually to them. People have differing susceptibility to change.

Each community also addresses gender concerns differently. Rural communities have mixed views on women-only projects, which often raise much curiosity among the men. In our experience, it is important that men are also closely involved, provided they are not the dominant players. When other men see their involvement, local communities are more open to working with the project.

Involving communities in mobilising and conducting the Knowledge Sharing Forums using peer-to-peer learning can help to ease the process. We have found that rural communities are more willing to share knowledge using participatory approaches and processes. During these meetings, the CELAC team emphasises the need to share if you want to learn. This strategy appears to work well. Normally, participants begin to share when they realise that they too are learning freely.

Farmers, other members of civil society and government need to create a commitment to cooperate, to change, to challenge – and to allow time for this to happen. It is important to understand the specific community culture. It requires research and planning at the base level to explore issues e.g. of culture, gender, and how receptive people are to the project. Visit the community and plan in advance how to address challenges and take advantage of strengths, and adjust your plans accordingly.

Conclusion

Information is a vital tool to enable and increase farmers' livelihoods, provided the farmer can use the information positively. This information needs to be shared so that others not only have and use it, but can also customise it for themselves and share it again thereafter.

At BROSDI, our approach is to work with partners to identify key needs or issues; determine appropriate knowledge-sharing and information management initiatives; and then communicate these initiatives in a language that matches the problem being solved and the target group. The project team, the district farmers' networks, government and other members of civil society have to work together in order for project ownership to prevail.

We have seen the tangible benefits that sharing knowledge can have, from farmers who can afford to educate their children and provide medical care for their families, to constructing more permanent houses. We have seen farmers who have benefited from increased farm outputs with each season and diversified their income-generating activities – helped by the use of appropriate tools for sharing knowledge and local content.

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9

Ushahidi, or 'testimony': Web 2.0 tools for crowdsourcing crisis information

by ORY OKOLLOH

Introduction

This article reflects on the development of the Ushahidi website. The idea behind the website was to harness the benefits of crowdsourcing information (using a large group of people to report on a story) and facilitate the sharing of information in an environment where rumours and uncertainty were dominant.

At the height of the post-election violence in Kenya in late December 2007 and early January 2008, my personal blog become one of the main sources of information about the flawed electoral process and the violence that broke out thereafter.[1]

There was a government ban on live media and a wave of self-censorship within mainstream media, which created an information vacuum. The government argued false or biased reporting would result in even more ethnic-based violence, and that it wanted the opportunity to review media reports before they went 'live'. In response to the ban I asked people to send me information via comments on my blog and emails – about incidents of violence that they were witnessing or hearing about throughout the country, and that were not being reported by the media.

I quickly become overwhelmed by the volume and thought how useful it would be to have a dedicated website where people could anonymously report about incidents of violence online or via mobile phone text messages (SMS) – and if this information could be mapped so that people could visualise what was going on.[2]

Though there was a high risk of false reporting, I felt that having a vehicle where some information could be shared was better none – and that relying on local resources was a good way to do this. Information in a crisis is a patchwork of sources. You can only hope to build up a full picture by having as many sources as possible. The Ushahidi website was not intended to be wholly accurate and certainly there was no intention to achieve the standards e.g. of a mainstream newspaper or a human rights reporting organisation – the main focus was the immediate need to get information out.

Finally, the website was intended to be a 'memorial' or archive of sorts for the events that happened – as a reminder of just how bad things got – so that Kenyans would hopefully avoid repeating history at future elections.

How Ushahidi began

On 3rd January 2008, I shared my thoughts on my blog and encouraged Kenyan 'techies' who were interested in building

[1] See: www.kenyanpundit.com

[2] Short Messaging Service (SMS)

"Information in a crisis is a patchwork of sources. You can only hope to build up a full picture by having as many sources as possible."

such a website to get in touch. The response was lightening fast. Within a day or two a group of volunteers had coalesced and the domain was registered. That was the genesis of Ushahidi, which means 'testimony' in Kiswahili.

The website went live less than a week later. It was built using open source software with around 15-20 developers making different contributions.[3] Most of these developers came from Africa. The majority were Kenyans. There was no funding for the website at the time – everything was done by volunteers, from donating server space, writing the code, donating the short code for SMS calls and helping gather the initial data to helping spread the word.[4] It was a rapid prototype model, based on the premise that things could be improved as we went along by learning on the job. We believe this spurred our innovativeness and creativity. We focused on building and launching an overall framework, and addressing the details and any technical hitches later.

Over 250 people began to use the new platform as a means of sharing information. Some radio stations even started using the website as an information source. The website was interactive. People could contribute and not just receive information. We also had the expectation that sharing information would also help individuals and groups who wanted to figure out where help was most needed (see Box 1).

Issues around verifying reports

The Ushahidi website allowed reporting via SMS and the website itself. However, all reports had to be manually checked and approved by Ushahidi staff before they went live (see Box 2).

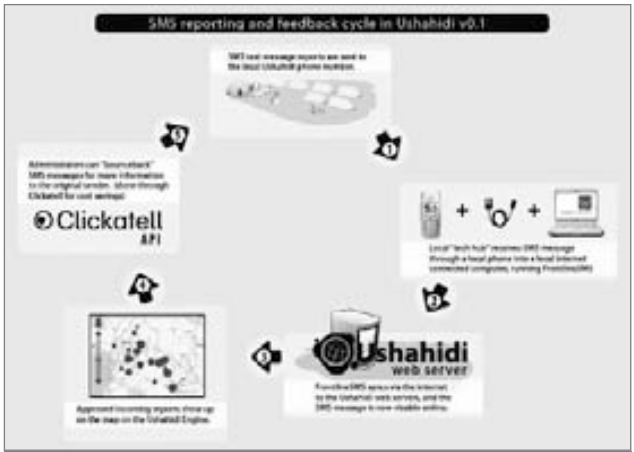
The 'go-live' process was easy for reports submitted via the website but SMS reports had to be manually entered. The approval process was rather *ad hoc*. Where possible, we called or emailed reporters to try to verify reports. Where people reported anonymously, stories were counter-checked by comparing with other sources e.g. mainstream media. Where information appeared credible but we could not verify it, we posted it and noted that it was not verified.

Box 1: Extracts from 'Kenya: Citizens' reporting tool comes in handy.'

Ushahidi, meaning 'witness' in Kiswahili, describes itself as a tool for people who witness acts of violence in Kenya to report incidents that they have seen. The incidents are then placed on a map-based view for others to see. Most incidents listed on the website are verified by local groups working on the ground.

What is shocking about some reported incidents is the frequency with which new, unreported episodes are being uploaded to the website – indicating that official reports from aid agencies and the Government may have grossly underplayed the extent of damage around the country.

Source: Kinyanjui (2008)



Box 2: How SMS messages are routed through Ushahidi

The first Ushahidi website model allowed people to send in reports both via SMS and on the website itself. This simplified diagram shows how SMS text messages move through the Ushahidi system in a two-way communication cycle.

- An SMS text message gets sent to a local number
- It is then rerouted through FrontlineSMS[5]
- This synchronises with the Ushahidi platform
- The message shows up on the Ushahidi website
- Administrators can then decide whether to send a message back to the original sender

[3] **Open source software** (OSS) can be defined as computer software for which the human-readable source code is made available under a copyright license (or arrangement such as the public domain) that meets the Open Source Definition. This permits users to use, change, and improve the software, and to redistribute it in modified or unmodified form. It is very often developed in a public, collaborative manner.

[4] 'With the growing popularity of mobile phones, especially in developing countries, SMS has become a familiar and widely used form of communication. It offers advantages over traditional voice services including reduced cost and the ability to send messages to large numbers of people in a short amount of time.' Source: www.frontlinesms.com/what

[5] FrontlineSMS enables you to provide local numbers in areas where larger SMS providers do not operate. It is free software that allows you to send text messages to large groups of people anywhere there is a mobile signal. See www.frontlinesms.com

This is the risk with any crowdsourcing social media tool. 'Truth' is not guaranteed – but the idea behind crowdsourcing is that with enough volume, a 'truth' emerges that diminishes any false reports. To avoid the risk of the website being used for propaganda, reports were monitored before they went 'live'. Anything that appeared to be patently false, inflammatory or inaccurate was not posted. We anticipated that over time it would be easy to counter-check false reports against what eventually made it to the mainstream media and by using the power of the citizens themselves to counteract false reports. For example, someone posted a false report of violence breaking out in a North-Eastern town called Garissa. Within hours we had received several reports from other sources saying that there was no violence in the area.

Developing potential: Ushahidi and humanitarian crisis situations

In Kenya, Ushahidi demonstrated the power of geographically mapping real-time citizen reports and crisis-related information to help civilians avoid conflict.
Randy Newcomb, President and CEO of Humanity United

As interest in the website developed, it became apparent that the tool had potential applicability beyond Kenya, particularly in crisis situations. Humanitarian-based crisis situations do not usually start with one flashpoint. They generally result from a number of events and factors that have happened over time. Kenya was one such example. While the violence was depicted as a 'sudden eruption' of protests by supporters of the opposition leader Raila Odinga, there were indications that some of the violence was pre-planned.[6]

Our view was that Ushahidi could in the future help local and international NGOs working in crisis situations: from early conflict warning to tracking a crisis situation as it evolves and facilitating response.

Redeveloping the Ushahidi platform

As a result of the growing public interest in Ushahidi and its potential for wider replication we received funding from Humanity United, an organisation dedicated to ending modern-day slavery and mass atrocities. This has allowed us to rebuild the platform into a tool that any person or organisation can use to set up their own way to collect and visualise information.

The private alpha of the redesigned Ushahidi platform

"We anticipated that over time it would be easy to counter-check false reports against what eventually made it to the mainstream media and by using the power of the citizens themselves to counteract false reports."

was released in October 2008. The alpha is the initial version of the rebuilt platform. It is being tested by a number of groups before the software is released to the general public. Pilot projects include Peace Heroes, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) crisis and four others.[7] [8] We are surveying our testers and plan to write case studies about the implementation and testing process once this phase is completed.

It is too early to fully evaluate what impact the tool is having. However, we have some initial reflections based on our experiences in Kenya and our more recent experiences in DRC.

Challenges and lessons learnt

We have tried our own deployment with the Ushahidi DRC page to cover the crisis in Eastern DRC. That has been a very useful learning process for us, including the challenges of building in translation facilities, operating in a very low Internet access region and overcoming trust issues from the local population as far as submitting information.

Our immediate experience with the DRC deployment reveals that there is still a lot to be done and that each crisis/situation has its own set of unique challenges (and possibilities). The main challenges are outlined below.

- The lack of good local Internet connectivity. Although we expected this and worked hard to get the mobile component ready, even our partner organisations are struggling to maintain their access to the Internet.
- The lack of an Ushahidi point person on the ground. This was a rare instance in which we were going to manage the deployment itself at least initially, which is why we have tried to partner with groups such as Heal Africa. We sent out an outreach email and they were recommended to us

[6] See: www.commondreams.org/news2008/0124-07.htm

[7] Peace Heroes: Unsung Peace Heroes is a campaign developed by Butterfly Works and Media Focus on Africa Foundation. The goal is to nominate people who helped do positive things during and after the post-election violence in Kenya. Kenyan heroes are ordinary people who did extraordinary things for their fellow citizens or their country. See: http://peaceheroes.ushahidi.com, www.mediafocusonafrica.org and www.butterflyworks.org

[8] Deployment to the DRC Congo happened on 7th November 2008 – the week the alpha version of the new Ushahidi Engine software was released. See: http://drc.ushahidi.com

"As interest in the website developed, it became apparent that the tool had potential applicability beyond Kenya, particularly in crisis situations."

based on their lengthy experience locally and with monitoring how the local population is being affected by the crisis.

- The difficulty in raising awareness about Ushahidi in the local population and encouraging them to use it. We tried to promote the service wherever we could, via local bloggers, local organisations, international NGOs, local radio etc.

Other challenges and lessons learnt are outlined below.

Blogging can help raise awareness

It helps to have a relatively active and connected blogging community to raise local awareness (Kenya was a good example). Local bloggers help raise the profile of social media tools like Ushahidi. DRC does have a comparatively small but active blogging community of both locals and expatriates. We have encouraged bloggers to share their reports on Ushahidi but so far no-one has done so.

Translation is important

We need to tackle the translation issues and also work with a wider network of bloggers geographically and linguistically.

Be simple but effective

The tool needs to remain simple and functional as much as possible – more complicated features slow the website down and make it harder to adapt to situations where there are few resources on the ground.

Be clear about what you aim to do

We need to be clear about what Ushahidi is and is not. Unlike in Kenya, in Eastern DRC when approaching local organisations and contacts we were often asked if they would be paid for reporting to the website. Perhaps because the DRC crisis has been much longer and more persistent, organisations are more hesitant to embrace this type of approach.

People need time and resources

In Kenya, some areas were isolated from the violence – and the violence also ebbed and flowed. This meant people were better able to engage in citizen reporting. As someone closely involved in assisting people in DRC pointed out to me, in a crisis situation most people are on the run – they do not have time to file reports.

In places like Eastern DRC that is compounded by factors like electricity cuts so mobile phones cannot be charged. Some people do not have the resources to buy credit so the SMS functionality does not really help them. Also, unlike in Kenya, there is no MamaMikes option for donating credit.[9] We are trying to get Zain, a leading mobile phone service provider in Africa, interested in this type of service.

Gaining trust

Unlike in Kenya, in DRC people are not used to a culture of free press – nor of people asking for their opinion. Most importantly, there is a huge lack of trust as well as concerns about reprisals if people are targeted for making reports. We have tried to allay these concerns by emphasising that the reports can be anonymous and generic, e.g. 'help is needed because of a cholera outbreak in Rutshuru'. However at present we do not have detailed guidelines for reporters.

Creating two-way information flows

In an ongoing conflict like DRC, there is also the issue of fatigue among the locals, which was not the case in Kenya. Ushahidi becomes just another organisation that is looking for information. Past experience has shown citizens that sharing this information with the media, NGOs, UN Missions etc. has not really changed anything. To address this, we are building in functionality that closes the information loop – people are not just giving information but also receiving information e.g. on where to get help.

Creating a culture of sharing

In comparison to when we launched in Kenya, our efforts in DRC were much more structured. The Ushahidi DRC page has received great coverage in the international press. However, we have not received the volume of reports we anticipated. Many of those affected by the crisis or watching the situation closely had complained about the minimal media coverage on the DRC conflict. In contrast in Kenya, we received more reports with very minimal active outreach on our part. While we did not expect to receive thousands of reports, we certainly expected more than we have received so far.

Another challenge is the distinct desire to silo informa-

[9] The MamaMikes remittance service empowers Kenyan immigrants in North America and Europe to transfer help home – not via cash, but by sending shopping credits, mobile phone airtime, and other gifts. See www.mamamikes.org

"Ushahidi demonstrates how we can use open source software in humanitarian crises, the potential power of crowdsourcing, and the advantages of keeping tools simple and easily adaptable."

tion among humanitarian organisations in DRC who should be the natural users of Ushahidi – and this was also a problem in Kenya. We encouraged NGOs to submit information collected in the field (which was substantial) but with no success. The reasons are unclear considering the benefits of bringing more attention to a crisis and helping to strategically direct help. Perhaps it is a general reluctance to embrace innovation. Perhaps it is a belief that fundraising works best for those with the most information, and Ushahidi is seen as a competitor. In any event, it is a huge problem. These organisations purportedly speak for the people who are affected by a crisis, yet do not appear to want to embrace this form of citizen reporting.

Ways forward

The new Ushahidi platform will soon be available. It will allow the aggregation of crisis information by displaying data from various sources such as mobile phones, the Internet and mainstream news feeds on one page. The data can also be shown in a simplified geographical format. Anyone tracking or affected by a particular situation can submit reports.

This open source application will be available for free for others to download, implement and use to bring awareness to crises in their own region. The core platform can be customised for different locales and needs. Implementing organisations will be responsible for raising awareness about the tool and encouraging e.g. members of the public and staff members to submit reports. The rebuilt platform will have various administration levels from data entry of reports (e.g. for organisations to submit their own reports from the field), to full administrative privileges, which include the responsibility of verifying the submitted reports.

Organisations will also be able to use the tool for internal monitoring purposes. For example, a human rights organisation collecting testimonies about an event may not want to release the information publicly to protect the anonymity of those testifying or because they want to verify the information first (see Box 3).

However, we do realise that it is a tool and not a solution. Our goal is to create the best tool possible to help make sense of emerging situations and to develop web and mobile tools that can help with visualisation and decision-making on where and how to deploy aid and other forms of assistance.

Box 3: The new Ushahidi platform

Some of the technical features of the new platform will include:
- Simple and fast web/Internet accessibility.
- Map-based regional views for each country using web-based interactive maps.
- Pre-determined geo-location information for major cities.
- Ability to send reports to Ushahidi through mobile phones.
- Ability for people to sign up to receive text message alerts through mobile phones.
- Ability for people to sign up for RSS feeds to their mobile phone, email or RSS feed reader – segmented by region, country or city.[10]
- Multilingual.
- Detailed incident report page, including but not limited to: location, date, description, category, links, images, and video.
- Ability for others to submit more information about a specific incident.
- Track the number of reports coming in from specific locations and designate them as 'hotspots' and apply a heat-map to that area with extra explanations.
- 'How you can help' area where different organisations email the site administrator to be added with a short description, contact information and link to their site.
- Possible addition of a simple donation system for a specific organisation in the affected country (e.g. Kenyan Red Cross).
- Ability to post anonymous incident reports, by the contributor's choice.
- A search and timeline feature.

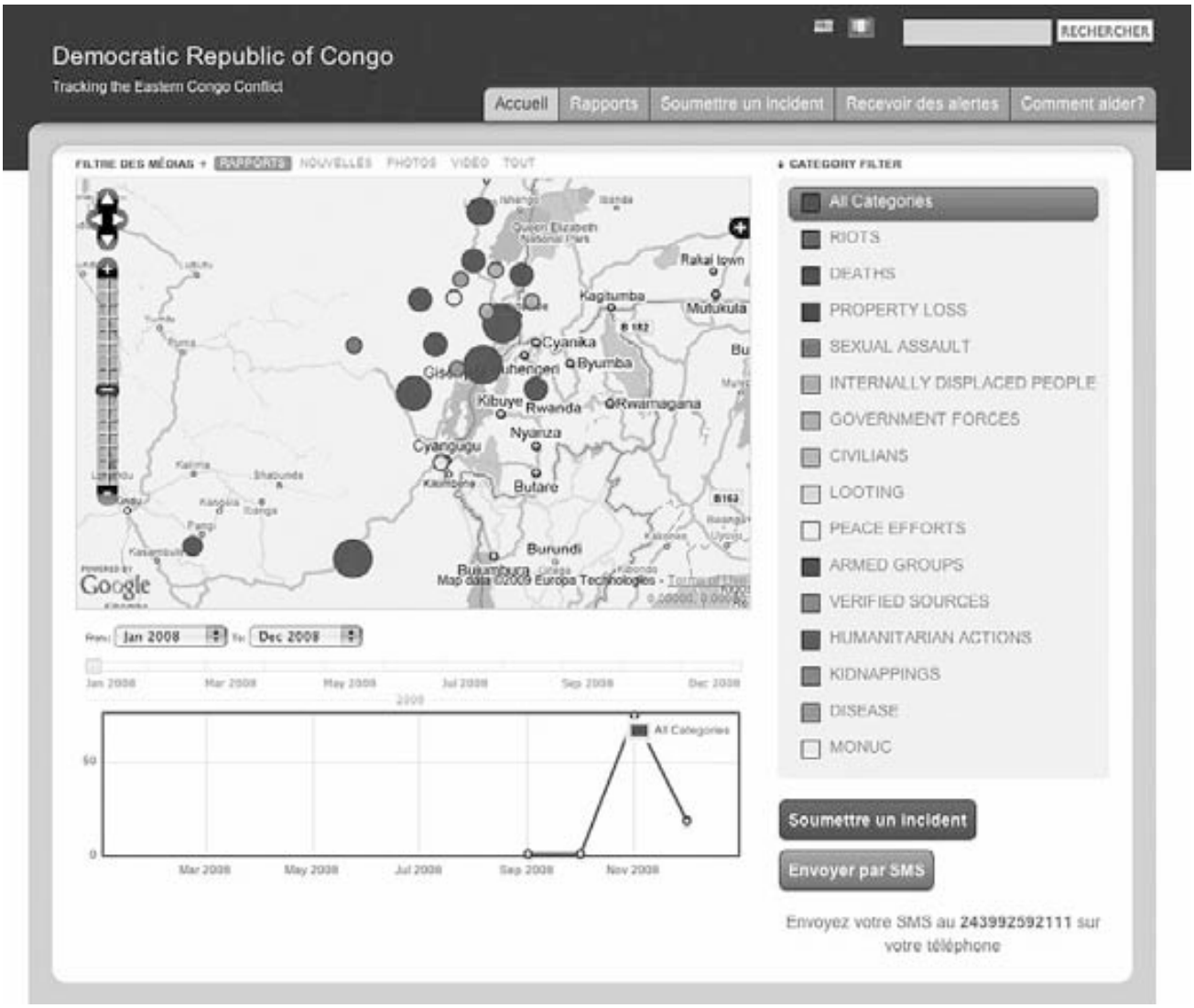
Final reflections

As the interest in the platform evolves and is refined in the development process, more lessons and challenges are bound to emerge. How can we handle the verification of data in a fast-breaking crisis? How can we extend Ushahidi's reach in low-tech areas?

Although it is still very early days for Ushahidi, the development of the platform has already generated some useful lessons in terms of how to approach participatory media, especially in challenging environments. Ushahidi demonstrates how we can use open source software in humanitarian crises, the potential power of crowdsourcing, and the advantages of keeping tools simple and easily adaptable. We anticipate that the platform will revolutionise how many organisations handle their data and also democratise how information is collected and shared in crisis situations.

[10] For a definition of 'RSS', see glossary, p.122. See also RSS feeds p.115 (this issue).

Ushahidi plans to make its mapping tool available globally for free to interested parties and organisations. The Ushahidi team will be able to provide technical customisations and support as needed.



For now, we will continue to embrace the rapid prototype model and focus on pushing the boundaries of the various areas that the platform touches on – crowdsourcing; visualisation; mapping; and mobile phone platforms.

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10

Web 2.0 for Aboriginal cultural survival: a new Australian outback movement

by JON CORBETT, GUY SINGLETON and KADO MUIR

Introduction

The Walkatjurra Cultural Centre is an Aboriginal organisation based in Leonora, Western Australia. This article reflects on their journey as they invest in the uptake of digital technologies, including most recently Web 2.0 applications, to revitalise their culture and enhance community development both socially and economically. We also highlight the outcomes of a community-based youth empowerment project involving university researchers and Aboriginal community members.

Fieldwork began in May 2005 with the creation of a participatory digital video disc (DVD). The DVD was used by the community as a vehicle to communicate traditional knowledge to help bridge the intergenerational knowledge divide, as well as to influence non-indigenous decision makers (local government and mining companies). Community members, building on their video skills, are now using a number of Web 2.0 technologies to expand both the scope and longevity of the original project. This project is still ongoing.

There were two principal purposes for using Web 2.0 based tools:

- to meaningfully engage Aboriginal youth in learning about their rapidly forgotten local knowledge and help them adopt new skills; and
- to facilitate the youths' direct participation in – and contribution to – the greater community development strategy.

Background

As with many indigenous cultures, the Aboriginal people of Australia strive to maintain a strong relationship with their country and culture. This place-based affinity is especially true for isolated rural communities. This connection to place exemplifies what it means to be an Aboriginal Australian. Many Aboriginal families rely on their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) of the surrounding environment and natural resources for subsistence, cultural identity and employment. However, two significant issues contribute to limiting the role of this place-based identity in everyday community life:

- the breakdown of the intergenerational transfer of local knowledge; and
- that mainstream Australian society places little value on this knowledge, making it appear parochial and largely irrelevant in everyday Aboriginal life.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2003), 80% of the Aboriginal population speaks only English (similar to Australia's non-Aboriginal population). Only around 12% of the Aboriginal population speaks a customary

"The most anticipated benefit of digital technologies (specifically Web 2.0 technologies) is their potential to bridge the generation gap."

language. The younger generation have grown up in a wider society that fails to recognise the significance of their knowledge and maintaining their indigenous identity. This has led to the apparent abandonment of Aboriginal culture in preference for a more dominant Western one.

In addition, large numbers of Aboriginal elders have limited experience and 'self-belief' in their ability to meaningfully engage in Western modes of communication, especially given that the written word is the main way of transmitting cultural heritage in the western world. The result is that many indigenous elders and parents face a significant challenge in communicating the importance of their knowledge to both the non-indigenous community and younger indigenous generations.

So how does an Aboriginal elder effectively communicate **across** cultures this connection to place, demonstrate their ability to effectively self-manage natural resources, and engage the community youth in promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer?

Recent literature suggests that more culturally adaptable modes of communication using information communication technologies (ICTs) may provide an answer (Chikonzo, 2006).

Aboriginal Australia, digital technology and Web 2.0

Remote Aboriginal communities in Australia have used a range of ICTs for over thirty years to create and maintain contact and networks outside their immediate space (Michaels, 1994).[1] Today, many indigenous Australian groups at the community level are using digital technologies for two main purposes:

- to get involved in some form of 'development', e.g. incorporating modern infrastructure into existing lifestyles and/or for mobilising resources – including Web 2.0, video and other Internet-based applications; and
- to strengthen processes to ensure history stays in place and/or for the enrichment of clan places, in what Christie and Veran (2006) describe as 'envelopment'.

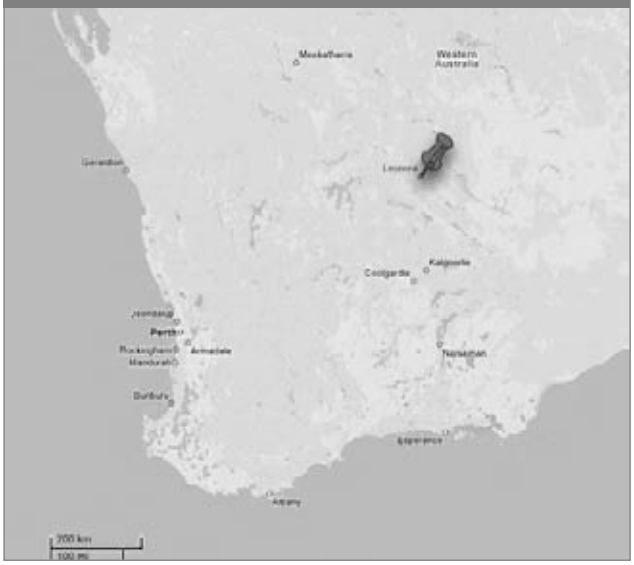
Examples of such practices include:

- digital recordings of ancestral songs;
- collections of digital photographs to share stories and strengthen family identities;
- generating digitised maps incorporating Aboriginal place names to strengthen Native Title claims;
- creating videos of storytelling with reference to particular lands and places (history, management and ownership); and
- using video cameras to bring together groups of elders to pass on stories to the younger generation.

The most anticipated benefit of digital technologies (specifically Web 2.0 technologies) is their potential to bridge the generation gap as a culturally adaptable mode of communication.[2] The process of involvement in digital technology and associated end products has the potential for developing, building or enhancing individual capacities.[3]

Australian organisations such as UsMob and dEadly mOb use various multimedia tools to enhance indigenous participants' skills, abilities, social capital and technical capacities.[4]

Figure 1: Map showing location of Leonora, Western Australia



Source: Google

[1] In 1988 the first communication satellite was launched to provide remote communities in central Australia with radio and television. Today, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) broadcasts radio to remote indigenous communities. Imparja, a mainstream Aboriginal-run television station, focuses on contemporary indigenous issues mixed with mainstream interest shows, and the new National Indigenous TV (NITV) features 100% indigenous media content.

[2] By and large the inclusiveness of digital technologies does not discriminate between genders or age groups.

[3] E.g. knowledge archives, non-discriminate forums, cultural asset inventories, cultural validity etc.

[4] UsMob is the first project to be launched under the Australian Film Commission (AFC) and ABC New Media and Digital Services AFC/ABC Broadband Production Initiative (BPI). It supports dynamic projects developed and produced specifically for broadband delivery on ABC Online. See www.abc.net.au/usmob

Figure 2: Community youth members uses a video camera

Photo: Jon Corbett

This can help increase employment opportunities by easing the transition from school to workplace environments and in language maintenance and cultural awareness.[5] Many development agencies use positive changes in socioeconomic status and the cultural awareness of individuals as key capacity building/development indicators. Arguably, the use of ICT/digital technology discussed here represents potential examples of capacity building/development/enhancement in practice.

The digital tools used to achieve such development and envelopment objectives are increasingly in the form of videos, DVDs, digital photos, and audio files. All these technologies are readily available to most community members, making them relatively cost-effective. More recently, evolving Web 2.0 applications are becoming accessible tools for authoring and disseminating digital content.

[5] dEadly mOb is a mentoring programme, which uses ICT to create online opportunities for Aboriginal youth.

Methods and processes

The Walkatjurra Cultural Centre in Leonora (Figure 1) is investing heavily in digital technologies. The explicit aim is to enhance both community development and envelopment initiatives. It began using many of the technologies outlined above, but is now beginning to focus on the implementation of Internet-based tools, and in particular Web 2.0 technologies.

The rest of this article describes an ongoing project that explicitly seeks to revitalise culture and enhance community development through the participatory use of digital technologies. With funding from the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC), the project involved collaboration between the Walkatjurra Cultural Centre, Curtin University of Technology and the University of British Columbia Okanagan. The project process is divided into two distinct phases. The first involved training youth in the use of digital video recording, editing and production techniques. The second involved taking these skills and transferring them to a Web 2.0 environment. Both of these phases are described overleaf.

Walkatjurra digital video project

Participatory video (PV) is the use of video as a participatory communication tool. It has become increasingly popular over the last twenty years, and is a particularly good tool to use with oral societies and non-literate people. It is a process that supports community members to become 'generators, creators, transformers and users of communication, information, skills and education for their own benefit' (Norrish, 1998). Video cameras have become lighter, easier to transport and straightforward to learn and handle – as well as more affordable – even for relatively economically marginalised communities. The videos produced do not need to be studio processed and are easily disseminated.

Using the guiding principles of PV, project collaborators trained an enthusiastic group of youth from the Walkatjurra Cultural Centre in filming, editing and producing a DVD.

To date, a core group of five youth have been involved in such projects. This represents a small proportion of Aboriginal youth in Leonora. While inclusive participation is both a key process and outcome within such initiatives, initial interest and momentum was based around particular community kinship networks to get the project going. The initial stages of the project involved particular families in order to generate project momentum and direction. Later on, once the initial projects have been acquitted and evaluated, and the required resources are gathered, a broader number of community members can then participate.

This training took place during a trip into the bush with a group of community members comprised of elders and youth.[6] The trip lasted four days and was intentionally designed to acquaint the youth with several locally important bush foods. These included the bush tomato (*Solanum centrale*), silky pear (*Marsdenia australis*), emu, witchety grubs and kangaroo. As the youth learnt about these foods from the elders in the group (their seasonality, harvesting, preparation and consumption), they recorded the teachings using the video equipment. There was strong evidence that the young members in the group were absorbing and processing their elders' information, which might have seemed less interesting had the technologies not actively encouraged their participation. This was confirmed by the youth taking away the video equipment several times during the trip and filming their own short videos that documented the foods being harvested and eaten, in essence reiterating the information that their elders had taught them.

"Young members in the group were absorbing and processing their elders' information, which might have seemed less interesting had the technologies not actively encouraged their participation."

On returning to Leonora the technology intermediaries, elders and youth spent three days producing a DVD. Often during participatory video projects there is less interest in the editing component of the project. It is time consuming and tedious work. Yet the Leonora youth were engaged throughout – providing advice, voice-over segments and a large dose of enthusiasm. The final product was screened to everyone in the community.

Over the next twelve months the DVD went on to be shown at several national DKCRC conferences where the youth members were invited to present their work. The youth and their DVD were also featured on state television and radio stations. This initial project set the foundation for several youth in Leonora to begin to really explore the video medium as a means to communicate information about themselves and their lifestyles to others outside of their remote rural community.

Walkatjurra and Web 2.0 development

Rural Internet access has increased and become more affordable in Western Australia over the last five years, largely due to the rapid increase of mining industry activity. As mining companies expand, so does their need for communications infrastructure, such as mobile phone towers. This has provided access to Internet and mobile communications to communities in regions that would normally be void of such technology. This is an unexpected benefit for communities from an industry that historically disrupts Aboriginal cultural activity.

This improved connectivity has enabled the next phase of the Walkatjurra Cultural Centre's digital journey. Members have built on and expanded their repository of cultural information and experimented with developing and implementing Web 2.0 technologies. This initially began with individuals creating private web pages. These became valuable tools for increasing awareness of community issues, activities and services, and overcoming the barrier of distance that often affects remote Aboriginal communities.

[6] 'Bush' is a local term used to describe the outback or desert-like wilderness areas in Australia. Commonly used when referring to 'traditional Aboriginal lands'.

Figure 3: Community youth edit 'Papinmaru' in the Walkatjurra Cultural Centre

Photo: Jon Corbett

More recently, members have adopted the use of Web 2.0 applications such as blogs, social networking systems, and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services.[7] [8] [9] The Cultural Centre set up several blogs with RSS feeds using Blogger, a free-to-use Google application.[10] They used them to share information about community issues, targeting both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, this provided community members with access to information outlining the progress of the Cultural Centre's activities. However, our informal observations showed that community members preferred to communicate either face-to-face or by using mobile phones, which were becoming increasingly available, rather than using the RSS feeds. Perhaps the categories of information displayed by the RSS feeds may have been too general and did not encourage people to use the RSS feeds to access information.

External parties such as private enterprise, government departments, partnering research institutions and other community-based organisations were provided with select parcels of general information. These related to cultural, environmental or political issues that might influence their relationship and subsequent level of support for the Walkatjurra Cultural Centre.[11]

At this point it is difficult to tell whether this strategy has changed how external stakeholders respond to related socio-political community matters. However informally, stakeholder

[7] For a definition of 'VoIP', see glossary, p.123 (this issue).
[8] For a definition of 'blog', see glossary, p.121. See also Blogging p.106 (this issue).
[9] Online social networking tools focus on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities. For a full definition, see glossary, p.123. See also Social networking, p.112 (this issue).
[10] For a definition of 'RSS', see glossary, p.122. See also RSS feeds p.115 (this issue).

[11] Generally positive information regarding the community's achievements and future development plans. Controversial aspects of native title and heritage matters and sensitive internal community information would not be broadcast in this manner.

"By engaging the youth in positive technology interaction and permitting meaningful participation in the Centre's activities, older generations are increasing the likelihood of involving younger members."

feedback suggests this strategy has increased their holistic understanding of the community's objectives – and how their decisions may impact on the community agenda. Furthermore, by providing access to regular updates via RSS feeds on the successes of the community youth ICT initiatives, donor bodies may also be more likely to support future funding applications because this information is more readily available and immediately accessible to them.

Online social networking tools have been used by several members of the Cultural Centre to increase access to information relating to the Centre's initiatives. A Facebook group was created to outline and debate issues of land rights advocacy – a topical issue for Australian Aboriginal peoples, especially members of the Cultural Centre. To date, 126 people have joined. Many are indigenous peoples from outside Australia, providing personal accounts of similar international experiences of land rights and indigenous counter-culture clashes with mainstream society. These strategies aim to increase awareness and political support for community issues. But again, their impact and effectiveness remains difficult to quantify.

VoIP services, in particular Skype, were set up on computers within the Cultural Centre. Due to the transient nature of community life, mobile phones are valuable tools for maintaining social relationships.[12] By using Skype, call costs are greatly reduced, permitting far longer call times. Skype calls can be diverted through their mobile phones, providing constant access. Although not widely adopted, it demonstrated that it could be a very powerful communication tool, linking other communication mediums (Internet, email, mobile phone, and landlines) at a very cost effective rate.

We also used Web 2.0 technologies to increase the impact and outputs of the youth video projects. Through the 'Lonely Planet: Less than three' competition, a web video competition hosted by the Lonely Planet travel company, the

Figure 4: The Papinmaru video on the Lonely Planet Less Than Three website

youth created a short, less than three-minute, video documenting how they hunt *papinmaru* (a large lizard).[13] The video takes the audience into the bush and shows the youth successfully hunting and then cooking their prey. The video won broad acclaim and was awarded the runner-up prize in Lonely Planet's international competition. The Papinmaru video was posted on the official competition site and also linked to the Lonely Planet TV site.[14]

Community members and the youth used several websites to showcase their video. This meant the video could be easily promoted, accessed and further shared. This allowed for a wider international audience, which subsequently generated significant interest around the youths' win and related activities at the Cultural Centre. The video was also uploaded to the Cultural Centre website. Wherever the video was uploaded, it was tagged with references back to the Cultural Centre, marketing their activities, and the success of their youth.[15]

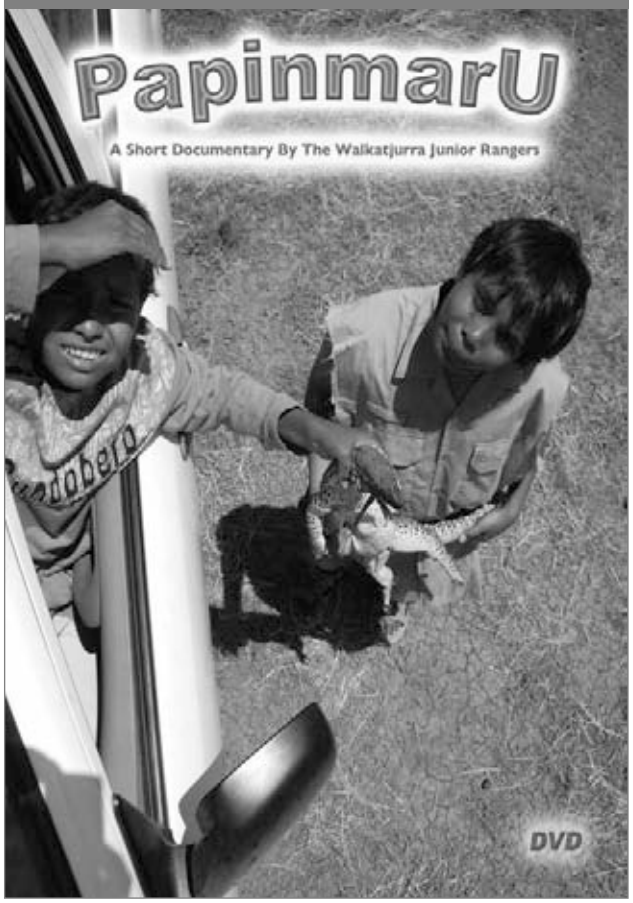
[12] Aboriginal peoples regularly move between towns to fulfil kinship obligations such as births, funerals or ceremonies, making cost-effectiveness communication with dispersed families and friends important.

[13] *Papinmaru* or *goanna* have a prominent place in the culture of Aboriginal Australians, including totemic relationships and representations within their creation theory.

[14] Although the Papinmaru video is no longer available on the Lonely Planet TV website, for more information about the Less Than Three competition see: www.lonelyplanet.com/lessthanthree/winning_videos.cfm

[15] For a definition of 'tagging' see glossary, p. x. See also Tagging p. X (this issue).

Figure 5: Papinmaru DVD cover



Source: Walkatjurra Cultural Centre

The youth also edited a longer, 10 minute version of the video helped by several older Cultural Centre members.[16] This turned it into a marketable product. It was offered for sale on the Centre's website and at related functions (art exhibitions, conferences, community events). Eighteen months after they won the competition, every copy of the video was sold, around 50 copies at $20 each. The youth have been able to generate a valuable product for the Centre.

By understanding the Cultural Centre's objectives and the range of technologies its members use to achieve them, the importance and relevance of the youth's Web 2.0 video experiences can be clearly acknowledged. By engaging the youth in positive technology interaction and permitting meaningful participation in the Centre's activities, older generations are increasing the likelihood of involving younger members to drive the Centre's activities in the future.

[16] One of whom was non-indigenous and a university researcher.

"There is a gap between what community members consider valid evidence to support what they see as the impact of ICT and Web 2.0 usage within the community, and the comparative academic evaluation of such findings."

Lessons learnt, critical reflections and analysis

This project is a long-term undertaking. As a result, the process is adaptive. It has developed to accommodate and incorporate appropriate training curricula and tools required by the users of the technology. The innovative work, international successes, and high profile have greatly enabled the Walkatjurra Cultural Centre to continue to raise funds for projects. However, there still remains the need for longer-term commitment by participating youth – as well as more support by parents and other non-involved community members. Walkatjurra Cultural Centre organisers have attempted to incorporate a video and Web 2.0 teaching component into the school curriculum in order to generate greater participation in the community at large. However, this has been largely unsuccessful due to a lack of available finance from the school, and the view that such activities fall outside the range of core educational objectives for children (such as literacy and numeracy).

Researchers linked to the Centre have been approached by youth independent of the project and asked about future field trips and DVD productions. We noticed that participating youth often bring along friends to observe related activities in the Cultural Centre. Their friends have also shown a strong desire for future participation and inclusion. Community members have also inquired about how their child might participate in activities. This desire to participate was most notable after the youth made the Papinmaru DVD and won the Lonely Planet competition, once the positive outputs of the initiative had been publicly recognised. Improving future participation seems to rest with the logistical, financial and ethical capacity of staff within the cultural centre to meaningfully engage a greater number of community members.

Finally, and significant to both researchers and community members alike, is how to improve both the measurement and evaluation of ICT-related research. There is a gap between what community members consider valid evidence to support what they see as the impact of ICT and Web 2.0 usage within

the community, and the comparative academic evaluation of such findings. Participating researchers act as support mechanisms for the community. Therefore, if they initiate intensive project appraisals and assessments, community members may view this as distractive or inappropriate, or that their views and opinions are insufficient as stand-alone conclusions to questions they themselves have sought to answer.

Conclusion

This evolving exploration with digital technologies has been a largely positive investment of time and energy for the Walkatjurra Cultural Centre and the youth involved in the project. The community views the Papinmaru web video as a tangible success. It has encouraged the centre's youth to further develop their video-making skills. Four youth members took part in the Freemantle Film school programme in Perth, the state capital, in early 2008. Web 2.0 technologies have greatly expanded their reach and their message, moving their audience from a very limited one to an international forum. This has a strong impact on understanding their own potential and promotes the message of cultural survival and pride that is central to the Walkatjurra Cultural Centre's intent.

There are clear lessons learnt to date from this project. Firstly, that youth living in marginal and remote outback communities, if given access to tools and training, are capable of producing original and innovative video materials. Using Web 2.0 technologies these materials can be shared (for a minimal cost) with international audiences. This in turn can greatly raise the profile of the youth and other organisations involved in the project. It has the potential to influence both the general public and decision makers, by generating a better understanding of remote Aboriginal Australia. Perhaps it will also influence longer-term decisions related to rural connectivity provision.

"Research needs to target and identify key sociocultural environmental conditions that promote meaningful ICT and Web 2.0 interactions."

Further community-based research on how other Aboriginal groups can engage similar Web 2.0 initiatives for positive change is needed. In particular, research needs to target and identify key sociocultural environmental conditions that promote meaningful ICT and Web 2.0 interactions. This may help to increase both the widespread adoption of such technologies and the breadth of applications Web 2.0 technology may hold for Aboriginal peoples.

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Theme section

Part IV: Theory and reflection on practice

The articles in Part IV reflect on some of the lessons learnt from previous experiences of using information communication technologies for development. The authors discuss some of the strategies, issues and challenges related to integrating Web 2.0 technologies into development approaches – and of using appropriate tools for appropriate purposes.

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN explores the lessons learnt from the information communication technologies for development (ICT4D) paradigm shift to Web2forDev. ICT4D helped to mainstream ICTs into development thinking and highlight issues of access and connectivity in the developing world. However, ICT4D was mostly driven by technology hype and a narrow approach to how we use the tools. In contrast, Web 2.0 tools have a stronger focus on social and decentralised networking rather than strategic implementation. Yet key issues remain: access, connectivity, capacity-building, literacy and language. Esterhuysen argues the need to holistically appropriate, adapt and integrate these technologies in our work with people, information and technology.

Next, **ETHAN ZUCKERMAN** writes about the use of 'simple tools for smart people'. Zuckerman examines how we can appropriate these tools for development purposes, and also how 'using the appropriate tools, for the right job at the right time, is something that we all have to understand.' He describes how grassroots activists have been leading innovators in the use and appropriation of Web 2.0 tools and explores how the mobile phone revolution is helping to overcome issues of access and connectivity. Lastly, he discusses the importance of filtering online content for relevance, meaning and context, and the emergence of trusted, expert online editors and aggregators.

Lastly, **ANJA BARTH** and **GIACOMO RAMBALDI** recount how the process of organising the Web2forDev conference has contributed to building a community of practice. The authors reflect on the successes and challenges of adopting Web 2.0 and other ICT tools to create online collaborative spaces for the conference organisers. In addition, the authors draw on results from two conference surveys to assess what impact the conference has had on both the participants and their ways of working and in helping to form and maintain a new Web2forDev community of practice.

11

Circling the point: from ICT4D to Web 2.0 and back again

by ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN

Introduction

By 'circling the point' I want to explore the relationship between information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) and Web 2.0 for development (Web2forDev).[1] The term ICT4D is actually relatively new. When the Association for Progressive Communication (APC) network started using online information-sharing and email systems in the late 1980s, the term did not exist. By 1990, we described ourselves as a network supporting global computer communications for the environment, human rights, development and peace.[2] Even the United Nations Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP) – which, in partnership with the APC, provided many people in developing countries with their first email access – did not use the term ICT4D.[3] People and institutions were actively working with information, documentation and technology in developing countries, but did not see themselves as being ICT4D protagonists. Mostly, they were rooted in their own sectors, be it health, environmental sustainability, or women's rights.[4]

The flaw of the technology hype

The term ICT4D became more common in the late 1990s at the height of the telecommunications boom. Liberalisation, privatisation, policy reform and a drive to expand markets coincided with the idea that ICTs could transform the world. High-level initiatives such as the Digital Opportunity Task Force, the United Nation's High Level Panel of Experts, the United National ICT Task Force, and the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), demonstrated this new preoccupation with the role of ICT in development.[5] [6]

As we consider Web2forDev, or the 'participatory' web for development, we should reflect not just on the successes, but also on the challenges and weaknesses inherent in ICT4D.

Perhaps the main flaw of ICT4D was the frequent tech-

[1] For a definition of the terms Web 2.0 and Web2forDev, see glossary, p.123-124 and overview article, p.8 (this issue).
[2] Founded in 1990, APC is an international network and non-profit organisation that wants everyone to have access to the Internet to improve their lives and create a more just world. To read more about the history of APC see www.apc.org/en/about/history.
[3] The SDNP closed several years ago. For more information see: www.sdnp.undp.org.
[4] E.g. early ICT adopters included Satellife/Healthnet www.healthnet.org and HURIDCOS www.huridocs.org. IDRC (International Development Research Centre) were active in ICT4D as early as the 1970s. See http://tinyurl.com/dgmgwr. The Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) IMARK initiative (Information Management Resource Kit) was conceived and developed by people with both an understanding of farming and libraries and information.
[5] The Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force), created at the G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit in July 2000, consisted of governments, private sector entities, not-for-profit and international organisations from developed and developing countries. Its purpose was to identify ways in which the digital revolution could benefit all of the world's people, especially the poorest and most marginalised. See: *Digital Opportunities for All: Meeting the Challenge*, May 2001. Online at: www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2001genoa/dotforce1.html
[6] www.unicttf.org/index.asp

"As we consider Web2forDev, or the 'participatory' web for development, we should reflect not just on the successes, but also on the challenges and weaknesses inherent in ICT4D."

nology-driven hype. It created a misleading expectation that ICTs enabled 'leapfrogging' over development obstacles. This often diverted attention from development fundamentals (e.g. improving governance, ensuring basic freedoms and human rights, education and training, institutional capacity, etc.). In the ICT sector itself, it obscured the need to invest in more traditional information and communications infrastructure – such as libraries and community media – and the human skills needed to disseminate, manage and produce information effectively. None of these are mutually exclusive with ICTs. In fact they should be closely integrated. But somehow the ICT4D paradigm put too much emphasis on new technologies, and too little on the need to integrate with other tools and skills, and with development theory and practice. Also, the people doing the thinking, planning and implementation of ICT4D were selected for their technology expertise, or links to a very dynamic and assertive IT industry. There were ICT4D protagonists at international and local levels who understood development and advocated for more holistic approaches to ICTs. But their voices tended to be less glamorous, and not as easily heard, as those suggesting quick and cheap solutions.

Unclear transparency and accountability

Part of the ICT4D paradigm was public private partnerships (PPPs) and new ways of thinking of the role of the state in development. We still need to find ways to address both state weakness in developing countries and channelling private sector investment into building essential infrastructure. However, PPPs in the ICT sector were often short-sighted, lacking the necessary procedures to ensure accountability and transparency. A weakness in the ICT4D paradigm became an unclear relationship between business and government. The fact that many governments continued to own and control national telecommunications monopolies – even after privatisation – made things even less clear.

Appropriating ICTs: from work to play and back again

Another disadvantage with ICT4D was a short-sighted approach to project development and capacity building. This did not encourage sustainable appropriation of ICTs. Projects were often introduced with limited funding and resources, with minimal access to ICT infrastructure and support. People implementing these initiatives were expected to demonstrate, in very short time, how ICTs would alleviate poverty. In many developing country organisations, when email was introduced, people had shared email addresses instead of private ones. Using email for personal purposes was frowned upon. ICTs for development were strictly for 'development' work. School networking initiatives took special precautions to prevent scholars from playing computer games.

In contrast, at the same time in the developed world, people were appropriating ICTs in a very different way, using personal email, playing computer games, or checking stock portfolios. Online dating, gambling and shopping soon followed. Now, music and video downloads are part of the norm. These are everyday activities for many people with Internet access, as common as using ICTs at work. But for people in the developing world, with slow and expensive Internet connections, these activities remain unfeasible. In many communities these are not yet part of the cultural norm.

The difference is fundamental. In the developed world, a whole new generation has explored new technology on their own terms, driving and creating the Web 2.0 developer and user base. As we move forward in the transition into Web 2.0 for development, we must not repeat the error of the narrow approach to appropriating technology.

The benefits of the ICT4D paradigm

There were also many positive outcomes. ICT4D put the lack of Internet access and infrastructure in the developing world clearly on the agenda. Development donors were forced to accept that a huge and growing gap existed – and that, if not addressed, it could deepen the existing exclusions and sharp divides between the haves and have-nots. These divisions created and entrenched gaps not only between rich and poor, but also between those who benefited from access to new technologies and those who did or could not.

Debates on Internet content raised important concerns around cultural and linguistic diversity – an issue that had been neglected in most development discourse. In addition, the ICT4D paradigm also created awareness of the need for capacity and skills needed in the use, management and production of ICTs. At a macro-level, governments were required to include ICTs in poverty reduction strategies. At project level, ICT4D initiatives were expected to address fundamental issues such as local ownership, community participation, building local institutional capacity, ensuring sustainability and integrating learning in their project implementation.

Is the hype around ICT4D over?

Do we no longer need to think of ICT4D as a priority in its own right? This view seems to be held by many development agencies. There have been many significant improvements and opportunities for addressing the infrastructure gap. Mobile phone handsets can be used to interact with the Internet. Fuel cell technologies and improved solar technology provides workable solutions to ICT energy needs. More energy efficient computers are being produced. These are positive developments. Yet equally, many development agencies, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs), are only just beginning to see ICTs as relevant to development – and they are at risk making the same mistakes again. There is also an assumption that the basics (access to telephony, and technology and communications infrastructure) has been taken care of – that market-led expansion of products and services, particularly in mobile telephony, are solving the problems which governments and international organisations have failed to address for decades.

Do we still need ICT4D?

Development funding has moved on from focusing on ICT4D as a sector in its own right. There is less financial support for ICT focused projects – and the emphasis has shifted to integrating ICT4D into 'traditional' or mainstream development.

The 'mainstreaming' of ICTs in development can be seen as a kind of victory.[7] The hype might be over, but development agencies now recognise the importance of incorporating ICTs into developing country infrastructure development. People working in health, agriculture, governance and transparency no longer question that ICTs can add value. Non-governmental organisations no longer have to persuade donors to fund computer technology, Internet access, and website development. But a truly integrated and inclusive approach to ICTs in development is still rare, and limited by the lack of affordable access to infrastructure – and capacity – for many people.

Businesses in developing countries, from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to multinationals are being enormously creative in developing new products and services to respond to – and generate – demand from low-income communities, e.g. Mpesa in Kenya, a mobile phone based money transfer initiative in Kenya.[8] Yet both governments and local development organisations often lack the capacity and skills to effectively integrate ICTs in ways that contribute to sustainable development, relying instead on consultants, and third party hardware and software companies. The result is ICT projects which lack a longer-term developmental perspective and impact assessment, and fail to build local capacity to ensure sustainable and innovative use of technologies. The problems produced by technology-driven approaches remain. We still need a special focus on ICT4D to develop specialised knowledge and capacity, holistic approaches to social change and development – and reliable, grounded ICT4D practitioners.

"Somehow the ICT4D paradigm put too much emphasis on new technologies, and too little on the need to integrate with other tools and skills, and with development theory and practice."

Like gender mainstreaming, the risk is that ICT4D could be mainstreamed out of existence. Basic infrastructure development challenges remain. Many people still do not have affordable, reliable Internet access. Mobile telephony and the mobile Internet have enormous potential, but costs are still too high for many people. A new digital divide is growing: the broadband divide. Without broadband access in key institutions like universities, businesses, government and the media, developing countries will remain on the edge of knowledge generation and access. One online discussion group participant that preceded the Web2forDev conference commented:

> *As soon as a few rural communities begin to understand the basics of the Internet and World Wide Web, a new toolbox with new knowledge emerges. It is like running a race in which there is no finishing line. If you are a participant in this you can't help but feel a sense of fatigue.*

What can Web 2.0 for development offer?

Some perceive Web 2.0 as a new phenomenon, others do not. I think both views are true. For example, social networking is definitely not new. People have been networking socially with ICTs since the technologies were introduced. In the pre-web era thousands of 'usenet newsgroups' or 'bulletin boards' allowed people from all over the world to participate in online discussions that were very much like text-based versions of blogs.[9] [10] APC hosted hundreds of these 'conferences' during

[7] Mainstreaming is often used to describe a process of integrating an issue into other areas, rather than having a special focus on it, in other words treating it as a crosscutting issue rather than a topic in its own right.
[8] Mpesa: www.safaricom.co.ke/index.php?id=228

[9] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USENET
[10] For a definition of 'blog', see glossary, p.121. See also Blogging p.106 (this issue).

This Bulgarian environmental campaign in 2006 was waged on and offline.

Photo: BlueLink

the 1990s. Many served as spaces for collaborative work among environmentalists from all over the world both before and after the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.[11]

Recent trends have introduced fundamental differences in how people interact with the web. New social networking platforms like YouTube, Flickr and Facebook might seem frivolous, but they generate excitement.[12] They can add an element of fun to how we network 'for development'. The technology learning curve can be alienating, but it can also encourage new creativity. I would describe Web 2.0 as a user-driven trend in platforms, tools and approaches that strengthens the power of online networking. It responds to some of the problems of the online universe. In particular, it helps people deal with the proliferation of online content. It gives us new plain language tools for classification (tagging) and searching.[13] It also gives us better content collation and information aggregation tools such as RSS (Really Simple Syndications).[14] Blogs and easy-to-use content management systems makes it fast and easy for anyone with access to create online content in multiple mediums, including audio and video. Moreover, the proliferation of sharing and copying content is proving a far more powerful challenge to restrictive, top-down intellectual property regimes than years of lobbying by open content activists have been able to produce.

Web 2.0 goes much further than the traditional web in removing the barriers between producers, consumers and creators of content. It gives people working in development information and communications an opportunity. Development content is hard to find. It is difficult and expensive to create. Web 2.0 can help us to do it in an interactive way. It creates new opportunities for existing journalists, and allows

[11] The Association for Progressive Communications and the networking of global civil society: APC at the 1992 Earth Summit, by Rory O'Brien and Andrew Clement, APC 2000. See: www.apc.org/about/history/apc-at-1992-earth-summit
[12] YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. Like YouTube, Flickr is a free to use image and video hosting website and online community platform. See www.flickr.com and www.youtube.com. Facebook is a free-to-access social networking website. See www.facebook.com.

[13] See glossary, p.123, also Tagging, p.117 (this issue).
[14] See glossary, p.122, also RSS, p.115 (this issue).

Women with stories to tell learn how to create short clips with images and sound and share them for human rights education and training. Uploading the videos to sites like YouTube, they are both the producers and the disseminators.

Photo: Women'sNet

for the emergence of citizen journalists. It builds a culture of sharing and has strong links with the movement for free and open source software (FOSS).[15]

Can Web 2.0 tools make the Internet more accessible?

That Web 2.0 is user-driven is significant for those of us who believe in the value of the 'participatory web for development'. If users are shaping the future of the Internet, then **who** those users are, **what language** they use, and **where** they live matters. The majority of Internet users are from developed countries. Is it possible to create a body of users from the developing world who are active and engaged enough to influence Internet development?

If sharing information is a fundamental characteristic of Web 2.0, so is a stable and permanent Internet connection. People often see the lack of broadband access as a barrier to using Web 2.0 tools in development work, and in developing countries. APC views Web 2.0 as an opportunity for better use of limited connectivity and driving demand for much-needed broadband. Used effectively, Web 2.0 tools can reduce limited and expensive online time. Perhaps the greatest opportunity lies in how Web 2.0 integrates text, images, sound, and video, with huge potential for development workers. It helps us to manage content and share it with people who are not literate or who are visually impaired. It also becomes an effective information-sharing medium in cultures where text is not an obvious means of storing information. An excellent example are farmer blogs where podcasting effectively connects rural communities with wider information networks.[16] [17]

Ultimately, Web2.0 is about people working, sharing and playing together online. We must not lose this concept when

[15] FOSS is software which is licensed to grant rights to its users to study, change, and improve its design by making its source code available. See e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_and_open_source_software also glossary, p.122 (this issue).

[16] For a definition of 'Podcast' see glossary, p.122 (this issue).

[17] See e.g. 'Sharing farmers' knowledge through audioblog.' Online: http://blog.web2fordev.net/2007/09/24/sharing-farmers-knowledge-through-audioblog/

Children at this rural Nigerian centre learn computer basics by playing games. It's unlikely that their Internet connection is stable enough for them to use Web 2.0 yet.

Photo: Fantsuam Foundation

we use Web 2.0 tools for development. On social networking platforms like Myspace,[18] Orkut[19] and Facebook people share information about their ideas, work, music, and relationships, alongside discussing politics and participating in online activism. This mix of the personal, political, entertainment and work could be key to unlocking the potential of Web 2.0 for development. Web 2.0 makes it possible to share development information and knowledge in more accessible ways. It also gives us the tools to speak out and hold governments and development institutions to account. It allows us to network and learn more holistically. It increases options for marginalised communities to speak for themselves and create their own content.

Development is happening, but not everywhere or as much as many of us would like. For people in developing countries, relying on foreign aid and governments is not the most reliable strategy, even if these play critical roles. Increasingly, communities are creating their own local solutions. Web 2.0 is the perfect platform for mediating and negotiating this diverse, multi-layered response to development challenges. You can move from collaborating on one website to protesting on another. You can speak as an institution, as a community – or as an individual.

[18] See: www.myspace.com/
[19] See: http:/www.orkut.com

Web 2.0: Challenges and lessons learnt

Learn to share but understand risks

There are many challenges to consider in implementing Web 2.0 for development. Sharing is a major challenge. To create a culture of sharing requires more than just talking. It requires a different approach to policy-making and information access, and a re-affirmation of legitimacy of global public goods and of the commons. It also requires us to trust others with our ideas and the products of our work.

Trusting becomes easier if you are organised and have good defences. We have to approach social networking for development through building good information skills and awareness of how to protect privacy and communicate as securely as possible. We must ensure that the communities we work with understand the risks of networking online, from privacy and security to the potential for the distortion, or abuse of information, negotiating what information should be private or public, and understanding who to consult when deciding.

Appropriating the tools for ourselves

There is also a business backend to Web 2.0. It is not just altruistic people creating platforms to allow people to have a good time on the Internet. It involves money, buying and

"Web 2.0 goes much further than the traditional web in removing the barriers between producers, consumers and creators of content."

selling. To appropriate these platforms for development we need to be conscious of these trends. We need to take charge. Many of these platforms run on open source tools that are readily available. We should use them and influence their development.

Developing capacity

Regarding capacity development, we need to think differently and not make the same mistakes of the narrow early ICT4D approach, the idea that you needed skills first, before you could have legitimate access to the tools – or that without first investing in creating 'useful content', Internet access would not benefit poor people. With Web 2.0 this will not work. People will only learn how to use the tools with relatively unrestricted access to them. Creating their own content becomes the key to accessing useful content created by others.

A challenge for many people in developing countries is learning how to appropriate the web as individuals, rather than as representatives of organisations or communities. Journalists are excellent at that and African bloggers are using this approach effectively. Yet people working in NGOs tend to be shy of blogging. We have a programme called APC Africa Women, were we train women to use ICTs. They do fantastic work, but are very cautious of making their voices heard online. One way of addressing this is to create group, or community blogs.

Language and culture

Linguistic diversity is another challenge. Web 2.0 is not only for English speakers. For example, the APC website has been bookmarked by more Spanish than English speaking readers on Delicious.[19] Let us not make assumptions that we cannot create linguistic diversity for these platforms.

Someone at the Web2forDev conference raised a point about whether culture influences how ICT4D is implemented. Working within existing culture barriers is a challenge. But perhaps culture changes and evolves even independently of technology. Culture is influenced by war, migration, poverty. What can sustain cultural coherence in any society are healthy, functioning social institutions. Social institutions come in many forms. Online communities can become part of the fabric of strong, inclusive societies. The power is in us. Development is about fighting daily battles, making connections with others who are doing the same, finding innovators and influencing policy makers, whether we are using Web 2.0 or not.

Conclusion

The challenge of using Web 2.0 for development is no different from the challenges of ICT4D. We need to remain focused on sustainable social change and development; on building capacity and ownership at the local level and on using holistic, integrated approaches in our work with people, information and technology. Web 2.0 can be an immensely powerful platform for development and for challenging fundamental social inequalities if we use it to speak out, but also to share, listen and learn. I will end with a quote that I think is relevant to how we should approach Web 2.0 for development: 'Fools talk. Cowards are silent. Only wise men and women listen.'[20] Let us not be quiet, and listen as much as we can on the participatory web.

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NOTES
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[19] Delicious (www.delicious.com) is a social bookmarking web service for storing, sharing, and discovering web bookmarks. See also Social bookmarking, p.119 (this issue).
[20] The Shadow of the Wind (Spanish: *La sombra del viento*) by Carlos Ruiz Zafón, 2001.

12

Web 2.0 tools for development: simple tools for smart people

by ETHAN ZUCKERMAN

Introduction

I know very little about agriculture or food – but I do know a little bit about Web 2.0.[1] This phenomenon has so many names, manifestations, and different ways to talk and think about it. The one I usually use is the read-write web. Essentially, the Internet began as a way of sharing computer resources. But very quickly, it turned into human communication. If you give people the opportunity to communicate over the Internet they will do so.

Email actually preceded the Internet. In 1965 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), people were sending email back and forth because they shared the same computer. By 1969 we had the Internet, and by 1971, email between computers – within nine months the majority of Internet traffic was email. The World Wide Web started in 1990. Web blogs (blogs) are over ten years old. Wikis are even older than that, from 1995. Wikipedia is becoming an enormous phenomenon, and that is nearly eight years old.

We often forget is that this is actually relatively old technology and ideas. Most Internet technology is over twenty years old. So why are we talking about it now? Because it's not about the tools, it's about the people. We are experienc-

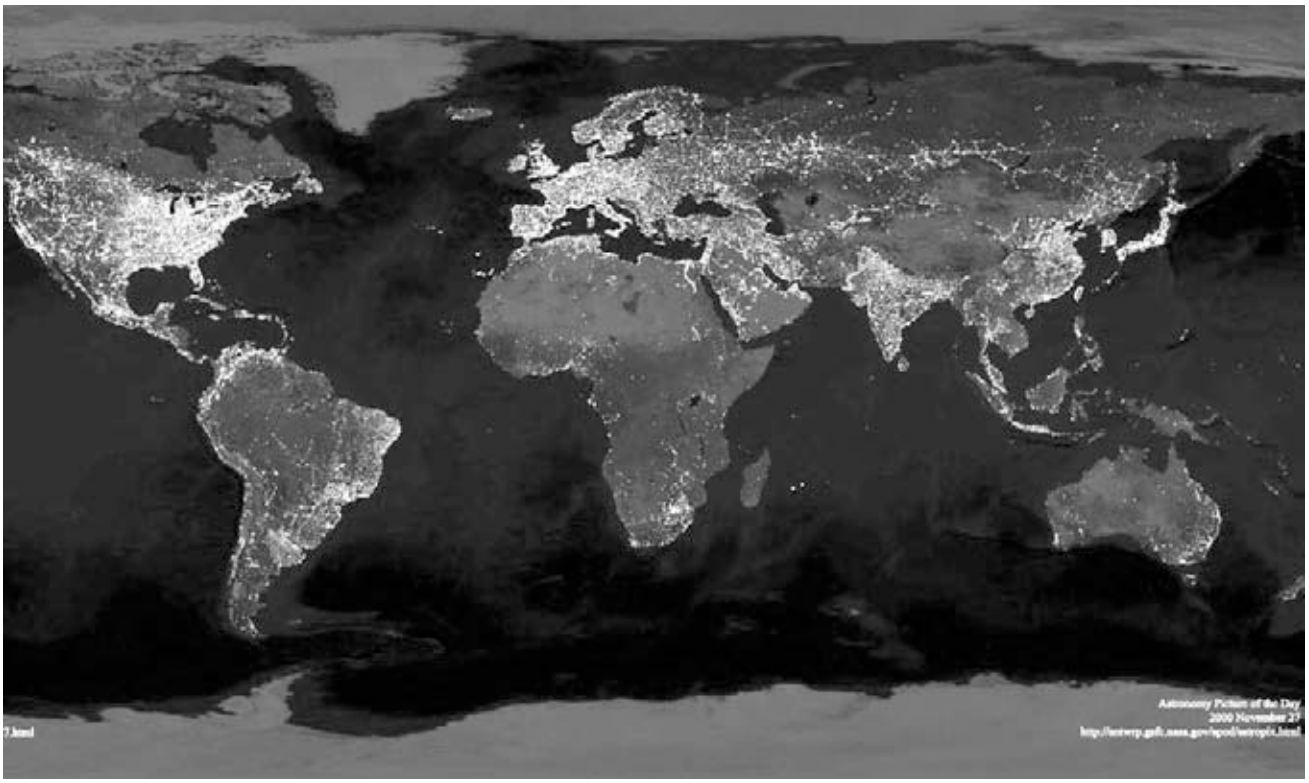
[1] For a definition of Web 2.0, see glossary, p.123 and overview, p.8 (this issue).

Box 1: Four sets of bloggers from around the world[1]

Top left: the first Cambodian bloggers conference, Phnom Penh, July 2007. They call themselves the cloggers. They got together to talk about how to bring forward Cambodian blogging. Top right: Jordanian bloggers, one of the most vibrant blogospheres in the world.[3] They did a lot of the frontline reporting when the hotels were bombed in Jordan. Bottom left: Tanzania, the TED African conference. Over a hundred bloggers came to this very elite technology conference held in Arusha, Tanzania.[4] Bottom right: Global Voices Forum, New Deli, 2006. This conference brought together bloggers from all around the world.

[2] For a definition of 'blog', see glossary, p.121. See also Kreutz, p.28 and Blogging p.106 (this issue).
[3] 'Blogosphere' is a collective term encompassing all blogs and their interconnections. See also Blogging p.106 (this issue).
[4] Held 4th–7th June 2007 'Africa: The Next Chapter,' Arusha, Tanzania.

NASA's view of the earth at night. If somewhere is not lit up the odds are that it does not have a good Internet connection.



ing a seismic shift – it's about who can be brought together with these tools.

Issues of access and connectivity

Web 2.0 tools have an amazing capacity to bring people together in the same place. Currently, there are well over a billion people online. And critically, in most developing nations you can now expect a small percentage of people online. But this is very different from place to place. In North America you can assume that if you put information online someone can access it. But in the developing world we cannot make this assumption.

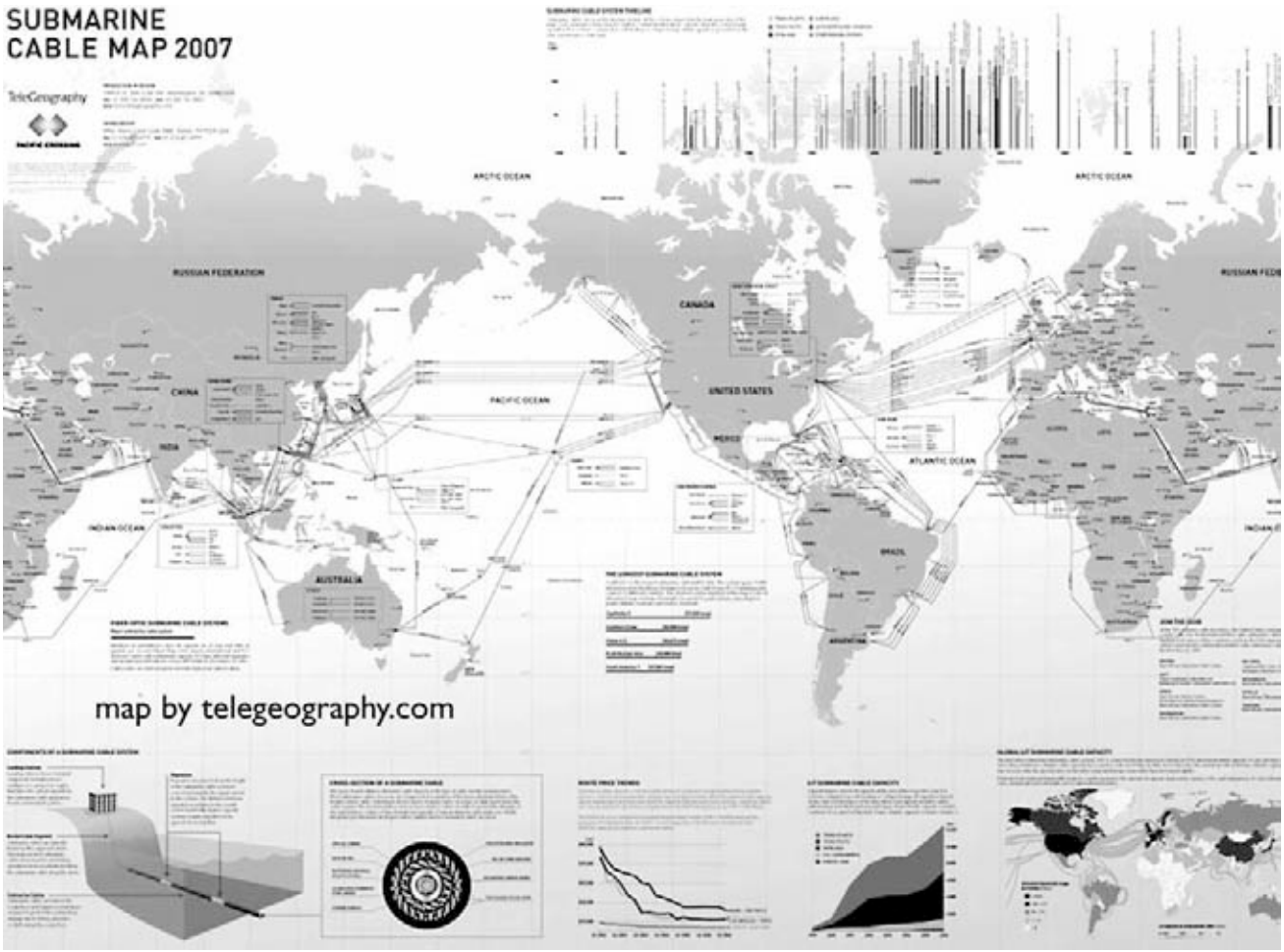
The image above should be mandatory for anyone who uses Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for development. It is NASA's view of the earth at night. It really illustrates the challenge. If somewhere is not lit up the odds are that it does not have a good Internet connection. You need electricity to be online in a sustained, meaningful and engaged fashion. And lots of the world is still suffering from basic infrastructure problems that make it very difficult to participate in many of the high bandwidth activities that we are talking about.

The image on the next page shows the fibre optic cables connecting the world. There is a single cable in West Africa, the Sat Three cable.[5] There is no cable at all in east Africa. Where these cables are is where you have the chance to get good and inexpensive Internet connectivity. But there are large parts of the world without high bandwidth at this point. In places like these, it is not about laptops, or high bandwidths: it is about much smaller devices, like the mobile phone. And the mobile is the most amazing revolution that we have seen in information technology so far.

The mobile phone revolution

We are now rapidly heading towards 3 billion mobile phone handsets worldwide. Even in less developed countries an estimated 80-90% of people have access to one. This is a level of penetration of technology that changes all the rules of the game. So when we think about participatory media, about read-write media, we have to think beyond the laptop and the Internet. We need to think about projects like Interactive Radio for Justice (see Box 1).

[5] 'SAT-3/WASC or **South Atlantic 3/West Africa Submarine Cable** is a submarine communications cable linking Portugal and Spain to South Africa, with connections to several West African countries along the route. SAT-3/WASC provides the only optical fibre link between West Africa and the remainder of the world.' Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAT-3/WASC_(cable_system)



Mobile phones are also being used in election monitoring. This is incredibly powerful. In 2000, Ghana had a remarkable election. It was a relatively peaceful transfer of power from one political party to another. It has really increased Ghana's prosperity. One of the reasons for this was election monitoring, using mobile phones and FM radios. The theory was, if someone was preventing you from voting at a polling station, you could make a mobile phone call. You didn't call the government or the police. You called the local radio station. They would broadcast that people were being prevented from voting and that if the police did not show up to enable people to vote, then it was public accountability. This model used SMS, radio and the Internet.[6] [7]

Box 1: Interactive Radio for Justice

Interactive Radio for Justice has been taking place in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. This is a fascinating radio and mobile phone project. It is an opportunity for people in Congolese villages to ask questions of leaders, and these questions can be very pointed. 'Hi, there are ten soldiers living in my home, they say I have to feed them. Do I have to feed them?' You might guess this is a dangerous question to ask, but you might want to ask the United Nations forces in charge, or the defence minister and the minister of justice – and that is what this radio programme does.[8] It gives people – particularly women – the opportunity to send questions via mobile phone text messages to very powerful people, and have them answer them over the radio. Groups of women organise listening parties around AM radios, to understand those answers. I think this is going to be the culture for many countries that we work in. It is not as sophisticated as some Web 2.0 technologies. But it is back and forth and participatory – and it uses the right technology for the people it is trying to reach.

[6] Another example of election monitoring is the Ushahidi project – see Okolloh (this issue).

[7] Short Messaging Service (SMS): used for sending and receiving short text messages via mobile phones.

[8] United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC)

Using telephones to access information

One of the most interesting new technologies is called IVR: Interactive Voice Response. It has great potential.[9] It is a way to build phone systems that provide audio information over your phone. It is not written in text, the same way you would normally get it on a website. The idea is that you can go into a phone system and say, 'Tell me about crop prices,' or 'Tell me about medical information.' You either use voice recognition software, or work your way through an audio menu to get the audio delivered. This is so important because text-based web – and also SMS – only works well if you are literate. For many people, to really access this information, it is more appropriate to talk to them than it is to give them text. We can use FM radio, but that is still a broadcast technology. IVM allows people to retrieve information as and when they need it.

Learning from the activists

If you give people the tools, they can feed you information. And for most people, those tools are mobile phones. There is a project in Zimbabwe, called Kubatana.[10] They realised that most Zimbabweans are trying very hard to stay alive. The chances of going to a cyber café and writing a long political essay are rather small. But many people in Zimbabwe have mobile phones. So Kubatana is asking people, for example: 'Are you going to participate in the next 'stay away'?'[11] They then use the Internet to connect – not with Zimbabweans, because that is not the best way to reach them – but with the wider world. But they use the mobile phones to collect the information from the people first. The mobile is the input and the Internet is the output. As a Westerner, the Internet is the best way for me to access this information. For Zimbabweans, it is SMS. And using the appropriate tools, for the right job at the right time, is something that we all have to understand. I recommend learning from these activists.

Something really interesting about working in Web 2.0 with human rights is that activists are 'lead users'. Lead users are those who push the limits of what is possible with the technology because they need things that the technology is not able to do. For example, the Egyptian Kefaya movement

"In North America you can assume that if you put information online someone can access it. But in the developing world we cannot make this assumption."

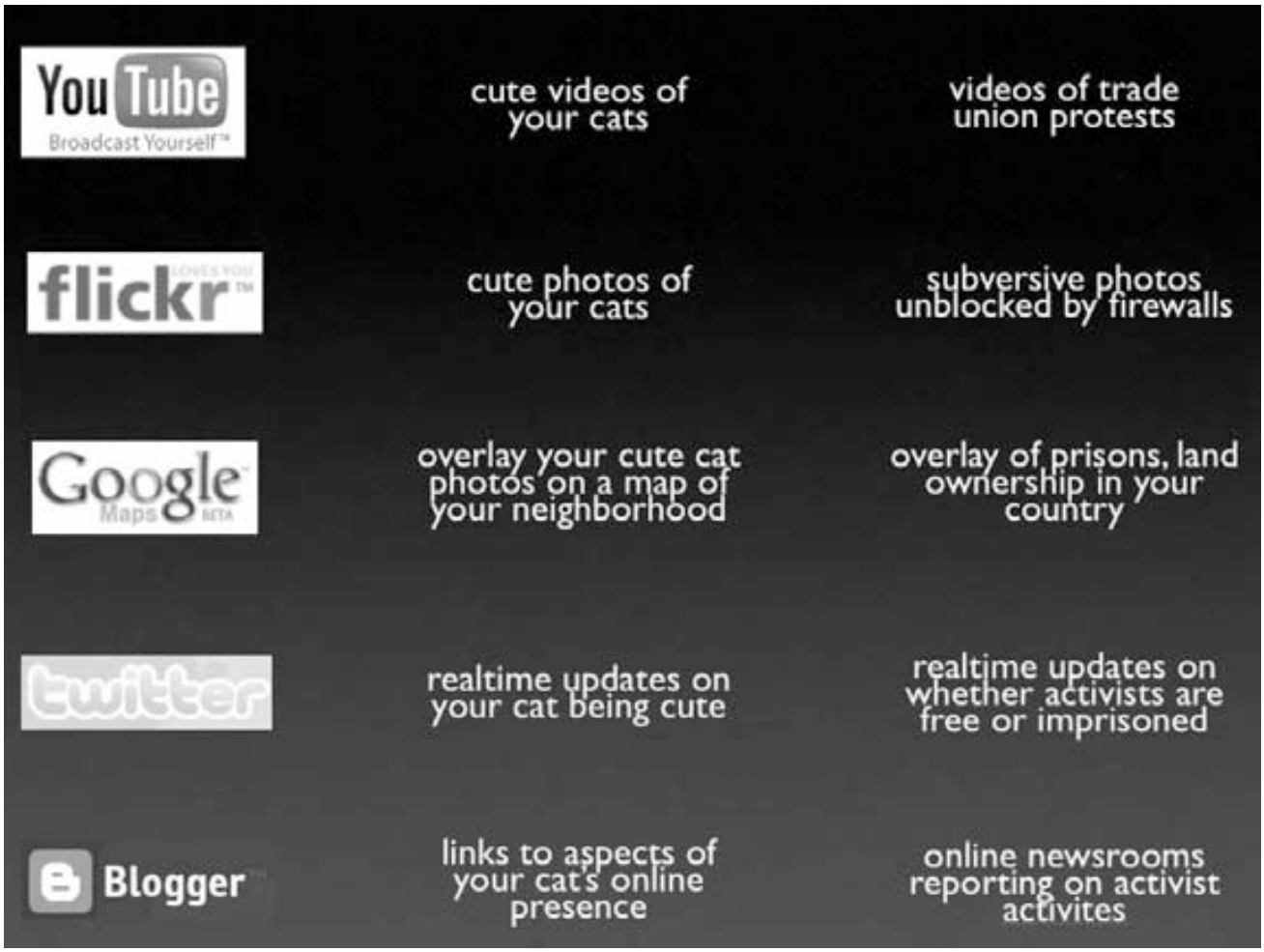
is finding fascinating ways to use Web 2.0 tools to communicate.[12] One of the ways they have done this is by using blogs as newsrooms. People in the field report using SMS, online instant relay chat services (IRC, or instant messaging), and digital photos. They make a phone call, and someone sitting at home in front of a high bandwidth connection acts as the newsroom, reporting on their activities, and other activities in Egypt, because otherwise it is very difficult to get their voices heard in the Egyptian press. This newsroom then suddenly becomes the source for mainstream television and media all over the world. So if the local press will not report what you are doing, you can become the local press by using blogs.

This became very important for Alaa Abd El Fattah, who was one of 800 people arrested during a protest in Egypt, 2006. There was no media coverage of it at all. But Alaa started blogging from prison. Alaa is married to Manal, and they run a blogging website together.[13] While Alaa was in prison, he wrote long blog posts, passed them out to Manal, and she would put them online. Despite spending 60 days in prison, he was watched by the entire world, resulting in a movement to try and get him out of prison. It had international news coverage. When he was finally released there were television reporters surrounding the court.

Another interesting Web 2.0 tool is Twitter.[14] You can write a message of up to 140 characters long, and upload it online either from a computer or via SMS. It goes out to everyone who is following you. And many of the people who use Twitter use it to say things like, 'I'm at FAO giving a presentation'. It isn't really rich discourse. But it is great for activists, who, like Alaa, may end up in prison. So what you say is, 'I'm being taken to this police station, if I'm not out in four hours, please come and look for me.' And this is how Alaa has used Twitter.

[9] A good example is Voxiva, a company which has developed IVR solutions for the health and microfinance sectors. See http://voxiva.com for more information.
[10] www.kubatana.net: The NGO Network Alliance Project – an online community for Zimbabwean activists.
[11] A 'Stay away' is a day of protest organised by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) where people are urged to 'stay away' from work to press government to address the economic meltdown. See www.zctu.co.zw and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe_Congress_of_Trade_Unions
[12] Kefaya (Egyptian Arabic for 'Enough!') is the unofficial moniker of the Egyptian Movement for Change, a grassroots coalition which draws it support from across Egypt's political spectrum to oppose President Hosni Mubarak's presidency. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kefaya and http://kefaya.org/index.htm
[13] www.manalaa.net
[14] Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging service. See p.108 for more information.

Web 2.0 tools: 'Cute cats' versus activism.



Ethan Zuckerman

The 'cute cat' theory: repurposing Web 2.0 tools

This is the main theoretical aspect of this article. I call it the 'cute cat theory' of Web 2.0. Web 1.0 was about static websites, home pages and online commerce and so on. Web 2.0 has different origins. Web 2.0, the 'I can share with you' web, was invented so that I can show you cute photographs of cats, and put captions on photos of cute cats, and show them all over the world. These tools were crafted for the most boring, silly purposes. But they get repurposed. So YouTube may be about showing you fun videos of cute cats – but it also lets us get videos out of Zimbabwe, and shows you a trade union protest.[15] Flickr allows me to put funny captions on photos of my cats to share with you, but it is also a great way to get around the Chinese firewall which blocks certain sensitive texts.[16]

There are two serious points to this. For activists, there is a great benefit in using these tools. Because so many people want to use them for boring purposes, authorities do not want to prohibit access to them. So I think it is worth using these tools which have a social cost to ban rather than using a tool you have created yourself. The second thing is something we have learnt over years about ICT for development. Getting someone else to pay your development costs is a really good idea. Flickr has thousands of people working on making better and better photo-storing websites. Why create your own for development? Use the tools that already exist for your own purposes. But the problem when using these tools is that you put your data in the trust of someone else.

[15] YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. See www.youtube.com.

[16] Like YouTube, Flickr is a free to use image and video hosting website and online community platform, where users can upload, view and share images and video clips. See www.flickr.com.

"For activists, there is a great benefit in using these tools. Because so many people want to use them for boring purposes, authorities do not want to prohibit access to them."

It is a natural concern that we want to own our own infrastructure. But people are learning to use these collective tools because in many ways they are a lot more powerful than anything you can build yourself. This is mainly because there are thousands or hundreds of thousand of people working on them.

Web 2.0 forces us to become more trusting. But we can be careful about it, about how we license our data. Always make copies. There is also data that we never want to entrust to anybody else. It is important to be able to communicate very securely and to encrypt your own information if necessary. But for a lot of these systems, there is literally no way you can build these from scratch.

Which tools for which purposes?

To decide which tools are best for you, you need to think about who you want to reach and how. A lot of people are using virtual environments. But they are only useful to very few people with extremely high bandwidth – not the people we want to reach. They also need to be effective. What are you actually going to get out of it?

You also have to ask: what are your users putting into it? Something that has become very trendy in the non-profit sector is recruiting for causes on Facebook. E-petitions are also very popular. If all you have to do is click a button saying 'join my cause', people will join. But what does it mean? We are looking for participation. We are looking for engagement. We are looking for people to put content out there. If someone simply says, 'Oh, this is important to me', it is not nearly as interesting as someone actually being able to send you a message, write a post, share their voice, and articulate themselves.

Blogging: the ecosystem of links approach

This leads me to blogging. Blogs are as generic as a piece of paper, a press release, a newspaper, or a personal diary. What you need to figure out is why you are writing and who you are writing for. For me, it was a way to express my half-formed ideas and getting feedback on them, 'Hey, folks in my community: help me think this through'. If you blog as a way of sharing academic ideas with people working in your field, that can be very powerful. In my department at Harvard, you would have to blog for the simple reason that this is how we engage in academic conversation.

The other powerful thing about blogging is links. I was in Zimbabwe last year and wrote some fairly harsh posts about Zimbabwe. If you go online and search for 'holiday' and 'Harare' you won't find travel guides or a ministry of tourism website, you will find my website. This is not because I'm the most knowledgeable person on Zimbabwe. It is because of the magic of links.[17] Search engines like Google love links. Google looks for websites that are linked to lots of different places. And blogs get linked to a degree that almost nothing else gets linked.

Blogs exist in a digital ecosystem where links are our currency. We link as a way of saying 'I'm interested in this' or 'I think this is really stupid'. We link all the time. And so on my little blog there are thousands of people who are linking to me, and Google sees this and says, 'Wow, there's a thousand of people pointed at him, he must be important, he must be knowledgeable'.

This is the reason to blog. And this is the reason organisations should be blogging. Whether you are blogging formally or informally, take the ecosystem approach. If you want to be recognised by search engines like Google, you have to look at who is searching for you. And the best way to get linked to is to link to other people too. You have to figure out how to participate. And participating so that people link to you and you link to them is one of most effective things you can do.

Linking to Wikipedia

However, the single biggest thing you can probably do as a non-governmental organisation is to use and understand Wikipedia.[18] If you search Google for 'food security', the number one match is going to be Wikipedia. Wikipedia is now the ninth most popular website in the world. It is an enormous project with hundreds of thousands of people working on it, but you can be one of them at a very, very low cost of entry. People worry, 'Can I edit Wikipedia?' or 'Can I participate in it?' The answer is yes. Wikipedia is a culture of

[17] In computing, a hyperlink is a reference, link, or navigation element in a document or websites to another place or other websites. To insert a hyperlink to another place is often simply called to 'link'. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperlink
[18] Wikipedia is a free online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit. It is a multilingual, web-based, free-content encyclopaedia project. The name 'Wikipedia' is a combination of the words *wiki* (a type of collaborative website) and encyclopaedia. See: en.wikipedia.org

The single biggest thing you can probably do as a non-governmental organisation is to use and understand Wikipedia. If you search Google for 'food security', the number one match is going to be Wikipedia.

sharing information. But you have to be believable and share information respectfully and respect the culture. Learn how that culture works. Linking to Wikipedia is literally the most effective thing you can do.

Filtering: accessing relevant information online

The last thing I want to talk about is filtering. I was introduced to filtering in the context of Global Voices.[19] Filtering is something important that we forget about. There are close to 100 million people creating content online. When 100 million people talk, it is really hard to listen. So how do you filter those voices to a meaningful size? One way is by getting together in groups and saying: 'This is what is important to me'. One example is Muti, a South African project that just looks at African voices.[20] It votes and ranks what is the most interesting and important content online. For your work, this may turn out to be very helpful. A World Bank project called buzz monitoring looks at over a thousand development blogs and websites and then lets you put your own filter on top of it.[21] For example, you can use 'malaria' as a filter. Buzz Monitor then retrieves links to the most relevant content.

Filtering and translation

The most important thing about filtering is that it is not about the tools, it is about the people. To really filter information meaningfully, people have to do it. If you hand 100 blog posts to a person and say 'Which ones are about malaria?' you will get far better information than by relying on a search engine. For example, Global Voices is a project which takes citizen media – e.g. blogs, videos, or Podcasts – from all over the developing world and presents it to people in a way that is useful for them.[22] It is not high-tech – we use free tools, such as the free Google email service and other mailing lists. But it works because about 120 people work on it. They select the most interesting content and translate it – an enormous task. Speaking English on the Internet is no longer

[19] Global Voices Online is an international network of bloggers and citizen journalists that follow, report, and summarise what is going on in the blogosphere in every corner of the world. See: http://globalvoicesonline.org
[20] See www.muti.co.za
[21] See: http://buzzm.worldbank.org
[22] For a definition of 'Podcast' see glossary, p.122 (this issue).

enough. There are more non-English than English speakers online. There are more people blogging in Japanese and Chinese. You have to translate.

Filtering for meaningful content

Most importantly, you have to add context. And this is where we do the most work. For example, if you are interested in agriculture in the developing world, you have to think about the issues and select stories that will make sense to a wider audience, and translate so people can understand them. Then you have to contextualise the content. For us it takes hundreds of people to do this, and really thousands because we also rely on the bloggers who create that original content. If anything is important about Web 2.0, it is finding ways to line up dozens, hundreds, or thousands of people to solve these tasks that are otherwise almost impossible for us to solve alone.

Using Web 2.0 tools for development does present risks and challenges. Letting people speak freely is threatening. And letting everybody speak to a potentially global online audience is extremely threatening. What is so interesting about these tools is that anybody who can get online can use them. It has always been possible for ill-informed, bigoted people to stand up and speak to a large group of people. All Web 2.0 really does is amplify people's voices. You will often find that they are the harshest or most outrageous voices. So you need filtering. Look for the most interesting, pertinent voices, the voices speaking to a particular topic or set of issues.

"It's not about the tools – it's about the people the tools bring together."

Conclusion

This new Web 2.0 movement means that eventually, everyone who is connected on the web is going to be producing something. This is just the start. Out of the hundred million people creating content online, there are probably only a tiny fraction who would ever want to be speaking to you. The vast majority of people use these tools to speak to their family and friends, within private communities. But the question about information niches and wider niches is really important. Many of us get very deep in one particular corner of the blogosphere. I know a lot about development and African blogs, but occasionally I read other types. And I have to figure out who I want to listen to and who I want to believe. Who are the experts in those spaces? What I think we will have to get very good at, is not so much listening to individual voices, but to the editors and aggregators.

It is about simple tools for smart people. I have a lot of faith in human beings. It is people who are emerging as online subject experts – and those of us who are going to be really well informed are simply going to have the best collection of subject experts.

It's not about the tools – it's about the people the tools bring together.

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NOTES
This article is an edited transcription of Ethan Zuckerman's keynote speech made at the Web2forDev conference, 27th September 2007.

13

The Web2forDev story: towards a community of practice

by ANJA BARTH and GIACOMO RAMBALDI

Introduction

Coined in 2004, the term Web 2.0 is often used to describe the emergence of free or low cost web tools and applications that enhance the way we create and publish information or collaborate and share resources online.[1] However, the Web2forDev 2007 conference was the first international event focusing specifically on how Web 2.0 could be used to the advantage of Southern development actors, operating in the sectors of agriculture, rural development and natural resource management.[2]

This article recounts the development of the Web2forDev community, which led to the successful conference in 2007 **Web2forDev: Participatory Web for Development**. The community coalesced from likeminded development organisations keen to harness the increased collaborative power promised by the new low cost technologies and applications.

Web2forDev 2007 went far beyond solely organising a conference. Many online collaborative spaces were created and activated beforehand. Therefore the Web2forDev story is more than just one event. It is the story of a steep learning curve faced by collaborating organisations in dealing with innovative technologies within diverse institutions.

[1] For a definition of Web 2.0, see glossary, p.123 (this issue).
[2] The acronym Web2forDev was only publicly introduced in March 2007.

Box 1: What is a community of practice?

A Community of Practice (CoP) is made out of people who
- Bond on a voluntary basis by exposure to common problems
- Share a common sense of purpose
- Use common practices and language
- Embody themselves a store of knowledge
- Hold similar beliefs and value systems
- Collaborate directly, share knowledge and learn from each other

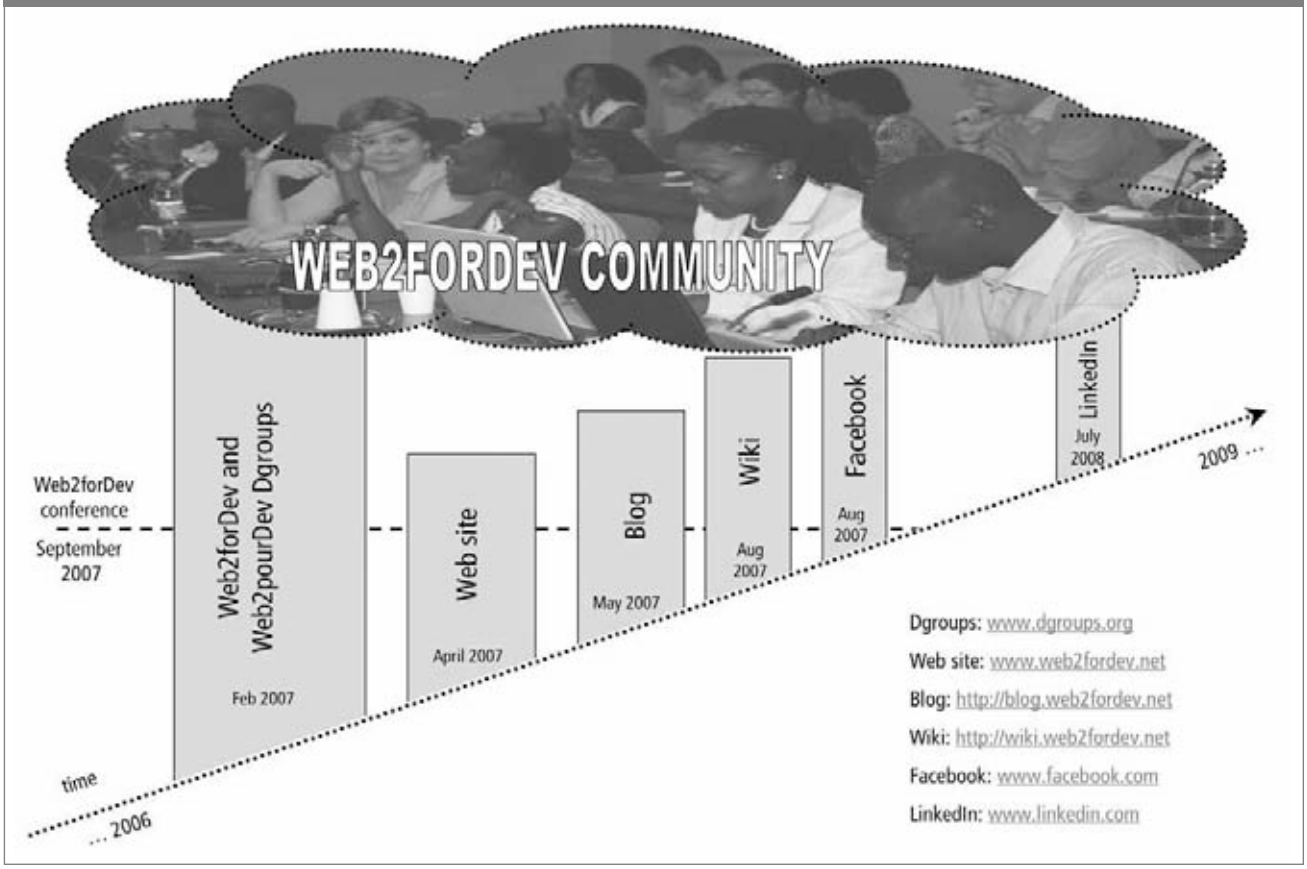
Source: Wenger (2002)

Here, we explore some of the Web 2.0 tools we used to organise the conference, the challenges the organisers faced in supporting such a process – and ways forward towards forming a more committed, interlinked and dedicated community of practice (see Box 1).

In April 2006 the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) invited participants to join forces in organising one of its yearly Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Observatory meetings. CTA proposed to organise a conference to focus on the use of Web 2.0 applications in the context of development. The proposal was well received, so in order to better define the topics to be covered by the event which would later become the 2007 Web2forDev conference, CTA designed and administered a bilingual (English and French) online survey among people working across the globe on ICT for development (ICT4D).

The 450 respondents prioritised which Web 2.0 tools they

Figure 1: Timeline of tools used to organise the Web2forDev conference



considered relevant for their work and wanted to learn more about. The three main topics of interest were later added to the conference programme:

- shared virtual spaces, remote collaboration and knowledge-sharing;
- appropriate technologies for online publishing; and
- online information retrieval and access.

In October 2006 the initial group of organisers expanded to include the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).[3] A steering committee (SC) was formed including representatives from the 12 participating organisations (for location see Figure 2).[4]

[3] FAO later hosted the Web2forDev conference in Rome.

[4] The organisations involved were: CTA, International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), FAO, German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP Secretariat), Association for Progressive Communications (APC), University of British Columbia Okanagan, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Euforic and Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR).

The 'participatory web' at work

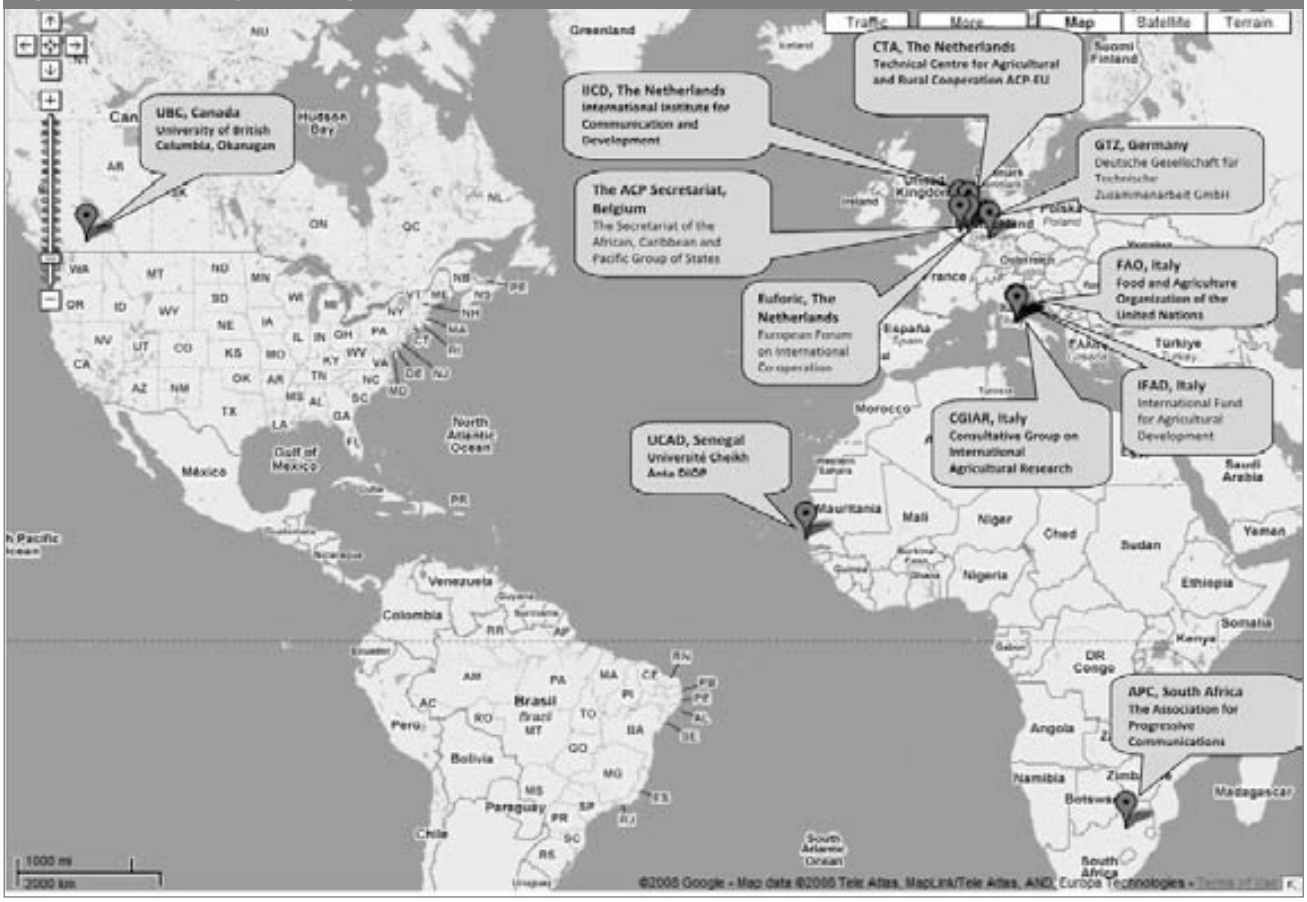
The organisers used several information channels and exchange platforms to establish and involve a new Web2forDev community ahead of the conference. The initial online community consisted of interested respondents to the first survey using dedicated electronic discussion lists. These lists were open and other interested individuals were free to join.

Involvement of the Web2forDev community

A number of Web 2.0 applications (see Figure 1) were put in place to develop and nurture the growing Web2forDev community. These supported and enabled effective remote collaboration and communication among the organisers and among the network members and the organisers. All online spaces were created to:

- disseminate conference information in an efficient and timely way;
- enable the audience to share opinions and experiences;

Figure 2: Location of partner organisations



- provide newcomers with examples of how Web 2.0 tools can be used for development; and
- facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges and networking among Web2forDev community members.

To brand the Web2forDev 'concept', the organisers agreed to earmark online resources relevant to the topic with the tag 'Web2forDev'.[5] At the time of writing, Delicious accounts for close to 1000 items tagged as Web2forDev.[6]

Two electronic discussion groups (DGoups) in English and French began in February 2007.[7] Members have increased steadily since then. DGroups email lists were initially used to disseminate news about the conference. Afterwards, they became a platform for members to discuss and exchange Web2forDev-related information.

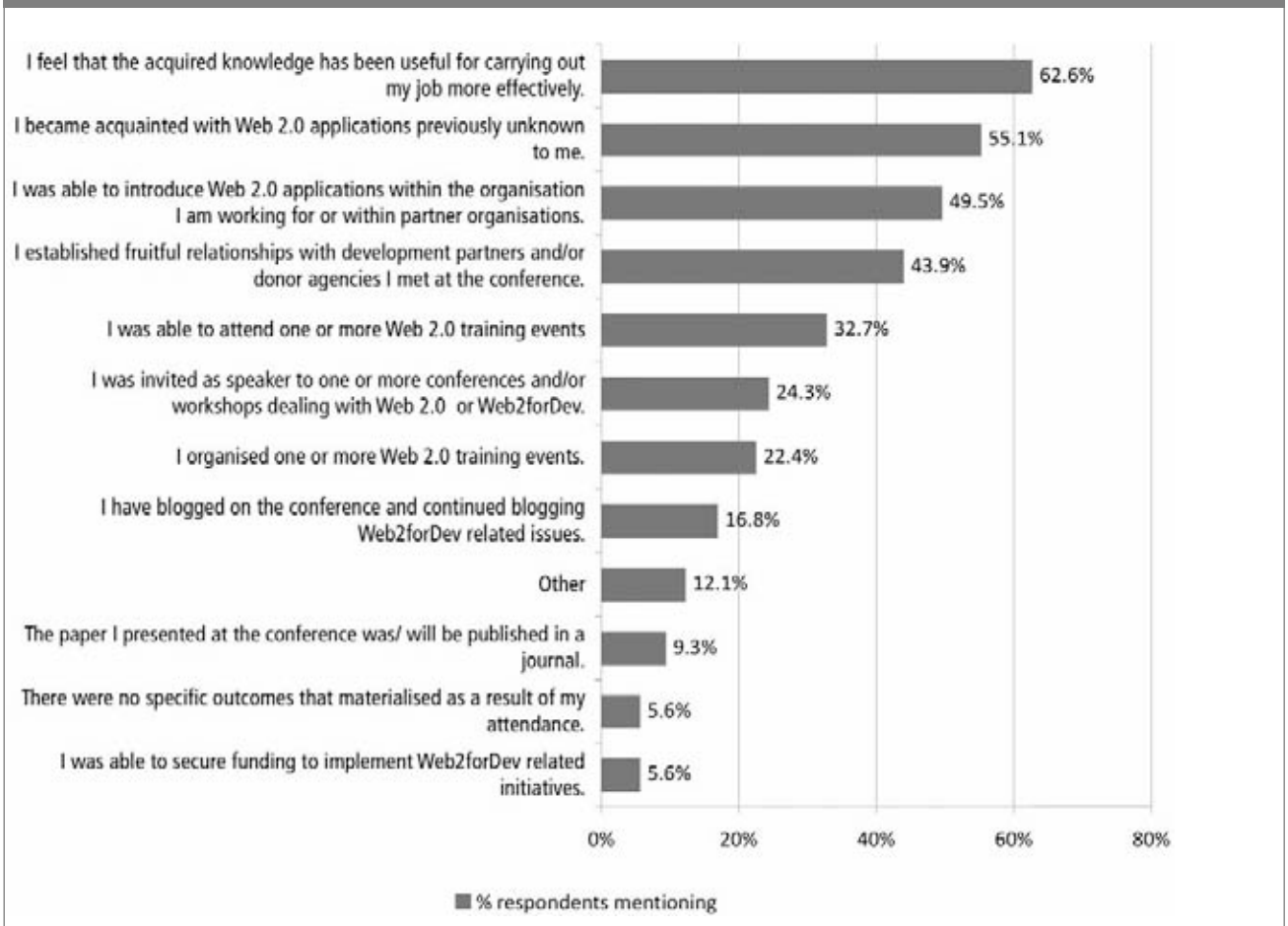
Other exchange platforms included the Web2forDev blog and the Web2forDev wiki. The conference blog was established to share Web2forDev stories prior to and during the conference.[8] It provided a broad audience with current information and offered the opportunity for direct feedback. The wiki was primarily used with participants to elaborate jointly themes for the conference's open space sessions.[9] Throughout the conference the participants could also use the wiki to experiment and get support if needed.

All these Web2forDev spaces featured on the conference

[5] For a definition of 'tag' see glossary, p.123. See also Tagging p.117 (this issue).
[6] Delicious is a social bookmarking web service for storing, sharing, and discovering web bookmarks. See: www.delicious.com. See also www.delicious.com/tag/web2fordev and p.119 (this issue) for a short guide to social bookmarking.
[7] DGroups is an online platform offering tools and services for groups and communities interested in international development. See: www.dgroups.org. English [web2fordev] www.dgroups.org/groups/web2fordev and French [web2pourdev] www.dgroups.org/groups/web2pourdev

[8] See http://blog.web2fordev.net. For a definition of 'blog', see glossary, p.121. See also Blogging p.106 (this issue).
[9] See http://wiki.web2fordev.net. For a definition of 'wiki', see glossary, p.124. See also Wikis p.110 (this issue).

Figure 3: Outcome of the conference



website.[10] This was the main gateway to access collaborative spaces and to apply for registration. The website included other Web 2.0 tools (e.g. RSS feeds from the blog and Delicious).[11] There were also featured videos from YouTube, images from Flickr and links to discussion groups.[12] [13]

Remote collaboration among organisers

Collaborative technologies enable people to interact with other people located at different geographical locations and within a group more efficiently and, in many cases, more effectively. (Source: Wikipedia).

The organising partners were located across three continents. So the steering committee (SC) relied heavily on Web 2.0 tools to overcome this constraint.

The steering committee regularly exchanged messages via dedicated electronic discussion groups. DGroups were set up for the committee and its subcommittees. A collaborative private work space was established using Microsoft SharePoint, an online file-sharing service. Conference-related documents were made accessible to all SC members, who could then access, modify and re-upload these remotely.

For remote discussions most SC members used free voice communications over the Internet (Voice over Inter-

[10] See: http://2007.web2fordev.net
[11] For definitions of RSS and social bookmarking see glossary, p.121, and also RSS feeds p.115 and Social bookmarking, p.119 (this issue).
[12] See www.youtube.com.
[13] See www.flickr.com.

"The Web2forDev story is more than just one event. It is the story of a steep learning curve faced by collaborating organisations in dealing with innovative technologies within diverse institutions."

net Protocol or VoIP) like Skype.[14] Remote conferencing was supported by desktop-sharing software, which simultaneously displays the desktop of the meeting convener on computer screens and/or projectors at the partner organisations.[15]

Challenges in the process

The process of organising the conference and animating the Web2forDev community was challenging. Those involved had to learn and adapt to fast-changing environments and become themselves adopters of innovation.

Different working styles and attitudes

In 2006 when the organisers initiated the various activities, the concept of Web 2.0 was only two years old and therefore relatively new – in its complex facets – to some of the participating organisations. We

- made use of remote workspaces;
- did PC2PC conferencing;
- viewed, discussed and modified documents displayed simultaneously on monitors in different countries; and
- invited people to collaborate on developing sections of the conference programme via an open wiki.

Everyone involved had to be open to innovation, to change their working habits – and have an eagerness to explore and learn. However, several Web 2.0 applications posed a real challenge for the responsible Information Technology (IT) departments, especially in larger organisations, who were sceptical and concerned about IT security in general. So partners needed to be ready to negotiate permissions with their IT colleagues. For example, some steering committee members' organisations did not allow the use of Skype.

As a result, adopting the tools was uneven and occurred at different times. Some SC members used only a selection of the tools available while smaller groups coordinated the use of specific applications (e.g. wiki, blog, desktop sharing, etc). The most commonly-used tools were DGroups, SharePoint and VoIP. Most people were familiar with DGroups. SharePoint was the main application used by (almost) all SC members to work on documents remotely. Skype was pivotal to participating in remote conferencing. Other applications like blogs and the wiki were considered as 'optional'. These were used by the few SC members who were more personally engaged in sharing information and opinions about Web 2.0 for development.

Media team members at the conference writing for the Web2forDev/ Web2pourDev conference blog.

Photo: Anja Barth

Keeping up-to-date with the rapidly evolving Web 2.0 landscape

Prior to the conference, Web 2.0 tools were frequently upgraded and new ones proposed for use. The challenge was to keep track of such a fast-changing environment. So we needed to understand which tools could be useful before we proposed adopting them. Here, we were constrained by a lack of time and some hesitancy to explore. All SC members had to deal with an overload of ideas and proposals for innovative adoptions. People were apprehensive about adopting unknown and (at that time) untested tools. This was felt in the 'body and spirit' of email exchanges.

Additionally, some proprietary file formats could not run on open source applications and this caused concern and additional work. One example was an innovative technology used to show both a live video of a presenter and their presentation concurrently and render these as a streaming presentation online.[16] At that time, the limitation encountered consisted in the fact that the technology required at least Internet Explorer 5.5 and a Windows Media Player 9.0 to play the full features.

[14] For a definition of 'VoIP', see glossary, p.123 (this issue). For more information on Skype visit: www.skype.com
[15] For more information visit the Lotus Sametime Unyte website: www.unyte.net
[16] See: www.presentations2go.eu

"The process of organising the conference and animating the Web2forDev community was challenging. Those involved had to learn and adapt to fast-changing environments and become themselves adopters of innovation."

The Web2forDev conference

The Web2forDev story reached a climax with the Web2forDev conference on 25th–27th September 2007 at the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy. The conference itself was preceded by a one-day 'Web 2.0 taster day' where participants less familiar Web 2.0 tools were given hands-on demonstrations.

The participants

The conference brought together a broad community interested in Web 2.0 for development. Around 300 people from over 40 countries from mainly Africa, Europe and Latin America attended. Participants included ICT specialists, information and communication experts, researchers, trainers, application and system providers, software developers, policy makers and enablers.

The conference dynamics

The conference aimed to create innovation, new partnerships and collaborations. The programme combined presentations, plenary discussions, open spaces, incubator sessions and a market place. We allocated plenty of time for the participants to actively work and share ideas on how to apply Web 2.0 to the advantage of Southern development actors.

Plenary sessions included several keynote speakers, such as Anriette Esterhuysen of APC and Ethan Zuckermann of Global Voices (see Esterhuysen and also Zuckerman, this issue). These presentations reflected the varied understanding of the meaning of 'participatory web for development'. They ranged from classic information communication technologies (ICTs) such as radio, television, landline telephones, emails and mobile phones to highly interactive, innovative and empowering online applications.

Interesting case studies included:

- the BROSDI project in Uganda where farmers started experimenting with web-based tools and mobile telephony to improve knowledge sharing and planning (see also Karamagi and Nakirya, this issue);[17]
- the GINKS experience in Ghana where video blogging is used to exchange information (see also Deh, this issue);[18]
- an overview on copyright issues when publishing online together with the presentation of the Creative Commons project;[19] and
- how Google mash-ups were used to combine diverse information, e.g. how Google maps could be combined with datasets available for climate modelling experiments and seasonal weather forecasts.[20]

During panel discussions experts examined issues such as opportunities and challenges for Web 2.0 in rural development and community empowerment. The two key challenges were connectivity and bandwidth. But there were also discussions about how we develop human relationships to build trust and confidence when working in cyberspace without face-to-face interactions.

All plenary and several parallel sessions were webcasted – videoed and uploaded onto the Internet for others to watch online.[21] Participants wrote and recorded their feedback on large boards called Democracy Walls which were then analysed during plenary sessions.[22] Journalists and participants conducted interviews and wrote reports on the event using different media, including the Web2forDev blog.[23] Interviews were posted on YouTube, BlipTV and Google Video. Blogging peaked during the event. Just ahead of the conference, running an Internet search using the Google search engine for 'Web2forDev' would return close to 102,000 hits.

Outcome and follow up activities

The conference created a lot of interest in promoting and adopting Web 2.0 tools across institutions and particularly in developing countries. Nevertheless, participants generally agreed that Web2forDev **is not about the tools but about the people**. Both participants and presenters emphasised that it is most important to listen to the needs of those whom the tools should serve and to discover how people can make best use of them.

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[17] Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI): www.brosdi.or.ug
[18] Ghana Information and Knowledge Sharing Network (GINKS): www.ginks.org
[19] See: http://creativecommons.org
[20] 'Climate Change Mashups,' presented by Michael Saunby at the Web2forDev conference See: http://saunby.blogspot.com/2007_09_01_archive.html Short URL: http://tinyurl.com/saunby
[21] By RAI TV and via the conference website using Presentations2Go technology. See: www.presentations2go.eu
[22] See: *PLA* 58 Tips for Trainers article about Democracy Walls.
[23] See: http://blog.web2fordev.net

Participants gather during a plenary question and answer session. The session is being webcasted – videoed and uploaded onto the Internet for others to watch online.

"Both participants and presenters emphasised that it is most important to listen to the needs of those whom the tools should serve and to discover how people can make best use of them."

The organisers administered an online end-of-conference survey to get feedback on the event and related activities as well as guidance on future directions. One year later (September 2008) another survey was done to assess the impact of the event and to seek guidance on what future Web2forDev related initiatives we could invest in, promote and support.

A number of initiatives have followed the event. Among others, CTA has produced a special issue of *ICT update* dealing with Web 2.0.[24] CTA and GTZ both organised awareness-raising workshops within their organisations. Web2forDev-related trainings have addressed diverse audiences, including:

- policy makers (ACP embassies in Brussels in partnership with CTA, Euforic and ACP Secretariat);
- Indigenous Peoples (in partnership with CTA and Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC); and
- researchers and educators (in partnership with CTA, Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM).

APC and FAO are working together to develop an IMARK self-instructional training materials package on Web 2.0 to be released in 2009.[25] FAO continues to facilitate discussions around e-agriculture as a follow-up action to the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).[26]

In addition, CTA has launched newsfordev.[27] This is a customisable news aggregator covering development issues. CTA also produced jointly with People TV an eight-minute documentary (English and French) on Web 2.0 applications used in the African context, called 'Agriculture and New Technologies – Web 2.0 in Africa'.[28] The documentary was aired on 38 TV stations in Africa in June 2008 and is currently available online on Google Video and on Dotsub.com (with multilingual subtitles) and syndicated on a number of websites.[29] Members of the Web2forDev community have volunteered their time and skills to translate the subtitles of the documentary in many languages, increasing the potential outreach of the message.

For APC, Web 2.0 technology is the focus of many projects in policy advocacy, research, capacity building and content development. APC also uses some Web 2.0 applications for internal communication and management.

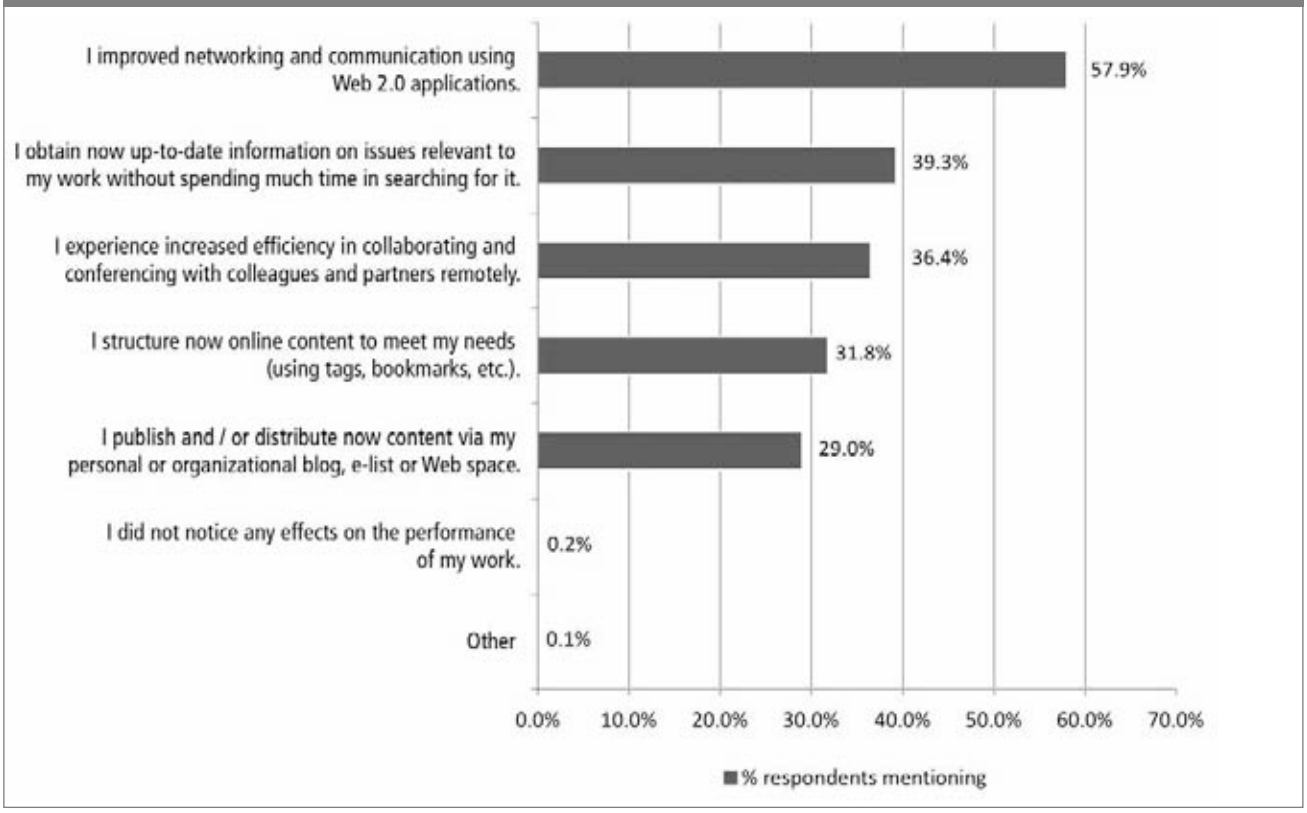
The Information Communication Technologies Knowledge Management (ICT-KM) Programme of the CGIAR released a Web2forDev brief (an article and a presentation) to encourage the staff who had attended the conference to give seminars in their centres.[30] Web 2.0 tools are a consolidated topic of the Knowledge Sharing Workshops co-organised by the programme.[31] They are also covered in the Knowledge Sharing Toolkit.[32]

IICD has been supporting a series of seminars with practical hands-on training for partner organisations in Zambia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, Ecuador, Bolivia (e.g. Radio La Luna, Ecuador, CIDOB, Zambia Association for Research and Development, and Bolivia).[33] A recent workshop in Uganda focused on how to integrate Web 2.0 applications and services in the work of ICT4D trainers.

The concept Web2forDev is under consolidation. The University of Colorado for instance is offering courses on Web 2.0 for development.[34] A definition of Web2forDev has been jointly elaborated and has been entered on Wikipedia.[35] There is also the new Web2forDev Development Gateway. This is a new initiative which aims to act as a start-

[24] See: http://ictupdate.cta.int/en/(issue)/39
[25] The Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) is a partnership-based e-learning initiative to train individuals and support institutions and networks in the effective management of agricultural information. See: www.imarkgroup.org
[26] See: www.e-agriculture.org/
[27] See: www.newsfordev.org/
[28] See: http://tinyurl.com/56gumk and http://tinyurl.com/5nm9el
[29] Web syndication is where material on one website is made available to multiple other websites via RSS feeds. See glossary, p.124 and also RSS feeds, p.115 (this issue)
[30] See: http://ictkm.cgiar.org/Web2forDev_Participatory.pdf
[31] See: www.kstoolkit.org/KS+Workshops
[32] See: www.kstoolkit.org
[33] See: http://ticbolivia.net
[34] See: www.colostate.edu/Orgs/IISD
[35] See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web2fordev

Figure 4: Improvement in the performance of work



ing point for Web 2.0 learning and sharing experience in the context of development work.[36]

Impact of the conference

One year later, participants reported that the conference has had a positive impact on their professional lives.[37] Respondents underlined their interest for further discussion and follow-up activities. They have been able to make successful use of knowledge and contacts gained in their daily work (see Figures 4, 5 and 6). Their comments include:

We are now able to reduce the cost of ICT with the introduction of Web 2.0 applications without compromising productivity and efficiency.

Attending the conference gave me the confidence and evidence to back up the recommendations I put forward [to my organisation] in investigating these new tools.

Respondents also provided concrete examples on how they used Web 2.0 applications in the context of development. Examples include:

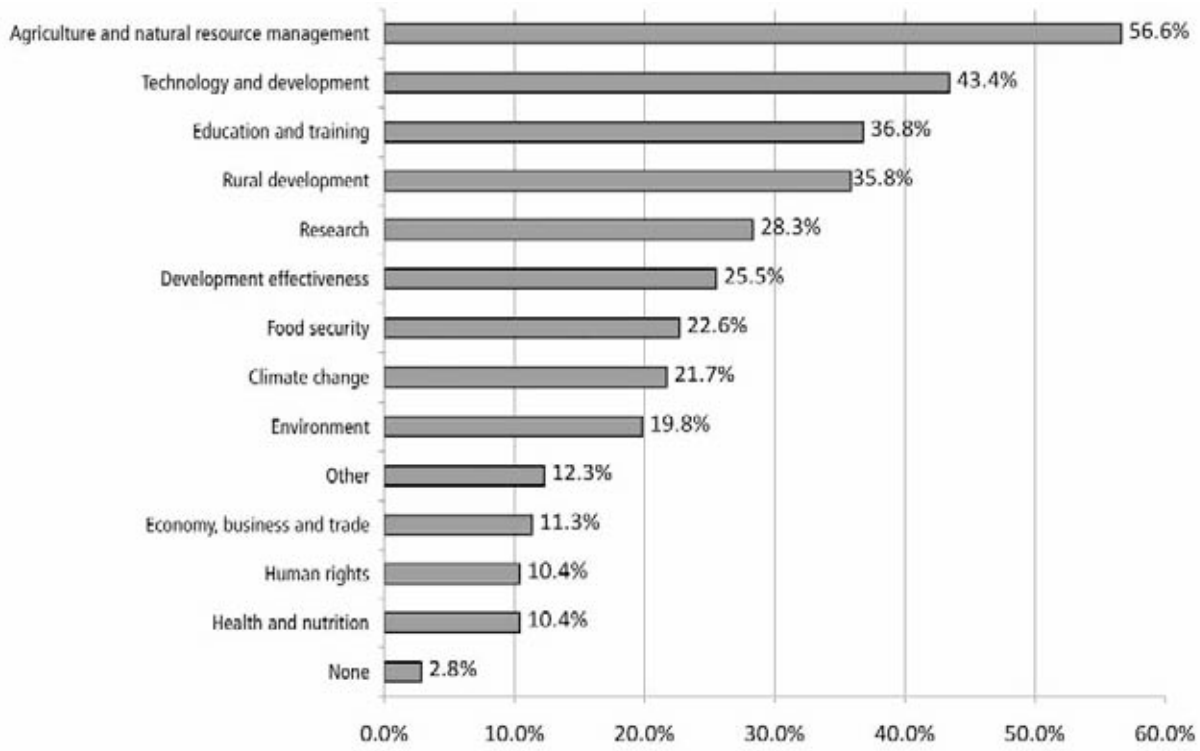
- using wikis and blogs in distance training on information management;
- using e-learning platforms to allow colleagues to access online educational materials;
- creating a wiki to share ideas, minutes, documents within teams;
- conducting a joint evaluation exercise involving about 40 participants;
- using tagging to help structure and share interesting information; and
- increased youth participation within adult-centred development initiatives.

However, respondents also identified several main challenges which remain:

At the moment we have a problem with bandwidth so using Web 2.0 tools in our organisation may be difficult.

[36] See: www.web2fordev.net
[37] The results of the survey (119 respondents) are available here: http://tinyurl.com/656qyn

Figure 5: Fields to put acquired knowledge into practice



The challenge was to find our way through the plethora of available systems.
The lack of applications in native languages is a big limitation, because not everybody speaks English.

We have too little time for the creation of useful and valuable content and uptake has been low. These tools are generally seen as 'add-on' activities, not core activities that contribute to the main mission of the organisation.

There have been several intellectual property right issues and a real need for evaluation of what materials could be accessed openly and which were not appropriate for cultural and intellectual property right issues.

The principle challenge for Web2forDev identified at the conference remains to be the issue of sufficient bandwidth – especially in the developing world. For organisations working in both the North and the South it is difficult to choose from the enormous number of applications and to integrate the idea of Web2forDev into their daily work.

The way forward

At present the Web2forDev community gathers mainly around the two electronic discussion DGroups and shared spaces on LinkedIn and Facebook.[38] [39] Although there have been a variety of Web2forDev activities before, during and after the event, among the respondents there was a general feeling that performance, outreach and impact of Web2forDev-related activities could benefit from increased sharing and added coordination. Issues remain around language, limited bandwidth and receiving guidance on choosing appropriate tools for the South. Institutions remain hesitant about investing staff time to explore and invest in Web 2.0 innovation. The September 2008 survey respondents identified several key issues to be addressed in the future. People involved in practicing and/or promoting Web2forDev need to:

[38] LinkedIn is a social networking site for professionals: www.linkedin.com
[39] See: Web2forDev pages: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=4492058025

"Those of us involved in practicing and/or promoting Web2forDev need to develop and promote Web 2.0 tools that are appropriate for low bandwidths and mobile telephony."

- Substantially improve information- and experience-sharing.
- Further raise awareness and increase capacity to integrate Web 2.0 applications into existing information portals.
- Carefully monitor Web2forDev initiatives, which should also be followed by impact assessments. Resulting outcomes should feed into the online debate and serve as guidance for future initiatives.

However, the greatest challenge that most practitioners identified was encouraging organisations to adopt Web 2.0 applications and implement a 'Web2forDev' culture across the development arena – and more importantly, in the South. Those of us involved in practicing and/or promoting Web2forDev need to develop and promote Web 2.0 tools that are appropriate for low bandwidths and mobile telephony.[40]

Nonetheless, the building blocks for developing a stronger and more cohesive Web2forDev community of practice are in place. They are within reach of those who are interested in adopting and promoting the innovative use of appropriate Web 2.0 tools and practices in support of international development.

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[40] See also Samii, p.44, Karamagi and Nakirya, p.59, Okolloh, p.65 and Tips for trainers, p.105 (this issue).

Tips for trainers

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Web 2.0 tools: a series of short introductions

There are vast numbers of Web 2.0 tools, applications, platforms, and services available. Many of them are free or low-cost and easy-to-use. In this issue, we present a series of short introductory guides to a selection of commonly-used Web 2.0 tools:

- Blogging
- Micro-blogging and Twitter
- Wikis
- Online social networking
- RSS feeds
- Tagging
- Social bookmarking
- Glossary of Web 2.0 terms

Each introductory guide provides a brief description of the tool and how it can be used for development purposes, along with links to further information and where applications can be downloaded online.[1] We hope that you find these short introductions useful and welcome feedback from our readers.

[1] For more information about the examples of development websites listed in the guides, see e-participation, p.130 (this issue).

Blogging

Tips on how to create and maintain a dynamic and popular development blog

What are blogs?

• A blog (short for 'web' and 'log') is a website like an online journal. It is an easy way to publish content, administered via a simple web-based interface.
• Blogging means to maintain or add content to a blog.
• Providing you have Internet access, you can easily and freely create a blog on any topic.
• Blogs radically changed the way in which the Internet was used, by allowing people to publish their own content on a webpage, without the technical expertise needed to set up a website – or the funds to rent web space.
• A blog is usually maintained by an individual, but can also be done by groups or organisations.
• Blogs contain entries called 'posts' of written commentary, news, events, and other resources. Blogs can include multiple media such as text, photos, video clips and audio files.
• Blogs start with the newest not oldest posts – this gives them a sense current relevance.
• Users can set up a blog on an existing blog platform, or download blog software to run on their own web space. Most blogging platforms are free-to-use.
• Blog authors can allow others to comment on their posts and engage in discussion.
• Many blogs platforms allow authors to tag posts with multiple keywords.[1]
• If a blog is popular, it will be linked to by a lot of other blogs. Search engines like Google prioritise websites with more links.
• The blogosphere is a collective term encompassing all blogs and their interconnections. It is the perception that blogs exist together as a connected community (or as a collection of connected communities).
• Using blog search engines, you can track the interconnections between bloggers and topical trends and find other blogs by topic.
• Micro-blogging tools allow you to send and receive short posts via the Internet or a mobile phone. They may be more appropriate for low bandwidth bloggers.[2]

Why blog for development?

Blogs…
• can regularly disseminate information
• encourage others to participate
• can be used for raising awareness
• help to inform, trigger and foster debate and/or mobilise action
• allow us to participate in ongoing conversations online
• link to other related blogs to form new online networks and information pathways
• can be an expression of personal opinion, a good process of self reflection and can help to digest learning
• are an easy and cheap way to get your voice heard or publicise an issue

Some tips on how to start a blog

• Choose a topic and have an audience in mind.
• Check similar blogs. Start by commenting on them if you do not want to start your own blog right away.
• Develop your own style of blogging (writing), which suits you.
• Stay focused. Write consistent, interesting and useful content. Try not to over-generalise.
• Stay well informed and up-to-date. You will need to lead discussions (and eventually moderate comments).
• Add content regularly and answer any comments and feedback.
• Become part of a network by linking to your favourite blogs.
• Use your blog to highlight and add to existing discussions.
• Provide links in your blogs posts to where readers can find more information. If you refer to other blogs, make sure you link to them.
• When you reference or link to another blog, use the 'linkback', 'trackback' or 'ping' function to automatically notify them that you have referred to them on your blog. It helps build community and often other blogs will list all the trackbacks a particular post has had underneath the original post.
• There are specialised search engines for blogs. Just as with normal search engines and websites, you should register your blog with engines like Technorati. Also use their 'ping' features to notify them when you have updated your blog so that the

[1] See also Tagging, p.117 (this issue).
[2] See also Micro-blogging, p.108 (this issue).

Global Voices is a community of more than 200 bloggers who work together to bring you translations and reports from blogs and citizen media everywhere, with emphasis on voices that are not ordinarily heard in international mainstream media.

blog search engine will index the content of your new post.
• Allow your blog to be syndicated via RSS feeds.[3] [4] This means that others can easily feature headlines from your blog on their own websites and your readers can automatically receive updates when new material is published on your blog.
• You may also wish to automatically feature content from other blogs and websites (e.g. headlines) on your own blog by importing relevant RSS feeds.

Keep in mind…

• Writing takes time and patience. Do not underestimate the effort of blogging.
• Writing regular posts keeps your blog dynamic and interesting.
• Always quote your information sources.
• Clearly distinguish between opinions and facts.
• Low bandwidth limits access to blogs with photos, audio and video.
• Blogs can be used as references providing they are properly cited – always remember to check first.
• Explore which blogs are popular or trusted by others. Get to know who is using them.
• Always tag your posts. Use popular and relevant keywords so that others can search for them and find your content more easily.

Where to get started

There are several free or low-cost, easy-to-use blogging websites. Here are some examples.

Blogging websites

• www.blogger.com
• www.livejournal.com
• www.typepad.com
• www.wordpress.com
• www.xanga.com

Blogging software

To download and host on your own web space:
• www.wordpress.org
• www.moveabletype.org

Blog search engines

Find other blogs by keyword, topic or trend and track the interconnections between bloggers:
• http://technorati.com
• http://blogs.google.com
• www.blogscope.net
• www.blogpulse.com
• www.icerocket.com

Tips on blogging

• http://blogsessive.com
• http://tinyurl.com/globalvoicesblog[5]

Video: Blogs in Plain English

Also in French, German, Portuguese and Spanish. Also with multiple language subtitles on Dotsub.com:
• www.commoncraft.com/blogs
• http://tinyurl.com/dotsubblogs[6]

Examples of development blogs

• Afrigator: http://afrigator.com
• Alive in Baghdad: http://aliveinbaghdad.org
• Crisscrossed: www.crisscrossed.net
• Ghana GINKS blogspotters: www.ginks.blogspot.com
• Global Voices: http://globalvoicesonline.org
• iCollaborate: www.icollaborate.blogspot.com
• Indian Kisan blog: http://kisan.wordpress.com
• Kabissa: www.kabissa.org/blog
• Roxanna Samii: www.rsamii.blogspot.com
• Reporters Without Borders: www.rsfblog.org
• Voices of Africa: http://voicesofafrica.africanews.com
• Web2forDev conference blog: http://blog.web2fordev.net

See e-participation for more information about the websites listed (p. x, this issue).

[3] See also RSS feeds, p.115 (this issue).
[4] Syndication is where material on one website is made available to multiple other websites. See also glossary, p.124 (this issue).
[5] Full URL: http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/projects/guide-blog-for-a-cause
[6] Full URL: http://dotsub.com/view/dc75c2e2-ef81-4851-8353-a877aac9fe3c

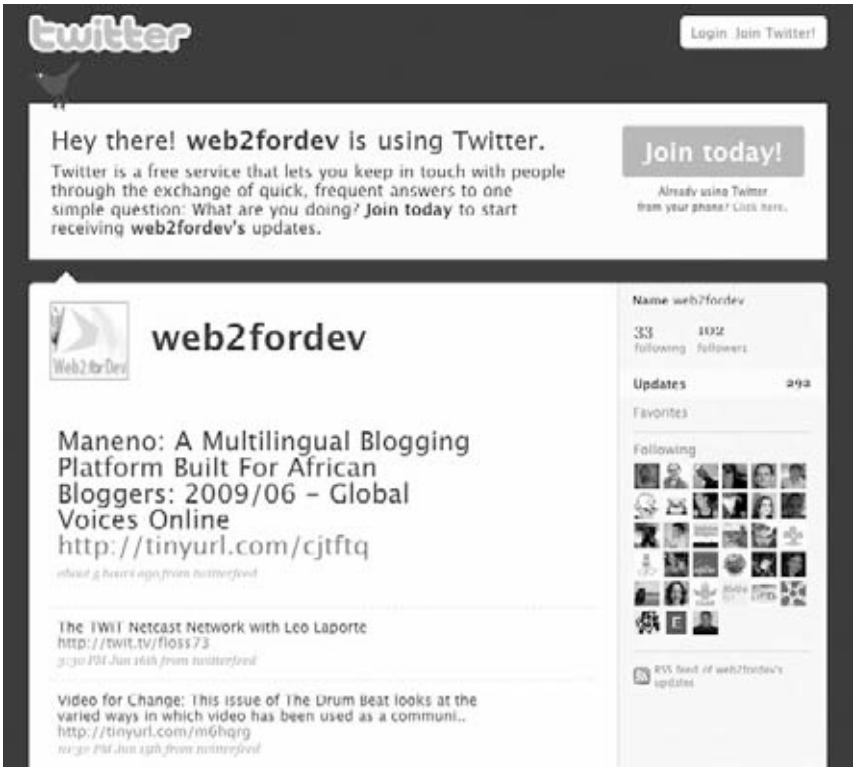
Micro-blogging and Twitter

Tips on using micro-blogging tool Twitter for development

What is micro-blogging?

- Micro-blogging is a form of blogging where users mostly publish very short text updates.
- Twitter.com is one of the best known services. Users can send short 140 character text updates (known as 'tweets') via SMS on their mobile phone or a computer connected to the Internet.
- Updates will appear on their Twitter page and be visible to any other Twitter member who is 'following' them (i.e. subscribed to them).
- Since Twitter allows people to submit updates via SMS it can also be a very powerful tool for on-the-ground citizen journalism, protest coordination and campaigning, situation monitoring and for keeping in touch over distances.
- Users can search everyone else's updates in real time for keywords, as well as subscribe to other user's updates, meaning that it can also be very useful for sharing and monitoring breaking news or particular topics of interest.
- Since updates can only be 140 characters long, people use URL-shortening services like Tinyurl.com to enable them to send webpage links in their updates.
- Putting a hash symbol # in front of a word is used to denote that it is a keyword tag, to make searching for relevant messages easier.
- Users can also maintain a conversation or direct their messages to a particular user by using '@username' within their messages.
- Using the letters 'RT' in a message encourages others to 're-tweet' or re-send the message so potentially reaching thousands of people in minutes.

The Web2forDev web portal now uses Twitter. Updates will appear on the Web2forDev Twitter page and are visible to any other Twitter member who is 'following' them.



- Twitter also provides RSS feeds of user's updates, or of the results of searches for keywords, enabling the stream of messages to be displayed on other websites.
- Users can also feed Twitter itself with an RSS feed by using services such as Twitterfeed.com or Rsstotwitter.com.
- Many other Web 2.0 websites and other services are integrating with Twitter. People can use services like Twitpic.com to send a photograph they have taken on their mobile phone which will appear on their Twitpic page. Twitpic will also automatically send an update to their Twitter account showing the URL of the photograph.
- There are a growing number of third party applications designed to make managing multiple Twitter accounts easier and enable users to manage multiple blogging, micro-

blogging and messaging platforms.
• Many of the ways in which Twitter can be used can be implemented through phone-based SMS and through bulk messaging software like FrontlineSMS.com and implementations like Ushahidi.com.[1]

Where to get started

Examples of development organisations using Twitter

• Web2forDev on Twitter: http://twitter.com/web2fordev
• Global Voices: http://twitter.com/globalvoices
• Kabissa: http://twitter.com/kabissa
• MobileActive: http://twitter.com/mobileactive

Video: Twitter in Plain English

Also in French, German, Portuguese and Spanish. Also with multiple language subtitles at Dotsub.com:
• www.commoncraft.com/twitter
• http://tinyurl.com/dotsubtwitter[2]

Other similar micro-blogging tools

• Identi.ca: http://identi.ca
• Yammer: www.yammer.com

Resources

Web2fordev.net article 'Micro-blogging: 140 characters of gossip or added value for development organisations?'
• http://tinyurl.com/twitterfordev[3]

DigiActive Guide to Twitter for Activism (PDF)
• http://tinyurl.com/digiactive-twitter[4]

[1] For more information about Ushahidi and FrontlineSMS see Okolloh, p.65 (this issue).

[2] Full URL: http://dotsub.com/view/665bd0d5-a9f4-4a07-9d9e-b31ba926ca78

[3] Full URL: www.web2fordev.net/component/content/article/1-latest-news/68-micro-blogging

[4] Full URL: www.digiactive.org/wp-content/uploads/digiactive_twitter_guide_v1-0.pdf

Wikis

Tips on online collaboration using wikis

What are wikis?

• Wikis are online collaborative workspaces.[1]
• A wiki is a simple, text-based web page or collection of web pages where teams of people can work together online from different physical locations.
• Wikis are like very basic websites in style and structure. They are designed to be read and edited using a web browser.
• Unlike conventional websites, wikis enable anyone who has access to write, edit, discuss and comment on the wiki content, including each other's contributions. Users can constantly modify and organise the content.
• Wikis can be made public or private. Administrators can choose who can access a wiki and specific sections within it and define users' rights.
• All wiki page versions are kept, from when a wiki page is first created. Collaborators can monitor and compare recent and past changes and revert to older versions if needed.
• Wikis will also show which user has edited the content.
• Wikis separate formatting from content, so people can work on improving content without concern for layout. Most wikis offer a WYSIWYG editor, which makes it easier to edit content online.[2]
• Most wikis also enable users to upload e.g. documents and photos.
• Wikis are also particularly good for developing complex documentation.
• Many individuals also use wikis much like an online personal notebook, to store and develop ideas.

[1] *Wiki* is Hawaiian for 'very quick'.

Why use a wiki for development?

Wikis can be used to…
• quickly and informally share, develop and organise ideas and information together online
• foster participatory and collaborative working online from individuals, project teams, community groups and organisations to international networks and the general public
• collate resources from project information and meeting minutes to trip reports and photos
• create and edit content from sharing ideas, developing projects, and writing documents to developing online training manuals
• enable project partners to contribute and provide a workspace for them to adapt content to local conditions
• find agreement and/or consensus among users
• easily create simple community or project websites and jointly develop content on them

[2] WYSIWYG or 'What You See is What You Get' is a computing term to describe a system in which content displayed during editing appears very similar to the final output.

Some tips on creating a wiki

• Visit other wikis to get a feel for how they work and what they do.
• You can either sign up to a free-to-use wiki platform via one of the many wiki providers – or download the software to run on your own web space.
• List your known requirements and preferences in detail before selecting a wiki platform. Can it expand to meet future needs? Can you migrate from one wiki platform to another later on?
• Try to choose an open source wiki platform so that if your partners wish to start their own wiki, it will be freely available for them to use.[3][4]
• Plan and organise how you want to structure your content. A well-devised structure will be important as your wiki grows. Remember you can also modify the structure as the project expands.
• Include a table of contents on each page for ease of navigation.
• Regularly check internal wiki links and external web links to ensure they are still active.
• One useful feature about working on a wiki is the ability to create pages that should exist, even if you do not have the content or the information to fill them yet. This encourages others to add the missing content and create relevant pages.
• When creating a new wiki page, think about where you want this page to be linked from. Then edit those pages to include a link to your new page.
• Give new pages sensible names. Do not use abbreviations but ensure the

[3] Open source software (OSS) is usually computer software where the source code and certain other rights are in the public domain. See glossary, p.122 (this issue).
[4] Choose one that is distributed e.g. under a GNU General Public or Creative Commons License (which enhances free use and development) and is supported by an active wiki community (who will be able to provide advice and support). See e.g. www.creativecommons.org

Wikipedia is a free online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit. Wikipedia is multilingual and is now the ninth most popular website in the world.

name is short and descriptive.
• For larger or more formal projects, wikis require constant maintenance. With multiple people contributing to a wiki there will be many works in progress. Budget for and appoint a coordinator to maintain the wiki, ensure consistency and keep things in good order (style and formatting, navigation etc.).
• Set aside time to agree on shared editorial guidelines on how to use the wiki – and then follow them consistently.
• Make sure the guidelines are easy-to-follow and provide training if necessary. Users need to know how your wiki works before editing and contributing to it.
• Include a practice page (known as a 'sandbox'), which allows people to experiment. It helps encourage people to familiarise themselves with how the wiki works.
• Before opening up your wiki to a larger group of participants ask a few people for comments and feedback. Making universal changes to an extensive, existing wiki is harder than doing so at the start.
• Decide who will have access and contribute to what (and when). You may want to open up access to others gradually as your wiki develops.
• Usually for best results, a disciplined workflow is needed with good communication among all collaborators.

Keep in mind…

• Choosing whether or not to create and use a wiki should be a collaborative process. Who is the intended community of users? Who can participate and who cannot? Is a wiki the most appropriate platform?
• While wikis can be very informal, you still need to write clearly. Avoid the use of slang terms which others may not be familiar with.
• As with all online publishing tools, always quote your information sources and provide links where available. Clearly distinguish between opinions and facts.
• If converting existing materials to a wiki format you may need to revise some materials to best suit the change in publishing medium e.g. a training manual.
• Wikis are based on collaboration and can be used to encourage debate. However, they are not necessarily the best place for finding consensus amongst dissenting voices. A mailing list or face-to-face meetings may be more appropriate for these types of discussions.

Where to get started

There are many free, easy-to-use wiki platforms. Here are some examples.

Free or very low-cost wiki platforms

• http://pbworks.com (formerly PBwiki)
• www.wikispaces.com
• www.wikidot.com

Downloadable wiki platforms

To run on your web space:
• www.dokuwiki.org
• www.mediawiki.org
• www.tikiwiki.org
• www.atlassian.com/software/confluence

For more tips on using wikis

• http://tinyurl.com/wiki-tips[5]

Compare available wiki platforms

• www.wikimatrix.org

Video: Wikis in Plain English

Also in French, German, Portuguese and Spanish. Also with multiple language subtitles at Dotsub.com:
• www.commoncraft.com/video-wikis-plain-english
• http://tinyurl.com/dotsub-wiki

Examples of wikis used in development

• Agropedia: http://agropedia.iitk.ac.in
• Appropedia: http://www.appropedia.org
• Kabissa Space for change in Africa wiki: http://wiki.kabissa.org
• Web2forDev wiki: http://wiki.web2fordev.net
• Wiki Advocacy: http://wikiadvocacy.org
• Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org

See e-participation for more information about the websites listed (p.130, this issue).

[5] Full URL: www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/network/2006/07/07/what-is-a-wiki.html

Online social networking

Tips on using online social networks for development

What are online social networks?

• Online social networks are a new generation of online community platforms which are similar to websites but offer specific interactive features and tools.
• An online social network brings people together and enables them to find others who share common interests or activities and who are interested in learning more about each other and what they do.
• They enable users to establish and make visible relationships, discuss topics of interest, access material, find contacts and encourage the growth of networks of people.
• Membership can be restricted or open.
• You can start a new 'group' of people with similar interests on an existing social networking website or create your own using free-to-use platforms.
• Social networks can range from friends and family, small dedicated communities of practice or interest, professional networks, to networks with global membership.
• Most online social network services provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as messaging and instant messaging, membership profiles (sometimes including curriculum vitae), online discussion forums, blogs, photo- and video-sharing, and other digital resources.
• These services are designed to be straightforward to use, from signing up and logging on, creating a profile and inviting people to access it, through to interacting with friends, colleagues, partners, and even people you have never met.

Why use online social networks for development?

Online social networks can be used to…
• target, create or enhance networks or communities of practice
• foster and enhance participation and collaboration and promote a sense of membership and solidarity within these networks
• interact with particular audiences e.g. civil society groups, policy makers, private sector
• facilitate better linkages between groups, for example partners, service providers and decision makers
• easily share and access information – from event announcements, work opportunities and reports to practical manuals, photos and videos
• enable greater information-sharing and support dialogue on key issues within the network
• build capacity by providing information and resources on particular topics
• learn about the professional background of people sharing your interests and establish professional relationships with them (e.g. via LinkedIn)
• keep up-to-date about work carried out by your peers

Comparing different types of social networking platforms and websites

• For most people who are interested in using online social networks, joining and contributing to an existing network is sufficient. However, if you are thinking of creating an online social network, you may want to start a new group on an existing website or create an independent one.
• Existing social networking websites often allow users to create new groups within them. They are often more appropriate for less sophisticated forms of networking, which focus more on promoting topics, issues or events within a more public sphere.
• Such websites work well for basic networking tasks but often the infrastructure is not available for more collaborative working. Examples would be Facebook or LinkedIn (which has a more professional focus compared to Facebook).
• Social networking platforms like Ning allow you to create your own customisable online social network. They contain a package of useful features, such as online forums, groups, blogs, and video and photo libraries. As you have control over the appearance of your website it allows for a more professional online presence.
• The third option is to download software to run on your own web server, but this requires more technical expertise and resources.
• Running your own social networking platform on your own web server provides far more security for your data and your users since you are in control of every part of the service.

• Free open source content management systems (CMS) such as Drupal or Joomla can be used to create more customisable online social networks. They offer a wider range of tools and applications, enabling you to customise your social networking website even further.
• Elgg is another free open source platform which is designed specifically for social networking websites. It is mostly used in the educational sphere, where it has been used to power social networks for various institutions and communities, such as Eduspaces.net with over 20,000 members. It is also the platform that the new Unionbook.org website has used.[1]
• Buddypress is a newly-updated suite of plug-ins which turns Wordpress MU (a popular multi-user blog platform) into a fully-featured social networking platform.

Some tips on joining an online social network

• Typical examples of social networking sites are LinkedIn and Facebook as well as photo- and video-sharing websites like Flickr and YouTube.
• Look for relevant communities. Subscribe to a social network whose members share your interests.
• Popular social networking websites vary from country to country. For example Orkut.com is popular in India and Brazil, Hi5.com in South America, and Friendster.com in the Philippines.

Keep in mind…

When joining an online social network

• Stay safe: never upload personal information that may compromise your safety and security – or that of other people.
• Consider who you will be networking with – and who will see your profile. Social networks can be used for 'professional' or 'social' purposes. Some are a combination of the two – however, some people use different profiles to separate their professional and personal identities.
• If in doubt, keep your profile information private or restricted. Think about whether to use your real name or a pseudonym when you sign up.
• Always consider others when uploading content. Get permission before uploading e.g. someone else's work, culturally sensitive information or photos of other people.
• Consider the tradeoff between making information publicly available and who may use it and for what purposes.[2]
• Is the material you want to add appropriate? Remember to check and adhere to any editorial policies before adding content.
• Be clear about who owns the information that you enter on your profile or that you upload. Always check the terms of service before joining an online network – some service providers retain the right to use your material without your permission.[3] Find out what rights the service provider has in terms of using your data and what rights you have to recall/delete your data.

Some tips on creating an online social network

• Be clear about the purpose for your social network and ensure you have a clearly defined audience. This helps to create a genuinely interested and active membership with useful experience to share.
• Decide whether to create an independent online social networking website or a new group within an existing one.
• If creating one, determine what features your website should contain.
• Develop a framework. Begin by uploading a few useful reports, example blog posts, discussion topics, photos and videos to stimulate interest.
• Once you have set up your group or website, invite potential members to join.
• All new members should receive a welcome message. Encourage them to invite others who might find the website useful.
• Send members regular, short email digests to inform them of recent updates.
• Encourage repeat visits and new members. Keep the content fresh with links to new information e.g. reports, manuals, announcements, resources, discussions, blog posts, photos and videos.
• If you are creating an online social networking website for an existing network, ensure that important content from the network is published, e.g. interesting news features, workshop reports, country developments etc.
• Keep content relevant, informed and up-to-date, especially if you want to lead discussions.
• If your website includes forums or blogs, help start interesting discussions and encourage active debate. Use thoughtful discussion topics and summaries to which participants can respond.
• Encourage members to take a

[1] See www.ericlee.info/2009/02/unionbook_launched.html

[2] For further discussion, see Overview, p.8 (this issue).
[3] For example, Facebook and YouTube retain the rights to use any information uploaded by members. In addition, some websites such as Facebook may retain a permanent archive of all material uploaded – even after deleted by the member from their own profile page.

proactive role in contributing to the network – uploading material, notifying people of forthcoming events, writing event reports or messaging other members – this participation will provide wider exposure to member's ideas and materials, as well as generate new content for the website.

• You may want to stipulate that key members share materials – participation is critical to broadening future contributions.

• Remember to offer guidance in the form of a help page and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page on how to use and contribute to the website.

• Consider running a blog covering the development of your social network website, describing new features and gathering feedback from users.

Keep in mind…

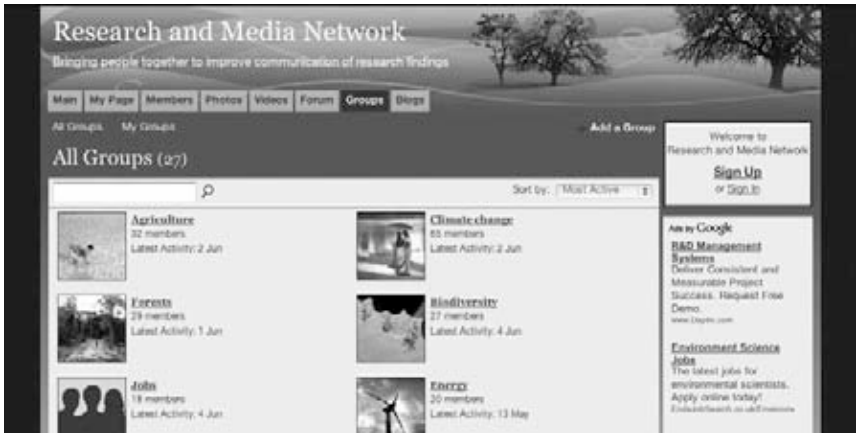
When creating an online social network…

• Social networking websites may not be appropriate for your target audience. Other, more accessible communication platforms (such as email discussion lists, DGroups.org or regular face-to-face meetings) may be more appropriate.

• Remember that managing online social networking websites takes energy and time. Allow at least one hour per day. Larger, more active networks may require longer daily maintenance. Remember to budget for the time.

• Avoid members adding inappropriate material to your website with clear editorial guidelines or moderation. Use polite, private messages explaining why such material is inappropriate.

Research and Media Network is an online social network built using Ning that brings people together to improve communication of research findings.



Deleting or rejecting unwanted content should, wherever possible, always be mutually agreed between the moderator and the contributor.

• Keep an email contact list for the members of your social networking website in a different location to the server that is hosting the website. Should anything go wrong with your social networking website (e.g. if your account is closed or a company goes out of business and ceases service etc.) you will still be able to contact your members.

Where to get started

There are several free or low-cost platforms to choose from – either as a new member of an existing network or to create your own. Here are some examples.

Social networking platforms

• www.linkedin.com
• www.facebook.com
• www.meetup.com
• www.ning.com
• www.buddypress.org
• www.elgg.org
• http://drupal.org
• www.joomla.org

Review of various popular social networking platforms similar to Ning:

• http://tinyurl.com/tcrunchsn[4]

Privacy and security issues

For further discussions on issues related to social networks, terms of service, privacy and intellectual property rights see Ashley *et al.*, p.x (this issue) and also e.g.:

• http://tinyurl.com/bbcfbook
• http://tinyurl.com/ericlee-faceb
• http://tinyurl.com/wikipfbook
• http://tinyurl.com/wikipmsp
• http://tinyurl.com/digiactivefb[5]

Examples of social networking websites for development

• Africa ICT Network: http://ictafrica.ning.com
• Forest Connect: http://forestconnect.ning.com
• i-genius: http://i-genius.org/home
• OneWorld TV: http://tv.oneworld.net
• Research and Media Network: http://researchandmedia.ning.com
• Web 2.0 Mapping and Social Networks Group: www.meetup.com/webmapsocial

[4] Full URL: www.techcrunch.com/2007/07/24/9-ways-to-build-your-own-social-network
[5] To see the full URLs for these websites, see e-participation, p.130 (this issue).

RSS feeds

Tips on using RSS feeds to access and share development online content – and how to filter it for relevance

What are RSS feeds?

• RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a data format used for syndicating web content in the form of RSS or web 'feeds'.[1] [2] They have become very popular with publishers and users alike owing to the ease and simplicity of their production and use.
• Each RSS feed is comprised of one or more feed 'items'. Each item consists of a URL, text and (optionally) multimedia content. An RSS feed could contain the latest news stories, weather reports, the latest publications, press releases, or even radio or television programmes.
• Individuals can subscribe to RSS feeds to read them, or RSS feeds can be incorporated into other websites.
• RSS feeds are popular with users for keeping track of news and new content from any number of websites because updates are delivered directly to them without the need to visit each of the websites in turn. Feeds could come from RSS enabled websites, news websites, blogs, social networks and social bookmarking websites.
• Users can use a feed 'reader' (or 'aggregator') to subscribe to and view different RSS feeds. A feed reader can either be an online website/service or a software application installed on your computer.
• Some feed reader applications will download the content onto your computer and enable offline viewing.
• RSS feeds are popular with publishers as they are a powerful marketing and outreach tool and can be produced automatically by many website platforms and blogs etc.
• RSS feeds are popular too with web developers as they can incorporate and display external RSS feeds on their website and share their own RSS feeds with other websites.
• The RSS icon on a web page shows visitors they can subscribe to an RSS feed by clicking on it or by copying and pasting the link from the RSS icon into their feed reader.[3]
• Content from multiple RSS feeds can be aggregated into one place i.e. a new RSS feed, a web page or a feed reader. They can also be manipulated either using filters – to increase relevance – or through mash-ups – to combine sources of information, adding value to the original content.

Why use RSS feeds for development?

With RSS feeds you can …
• improve the visibility and accessibility of development content online
• promote your organisation, news, campaign, project or ideas by allowing other websites to automatically incorporate content from your website
• add value to websites by automatically incorporating relevant information from other websites
• keep the level of content received manageable, targeted and relevant using filters – don't forget that information overload is a real problem for many web users[4]
• improve information-sharing, especially with the combined use of tags, social bookmarks and RSS feeds[5]

Some tips on using RSS feeds

• When subscribing to RSS feeds, spend time searching websites, blogs, social networks and social bookmarking websites to find relevant and trusted sources of information.
• Some online feed readers such as Bloglines allow you to see other users' RSS subscriptions – it is useful to see what others in your field are also reading online.
• If bandwidth is an issue in your community, download a feed reader application and install it on your computer, which will enable you to read your RSS feeds offline.
• Users can choose the frequency with which their feed reader checks RSS feeds for new information. Decide how often you want to receive updates.
• Personal start-pages such as Pageflakes, iGoogle and Netvibes allow you to create and customise your own web page, integrating multiple RSS feeds and other social networking applications and widgets.[6]
• There are various websites that allow

[1] Syndication is where material on one website is made available to multiple other websites. See also glossary, p.124 (this issue).
[2] Atom is another data format used in syndication.
[3] Other syndication icons include Atom or XML.
[4] For further discussion and critical reflection on the use of filtering see Ethan Zuckerman, p.87, (this issue).
[5] See Social bookmarking, p.119; also Tagging, p.117 (this issue)
[6] Widgets are mini portable applications which can be easily added to a website to provide additional functionality and dynamic content. Widgets can also be combined to create new functionalities.

NewsforDev.org uses RSS feeds and email to share news with agricultural development practitioners in African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries.

you to manipulate, combine (aggregate) and/or filter the content of RSS feeds – improving the relevance of the content and producing a new RSS feed which can then be subscribed to using a feed reader or displayed on other websites.

• Some websites allow you to create an RSS feed of content from any website either automatically or by manually bookmarking specific web pages. This could then be used to create your own RSS feed of new content on your website if your website is not RSS enabled. Social bookmarking website Delicious can be used in this way. Another simple tool to create RSS feeds is Feedmarklet.

• If your mobile phone can access the Internet, you can access your RSS feeds on your phone.

• You can send micro-blogging service Twitter.com an RSS feed via Twitterfeed.com or Rsstotwitter.com.[7]

Keep in mind…

• RSS feeds from trusted websites and well-filtered multiple sources are incredibly useful. However, web portals that put news into meaningful contexts, which have expert commentary and translate into other languages add additional value. For example, Global Voices Online is project where people also filter new content online (see below for details).

Where to get started

There are many feed readers available. Here are some examples.

Web-based feed readers

• www.bloglines.com
• www.google.com/reader
• www.newsgator.com/individuals/newsGatoronline
• http://feedshow.com

Downloadable feed readers

• www.newsgator.com/Individuals/FeedDemon (Win)
• www.newsfirerss.com (for Mac)
• www.newsgator.com/Individuals/NetNewsWire (for Mac)

Note: several web browsers e.g. Firefox or Opera also include basic feed reader functionality.

RSS feed filters, mashers and editors

• www.feedrinse.com
• www.feedsifter.com
• www.filtermyrss.com
• http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes
• www.zaptxt.com
• www.feedmarklet.com

Very basic guide to RSS from BBC

• http://tinyurl.com/rssbbc[8]

Video: RSS in Plain English

Also in French, German, Portuguese and Spanish. Also with multiple language subtitles on Dotsub.com:

• www.commoncraft.com/rss_plain_english
• http://tinyurl.com/dotsubrss[9]

Examples of development websites using RSS

• Afrigator: http://blog.afrigator.com/about
• Global Voices Online: http://globalvoicesonline.org/feeds
• IIED: www.iied.org/rss-feeds
• NewsForDev: www.newsfordev.org

[7] Content received via Twitter is only up to 140 characters in length. See also Micro-blogging, p.108 (this issue).

[8] Full URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/help/3223484.stm
[9] Full URL: http://dotsub.com/view/69aa48a4-a95f-4bc8-a511-bb0a1ee95e12

Tagging

Tips on using tags and tagging for development

What is tagging?

• Tagging is the process of assigning online content with keywords or tags.
• A tag is a form of metadata.[1] It is a one-word descriptor or keyword that a user can assign to online content, such as documents, blogs, photos and videos.
• Tags describe and categorise content and allow it to be found again by searching the Internet using that keyword.
• Tags are also usually hyperlinks, which if clicked, will show all content tagged with that keyword.
• Tagging makes it easier to organise and describe information in a manner that is personally meaningful.
• Tags are chosen according to the personal preferences of the user. While some websites provide existing categories of tags for users to choose from, users can also create their own tags or keywords.
• A 'tag cloud' or 'word cloud' is a visual list of tags that have been used on a website or blog etc. The tags that are used most often are shown in larger font sizes and/or different colours.
• Most blogs and social networking websites allow users the option to tag their content e.g. Flickr, Ning and Technorati.
• Tagging is particularly important for media such as photo, video and audio, which unlike text does not have word-searchable content other than a title or short description.
• The practice of 'social tagging' to share resources with others is quickly becoming a staple of Web 2.0. A collection of online user-generated tags is often referred to as a 'folksonomy'.[2]
• Social bookmarking websites like Delicious allow users to add their own tags to Internet bookmarks to help organise and remember them.[3] This is also especially useful for content which cannot be tagged where it has been uploaded.
• Websites that support tagging will often allow an RSS feed to be generated for a particular tag or set of tags. This RSS feed enables tagged content to be syndicated to other websites or read via a feed reader.[4]
• Geotags are tags that give a geographic location for a piece of content (e.g. a photograph) often using longitude and latitude information. Flickr allows photographs to be geotagged and geotagging is becoming increasingly important especially for use in mash-ups.[5]

Why use tags for development?

Tags can be used to…
• organise, structure, find and share development content
• open up more possibilities for sharing and collaboration, making it easier to share interesting online content on particular themes with others
• improve information-sharing, especially with the combined use of tags, social bookmarks and RSS feeds
• create collections of popular development tags used by others (e.g. a development folksonomy).

Some tips on using tags

• Where possible, always tag information or data that you upload online e.g. online presentations, blog posts, photos, videos and reports.
• See what tags other people in your field are using for similar content. For example, social bookmarking websites list popular tags chosen by other Internet users to describe online resources they have bookmarked.
• Assign multiple tags to a piece of content. Include the most important keywords: Is it a report? What year was it published? Is it about an event? Which organisations? Which countries? Which topics?
• Creating unique tags is an important way of differentiating content. This can be particularly useful for events/conferences where organisers encourage participants to use a pre-specified unique tag to identify material from that event (such as reports, write-ups, photos or blog posts).[6]

[1] Metadata is a form of data assigned to any piece of data, which allows it to be retrieved. See glossary, p.122 (this issue).

[2] See glossary on p.121 for a definition of folksonomies.
[3] Internet bookmarks (or 'Favourites') are stored web page locations (URLs) that can be retrieved. See Social bookmarking, p.119 (this issue).
[4] See also RSS feeds, p.115, this issue.
[5] A mash-up is combining data from two or more external online sources. See glossary, p.122 (this issue).

[6] For example, during the Web2forDev conference, participants were encouraged to use the tag 'Web2forDev' to describe any uploaded content related to the event, e.g. blog posts and photos.

The cover image of this special issue represents some of the more widely-used keywords or 'tags' associated with Web2forDev.

Keep in mind…

- Some keywords can have several meanings. For example, 'orange' can refer to the colour, the fruit or the telecommunication brand.
- Be consistent in the way you use tags to identify content related to a particular topic. This enables yourself and others to find information more easily.
- If you want a community of users to use tags e.g. members of an online social network, provide easy-to-follow guidelines on how to create and use tags as well as a list of popular or specific tags that are used in the specific area of interest.
- If you are creating tags for a specific topic, event, website or online group to use, decide on your unique tags in advance – and make sure people know what they are. This will prevent the need to retag numerous documents later on and ensure that related content can be found more easily by others.

Where to get started

Some common examples of websites using tags

- www.flickr.com (for photos)
- www.delicious.com (for bookmarks)
- http://technorati.com (for blogs)
- www.youtube.com (for videos)
- www.slideshare.net (for presentations)

To see an example of how content tagged with a particular keyword (web2fordev) is displayed in Delicious, see e.g.:

- http://delicious.com/tag/web2fordev

To see how content tagged with 'web2fordev' is syndicated on a website see e.g.:

- www.web2fordev.net
- https://twitter.com/web2fordev

Create graphical tag (or 'word') clouds for any text, feed or Delicious user's tags:

- www.wordle.net

Video: Introductions to tagging and folksonomies

- http://k12onlineconference.org/?p=273

Social bookmarking

Tips on using social bookmarks for development

What is social bookmarking?

• Social bookmarking allows users to tag and save links to web pages and online documents in the form of bookmarks that they want to remember and/or share.
• Social bookmarking websites have evolved from free online bookmark websites, which simply allowed you to store your web page bookmarks (or 'favourites') online so you could access them from any computer connected to the Internet.
• Social bookmarking websites now allow users to tag, organise, search and share their own and other people's bookmarks, often producing RSS feeds and sometimes allowing comments and discussion of particular bookmarks.
• People increasingly use social bookmarking to organise, share and promote content.
• Social bookmarks are saved on a remote web server, not on your computer, so can be accessed from anywhere with an Internet connection.
• Most commonly, bookmarks can be either public or private, but it is the ability to share with others that builds collaborative value.
• Users can view other users' bookmarks chronologically and also see how popular different bookmarks are i.e. how many times particular web pages or documents have been bookmarked by others, as well as the most common tags that have been used to classify a particular web page.
• Tagging is a key element of social bookmarking. Users can search for bookmarks using one or more tags.[1]
• Many social bookmarking websites provide RSS feeds for lists of bookmarks created by users or tagged with particular keywords. This allows subscribers to see new bookmarks as they are tagged, saved and shared by other users and for RSS feeds to be incorporated on other websites.[2]
• Some social bookmarking websites allow features such as adding notes or commenting on bookmarks, rating bookmarks, and saving copies of the content being bookmarked.

Why use social bookmarks for development?

Social bookmarks can be used to…
• organise, structure and share development content with others
• follow what websites and documents other people in your field are reading
• enable others to find information on particular themes more easily
• create collections of popular bookmarks related to development and share these lists with other users
• share information in a more powerful way by combining the use of social bookmarks, tags and RSS feeds

[1] See also Tagging, p.117 (this issue).
[2] See also RSS feeds, p.115 (this issue).

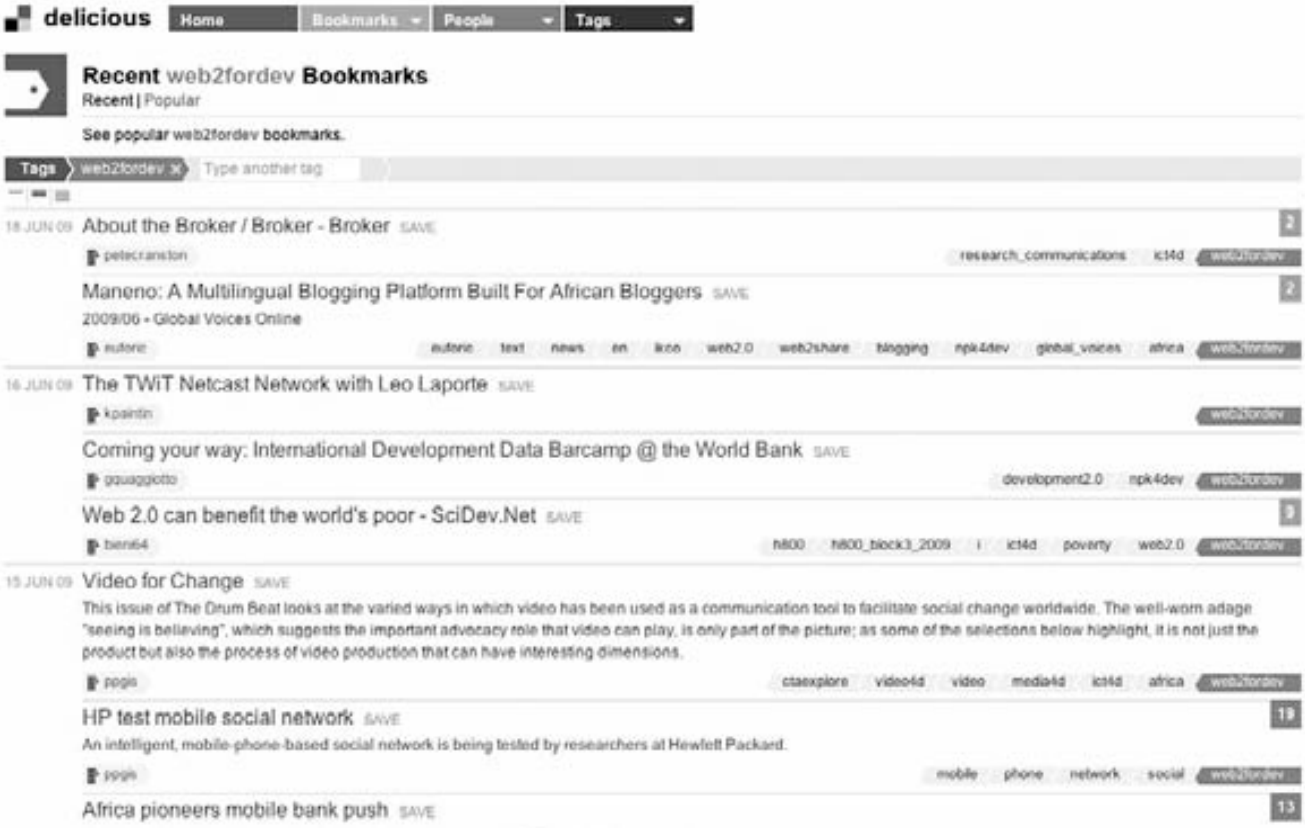
Some tips on using social bookmarks

• Social bookmarking websites often have downloadable add-ons (or 'extensions') available for your web browser to make it easier to bookmark web pages and content with one mouse click.
• If your website is not able to produce RSS feeds, you can create your own by bookmarking and tagging your new content in Delicious. This allows you to manually create and add new items to a new RSS feed of the content tagged with a specific keyword. The RSS feed could then be displayed on your website and would also be available for others to use.
• In the same way, you can use Delicious to create and manually add items to new RSS feeds highlighting content from any website. Used strategically, this is a way of classifying and then promoting content by making it available for syndication to other websites and viewing in feed readers.[3]

Keep in mind…

• When tagging bookmarks, some keywords can have several meanings. For example, 'orange' can refer to the colour, the fruit or the telecommunications brand.
• Just because you create a bookmark for a web page or online document, it does not mean that page or document will always be there. Content on the Internet can be moved or removed without warning. It is a good idea to save a copy of any important information you want to keep.

[3] For example, http://forestconnect.ning.com uses Delicious to create a list of documents already available online as well as website links, and then uses the RSS feed from Delicious to display the list of documents and links on their Ning website.



An example of how bookmarked content tagged with 'web2fordev' is displayed in Delicious.

Where to get started

There are several social bookmarking websites that you can join. Here are some examples.

Social bookmarking websites

- Delicious: www.delicious.com
- Technorati: http://technorati.com
- Google Bookmarks: www.google.com/bookmarks
- Digg: http://digg.com
- Diigo: www.diigo.com
- Muti: www.muti.co.za
- Stumbleupon: www.stumbleupon.com

Review of top ten social bookmarking websites:

http://tinyurl.com/bookmarks-review[4]

An example of how content tagged with a particular keyword (e.g. web2fordev) is displayed in Delicious:

- http://delicious.com/tag/web2fordev

An example of how this content can be syndicated on a website:

- www.web2fordev.net
- https://twitter.com/web2fordev

[4] Full URL: http://websearch.about.com/od/bestwebsites/tp/freebookmarks.htm

Glossary of Web 2.0 terms

This glossary lists most of the commonly-used terms describing Web 2.0 tools that are found in this special issue of *PLA*.[1] Please note that the glossary is not an exhaustive list and does not include more technical computing terms.

Aggregator (see also **RSS feeds**)
An aggregator (or 'news aggregator' or 'feed reader') is a piece of software or online service that receives and displays multiple web feeds of syndicated web content such as news headlines or blog posts. An aggregator could be a website displaying the latest headlines from multiple other news websites or a feed reader application that a user downloads to run on their computer to enable them to subscribe to, and view, RSS feeds of the latest content from multiple websites without having to visit each website in turn.

Audio blog (see **Blog** and **Podcast**)

Blog
A blog (short for 'web' and 'log') is a website, usually maintained by an individual. Blogs contain regular commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as photos, audio files or videos. Blogs often provide commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news. Some function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of blogging. Most blogs are primarily textual although some focus on photographs (photoblogs), videos (vlogs), or audio files (audio blogs or Podcasts) and are part of a wider network of social media. To 'blog' or to be a 'blogger' means to maintain or add content to a blog.

Blogosphere
Blogosphere is a collective term encompassing all blogs and their interconnections. It is the perception that blogs exist together as a connected community (or as a collection of connected communities) or as a social network.[2]

Bookmarks (see also **Social bookmarks**)
Internet bookmarks are stored web page locations (URLs) that can be retrieved. As a feature of all modern Internet web browsers, their primary purpose is to easily catalogue and access web pages that a user has visited and chosen to save. Saved links are also sometimes called 'favourites'. Bookmarks are normally visible in a browser menu and stored on the user's computer. Many external applications exist for managing bookmarks online (see Social bookmarks).

Content Management System (CMS)
A server-based software used to publish, edit and control the workflow of content in a website. It integrates many functions that enhance web services and their interfaces can be freely customised. For example, web portals are structured using CMS.

Crowdsourcing
Crowdsourcing means to outsource a task to a crowd of undefined, generally large group of people. Commonly used in Web 2.0 projects such as citizen journalism where the input of individuals is solicited. For example, Okolloh (this issue) describes the use of crowdsourcing to gather and distribute citizen reports.

Feeds (see **RSS feeds**)

Feed reader (see **Aggregator**)

Folksonomy (see also **Tags**)
The term 'folksonomy' (combining the words 'folk' and 'taxonomy') refers to a collection of online user-generated tags. Folksonomies are created collaboratively when people create and use tags to annotate and categorise content such as blog posts, photographs, web links and other web content. This bottom-up classification system has emerged from social tagging, also known as collaborative tagging, social classification, and social indexing.[3]

[1] Throughout this special issue, we make reference to Web 2.0 'tools', which includes applications, platforms and services. See our definition of Web 2.0 tools in this glossary.
[2] Source: Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogosphere
[3] Adapted from: Wikipedia.

Free Open Source Software (FOSS) (see **Open Source Software**)

Geotagging
Geotagging is the process of adding geographical identification metadata to various media such as photographs, video, websites, blog posts or RSS feeds. It is increasingly used to create visual maps of data through mash-ups.

Mash-up
A mash-up is aggregating or combining data from one or more external online sources together. At its simplest, a mash-up could be just creating a webpage that pulls in different content from multiple RSS feeds, such as text, pictures or videos. A more advanced mash-up is one that actually combines online data sources to produce a new set of data or service that was not provided (or necessarily intended) by the original publishers of the content sources.

Metadata
Metadata is data about other data, from keywords in the html of a webpage describing the content, to information about the size of a picture or file. Tags are a form of metadata.

Micro-blogging
A form of blogging where users publish very short posts, commonly submitted via a variety of means including SMS text messaging, email or instant messaging as well as via the Internet. Micro-blogging updates can be text, photos or very short video clips.

News aggregator (see **Aggregator**)

Online social networking (see **Social networking**)

Open source software (OSS)
Open source software (OSS) can be defined as computer software for which the human-readable source code is made available under a copyright license (or arrangement such as the public domain) that meets the Open Source Definition. This permits users to use, change, and improve the software, and to redistribute it in modified or unmodified form. It is very often developed in a public, collaborative manner. OSS are typically free-to-use (for this reason, they are often referred to as FOSS).[4]

PC2PC (see **VoIP**)

Personalised start-page
Personal start-pages are web pages that allow users to create their own customised web page, integrating multiple RSS feeds and other social networking applications and widgets.

Podcast
A Podcast is a series of audio or video digital media files automatically distributed via the Internet. A Podcast is distinguished from most other digital media formats by its ability to be syndicated, subscribed to and downloaded automatically when new content is added via a feed. Like the term broadcast, Podcast can refer either to the series of content itself or to the method by which it is syndicated.[5]

Post
A post (or posting) refers to content that is uploaded to the Internet. Typically, commentary written on blogs is referred to as a post.

RSS feed (see also **Web feed**)
RSS is a web feed data format used for web syndication to make content available to other websites or for individuals to subscribe to via a feed reader. Each RSS feed is comprised of one or more feed 'items'. Each item consists of a URL, text and (optionally) multimedia content. An RSS feed could contain the latest news stories, weather reports, the latest publications, press releases, or even radio or television programmes. RSS is defined as Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication. 'Atom' is a similar content syndication format.

Short Messaging Service (SMS)
Mobile phone text messaging service. Sending a text message via mobile telephone is known as Short Messaging Service, or SMS.

Social bookmarks
Social bookmarking is a web-based service to share Internet bookmarks. Social bookmarking websites are a popular way to store, classify, share and search links through the practice of folksonomy techniques. Since the classification and ranking of resources is a continuously evolving process, many social bookmarking services allow users to subscribe to web feeds based on tags, or a particular user. This allows subscribers to become aware of new resources for a given topic, as they are noted, tagged and classified by other users.

Social software
Social software is a type of software or web service that allows people to communicate and collaborate while

[4] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_and_open_source_software
[5] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting

using the application. Email, blogs, and even instant messaging are all examples of social software. Many advocates of using these tools believe that these create actual community, and have adopted the term 'online communities' to describe the social structures that they claim result.

Social networking
Online social networking tools focus on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities. Social networks are a new generation of online community tools devoted to Internet-based networking, which are similar to websites but offer specific interactive features and processes. A social network service brings together people who share common interests, such as photography or a social issue and who are interested in exploring the interests of others and learning more about their peers. Social networking websites make the relationships between people visible.

Start-page (see **Personalised Start-page**)

Syndication (see **Web syndication**)

Tags
A tag is a (relevant) keyword or term associated with a piece of online content (like a picture, article, website, or video clip) to describe the item. Typically, a piece of content will have more than one tag associated with it. Tags are mostly chosen informally and personally by the author/creator or the consumer of the item – i.e. not as part of some formally-defined classification scheme (taxonomy). A collection of online user-generated tags is often referred to as a folksonomy. Tagging is the association of keywords (metadata) to the file or document that makes it easier to locate during an Internet-based search for related content.

Tag cloud (see also **Tag**)
A 'tag cloud' or 'word cloud' is a visual list of tags or keywords showing groups of user-generated tags or website content. A tag cloud links together a collection of other associated tags. More popular tags are shown using larger font sizes and/or different colours.

Tagging (see **Tag**)

Trackback
A trackback (or linkback) function on a blog is to notify another blog that you are referencing them on your own blog.

User-generated content
The concept of enabling a community of users – not just individual authors – to create the content on a website, contribute to what is already there, govern it by determining its accuracy, usefulness, and relevance and ensure that the resource is updated as needed. User-generated content is typified by information resources such as Wikipedia or YouTube.com. On these websites, user-generated content is everything: without the users there is no content.

Vlogs (see also **Blogs**)
A form of blog that contains video content.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)
VoIP services are free or low-cost online platforms which enable you to make individual or conference 'phone calls' from one computer to another (referred to as PC2PC). Skype is one example of a VoIP service. See: www.skype.com

Web 2.0
The term Web 2.0 refers to a perceived second generation of web development and design that facilitates communication, secure information-sharing, cooperation and collaboration on the World Wide Web. Sometimes referred to as the 'read and write' web, Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-based communities, hosted services, and applications. These include applications such as social networking websites, video- and photo-sharing websites, wikis and blogs.

The term Web 2.0 was first used by Eric Knorr in December 2003 and became notable after the first O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference in 2004. Although the term suggests a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to an update to any technical specifications, but to changes in the ways software developers and end-users utilise the web.

With the first phase of the web, most people could only read information online. New Web 2.0 technologies now make it possible for most Internet users e.g. to edit and create their own content on websites that incorporate these technologies. They allow non-web designers to put their own content (writing, audio, video, etc.) online easier than ever before. They make content more portable than ever and easier to remix, mash together or reuse in a different context. Web 2.0 tools utilise this user-generated content and the economy of scale/network multiplier effect created to draw valuable connections between related users and content.

They make the discovery of new

content more automated and relevant than ever before.

They have the potential to exponentially increase the amount of information that any of us are able to access, store and recall.

Web 2.0 tools

Tool is used here as shorthand for a computer software application and also for applications that are web-based. There are dozens of emerging free or low cost interactive web applications and services (often referred to as the participatory web or Web 2.0). These can enhance the ways we create, share, and publish information. Examples of Web 2.0 tools include social networking websites, video-sharing websites, wikis, and blogs.

Wherever web tools are mentioned in this special issue, the terms web application, method, technology or approach might have been more appropriate to use depending on the actual use of the tool. We generally use the term 'tools' to cover all the different applications, tools, methods and technologies that we are referring to as Web 2.0 tools.

Web2forDev

Participatory Web 2.0 for development – or Web2forDev for short – is a way of employing web services to intentionally improve information-sharing and collaborative production of content for development. The distinction between Web 2.0 tools and Web2forDev is that Web2forDev is about the active use of these tools in development. It is about how development actors can relate and connect to other stakeholders, produce and publish their own material, decide on levels of access to information and redistribute pieces of content released by others. Web2forDev is about integrating, combining, aggregating, generating, moderating and mediating development information, ideas and perspectives.

Web feed (see RSS feed)

Web log (see Blog)

Web syndication

Web syndication is where material on one website is made available to multiple other websites or individual subscribers (using RSS or web feeds).

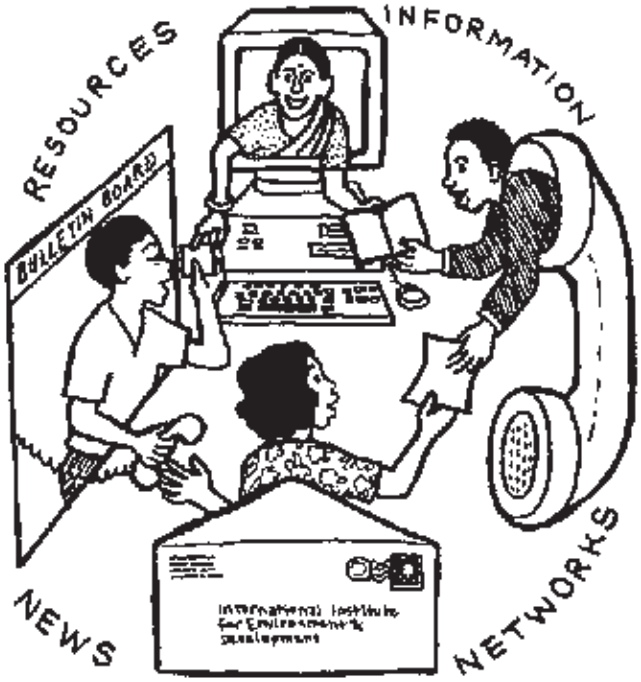
Widgets

Widgets are mini portable applications which can be easily added to a website to provide additional functionality and dynamic content. Widgets can also be combined to create new functionalities. Many blog platforms, social networking websites and personalised start pages provide libraries of widgets for their users to pick and choose from.

Wiki

A wiki is an online collaborative workspace. A wiki is a website that allows users to add, remove, edit and change content. It also allows for linking among any number of pages. This ease of interaction and operation makes a wiki an effective tool for mass collaborative authoring. The term wiki also can refer to the collaborative software itself (wiki engine) that facilitates the operation of such a website, or to certain specific wiki sites, e.g. encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia.

in touch

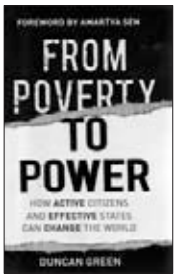


Welcome to the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for the *Participatory Learning and Action* audience, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date information on training, publications, and networks. Your help is vital in keeping us all in touch about:

- **Networks**. Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide – training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide contact details for other readers.
- **Training**. Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key training materials that you would like to share with other trainers?
- **Publications**. Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers to know about?
- **Electronic information**. Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?
- **Other information**. Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.

Please send your responses to: *Participatory Learning and Action*, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODD, UK.
Fax: + 44 20 7388 2826;
Email: pla.notes@iied.org

Book reviews



From Poverty to Power
How active citizens and effective states can change the world
● Duncan Green
Foreword by Amartya Sen
Oxfam International, 2008
ISBN 978-0-85598-593-6

This book explores efforts to grapple with inequality and poverty in three key areas: politics, markets, and vulnerability. In each case it finds that efforts to tackle inequality are best achieved through a combination of active citizens and effective states.

Active citizenship is a combination of rights and obligations that link individuals to the state, including paying taxes, obeying laws, and exercising the full range of political, civil, and social rights. Active citizens use these rights to improve the quality of political or civic life, through involvement in the formal economy or formal politics, or through the sort of collective action that historically has allowed poor and excluded groups to make their voices heard. For those who do not enjoy full rights of citizenship, such as migrants or (in some cultures) women, the first step is often to organise to assert those rights.

Effective states can guarantee security and the rule of law, and can design and implement an effective strategy to ensure inclusive economic growth. Effective states, often known as 'developmental states', must be accountable to citizens and able to guarantee their rights.

Why effective states? History has

shown that no country has prospered without a state than can actively manage the development process. The transformations of countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, Botswana, or Mauritius have been led by states that ensure health and education for all, and which actively promote and manage the process of economic growth. The road to development lies through the state.

Why active citizenship? People working together to determine the course of their own lives, fighting for rights and justice in their own societies, are critical in holding states, private companies, and others to account. Active citizenship has inherent merits: people living in poverty must have a voice in deciding their own destiny, rather than be treated as passive recipients of welfare or government action.

This book argues that active citizenship and effective states are compatible, as well as desirable. The challenge is to combine them as early as possible in a country's development. However, the relationship between the two is complex. They march to different rhythms, the steady grind of state machineries contrasting with the ebb and flow of civil society activism. In many cases, long-term development requires an element of deferred gratification, requiring businesses to reinvest rather than skim off profits, rich people to accept redistribution of wealth and income for the sake of national stability and growth, and poor people to limit demands for the improved wages and social spending that they so desperately need.

■ Available from Oxfam Publications. www.oxfam.org.uk/publications

Participatory Development: An Introduction

● Azmal Hussain
Santap Sanhari Mishra
ISBN: 81-314-0799-3
The Icfai University Press, 2008

A participatory approach to development has emerged mainly because of the recognition of the limitations of the conventional approach. The major limitation of the conventional approach is that it does not necessarily hold all the stakeholders accountable. Participatory approach involves local people, development agencies, and policy makers, deciding together how progress should be measured, and how results are acted upon. It can reveal valuable lessons and improve accountability. The incorporation of "local knowledge" in development projects is now commonplace and this has been made possible only through the introduction of participatory development modules.

This book focuses on how participatory development is attracting interest from many quarters by offering new ways of assessing and learning from changes that are more inclusive, and more in tune with the views and aspirations of those directly affected. It provides an opportunity for development organisations to focus better on their ultimate goal of improving people's lives.

■ Price: US$ 17 (PB) (Overseas Orders) INR 425 (Special Indian price)
Available from The Icfai University Press. www.icfaipress.org Email icfaibooks@icfai.org

Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)

● Practical Action Publishing, 2009
ISBN 978-1-85539-679-3

The Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) are a set of international guidelines and standards for the design, implementation and assessment of livestock interventions to assist people affected by humanitarian crises. They provide guidance on the identification of appropriate livestock responses, followed by detailed information on a number of interventions, namely: destocking, veterinary services, the provision of feed, the provision of water, livestock shelter and settlement, and restocking. LEGS is a multi-agency initiative supported by a number of donors and based on consultation and contributions from a broad range of individuals and agencies from around the world.

The post-publication activities are as follows:

- Development of training materials based on LEGS;
- Recruitment of a team of 'consultant trainers' to carry out Training of Trainers courses based on LEGS;
- Implementation of the training in 12 regions across the world;
- Translation of LEGS into French and other languages (to be made available as soft copies for download from the website)
- Application to the Sphere Project for 'companion module' status (see: www.sphere.org);
- Maintenance of a technical support capacity.

If you are interested in hosting a

training in your country, please contact the LEGS Coordinator: coordinator@livestock-emergency.net.
■ Available to purchase in hard copy from Practical Action at http://developmentbookshop.com/product_info.php?products_id=1534 and available to download for free in pdf format from the newly updated LEGS website: www.livestock-emergency.net

Partnerships for Empowerment. Participatory Research for Community-based Natural Resource Management

● Edited by Carl Wilmsen, William Elmendorf, Larry Fisher, Jacquelyn Ross, Brinda Sarathy and Gail Wells
Earthscan, 2008
ISBN 9781844075638

Participatory research has emerged as an approach to producing knowledge that is sufficiently grounded in local needs and realities to support community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), and it is touted as crucial to the sustainable management of forests and other natural resources.

This book analyses the current state of the art of participatory research in CBNRM. Its chapters and case studies examine recent experiences in collaborative forest management, harvesting impacts on forest shrubs, watershed restoration in Native American communities, civic environmentalism in an urban neighbourhood and other topics. Although the main geographic focus of the book is the United States, the issues raised are synthesised and discussed in the context of recent critiques of participatory research and CBNRM worldwide. The book's purpose is to provide insights and lessons for academics and practitioners involved in CBNRM in many contexts.
■ Available from Earthscan: www.earthscan.co.uk

Village voice: towards inclusive information technologies

● IIED Briefing Paper
Ben Garside
IIED, 2009

A decade ago it was dubbed the 'digital divide'. Now, the gap in information and communications technologies (ICTs) between North and South is slowly shrinking. The developing world accounts for two-thirds of total mobile phone subscriptions, and Africa has the world's fastest growing mobile phone market. By gaining a toehold in affordable ICTs, the poor can access the knowledge and services they need to boost their livelihoods. But to be sustainable, technologies need to factor in social realities. These include how people already share knowledge, and adapt to introduced technologies. Participatory approaches that keep development concerns at their core and people as their central focus are key.
■ Downloadable at www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=17051IIED

Public Participation and Oil Exploitation in Uganda

● Gatekeeper 138
Christoph Schwarte
IIED, 2008
ISSN 1357-9258

In 2006 oil was discovered in Uganda. With the country's economy highly dependent on fuel imports, national oil production could make a long-term contribution to poverty alleviation. But for sustainable development to occur, participatory governance must ensure that people are involved in the decision-making processes affecting their lives. This paper first analyses the adequacy of the existing legal framework on access to information and participation. On the basis of interviews and focus group studies it further examines the main practical barriers to better public participation. The author finds that in practice, public participation is subject to several financial, technical and political constraints. The culture of secrecy within government bodies, weak civil society structures as well as the politics of patronage remain substantive challenges for the fair and equitable management of natural resources in Uganda.
■ Downloadable at www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=14574IIED

Legal tools for citizen empowerment: Increasing local participation and benefit in Mali's mining sector

● Amadou Keita, Moussa Djire, with Kadari Traoré, Kader Traoré, Djibonding Dembelé, Arouna Dembelé, Mamadou Samassekou, and Moussa Doumbo
IIED, 2008
ISBN 978-1-84369-713-8

Mali's mining sector has grown greatly since the early 1990s, and is now the second largest source of export income. But while the state receives significant revenues, at the local level mining operations have been associated with loss of land rights and

environmental pollution. This study identifies legal tools that can be used by local people to better secure their land rights and to participate more effectively in investment decisions and benefits.

■ Also available in French. Downloadable at www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=12554IIED

Legal empowerment in practice. Using legal tools to secure land rights in Africa

● edited by Lorenzo Cotula, and Paul Mathieu
FAO and IIED, 2008
ISBN 978-1-84369-703-9

In recent years, many legal services organisations have developed innovative ways for using legal processses to help disadvantaged groups have more secure rights over their land. The approaches, tools and methods used vary widely across contexts – from legal literacy training to paralegals programmes; from participatory methodologies to helping local groups register their lands or negotiate with government or the private sector, through to legal representation and strategic use of public interest litigation. In 2008, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the International Institute for Environment and Development, and the Faculty of Law of the University of Ghana jointly organised an international workshop to promote an exchange of experience among practitioners. This report captures the highlights of workshop discussions.

■ www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=12552IIED

To subscribe to IIED e-newsletters (e-news and new publications), please email newbooks@iied.org or visit www.iied.org

Events and training

The Workshop 09 - 13th International Commune on Participatory Development

● 30 September-9 October 2009
Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) Campus, Thrissur, Kerala, India

The Workshop is an annual event where development workers, policy makers and proactive individuals come together from across the world to share information, experiences and keep themselves abreast of the latest in the field of participatory development.

This is the 13th Workshop organised by Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices as part of its efforts to promote participation in all forms of human development.

Workshop 09 is a residential 10-day workshop and provides both a theoretical understanding of participatory approaches and tools as well as the opportunity to apply them in the field. The ten days include general and specific module based theory, three days in various rural, peri-urban and urban field settings, as appropriate to the module content, and finally a sharing, reflection and feedback session.

The following training modules will be included:

- Child Participation: Methodology and Good Practice
- Community-led Local Level Planning
- Community-led Monitoring and Evaluation
- Community-led Poverty Assessments
- Participatory Methods and Approaches
- Participatory Theatre
- Public Accountability: Approaches and Challenges
- Training of Trainers

Fees: INR 25, 000 for Indian participants
Euro 1,400 for International participants

■ For more details and/or to apply:
Email: info@theworkshop.in
Website: www.theworkshop.in
Praxis website: www.praxisindia.org

Participatory Appraisal Workshop

● 7-11 September 2009, the University of Edinburgh, School of GeoSciences, Institute of Atmospheric and Environmental Science

An intensive five day workshop organised by the Office of Lifelong Learning, concentrating on the practical applications of PA and including a placement at the end of the week to put the skills learned into practice. Previous placements have taken place with the Bilston Wood Community Project and the Woodland Trust Scotland.

The cost of the workshop is £575 (volunteer rate £375 by special application) which includes all tuition costs, in-course transportation, documentation, refreshments and a sandwich lunch on four days.
Registration deadline: 10 August 2009

■ Full information can be found on the website at www.lifelong.ed.ac.uk/cpd/courses/geosciences where you can download the registration form and course flier and also book online.

Environmental Consensus & Conflict Resolution

● 1-3 September 2009, the University of Edinburgh, School of GeoSciences, Institute of Atmospheric and Environmental Science

This is an intensive 3-day workshop which applies theory and consensus building skills in a practical way and encourages participants to work in depth on their own case study material. The scope and format of the workshop has been developed in response to positive feedback from previous participants, who have been attracted from government agencies, business and NGOs.

The cost for this workshop is £450. A special discount rate of £350 is available for a limited number of volunteers (a special application should be made for the volunteer rate). The fee includes all tuition costs, in-course transportation, documentation, refreshments and a sandwich lunch on four days during the course. Registration deadline: 4 August 2009.

■ Full information can be found on the website at www.lifelong.ed.ac.uk/cpd/courses/geosciences where you can download the registration form and course flier and also book online.

Community-based Mapping (on-line course)

● 28 August-2 October 2009, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) at Colorado State University

Mapping can be a powerful tool for communities to use to better manage their resources, plan for the future, record and utilise local knowledge, raise awareness about areas of concern in their environmental and social landscape, and communicate their priorities and concerns to external agencies or government officials. This course will explore theories, ethics, applications, and methods of community-based mapping and its role in participatory learning and action as well as larger processes of integrated community-based development. This course, while drawing on many of the recent case studies, academic writings, and reports from the field, will be highly interactive and will emphasize the sharing of experiences, ideas, and insights from course participants.

This is an online course, organised in a seminar format with weekly readings, presentations and assignments along with discussion among participants. While participants are not required to access the courses at specific times it will be necessary to access the course at least two or more times each week to download assignments, post reactions, and give feedback to other course participants.

■ For more information visit www.colostate.edu/Orgs/IISD/courses/Mapping.html

e-participation

Agriculture and New Technologies: Web 2.0 in Africa

http://tinyurl.com/ctaweb2inafrica

Educational video on how farmers have been using Web 2.0 applications in Africa by People TV and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation EU-ACP (CTA).

Amnesty International Campaigning Manual

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ACT10/002/2001/en

A campaigning manual which covers starting a campaign and engaging with the media.

Association for Progressive Communications

www.apc.org

A global network of civil society organisations that aims to empower and support organisations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Common Craft: Social Media Pack

www.commoncraft.com/social-media-pack

A series of short video introductions to a wide selection of social media tools and ideas. Presented in Plain English with the option to watch in French, Spanish, German or Portuguese. Free to watch online – can be downloaded for a fee. Also available on Dotsub.com with multiple language subtitles (search Dotsub for 'Commoncraft').

Communication Initiative Network

www.comminit.com

An online space for sharing the experiences of, and building bridges between, people and organisations engaged in or supporting communication for economic and social development and change.

DGroups: Web2ForDev Discussion Group

http://tinyurl.com/dgroupsweb2fordev

Electronic discussion group dealing with topics related to Web 2.0 for Development.[2]

Euforic

www.euforic.org

Uses Internet applications to produce web-based information services, including alerts, country profiles, thematic dossiers, organisation directories, an email digest, an online repository, event listings, and search tools to share, access and assess information on development.

The Fiankoma Project

www.fiankoma.org

A development education project that used video and other digital media as tools to promote development awareness, working with teachers, students and communities in Ghana and the UK.

ICT Update: a current awareness bulletin

http://ictupdate.cta.int

ICT Update is a bimonthly bulletin about information communication technologies for development. Each issue focuses on a specific theme relevant to ICTs for agricultural and rural development in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

Impact Assessment of ICT for Development Projects: a compendium of approaches

http://tinyurl.com/ICT-SED

Presents a set of frameworks that can be used by ICT4D practitioners, policy-makers and consultants to understand the impact of informatics initiatives in developing countries.[3]

The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD)

www.iicd.org

IICD is a non-profit foundation that specialises in ICT as a tool for development.

The Machine is Us/ing Us

http://tinyurl.com/machine-us

Educational video on Web 2.0 by Professor Michael Wesch, Kansas State University.[4]

Muti

www.muti.co.za

A social bookmarking website dedicated to content of interest to Africans or those interested in Africa. Users bookmark and vote on URLs and can add tags to bookmarks.

NewsForDev: News for development professionals

http://NewsForDev.org

NewsforDev is a CTA project that uses RSS and email to share information with agricultural development practitioners in ACP countries.

[1] Full URL: http://video.google.co.uk/videoplay?docid=-2469769595078354835

[2] Full URL: http://dgroups.org/Community.aspx?c=d84f51bb-0442-4f21-bd84-1a03e0d68cef

[3] Full URL: www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/idpm/research/publications/wp/di/di_wp36.htm

[4] Full URL: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLlGopyXT_g

Open Forum on Participatory Geographic Information Systems and Technology

www.ppgis.net

Supports community mapping for conservation, development, natural resource management and customary property rights.

Personal Media Learning Center

www.ourmedia.org/learning-center

A rich educational resource for everything you wanted to know about user-created video, audio, and other forms of citizens' media.

Social Bookmarking Sites

http://tinyurl.com/bookmarks-review

Review of the top ten social bookmarking websites.[5]

The 59 smartest non-profit organisations online

www.squidoo.com/org20

These charities were chosen for their excellence in online storytelling and collaboration with their donors and because of their use of Web 2.0 tools to engage their constituents far beyond asking them for donations.

Video for Agricultural and Rural Development

http://video.cta.int

This video portal initiated by CTA in 2004 is a collection of video clips and films about ARD issues in ACP countries. This portal shares experience/knowledge about using video for agricultural and rural development.

[5] Full URL: http://websearch.about.com/od/bestwebsites/tp/freebookmarks.htm

Web2forDev 2007 International Conference website

http://2007.web2fordev.net

This website offers a collection of resources including recorded presentations by keynote speakers at the Web2forDev conference.

Web2forDev Gateway

www.web2fordev.net

A virtual meeting point for innovators dealing with the use of Web 2.0 applications in development. Provides access to a number of related social networking spaces. Recommends websites dealing with Web 2.0 for Development.

Web2forDev WebRing

http://tinyurl.com/web2fordev-ring

This is the hub of the ring of websites, blogs and wikis sharing common interests in collaborative online applications used in the context of development work. This WebRing aims to facilitate access to relevant Web2forDev information and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.[6]

ARTICLES ON PRIVACY CONCERNS OVER WEB 2.0 TOOLS

For further discussions on issues related to Web 2.0 and privacy, censorship, terms of service and intellectual property rights see e.g.:

BBC News

http://tinyurl.com/bbcfbook

News article: 'Websites "keeping deleted photos".'[7]

[6] Full URL: http://h.webring.com/hub?ring=web20fordevelop1

[7] Full URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8060407.stm

Digiactive

http://tinyurl.com/digiactivefb

Blog post by Gaurav Mishra: 'The Perils of Facebook Activism: walled gardens, serial activists and hackers.'[8]

Eric Lee blog

http://tinyurl.com/ericlee-faceb

Blog post by Eric Lee: 'Bandwagons and Buzzwords: Facebook and the Unions.'[9]

Global Voices Advocacy

http://tinyurl.com/gvbloganon

Article by Ethan Zuckerman: 'Anonymous Blogging with Wordpress & Tor.'[10]

Wikipedia

http://tinyurl.com/wikipfbook

http://tinyurl.com/wikipmsp

Discussions related to social networking websites Facebook and MySpace.[11] [12]

EXAMPLES OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Africa ICT Network

http://ictafrica.ning.com

A networking community for people who are professionally involved in the African ICT Industry.

Development CAFE

www.thedevelopmentcafe.org

Development CAFE is an interactive online social network for development professionals for people

[8] Full URL: www.digiactive.org/2009/04/17/the-perils-of-facebook-activism-walled-gardens-serial-activists-and-hackers

[9] Full URL: www.ericlee.info/2007/11/bandwagons_and_buzzwords_faceb.html

[10] Full URL: http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/projects/guide

[11] Full URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Facebook

[12] Full URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Myspace

from all over the world to meet and interact and share information and resources based on the development sector.

The Environment Site
www.theenvironmentsite.org/forum
A social network for people interested in environmental issues.

Forest Connect
http://forestconnect.ning.com
A social network dedicated to Small and Medium Forest Enterprises (SMFEs).

i-genius
http://i-genius.org/home
Supports social change and helps members develop partnerships with established organisations.

OneWorldTV
http://tv.oneworld.net
Non-profit video-sharing network aimed at people interested in development, environment, etc.

Research and Media Network
http://researchandmedia.ning.com
A social network for people who communicate about sustainable development research.

Social Source Commons
http://socialsourcecommons.org
A useful website to find new communications tools. Lists groups of web-based tools from different people working in the non-profit sector, grouped into 'toolboxes' and ranked by popularity.

EXAMPLES OF DEVELOPMENT WIKIS

Appropedia
www.appropedia.org
This wiki explores collaborative solutions in sustainability, poverty reduction and international development through the use of appropriate technology and the sharing of project information.

Kabissa: Space for change in Africa
http://wiki.kabissa.org
An online wiki manual for African civil society organisations who want to learn more about integrating Web 2.0 technology into their work.

Telecentres-Africa
www.share4dev.info/telecentres
A platform for sharing experiences about telecentre activities in Africa. Includes a wiki which provides a collaborative space for sharing related experiences.

Web2forDev on Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web2fordev
Editable description and definition of the Web2forDev concept on Wikipedia.

WikiAdvocacy
http://wikiadvocacy.org
WikiAdvocacy is a free, reader-built guide, as well as an online community for advocacy.

WikiEducator
www.wikieducator.org
An online collaborative community project that focuses on the learning for development agenda. Search for Community Empowerment, a new and evolving section on the new WikiEducator website.

Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org
Wikipedia is a free online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit. Wikipedia is multilingual and is now the ninth most popular website in the world. Includes useful development content.

EXAMPLES OF DEVELOPMENT BLOGS

Afrigator
http://afrigator.com
Afrigator is a social media aggregator and directory built especially for African digital citizens who publish and consume content on the Web.

Alive in Baghdad
http://aliveinbaghdad.org
A website and blog dedicated to showing the conflict through the voices of Iraqis, with testimonies from individual Iraqis, footage of daily life in Iraq, and short news segments from Iraq.

Blogsessive
http://blogsessive.com
A website which includes blogging tips, Wordpress tools and plug-ins, themes and answers to your blogging related questions.

BROSDI audio blog
http://audioblog.podbean.com
The Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative audio blog about effective local agricultural practice.

Brussels Development Briefings
http://brusselsbriefings.net
This blog includes all the relevant documents about the regular development briefing sessions in Brussels on key issues and challenges for rural development in the context of EU/ACP cooperation.

CEDICT: Communication, Education and Development using ICT
http://cedict.blogspot.com
A blog about individual and community development using new information and communication technologies, especially e-learning, open educational resources, open source, Web 2.0, blogs, wikis, social networking, social

bookmarking, semantic web and other social software.

CrissCrossed

www.crisscrossed.net

CrissCrossed focuses on how social changes occur via communication, online tools, their impact, potential and challenges in the context of cultural diversity. Includes topics related to network learning and knowledge management for development.

CTA Brussels

http://brussels.cta.int

This blog shares information on key ACP-EU programmes and events from Brussels relevant to agriculture and rural development in ACP countries. Users can subscribe online to the weekly e-newsletter.

Ghana GINKS storytelling blogs

www.ginks.blogspot.com

GINKS is a network of individuals and organisations that seeks to promote ICT4D in Ghana. Includes a video blog (vlog).

Global Voices

http://globalvoicesonline.org

An international advocacy network. Collates, translates and reports on blogs and citizen media everywhere, with an emphasis on voices that are not ordinarily heard in international mainstream media.

Global Voices Advocacy: Blog for a Cause!

http://tinyurl.com/globalvoicesblog

A series of manuals focused on the topics of circumventing Internet filtering, anonymous blogging and effective use of Internet-based tools in campaigns for social and political change.[13]

I collaborate, e-collaborate, we collaborate

www.icollaborate.blogspot.com

This blog is run by the members of the E-collaboration learning community who work in development organisations based in the Netherlands.

ICT-KM Programme

http://ictkm.wordpress.com

The ICT-KM blog focuses on the promotion and support of the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and knowledge management (KM).

Indian Kisan Blog

http://kisan.wordpress.com

Discussions, data, figures and articles on issues related to food security in India.

Mashable

http://mashable.com

Mashable is the world's largest blog focused exclusively on Web 2.0 and Social Media news.

Reporters Without Borders

www.rsfblog.org

Brings together free speech activists and other Internet users who are concerned about what is happening in the world and provides a way to publish information that is censored in their own countries.

Roxanna Samii blog

http://rsamii.blogspot.com

This blog talks about development, knowledge management, change management, organisational behaviour, ICTs, rural livelihoods, leadership, management and other related subject matters.

Web2fordev Blog

http://blog.web2fordev.net

Developed during the Web2fordev 2007 conference, this blog is an archive of interesting debates and resources related to Web 2.0 methods, approaches and applications for development.

Voices of Africa

http://voicesofafrica.africanews.com

An African blog, which aims to help talented Africans build a career in media, using currently available technologies that are not yet financially affordable in Africa.

EXAMPLES OF ONLINE PLATFORMS USING MOBILE PHONES

Mobileactivism

http://mobileactive.org

A community of people and organisations using mobile phones for social impact.

Ushahidi

www.ushahidi.com

Crowdsourcing citizen reporting tool that uses FrontLine.com SMS services to enable citizens to upload and receive reports, breaking news etc. Developed for humanitarian crisis situations.

[13] Full URL: http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/projects/guide-blog-for-a-cause

RCPLA Network

In this section, we update readers on activities of the **Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network (RCPLA) Network** (www.rcpla.org) and its members. RCPLA is a diverse, international network of national-level organisations, which brings together development practitioners from around the globe. It was formally established in 1997 to promote the use of participatory approaches to development. The network is dedicated to capturing and disseminating development perspectives from the South. For more information please contact the RCPLA Network Steering Group:

RCPLA Coordination and North Africa & Middle East Region: Ali Mokhtar, Near East Foundation – Middle East Region, Center for Development Services (CDS), 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +20 2 794 7278; Email: cds.prog@neareast.org; amokhtar@nefdev.org; Website: www.neareast.org/main/cds/default.aspx

Asia Region: Tom Thomas, Director, Institute for Participatory Practices (Praxis), S-75 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi, India 110 049. Tel/Fax: +91 11 5164 2348 to 51; Email: tomt@praxisindia.org; www.praxisindia.org
Jayatissa Samaranayake, Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID), 591 Havelock Road, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka. Tel: +94 1 555521; Tel/Fax: +94 1 587361; Email: ipidc@panlanka.net

West Africa Region: Awa Faly Ba Mbow, IED-Afrique, BP 5579 Dakar Fann, Senegal. Tel: +221 33 867 10 58; Fax: +221 33 867 10 59; Email: awafba@iedafrique.org Website: www.iedafrique.org

European Region: Jane Stevens, Participation, Power and Social Change Group, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. Tel: + 44 1273 678690; Fax: + 44 1273 21202; Email: participation@ids.ac.uk; Website: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip
Participatory Learning and Action Editorial Team, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK. Tel: +44 207 388 2117; Fax: +44 207 388 2826; Email: planotes@iied.org; Website: www.planotes.org

Latin America Region: Jordi Surkin, Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participación, PO Box 3371, Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Tel/Fax: +591 3 3376076; Email: jsurkin@gntp.org; Website: www.gntp.org

Eastern Africa Region: Eliud Wakwabubi, Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK), Jabavu Road, PCEA Jitegemea Flats, Flat No. D3, PO Box 2645, KNH Post Office, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel/Fax: +254 2 716609; Email: pamfork@nbnet.co.ke

News from the RCPLA Network Coordinator

Deepening Participation for Social Change

Although the concept of participation has become a popular one in development activities, there is often a remarkable lack of an actively participatory process in the implementation of projects. Deepening Participation for Social Change was identified by the RCPLA members as the theme for the year 2008-09. In this context the network is planning a publication that aims to promote the effective adoption of the participatory approach.

This publication will present conceptual reflections on participation in development, analyse participation as an active process throughout the project cycle and identify the challenges faced in deepening the use of participatory approaches. The case of the Young Women Leadership Program (YWLP) implemented in Egypt will serve as a successful model for deepening the participatory approach for social change. The publication will also include tips on how to monitor and evaluate the process of implementing the participatory approach and will be followed by a training manual on adopting and strategising this approach.

Participatory Learning and Action 57 now available in Arabic

Readers in the Middle East and North Africa will be particularly interested to know that *PLA* 57 entitled: *Immersions: learning about poverty face-to-face* is now available online in Arabic. Guest edited by Izzy Birch and Raffaella Catani (Praxis), with Robert Chambers, the theme for this special issue centres on experiences of face-to-face learning, or immersions – opportunities for development professionals to spend a period of time living with and learning from a poor family. See www.rcpla.org/page.php?pg=publications#arabic

The RCPLA website has been updated; new publications and resources are now available at www.rcpla.org

To join the network, please contact Ms Passinte Isaak, email: pisaak@nefdev.org

News from the Asia Region: Praxis India – Institute for Participatory Practices

Workshop 09

Praxis is preparing for Workshop 09 – the Annual Praxis Commune on Participatory Development, to be held in Kerala from 30th September to 9th October. For more details see Events and Training in the **In Touch** section.

Voices of the Kosi – A pre-election people's campaign aroundf the Kosi Basin

During April 2009, Praxis coordinated a campaign in Purnia district, Bihar state to connect with inhabitants of the Kosi basin along part of the stretch of the Kosi river. The campaign was undertaken by a number of prominent civil society organisations of Bihar and media representatives. The overall aim was to give excluded, marginalised and vulnerable groups along the Kosi river an active voice in their own equitable and sustainable development.

The area between the embankments of Kosi river comprises over 380 villages and houses nearly 12 lakh people, and it exemplifies the most glaring form of exclusion from basic services and development opportunities. Since the construction of the Kosi barrage in the early 1950s and subsequent submergence of the villages, inhabitants of the area have never been provided with any recourse, in blatant violation of promises of compensation made to them by the then Prime Minister Mr. Jawahar Lal Nehru, which included provision of land, employment and houses.

Praxis initiated a boat journey across the stretch of the Kosi river between embankments to connect with the affected people for whom the river has been flooding for the last five decades. The people of the Kosi basin expressed their anger and spoke of their demands. A people's manifesto was generated in the process and each community visited by the team came up with a plan to confront candidates of the 15th Lok Sabha elections with their manifesto. Issues and vulnerabilities were profiled using participatory video, GPS and satellite imageries, and participatory research processes.

This campaign will be documented more fully in a future issue of *PLA*. For more information visit www.praxisindia.org/kosi

News from the Latin America Region: Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Partipación (GNTP)

GNTP's environment and sustainable landscapes programme is working on two key projects. With Conservation International it is running a conservation and knowledge management project that focuses on landscape conservation, sustainable economic development, comanagement and other areas. They are also starting a project to analyse Human Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Madidi landscape (Bolivia). In this project PRA methods will be used to examine how communities are feeling the impacts of climate, the adaptation mechanisms they have developed, and how climate change will affect their well-being. This participatory research will be combined with a scientific analysis of climate change models, predictions and historical weather data, to produce more rigorous project results.

GNTP is part of a new consortium with Cooperation Housing Foundation (CHF) International and the Bolivian Federation of Municipal Associations that is implementing a five year project to strengthen the management and investment capacity of municipalities in Bolivia. For more information visit www.gntp.org

News from the European Region: PPSC Group at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

The Participation, Power and Social Change (PPSC) Group at IDS has been working on a range of issues over recent months. Amongst many activities, colleagues have been facilitating a workshop in Mali focusing on rights-based approaches; convening the third and final session of the BINGO (Big International NGOs) group who have been exploring their role as agents of social change; and researching the impacts of the food, fuel and financial crisis on the world's poorest people.

Last autumn saw the publication of Robert Chambers' new book, *Revolutions in Development Inquiry*, published by Earthscan, which was launched at the Edinburgh Radical Book Fair. Also published by the team were the IDS Bulletins *Reclaiming Feminism: Gender and Neoliberalism* (Cornwall, A.) and *Intergeneartional Transmissions: Cultivating Agency?* (Moncrieffe, J.). The Citizenship Development Research Centre published the IDS Focus Policy Briefing 05, *Building Responsive States: Citizen Action and National Policy Change* and the Pathways of Women's Empowerment programme published *Conceptualising Women's Empowerment in International Development Agencies* (Eyben, R. and Napier-Moore, R.).

Applications are now open for the

2009 Masters Programme in Participation, Power and Social Change which will commence in October this year. This action learning course offers experienced development workers and social change activists the opportunity to critically reflect on their practice while deepening their knowledge and skills. For more information on the MA or any of the activities please contact ppsc@ids.ac.uk

News from the European Region: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

Democratising the governance of food and agricultural research

The latest chapter of an online multimedia book in the making *Towards Food Sovereignty. Reclaiming autonomous food systems* focuses on the need to transform agricultural research. It also addresses the politics of knowledge associated with conservation and natural resource use as well as notions of cognitive justice and equivalency between indigenous knowledge systems and western science. Authored by Michel Pimbert, the chapter is called "Transforming knowledge and ways of knowing."

Pimbert proposes a new way of working in which policy makers, scientists and local people set strategic research priorities together, and in which research serves local interests ahead of those of private companies and technocratic elites. He proposes a two pronged approach. The first gives a more central place to farmers and other citizens in the actual governance and running of a strengthened public research system. The second seeks to expand horizontal networks of knowledge producers and users to enhance learning and action *by, with* and *for* people.

Download the chapter at www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=G02493

Promoting practical, just and sustainable forest use using films

As part of the **Forest Governance Learning Group**, IIED's partners are working with a filmmaker to prepare short videos to show that many key forest problems are related to social justice, and that such problems *can* be worked on, and how this can be achieved. These films will include an overview plus case studies from Malawi, Ghana, Vietnam and Uganda, as well as material contributed by Forest Governance Learning Group members in several other African and Asian countries. The films are due to be completed by autumn 2009. Further information on the Forest Governance Learning Group is available on the IIED website: www.iied.org/natural-resources/key-issues/forestry/forest-governance-learning-group

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- *Articles*: max. 2500 words plus illustrations – see below for guidelines.
- *Feedback*: letters to the editor, or longer pieces (max. 1500 words) which respond in more detail to articles.
- *Tips for trainers*: training exercises, tips on running workshops, reflections on behaviour and attitudes in training, etc., max. 1000 words.
- *In Touch*: short pieces on forthcoming workshops and events, publications, and online resources.

We welcome accounts of recent experiences in the field (or in workshops) and current thinking around participation, and particularly encourage contributions from practitioners in the South. Articles should be co-authored by all those engaged in the research, project, or programme.

In an era in which participatory approaches have often been viewed as a panacea to development problems or where acquiring funds for projects has depended on the use of such methodologies, it is vital to pay attention to the quality of the methods and process of participation. Whilst we will continue to publish experiences of innovation in the field, we would like to emphasise the need to analyse the limitations as well as the successes of participation. *Participatory Learning and Action* is still a series whose focus is methodological, but it is important to give more importance to issues of power in the process and to the impact of participation, asking ourselves who sets the agenda for participatory practice. It is only with critical analysis that we can further develop our thinking around participatory learning and action.

We particularly favour articles which contain one or more of the following elements:
- an **innovative** angle to the concepts of participatory approaches or their application;
- **critical reflections** on the lessons learnt from the author's experiences;
- an attempt to develop **new methods**, or innovative adaptations of existing ones;
- consideration of **the processes** involved in participatory approaches;
- an assessment of the **impacts** of a participatory process;
- potentials and limitations of **scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches**; and,
- potentials and limitations of **participatory policy-making processes**.

Language and style
Please try to keep contributions clear and accessible. Sentences should be short and simple. Avoid jargon, theoretical terminology, and overly academic language. Explain any specialist terms that you do use and spell out acronyms in full.

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Please include a brief abstract with your article (circa. 150-200 words).

References
If references are mentioned, please include details. *Participatory Learning and Action* is intended to be informal, rather than academic, so references should be kept to a minimum.

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Format
We accept handwritten articles but please write legibly. Typed articles should be double-spaced. Please keep formatting as simple as possible. Avoid embedded codes (e.g. footnotes/endnotes, page justification, page numbering).

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Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network
Since June 2002, the IIED Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action has now housed by the Institute of Development Studies, UK. Practical information and support on participation in development is also available from the various members of the RCPLA Network.

This initiative is a global network of resource centres for participatory learning and action, which brings together 15 organisations from Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe. The RCPLA Network is committed to information sharing and networking on participatory approaches.

Each member is itself at the centre of a regional or national network. Members share information about activities in their respective countries, such as training programmes, workshops and key events, as well as providing PLA information focused on the particular fields in which they operate.

More information, including regular updates on RCPLA activities, can be found in the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*, or by visiting www.rcpla.org, or contacting the network coordinator: Ali Mokhtar, CDS, Near East Foundation, 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, 10th Floor, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +2 2 794 7278; Email: amokhtar@nefdev.org

Participation at IDS
Participatory approaches and methodologies are also a focus for the Participation, Power and Social Change Group at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This group of researchers and practitioners is involved in sharing knowledge, in strengthening capacity to support quality participatory approaches, and in deepening understanding of participatory methods, principles, and ethics. It focuses on South-South sharing, exchange visits, information exchange, action research projects, writing, and training. Services include a Participation Resource Centre (open weekdays) with an online database detailing materials held. The Group also produces a newsletter and operates an email distribution list.

For further information please contact: Jane Stevens, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK.
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Web 2.0 tools and approaches are radically changing the ways we create, share, collaborate and publish digital information through the Internet. Participatory Web 2.0 for development – or Web2forDev for short – is a way of employing web services to intentionally improve information-sharing and online collaboration for development. Web 2.0 presents us with new opportunities for change – as well as challenges – that we need to better understand and grasp. This special issue shares learning and reflections from practice and considers the ways forward for using Web 2.0 for development.

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