

Abstract

A Better World is Possible: An Invitation to Believe and Make It Happen

Alfonso Molina

Introduction

On 11-12 December 2002, in Rome, a workshop on e-inclusion brought together representatives of “senior” and “youth” multiplier organisations working to help reduce the digital divide between “the have” and “the have-not” areas of the world. The purpose was to search, encourage and help exploit synergies potentially existing between the aims and activities of diverse e-inclusion organisations. This report builds on these foundations and identifies a series of programmatic *spaces for action* as well as possible governance for the future evolution of the *global e-inclusion movement* (GeM).

e-Inclusion Action Spaces (eAS)

In Rome, the workshop participants identified many areas of e-inclusion activity and mechanisms. These have given rise to the following fourteen e-inclusion action spaces

Action Space 1 – Ecological ICT Recycling for e-Inclusion. Many people and organizations give away ‘obsolete’ IT equipment. The task for the movement is to support the scaling up and beneficial impact of this activity to the maximum and for the benefit of as many excluded people as possible. This means *collecting, transporting and supporting the effective implementation of the IT equipment in a context of capacity-development (e.g. capacity for adaptation to local conditions, use, maintenance, repair, and training)*.

Action Space 2 – Twinning for e-Inclusion. Today, it is common for cities and schools to twin i.e., *establish relationships with a spirit of partnership to support and learn from each other through exchange visits and support to specific programmes of action.* This concept has huge potential for global scaling up by (a) expanding what is happening already to the maximum potential and (b) expanding the concept to other areas of activity such as higher education, health and even business and NGOs.

Action Space 3 – Business Relations for e-Inclusion. This action space seeks to scale up and build on actions of importance for e-inclusion already implemented by the private sector. At least two generic lines of action can be distinguished:

(a) Business knowledge-support and funding by philanthropic entrepreneurs or organizations, focused on supporting business plan and development of e-inclusion grassroot projects.

(b) *Win-Win e-inclusion value networks*, focused on exploiting opportunities to contribute gainfully to e-inclusion in the local and international value chains or networks of every type of organization.

Action Space 4 – Learning environment on e-Inclusion innovation and entrepreneurship.

This e-inclusion learning space is focused on helping build systematically strategic innovation and entrepreneurship capacities of e-inclusion grassroot projects and, more widely, of all those people in leadership and influential positions in all types of organizations concerned with social responsibility for a better world.

Action Space 5 – e-Volunteering for e-Inclusion. This e-inclusion volunteer space is focused on joining forces to expand systematically and to the maximum expression the enormous potential of e-volunteering activity. Inside the environment of the global movement, e-volunteering clearly has synergies with, for instance, “university twinning” and “environmental ICT recycling.”

Action Space 6 – e-Government for e-Inclusion (e-Citizenship for ALL). This e-government for e-inclusion space is focused on joining forces to work and promote the implementation of e-government to strengthen e-democracy and e-citizenship for all, including transparency, accountability and citizens’ participation at all levels of government.

Action Space 7 – Free/Open Software for E-Inclusion. This e-inclusion space is focused on joining forces to work and promote the development and implementation of free / open source software (FOSS) for e-inclusion. It is closely linked to e-government in that many governments are implementing, planning or considering adopting FOSS.

Action Space 8 – Awards for e-Inclusion (Many Challenges, One Spirit). This “awards for e-inclusion space” is focused on the systematic identification of synergies and collaboration between all Challenges and other awards to enhance the impact of the value delivered to projects.

Action Space 9 - WSIS for e-Inclusion (up to 2005). This “WSIS for e-inclusion space” is focused on the exploitation of synergies between the GeM and the WSIS process leading to Geneva, December 2003. The aims are: (a) participating and influencing the information-society agendas of governments and other high-level forums on the information society, and (b) enhancing the opportunities and impact of value delivered to grassroot projects through the promotion of appropriate governance and concrete programme of actions.

Action Space 10 – Fund-raising for e-Inclusion. This action space focuses on the identification of sources, preparation of strategies for fund-raising and definition of norms and procedures to ensure transparency, accountability and best value to and from all projects and activities associated to the movement. An important concept of the fund raising is the clicking mechanism that combines elements of e-advertising with awareness raising and donation.

Action Space – 11 - Culture and Intellectual Work for e-Inclusion. The goal of this e-inclusion action space is to create two interrelated spaces - like the left and right sides of the single brain- that together synergize, energize and give visibility to existing and new cultural and intellectual work focused on the information society for all. The resulting multi-cultural/intellectual work of artists and intellectuals will become the critical consciousness of the movement and its members will be people from everywhere who contribute notably to the visionary, philosophical, political and practical thinking for the information society for all.

Action Space 12 – Advocacy, Campaigning and Lobbying for e-Inclusion. This action space cut across all others and can manifest itself through multiple themes, at multiple layers of action and making use of equally multiple means. Thus some advocacy, campaigning and lobbying will be at the overall level of the movement, others will be confined to specific e-inclusion action spaces, etc. Media is a special case and we should aim for establishing a meaningful relation not just for visibility but also for highlighting aspects and actions that will have a high educational impact about the spirit, results and impact of the programmatic movement.

Action Space 13 – Specific e-Inclusion Actions. This e-inclusion action space is closely associated to all others in that it suggests possible areas for targeted campaigning and actions by all other action lines. They are also opportunities to link the e-inclusion movement to other movements that are tackling these target areas in a dedicated way. In the Rome workshop there were organizations dedicated to the following areas: e-Inclusion for Indigenous Peoples; ICTs for Environment, ICTs for AIDS, ICT for Gender Balance, ICT for Youth, CT for Civil and Human Rights and, more generally, freedom, justice and peace.

Action Space 14 – Movement’s Solidarity for e-Inclusion. This action space is intended for valuable grassroot e-inclusion projects that for reasons beyond the responsibility and control of the leadership find themselves in a crisis that threatens their survival, with consequent loss of important resources/services for people from poor areas of the world.

Reflections on Workable Organization for the Global e-Inclusion Movement

The inescapable pre-condition for making a reality of GeM is the *firm belief and motivation* that by working together, exploiting for everybody the opportunities of the new technology, we can bring about change. Nothing is set and we must all participate, propose, and think boldly about a GeM’s flexible and inclusive working structure that maintains a strong focus on: *people, empowerment, transparency, accountability and e-democracy; distributed leadership; not re-inventing the wheel; dreaming big and implementing pragmatically.* Figure 1 gives an idea of the multiple organizational dimensions of the global e-inclusion movement and helps to conceptualize a workable structure,

governance and, above all, starting a flexible process that through the concepts of “e-inclusion cybercell” (eCC), “e-inclusion project” (eIP) and “e-inclusion action space” (eAS).

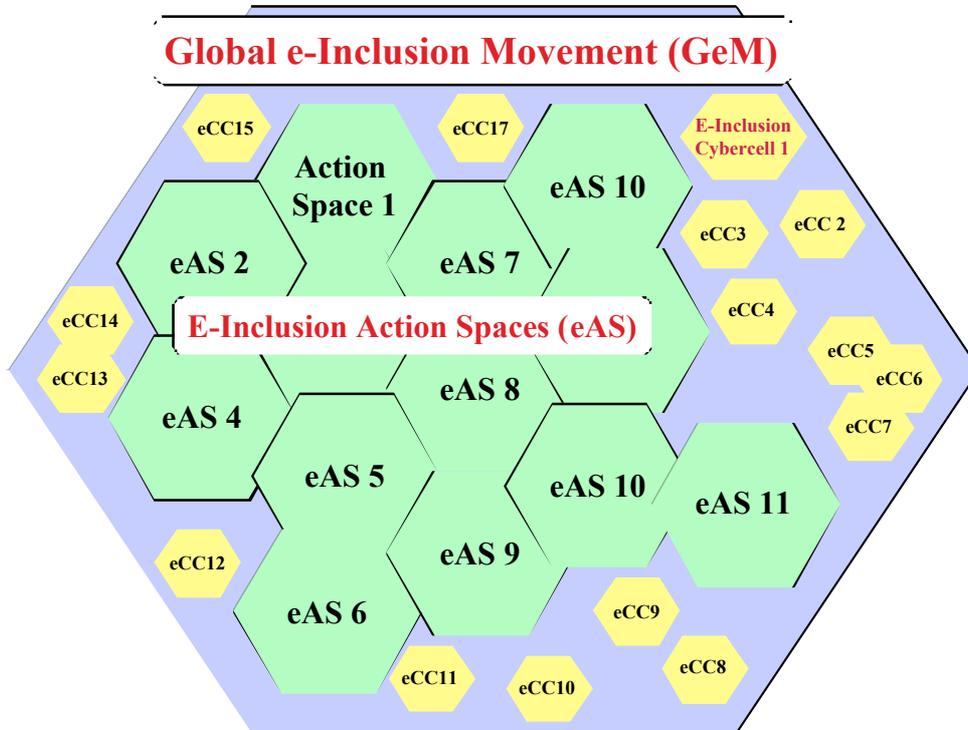


Figure 1. Multi-dimensional Organizational View of Global e-Inclusion Movement (GeM)

For the sake of simplicity the GeM diagram of Figure 1 contains 4 levels only:

Cybercells, the fundamental organizational unit of the movement, made up of social (e.g., people, groups, organizations, etc.) and technical constituents (e.g., computers, infrastructure, etc.) *Cybercells* emerge to explore, define and potentially consolidate a partnership or alliance around a desired e-inclusion target or objective and thus potentially leading to an e-Inclusion Project or (eIP) even an e-Inclusion Action Space (eAS).

e-Inclusion Projects (eIPs), alliances or partnerships with well-defined e-inclusion objectives, organization and work-programmes either operational or proposal stage under negotiation, and including all types of supporters..

e-Inclusion Action Spaces (eAS), made up of a set of e-inclusion projects (eIPs) working together in a common large-scale targeted programme of work, including relevant e-inclusion cybercells and all types of supporters. An eAS can legitimately be seen as an e-inclusion movement with an specialized focus and the ultimate target is to give rise to a multiplicity of them.

Global e-Inclusion Movement (GeM), made up of all e-Inclusion Action Spaces focused on specific large-scale programmatic actions and including all e-inclusion projects, e-inclusion cybercells as well as all types of supporters. It is the broadest level and much of its governance is actually the accumulated projection of the governance of e-Inclusion Action Spaces just discussed

Reflections on Governance Aspects of the Global e-Inclusion Movement

The emergence and development of the e-inclusion movement has a fundamentally democratic nature and governance because, if it is to succeed, it will be on the basis of shared vision, motivation, and commitment to work together for a better world. Thus *democratic consensus* should be the main means of decision making at all levels.

e-Democracy and Empowerment at GeM and eAS Levels. Some decisions will have direct implications for all members of the movement. In this case, I suggest that the alternatives should be presented to the movement for an e-debate and e-consultation during a limited period and *consensus should be sought on the basis of (1) what is best for the growth of the movement and its impact on the grassroot., and (2) what is best for the ensured programmatic and logistic success of the event that generated the debate.,* If consensus is not reached within this period, then we have to experiment with e-democracy. For instance, a final decision may be reached via majority e-vote by GeM's members or, possibly, by *an international group of trusted individuals* coming from all continents (individuals with high reputation for wisdom, ethics and commitment to a better world).

Stimulating Balanced Empowerment in the Development of GeM. A major issue in empowerment is to seek to foster *inclusiveness of stakeholder-groups' representation* in the distributed leadership of all eASs, particularly of youth, women, disabled and from different cultural regions of the world. GeM should all strive to bring generational, gender, disability and cultural ("*gendiscul*") presence from cybercell to GeM. Of course, the extent and the way this is done are a matter for local decisions, particularly, at the level of cybercells and e-inclusion projects where matters of expertise and effectiveness count heavily.

The Web Presence of the Global e-Inclusion Movement

The movement will have a multi-level website presence following the dimensions of e-inclusion cybercell (eCC), e-inclusion project (eIP), e-inclusion action space (eAS) and global e-inclusion movement (GeM). Individual and organizational members of the movement are free to create and innovate web actions and to set linkages and interactions in all directions. The latter

increase the movement's "connectivity density" with the result that web visitors are able to access the movement's "cyberspace" from a huge variety of places.

In terms of responsibility, it should be clear that at *cybercell* and *project level*, website creation, place, image, functionality, running, and servicing are the complete responsibility of the organizations involved in the eCC or eIP. At *e-inclusion action space* level the same responsibility should ideally be the responsibility of the organizations that are the acknowledged pioneers and leaders in the area. At GeM level, the website image, functionality, running, and servicing will be the responsibility of the www.e-inclusionsite.org which will be transformed to reflect the requirements of the new state of development of the process of movement building.

Real-time Evaluation Methodology as Learning Factor in the Evolution of GeM

One of the problems that has undermined the credibility of worthwhile efforts to tackle poverty and exclusion over the years has been the lack of evaluation and measures that can show (a) how they have helped to make a difference in relation to the situation at the start and, hence the value delivered to communities and people on the ground; and (b) the evolution of the initiatives through longitudinal assessment that provides a periodical view of their progress and hence a possibility of learning and improving in real time

In a movement that aims to make a significant long-term contribution to a better world this must improve for a variety of strong reasons: accountability, transparency, codification of effective-practices, learning together and, ultimately, to deliver better value to communities and people. We will implement a real-time evaluation designed to contribute to the development of GeM, by making explicit achievements, difficulties, challenges and weaknesses, and with the findings and lessons periodically fed back into the evolving constituency-building processes of cybercells, eIPs, eAS and ultimately GeM. Such an evaluation would go beyond examining achievements against common quantitative committed targets. It would seek to reveal the deeper qualitative developments of human networks and range of different values added by the initiatives to organizations, communities and individuals that are the intended beneficiary targets.

Next Steps to Implement to Advance the GeM from Now to WSIS Geneva (December 2003)

The pre-condition for starting the process of movement-building is in one word found in the title of this paper: believing. Then we can proceed to invite not only similar type of stakeholders but others as well, for instance, foundations, companies, governments, projects, civil society, etc. working for an e-inclusion. This process should be organic, however, and should also have clear targets to be reached within a meaningful period of time.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to take place in Geneva in December 2003 offers a “natural” opportunity and date for GeM to complete its “conception” phase by generating both: (1) a sizeable active constituency organized into cybercells, eIPs and eASs, and (2) an attractive and realistic programme of work and targets at all levels of cybercell, eIP, eAS and GeM and, ideally covering all e-inclusion action spaces. The GeM’s workprogramme could then be made public at WSIS Geneva to benefit from the concentrated governmental, international, NGO, civil society presence as well as from the wide media attention that the event is expected to generate on the area of e-inclusion.

If we accept this WSIS target, then we have roughly 9 months to work from about end-March, with March left for comments and feedback on this document. The 8 months could in turn be divided into two phases with the first phase (1st April to 31st July 2003) starting the systematic work of populating the movement’s e-inclusion action spaces and leading to setting up credible eAS constituencies with initial frameworks and workprogrammes. The second phase (1st August to 1st December 2003) would deepen this development and would finalize the GeM workprogrammes to be launched publicly during WSIS Geneva. In order to succeed, I think the following activities should be implemented during the first phase until end of July 2003:

Opening of provisional web-interaction spaces at the www.e-inclusion.org and/or any appropriate site in order to facilitate the formation of cybercells or the nomination of existing eIPs

Begin populating the movement with existing and/or new cybercells, eIPs, and eAS. I invite you to take the lead now, thus making a reality of GeM’s concept of distributed leadership.

Call for and collect manifestations of interest by organizations that wish to play an active role in the available e-action spaces, with their expectations and potential contributions.

Opening of interactive web spaces to stimulate and moderate the initial definition of eAS’s frameworks and workprogrammes primarily focused on synergy identification and exploitation

Completion (end-July) of initial frameworks and workprogrammes containing first definitions of targets with estimated timelines, funding needs and potential funding sources.

Following the first phase, the following activities should be implemented by WSIS December 2003

Deepening of all activities started during the first phase, leading to a stronger constituency and to a new version of the www.e-inclusion.org for GeM.

Completion of GeM document to be launched at Geneva and containing 5-year evolutionary eASs’ work-programmes and targets that show clear synergies among e-inclusion action spaces.

Completion of preparations for public launch of GeM workprogramme, including press releases and wide promotion to WSIS participants.

Kick off of promotional campaign to governments and high-level forums in order to encourage the adoption of the GeM's programme both individually and as WSIS resolution.

In addition to these proposals, the following must also be implemented by the time of Geneva:

eAS 3 - Consider starting a web's *e-inclusion 'mentor' space* made up of all those "business-relations" experiences willing to share their business/operational models and answer questions.

eAS 8 - Lend support to the Youth Challenge for WSIS, the Stockholm Challenge and the other challenges already open for entries.

eAS 10 - Tuesday of every week will be a "clicking day" with the first "clicking day" starting on Tuesday 11th of March 2003. It is urgent to clear the "debt" we have with our current sponsors to raise further funding for project in poor areas of the world.

eAS 11 – Support the Youth Arts Expo for WSIS and begin collecting *proposals* of names from all continents for the scientific committee.

eAS 13 - *Specific e-Inclusion action Spaces.* Work with *eAS 12* (i.e. advocacy, campaigning) to generate an initial definition of movement's campaigning themes.

eAS 14 - Begin putting in place accreditation mechanism, maybe a small GeM's panel of people with access to information on the ground.

Clearly there is plenty of good work to do. This however should not be a reason for a weakening of the will in front of the historical endeavour. It is crucial that a large, visible, global e-inclusion leadership emerges and is able to communicate to the world a recognizable common message focused on people and the elimination of exclusion and poverty from the emerging knowledge society. This should become the strong, loud "voice" of the movement, a "voice" fundamentally focused on the grassroot and for the grassroot. This should be the base of the movement's authority and of its eventual success in this crossroad 21st century.

Rome, 2nd March 2003