



# U.S. Agency for International Development Digital Opportunity in the Developing World

December 2003

*For more than forty years, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been able to draw on its experience in building capacity and on the technological strength of the United States to introduce a number of ground-breaking successes in applying Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to development.*

## Challenges

USAID and others have made tremendous progress in providing new digital opportunity to the developing world. Yet billions of people remain out of touch with the benefits of the



dot-COM Alliance

Senegalese students take part in their school's TechnoFair to introduce use of computers in classrooms.

information revolution, particularly the rural and low-income populations of developing countries. Technological advances in recent years, such as new wireless access devices, have opened the possibility of affordable access for billions of new users worldwide. USAID must take advantage of

these advances and continue to pursue the removal of policy and regulatory barriers so that the "last mile" can be bridged in reaching these billions of people.

## Strategic Approach

For USAID, ICT is important both as a means and as an end— a tool for development as well as an economic sector to be developed. USAID's strategic approach to ICT for development has five principal elements:

- 1. Partnerships:** Collaborate with partners to provide the financial and technological resources needed to build and use ICT capabilities in developing countries.
- 2. Policy reform:** Promote pro-competitive legal, policy, and regulatory reform in telecommunications and electronic commerce.
- 3. Access:** Expand ICT access for under-served populations—particularly the poor, rural residents, ethnic minorities and women.

**4. Capacity building:** Develop the capacity of government and non-government institutions and individuals to use ICT for development.

**5. Applications:** Demonstrate innovative ICT applications across all development objectives.

## Highlights

Within each of these strategic elements and across all development sectors, USAID has a number of successes to show for its decades of work in ICT. Here is a sample of the more than 350 current USAID ICT activities:

## Partnerships

- Since 1999, USAID has collaborated with Cisco Systems to expand workforce training for ICT technicians to 89 Cisco Academies in 32 countries with over 5000 students enrolled — 25 percent are women.  
[cisco.netacad.net](http://cisco.netacad.net)
- The Digital Opportunity through Technology and Communications (DOT-COM) Alliance is a partnership between USAID and more than 75 partners— each with specialized expertise in using ICT for development.  
[www.dot-com-alliance.org](http://www.dot-com-alliance.org)
- The Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI) of the Bush Administration places volunteers in businesses and community centers in Senegal, Peru and Indonesia to provide small businesses and entrepreneurs with ICT skills and knowledge.  
[www.dfi.gov](http://www.dfi.gov)

**Technicians install and test** a radio system that links the Kabul-based Afghanistan government with its 32 provincial governments for the first time in the country's history.

USAID Office of Transition Initiatives



## Policy

- Through the joint Telecom Leadership Program (TLP), USAID and the State Department have provided expertise from federal agencies in support of numerous regional workshops, training programs, and international conferences.  
[www.state.gov/e/eb/cjp](http://www.state.gov/e/eb/cjp)

*USAID is a leader in helping developing nations close the digital divide and apply ICT to all sectors of development. Today, numerous USAID activities have an ICT component, ranging from Teacher Training Resource Centers in Namibia to courtroom automation software in Mongolia and from rural access policy in Nigeria to support for training at the U.S. Telecommunications Training Institute (USTTI).*

- NetTel@Africa has developed a comprehensive curriculum for training IT policy and regulatory officials and has developed a growing network of more than 20 higher education institutions in the U.S. and Africa offering joint degrees in this area.  
[www.nettelafrika.org](http://www.nettelafrika.org)



Jeff Cochrane

- USAID has collaborated with the Department of Justice and the State Department to promote international and regional cooperation in combating cyber-crime and enhancing cyber-security.  
[www.abanet.org/abapubs/books/5450030I/](http://www.abanet.org/abapubs/books/5450030I/)

**Outdoor equipment with solar panels**, deep-cycle batteries, satellite dish, and transceiver provides Internet access in the rural area of Churubamba, Huanuco Province, in Peru.

## Access

- The Leland Initiative established the principal Internet gateway and national connection for 10 African countries and provided an estimated 2 million Africans with Internet access, a number that is growing daily.  
[www.usaid.gov/leland/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/leland/index.html)
- Between 1996 and 2003, the LearnLink Program established a number of sustainable networks of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in Bulgaria, Ghana, Paraguay, and several other countries.  
[learnlink.aed.org/index.html](http://learnlink.aed.org/index.html)
- Peace Corps, Freedom Corps, and Geek Corps volunteers help local entrepreneurs in all regions of the world to adapt the latest technologies to bridge the "last mile" to afford access for the disadvantaged.  
[www.geekcorps.org](http://www.geekcorps.org)

## Capacity Building

- Throughout the past 20 years, USAID's \$10 million investment in the U.S. Telecommunications Training Institute (USTTI) has leveraged more than \$45 million from the private sector for policy and regulatory courses and has provided a vital source of funding for USTTI trainees.  
[www.ustti.org](http://www.ustti.org)
- USAID and the IT Association of America (ITAA) have established the IT Mentors Alliance for IT business associations to ensure they have the capacity to actively and effectively engage policymakers.  
[www.witsa.org](http://www.witsa.org)
- USAID has joined with IBM, Coca-Cola, and other firms to create IT workforce training centers for youth in poor communities in Brazil. Similar programs are also being developed in other countries.  
[www.programaparaofuturo.org.br](http://www.programaparaofuturo.org.br)

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