

# Common standards for e-Governance solutions



Mark Fleeton

*“There is a strong case for inter-governmental collaboration to jointly develop common e-Government solutions - a principal reason for the creation of the DG Foundation,” says Mark Fleeton in an Interview to i4d’s Jayalakshmi Chittoor*

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**? What are the key issues addressed by Development Gateway Foundation (DGF)?**

The Development Gateway Foundation provides web-based tools to strengthen governance and make development efforts more effective by increasing efficiency in government procurement, improving financial management and aid coordination, and enabling knowledge sharing and collaboration among development practitioners around the world.

**? How are ICTs appropriated for playing a facilitating role in addressing the issues?**

The Foundation specialises in affordable e-Government solutions for developing countries based on open source software and common standards. While markets for enterprise and consumer software may still be reasonably competitive because development costs can be shared across very large numbers of users, this is not the case in government. There are only about 200 national governments, and governments tend to have many unique requirements and business processes that are not met by enterprise and consumer software. The result is that a very large share of e-Government software is custom-made. This may be affordable in high-income countries, but for many poor and small countries, it puts e-Government out of reach. There is thus a strong case for inter-governmental collaboration to jointly develop common e-Government solutions – a principal reason for the creation of the Development Gateway Foundation.

**? What is the most important ICT tool being used to fight against the problems?**

The Foundation currently has two flagship web-based applications to make aid and development efforts more effective. These are the Aid Management Platform (AMP)

and dgMarket. AMP enables governments to manage, coordinate and track aid flows.

It is designed for use by governments and their development partners. It increases efficiency by lowering the workload. In addition, AMP helps countries manage development resources according to national priorities and measure impact in line with the Millennium Development Goals

dgMarket is an online procurement system that publishes tender notices, contract awards, and bidding documents. It creates major savings in government spending, while giving companies of all sizes greater access to tender opportunities at home and abroad in their own language

**? How the persisting poverty issues being tackled by DGF globally?**

While the Development Gateway Foundation’s programmes are not directly about poverty alleviation, it acts as a catalyst for development by making international aid go further. The Aid Management Platform leads to significant efficiency gains by helping donors to coordinate aid flows and recipient governments to track and report on aid flows. The online procurement system, dgMarket, enables savings by opening government procurement to greater public scrutiny and cost-cutting competition.

**? Please enlighten on your programmes of knowledge collaborations and local partners.**

In addition to providing e-Government tools, the Foundation also runs global online networks for knowledge sharing and collaboration, called dgCommunities. These enable development practitioners to be more effective in their work by networking with peers, allowing them to access and share information on best practices in their field. Currently dgCommunities caters to over

36,000 registered users. Collaboration is at the heart of dgCommunities. More than 500 individuals and organisations work as volunteer guides and advisors for online communities in 30 topic areas. They are specialists in their fields, and come from around the world. The Foundation also provides seed funding and technical assistance to a network of locally-owned and managed social enterprises called Country Gateways.

They run web portals on local development issues and provide an array of web-related services to serve local needs particularly in e-Business, e-Government and e-Learning.

**? Kindly elucidate on extension of aid being provided for e-Governance enhancement activities for developing nations**

The Foundation's e-Government Grants Programme addresses institutional development and capacity-building in the context of broader, country-led initiatives and e-Government strategies. The programme is focused on e-Procurement with three projects underway in Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. It has mainly been financed by the Government of

Italy with significant co-financing by the World Bank.

**? How far have the ICT enabled e-Governance practices of DGF proved to be effective and, replicable?**

The potential impact of the online procurement system, dgMarket, is significant. The introduction of a system equivalent to dgMarket, combined with adequate business processes and vigorous enforcement of tendering rules, could save developing countries 5-20 percent of public sector acquisition costs through increased transparency and competition. An analysis for World Bank tenders concluded that the introduction of dgMarket is saving the World Bank borrowers about 0.5-1.5 percent (\$50-150 million) per year.

dgMarket is the leading independent aggregator of procurement tenders worldwide. It is increasing its coverage rapidly, with China and the United States joining in 2006. In addition to the global platform, partners have implemented local versions of dgMarket including a country portal for India and a regional application for the Middle East. The potential impact

of a common aid management platform adoption worldwide is substantial – a 1 percent improvement in aid effectiveness is equivalent to about \$1 billion per year in additional aid funds. After implementation of the Aid Management Platform (AMP) in Ethiopia the Development Gateway Foundation conducted a survey within the Ministry of Finance. The intention of the survey was to assess the efficiency gains as a result of the use of the AMP software and the training given to existing staff. Early results indicate significant time savings in reporting and project and portfolio management. Initial survey results indicate that the government reporting costs were halved after the adoption of AMP. Beyond financial benefits, the platform also yields considerable additional benefits as a result of increased dialogue, coordination and cooperation among governments and donors.

The Aid Management Platform was piloted in Ethiopia. An implementation is underway in Bolivia and implementations are pending in several additional countries. The Foundation anticipates four implementations completed by the end of FY 2007. ■

## AMARC fosters community radio

The 2007-2010 strategic plan of AMARC aims to address poverty, and looks into empowerment issues of the marginalised groups inclusive of gender to promote social justice and sustainability, democracy and participatory human development through popular media and, ICTs, besides fostering community radio along the principles of solidarity and international cooperation.

### I. Advocacy and policy research

- Advocacy for community media at the national, regional and international level Global activities
- Policy research, monitoring and knowledge exchange
- Solidarity activities including response to urgent calls from community radios threatened with closure or other interference and country solidarity missions

### II. Knowledge sharing and capacity building

- Training of trainers, managers and producers
- Knowledge sharing and research
- Technical guidance and support

### III. Content exchange and social action campaigns

- Regional news and features services in Latin America, Africa and Asia

- Community media reporting from international forums and events
- Social action broadcast campaigns on HIV/AIDS, health, environment, migration, anti-racism, food security, water, sanitation and interactive platform for programme exchange

### IV. Gender equality and women's rights

- Joint international broadcast campaigns
- Advocacy on media and gender
- Training and capacity building
- Networking and knowledge sharing

### V. Network development and communication

- Network communications and meetings
- Partnerships for development
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Dissemination of results
- Organisational development
- AMARC Regional and World Conferences of Community Radio Broadcasters ■

Source: [http://amarcwiki.amarc.org/wiliki.cgi?Strategic\\_Plan-2007-2010](http://amarcwiki.amarc.org/wiliki.cgi?Strategic_Plan-2007-2010)