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U.S. CENTER
FOR
CITIZEN
DIPLOMACY

U.S. SUMMIT & INITIATIVE FOR GLOBAL CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

NOVEMBER 16-19, 2010 | WASHINGTON, DC

THE ROLE OF NEW MEDIA IN ADVANCING CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

ROUNDTABLE

David Nassar | CO-CHAIR

Anoush Rima Tatevossian | CO-CHAIR



EVERY CITIZEN A DIPLOMAT

NEW TOOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

As Co-Chairs of the New Media Roundtable for the 2010 Summit on Citizen Diplomacy we are proud to offer this report. This report was compiled with the assistance of all the roundtable members, without whose support it would not have been possible. The co-chairs also wish to thank Ms. Katie Dowd, New Media Director for the U.S. Department of State and State Department Liaison to this Roundtable for her support and participation.

We want to offer a word on methodology. After fairly extensive research, the co-chairs determined that very little has been written evaluating objectively the use of new media in citizen diplomacy. Therefore, we developed this report from interviews with people currently active and experimenting in the field, specifically Roundtable members but some others who are cited throughout the document. Any errors, however, in our conclusions are ours alone and should not be attributed to those who offered first-hand observations from their hands-on work.

David Nassar

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CEO & Founder, Hotspot Digital

Anoush Rima Tatevossian

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NEW MEDIA ROUNDTABLE

INTRODUCTION

NEW MEDIA IN CITIZEN DIPLOMACY PROJECTS

I. Virtual Exchanges

Soliya; Project Einstein, Live Mocha

II. Communities of Practice/Networks of Common Interest

Alliance for Youth Movements; MobileActive.org; I Know Politics; Crisis Mappers; BarCamp

III. Facilitating Dialogue & Sharing Media

Global Voices Online; IndyMedia; Small World News; Meedan.net

IV. Crowdsourcing Solutions

Ushahidi; Access Now; SamaSource

V. Conflict Transformation

One Voice Movement; MidEast Youth; VideoLetters Project

VI. Advocacy and Virtual Support for Global Social Causes

Genocide Intervention Network (GI-Net); Save Darfur; iACT; Invisible Children;
One Million Voices Against FARC; Survivors Connect; Avaaz.org

CONCLUSIONS AND STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIX: HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Citizen diplomacy requires communication and rests on the soft foundation of developing a community of shared interests that reaches across cultural, linguistic and national divides. The rise of the Internet has created new forms of communication, facilitating the development of new kinds of communities, and thereby creating new opportunities for citizens to serve in their role as diplomats.

The forms of communication that are possible because of the Internet are different than traditional media, because it is less expensive and it is flexible, allowing for communication when you want it and how you want it. This has affected all aspects of our lives, and naturally it has affected our potential to engage and communicate internationally. What has come to be known as Web 2.0 has been particularly conducive to citizen diplomacy efforts, as it allows people to collaborate, create, publish and share content, comment and chat with each other in real-time and, certainly, across borders.

Of course, potential is only that, and while when viewed in the aggregate the number of tools available to enhance communication between peoples are staggering, some serious obstacles remain. These include language and access, among others. As of yet, the language barrier has been straddled but not overcome. Online translation tools such as Google Translate and Yahoo Babelfish, make it possible to translate quickly but it is still consecutive rather than simultaneous translation and the accuracy rate leaves a lot to be desired. Additionally, access to the Internet globally is still limited to a fairly small audience (at approximately 1.8 billion Internet users worldwide). Cell phones and SMS technology are much more predominant and are progressively saturating even the most remote communities in the world (at approximately 5 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide), however, due to wide discrepancies between cost, network access and handset platforms between countries they are more limited in their capacity for robust programs and strategies at this stage.

In order to better understand how the potential of new media as an enabler of citizen diplomacy might be realized and the obstacles overcome, we must understand what is currently working. To that end, this paper will offer a taxonomy of how new media tools and strategies have facilitated citizen diplomacy in the last 10-15 years, some conclusions that can be drawn from that, and some specific recommendations for how these tools and strategies can be used in the future.

On the basis of our review, the Roundtable has identified six areas in which new media operates in the citizen diplomacy space. These include the following:

- Virtual Exchanges;
- Communities of Practice/Networks of Common Interest;
- Facilitating Dialogue & Sharing Media;
- Crowdsourcing Solutions;
- Conflict Transformation; and
- Advocacy and Virtual Support for Global Social Causes.

NEW MEDIA IN CITIZEN DIPLOMACY PROJECTS

I. Virtual exchanges

These initiatives essentially follow the archetype of traditional educational or professional exchanges (with the goal of reciprocally exposing citizens to new cultures and languages), but are enabled by new media and technology instead of necessitating physical travel. As such, these programs open the door for participation to many more people with limitations that prevent them from traveling or spending stretches of time away from home. The result is a potentially exponential increase in the number and types of people participating in interactive exchange programs – whether they

be educational, professional, diaspora-focused, or surrounding other mutual interests.

Several schools and universities have *experimented with “virtual student exchanges”* and “virtual classrooms” particularly in the mid-2000s, but ongoing or formalized success cases are still sparse. Developments in video-conferencing technologies, increasing broadband, and improved quality of voice over internet (VoIP), as well as the growing utility of online social networks and virtual worlds can help enhance the ease of designing programs, and attractiveness to participate.

Three ongoing grassroots project examples include Soliya, Digital Democracy’s “Project Einstein,” and a unique online language learning initiative called Live Mocha.

Soliya

Soliya is a pioneering non-profit organization using new technologies to facilitate dialogue between students from diverse backgrounds across the globe. Our flagship program, the Connect Program, uses the latest web-conferencing technology to bridge the gap between university students in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and the United States. In a time when media plays an increasingly powerful role in shaping peoples’ viewpoints on political issues, Soliya provides students with the opportunity, skills, and tools to shape and articulate their own viewpoints on some of the most pressing global issues facing their generation.

Soliya’s Connect Program is facilitated by a cross-cultural team of young leaders drawn from over 25 different countries. To prepare these facilitators to fulfill their role, Soliya offers an 18 hour facilitation training course, via Soliya’s custom-made web-conferencing application. The training provides facilitators with transferable collaborative leadership and conflict resolution skills that they can use both via Soliya’s programs, and in other contexts at a local, regional, and global level.

[From Soliya website]

Project Einstein

Project Einstein (PE) is a project of Digital Democracy and is their signature educational platform. Digital Democracy (Dd) is less than two years old but has established a reputation for cutting edge development programs that empower communities utilizing technology, and educate 21st century citizens by teaching digital literacy skills.

PE is a photography-based digital pen-pal program, PE connects youths in refugee camps with resettled refugees and their classmates in the US. Current training locations include Haiti, Bangladesh, South Africa, Thailand and Indianapolis. The curriculum and platform are being packaged to be made available to other communities in Fall 2010.

PE was born from a photo training Digital Democracy conducted in Bangladesh in January 2008 and started as the vision of eleven Burmese youth living as refugees in Bangladesh. Using digital cameras to document their lives and share their story, Digital Democracy co-directors Mark Belinsky and Emily Jacobi worked with them as they learned how to use the cameras, shoot images, and chose their best on computer screens. Working in teams of two and three, they documented universal themes of: Happy, Unhappy, Peace and the Disabled. The end product of their initial Project Einstein – audio slideshows for the web, a book of photographs and a wall exhibition which provides a very powerful testament and unprecedented look into to the lives of these refugee youth.

Since the project in Bangladesh during January of 2008, Dd has continued to work extensively with Burmese refugees in Thailand and India, and among resettled populations in the United States. The photos taken by the youth of Project Einstein have been one of their most valuable resources in educating Americans about refugee issues and the humanitarian crisis in Burma.

Dd's Digital Pen Pal module allows users, especially children and young adults, to exchange images of their lives with their peers. Providing an identity and face to the countless Burmese refugee living around Burma's borders and throughout the globe. Partnering with MIT's Center for Future Civic Media, Eyebeam and high schools in Indianapolis, Indiana, Dd is now creating a platform and curriculum for resettled refugees and their peers in the U.S. to connect with refugees overseas.

Project Einstein focuses on connecting communities – that are otherwise inaccessible to free communication and information – with home-country immigrant and refugee communities in the United States. Project Einstein will facilitate the assimilation into new societies of young people for whom life in those societies would otherwise remain a mystery; maintain a connection between refugees and their homelands; and provide an open channel of communication between closed communities and the outside world.

Live Mocha

Language learning has been a long-standing pillar of citizen diplomacy, and new media has already begun to open a great deal of new frontiers in this arena. In a few short years, **LiveMocha** has grown to become the world's largest language learning community - offering free and paid online language courses in 35 languages, and a global community of more than 6 million members from over 200 countries around the world. It's growth and popularity has been consistent, and LiveMocha was recently named one of Time Magazine's 50 best websites in 2010.

Live Mocha mixes a social network with language learning. It provides basic online language lessons, but relies on its community of users helping each other by correcting each others' writing and pronunciation. Some members have also translated and extended their own language-learning content.

On the site, users can build a list of online friends, people from all over the world who are either trying to learn or already speak the language one is interested in. Then, users can chat and, while dialoguing (over text based chat, "flashcards," voice and/or video chat), offer some helpful critiques on grammar to each other – essentially creating a forum for an exchange of learning and practicing with "language buddies" who are physically on the other side of the word.

II. Communities of Practice/Networks of Common Interest

Digital technologists, online activists and digital strategists around the world have developed their own communities of practice, in the same way that engineers, medical professionals, lawyers and architects have done since the 1956 Eisenhower summit and before. These organizations tend to be more informal, at least for now. The groups use new media to facilitate their conversations and information sharing. Like the virtual exchanges outlined above, a virtual

community opens up the opportunity to much larger numbers of participants and in the case of professional associations, it also creates the opportunity for quicker and substantive transfers of information that could be important in the sciences, for example. Interestingly, some of the networks that use technology also tend to be focused on technology.

As new fields of media continue to develop, such as social networking, there will be new opportunities for practitioners to gather to share best practices. Like professional foreign exchanges, convening across borders around professional common interests is a long-standing form of citizen diplomacy. Several networks that have an inherent tech focus and also use new technologies to communicate and share knowledge regularly are outlined as case examples below. Tech-savvy creative communities, such as music producers, have also found a niche in *online collaboration* across borders in real-time and innovative projects such as *The YouTube Symphony Orchestra*.

The lesson of the initiatives outlined below is that there is great opportunity for working with “analog” professional associations in other industries (medical, architects, engineers, musicians etc.) to illustrate the utility of connecting international professional peers, online. This idea is included in our recommendations at the end of the document.

Alliance for Youth Movements

The Alliance for Youth Movements (AYM) is a nonprofit organization that assists activists who use technology to organize for social change. AYM does this by seeking to achieve three main goals:

- Identify and promote young digital activists and developments in digital activism through AYMs website, blog, Twitter feed; and annual conference.
- Connect young digital activists to each other and to tech experts by facilitating year-round online collaboration and conversation as well as through conferences; and
- Support young digital activists through in-person trainings, online tutorials and best practices, and leveraging AYMs relationships with technology leadership to generate direct support for activists' activities.

In doing all of this, AYM seeks to create a conversation that will lead to problem solving innovation. Movements that have a Web site instead of an office, a Facebook group instead of staff, and a Twitter hash tag instead of a marketed brand name have tremendous potential to empower people through grassroots engagement. Whether it is addressing violence, fighting discrimination, or holding governments accountable, these new media tools offer new solutions. However, finding them requires that the leadership of these movements and those who are creating the technology work with each other. In short, AYM lives at the intersection of cutting edge technology and cutting edge activism working together for social change.

Programs

AYM holds an annual global summit bringing together leading online and mobile activists as fellows with technology leadership. The most recent annual summit was held in Mexico City in October 2009. A short video summarizing that event can currently be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/user/youthmovements>.

Other programs include:

- Topic & region-specific gatherings – AYM recently held a meeting on the use of online and mobile tools to diminish violence in London from March 9-11, 2010, to bring together anti-violence activists from around the world. Some of the participants included Ushahidi (Kenya), Young Civilians (Turkey), Illuminemos Mexico, Mideast Youth (Bahrain), Soliya (Egypt) and Viva Favela (Brazil). On the technology side, Google and the Salesforce.com Foundation were supporters of the event and Twitter co-founder, Jack Dorsey, gave a presentation via Skype. AYM is in conversation for similar topically focused events or regionally focused events in the future.
- On-line tools & best practices: AYM is currently building a website at Movements.org. The website will serve as a virtual destination for activists interested in the use of technology to create social change by contributing a vibrant blog, online resource library and discussion of best practices.

AYM has had 88 fellows representing 25 countries participate in three conferences. Shubham Kanodia, 14, founded India's largest support group online for the victims of the Mumbai terrorist attacks using Facebook. Natalia Morar, in Moldova, led a protest through Twitter that captured the attention of her nation and the world and ultimately helped overturn a fraudulent election. Neither was part of a bricks and mortar organization but both changed their world. These leaders represent a new paradigm for the future of civil society, and until AYM's inception, lacked a mechanism to provide training and share their experiences.

AYM has leveraged its relationships with exciting movements in civil society to bring together some of the globe's top technology and communications companies to share their knowledge and expertise with online activists from across the world. AYM has received sponsorship from global industry leaders including Google, Edelman, Facebook, MTV, AT&T, MySpace, and Twitter.

MobileActive.org

MobileActive.org is a global network of practitioners using mobile phones for social impact. The global MobileActive community aggregates and builds upon the lessons learned from the pioneers in this field for the benefit of civil society organizations.

It's goals are to:

- Expand access to knowledge, ideas and experiences about the use of mobile technology to make the world a better place;
- Reduce learning costs for deploying mobile technology for civil society organizations;
- Accelerate the use of effective strategies and tactics of mobile use for NGOs;
- Provide a comprehensive platform for building partnerships, and for facilitating access to technology, know-how, and funding.

MobileActive.org was founded in 2005 when 40 activists from various parts the world convened in Toronto for the first time ever to explore the use of mobile technology for social change. Out of this three-day meeting a new community, and ultimately organization, was born. Today, MobileActive.org manages a growing international digital community of more than 10,000 highly skilled practitioners, technologists, campaigners and strategists who are actively collaborating and sharing information, innovative strategies and tools on the MobileActive.org Online Discussion List (Google Group), contributing user-generated content and case studies to the website, and interacting regularly over social media (Twitter & Facebook).

The MobileActive.org network works with partners to create the resources NGOs need to effectively use mobile phones in their work: locally relevant content and services, support and learning opportunities, and networks that help MobileActive.org's partners connect to each other. And, because it's important to engage & share experiences offline as well as online, MobileActive.org frequently organizes events, workshops and mobile camps focused on mobile technology for social good. These "M4Change camps" happen in various cities across the world.

This online (and sometimes offline) network facilitates a particular sense of bonding by convening around a shared technology that is still new for all users. People and organizations in the MobileActive.org network have expressed that where they had been feeling isolated and alone in their experimentation with mobile technology in places as far as Benin or rural Bangladesh, have since been able to share notes, knowledge and experiences with others who have a shared focus and passion.

I Know Politics

The **International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics** (iKNOW Politics) is an online workspace designed to serve the needs of elected officials, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, students and other practitioners interested in advancing women in politics. It is a joint project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

The goal of iKNOW Politics is to increase the participation and effectiveness of women in political life by utilizing a technology-enabled forum. The iKNOW Politics website plays a central role in achieving this goal by offering users the opportunity to:

- Access resources, including the online library and the information and expertise of other users, experts and practitioners;
- Create knowledge through mediated discussion forums, information exchange and consolidated expert responses to member queries; and
- Share experiences by using tools specifically designed to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned and best practices among members of a global community committed to the advancement of women in politics.

Crisis Mappers

The field of crisis mapping has exploded in 2010 and gone from a few people around the world exploring ways to use data to map crises to massive crowd sourcing projects playing a role in everything from humanitarian relief to election and crime reporting. As the community of people has grown, networks have grown up to connect them and The International Network of Crisis Mappers (CM*Net) is the leading one. Built on the social networking platform Ning, and launched by 100 crisis mappers at the first international conference on crisis mapping in 2009, CM*Net catalyzes communication and collaboration between and among crisis mappers with the purpose of advancing the study and application of crisis mapping worldwide.

CM*Net is relevant to the use of new media in citizen diplomacy in two ways. First and less important is the way that it uses platforms like Ning to connect with one another. Second, and far more important, is that it is collaborating on huge projects across linguistic, cultural, ethnic and political barriers to accomplish shared objectives. The most famous example of this to date has to be the Ushahidi implementation which initiated after the Haiti earthquake. (This voluntary activation of the crisis mappers network is covered further below, in the section on “Crowdsourcing Solutions.”)

BarCamp

BarCamp is an international network of user-generated conferences (or Unconferences). They are open, participatory workshop-events, whose content is provided by participants. The first BarCamps focused on early-stage web applications, and were related to open source technologies, social protocols, and open data formats. The format has also been used for a variety of other topics, including public transit, health care, and political organizing.

The first BarCamp was held in Palo Alto, California, from August 19–21, 2005, in the offices of Socialtext. It was **organized in less than one week**, from concept to event, with 200 attendees. Since then, BarCamps have been held in over 350 cities around the world, in North America, South America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Australasia and Asia. The largest recorded BarCamp happened in January 2010 with over 2700 attendees (confirmed with registration forms) in Yangon, Myanmar (Burma) **Barcamp Yangon in Global Voices**.

BarCamps are organized and evangelized largely through the web. Anyone can initiate a BarCamp using the **BarCamp wiki**. The procedural framework consists of sessions proposed and scheduled each day by attendees, mostly on-site, typically using white boards or paper taped to the wall. Unlike classical conference formats, the self-organizing character of BarCamps relies on the passion and the responsibility of the participants.

Although the format is loosely structured there are rules at BarCamp. All attendees are encouraged to present or facilitate a session. Everyone is also asked to share information and experiences of the event via public web channels including blogs, photo sharing, social bookmarking, twitter, wikis, and IRC. This encouragement to share is a deliberate change from the “off-the-record by default” and “no recordings” rules at many invite-only panel-driven conferences.

This practice of sharing, especially online, makes the BarCamp format a well-suited case example for citizen diplomacy. By its highly collaborative and web enabled sharing nature the physical face-to-face conference becomes more of a hybrid-event which enables remote online engagement, often times internationally, with Barcamp participants. (From Barcamp wiki page)

III. Facilitating Dialogue & Sharing Media

Blogs and online media can be very effective tools for sharing information around the world and for building conversation. As long as the information remains in a broadcast (unidirectional) format, dialogue does not occur. Once, however, the comments section of a blog or a Facebook page are engaged, then a blog becomes a tool for conversation and sharing ideas. As stated in the introduction, citizen diplomacy depends on communication and rests on the soft foundation of shared interests, both of which can be found in blogs and social media.

Since its beginnings, concerns have been raised that the Internet is too focused on the West and too English-centric. In response, some efforts have started in the last five to ten years to either produce content from diverse voices, or translate existing content from around the world so that it can be shared with a wider global audience.

One of the most successful examples to date is the Global Voices (GV) Online network. Global Voices Co-founder Ethan Zuckerman, who has **written extensively** on issues surrounding new & citizen media and cross-cultural dialogue, **recently noted** that many Internet users end up in “filter bubbles,” hearing mainly from people just like themselves, and consuming the same media as their siloed peers. However, he suggests that what we need are bridge-figures who can introduce us to information outside of our bubble. These can be multi-lingual or multi-cultural people, or in the case of blogs, “**bridge-bloggers**” (people who acts as a “bridge” between their domestic blogging community and the rest of the world). Several example projects below attempt to fill that precise bridge-building role over blogs and citizen media.

Global Voices Online

In an effort to help people break out of “filter bubbles,” Global Voices has developed a platform for bloggers from around the world act as filters for what’s happening in their country, and as translators of both language and context. These bridge bloggers are “people with feet in two worlds.”

Global Voices is a community of more than 300 bloggers and translators around the world who work together to bring you reports from blogs and citizen media everywhere, with emphasis on voices that are not ordinarily heard in international mainstream media.

Global Voices seeks to aggregate, curate, and amplify the global conversation online - shining light on places and people other media often ignore. Millions of people are blogging, podcasting, and uploading photos, videos, and information across the globe, but unless you know where to look, it can be difficult to find respected and credible voices. Our international team of volunteer authors and part-time editors are active participants in the blogospheres they write about on Global Voices.

Our Projects

Global Voices is translated into more than 15 languages by volunteer translators, who have formed the Linguaproject. Additionally, Global Voices has an Advocacy website and network to help people speak out online in places where their voices are censored. We also have an outreach project called Rising Voices to help marginalized communities use citizen media to be heard, with an emphasis on the developing world.

Our History

Global Voices was founded in 2005 by former CNN Beijing and Tokyo Bureau Chief, Rebecca MacKinnon and technologist and Africa expert, Ethan Zuckerman while they were both fellows at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. The idea for the project grew out of an international bloggers’ meeting held at Harvard in December 2004 and it began as a simple blog.

Our Primary Goals

At a time when international English-language media ignores many things that are important to large numbers of the world’s citizens, Global Voices aims to redress some of the inequities in media attention by leveraging the power of citizens’ media. We believe in free speech, and in bridging the gulfs that divide people.

We wish to:

- Call attention to the most interesting conversations and perspectives emerging from citizens’ media around the world by linking to text, photos, podcasts, video and other forms of grassroots citizens’ media.
- Facilitate the emergence of new citizens’ voices through training, online tutorials, and publicizing the ways in which open-source and free tools can be used safely by people around the world to express themselves.
- Advocate for freedom of expression around the world and protect the rights of citizen journalists to report on events and opinions without fear of censorship or persecution.

From Global Voices website

IndyMedia

The Independent Media Center grew out of the World Trade Organization Protests in Seattle in 1999, and the desire to provide alternative coverage of the events that took place there. Using its website, the Center acted as a resource on information and by connecting people. Since then, IndyMedia has developed into more than a dozen reporting stations around the world. The websites use a democratic, open-publishing system and operate through a decentralized and autonomous network. There are currently operating stations in London, Canada, Mexico City, Prague, Belgium, France, Italy, Jerusalem and more. IMCs have been established on every continent.

Small World News

Small World News is a documentary and new media company dedicated to providing tools to journalists and citizens around the world to tell stories about their lives. Small World News was inaugurated in 2005 with its first project *Alive in Baghdad*, and today it continues to spread across the globe. In Iraq they produced weekly video packages on citizens' daily life, but have since expanded to include a number of services beyond video, including audio interviews with audience participation (*Alive in Gaza*) and viral public access for user generated content (*Alive in Tehran*).

Their staff has been producing video and web journalism for 10 years including video documentaries and audio interviews from places as diverse as Iraq, Mexico, Afghanistan, and China. Their work has previously been featured in mainstream sources like Sky News, BBC, and *Newsnight*. They have production teams in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kenya, as well as a broad array of citizen journalists, contacts, and coordinators in Mexico, Afghanistan, Honduras, Liberia, Syria, Iraq, Kenya, Gaza, and Nigeria.

Beyond providing access to their public citizen journalism tools, Small World News has also been supporting, equipping, and training community members and under-served populations to become journalists, storytellers, and documentarians in order to broaden the geopolitical perspectives available to the international community.

Meedan.net

Meedan is described as a digital town square where people can share conversation and links about world events with speakers outside their language community. Meedan (which means 'gathering place' or 'town square' in Arabic) is primarily a community for Arabic-English dialogue and translated current affairs, and was founded in 2005 in the aftermath of 9/11 upon the realization of the lack of understanding and communication across cultures.

On the website, people can:

- Share news and opinion from the English-language and Arabic-language web
- Comment on articles and join cross-language conversations about technology, arts, business and politics
- Make friends with people who speak a different language and grew up in a very different place
- Translate articles, blogs and comments posted by other users

Meedan's aim is to increase cross-language interaction on the web, with particular emphasis on translation and aggregation services in Arabic and English. Through its use of Machine Translation (MT), Machine Augmented Translation (MAT), and distributed human translation, Meedan's goal is to increase dialogue and exchange between Arabic and English speakers primarily by launching a cross-language forum for conversation and media sharing.

According to the founders, "[a] fundamental premise of the organization is that social technology on the web can play a part in enabling citizen-to-citizen diplomacy between the peoples of Arab and Western countries, thereby helping to improve cross-cultural understanding. Meedan's vision is thus to innovate technologies that enable dialogues across linguistic, cultural, and ideological boundaries".

IV. Crowdsourcing Solutions

Digital technology offers new opportunities to solve problems in ways never before possible. The term crowd-sourcing has become shorthand for the trend of leveraging the mass collaboration enabled by Web 2.0 technologies; the idea that a problem can be put forward (usually online), and distributed networks of individuals can participate or contribute to the creation of content (Wikipedia), contribute knowledge or resources on a breaking news topic (CNN iReport), or collaboratively work towards the solution of a concrete problem. Through a simple Google form, for example, people can collaborate on a massive spreadsheet or database contributing thousands of a data points to a shared project – such as entering longitude and latitude of cities affected by floods in Pakistan, or using **Google's People Finder application** in the aftermath of the earthquake in Chile. Using more advanced tools, workers around the world can apply for jobs that can be done remotely, or Creole-speakers in the United States can translate text messages from Haitians during the recent earthquake. What is unique and inherent in many of these examples is that they are decentralized and primarily volunteer-led, often by concerned global citizen groups or individuals that are empathetic to a problem they have seen in the world, and are motivated to contribute their expertise, or time, in some way to help.

Several new organizations which take advantage of these opportunities using new media tools have come about in just the last year. The projects below represent some examples of this work.

Ushahidi

Probably the most well known example in the last year of a crowd sourced project is Ushahidi. It is a web tool that was initially developed to map reports of violence in Kenya after the post-election fallout at the beginning of 2008 based on reports from citizens submitted via the web and mobile phone. **Ushahidi** (which means "testimony" in Swahili) seeks to create a platform that any person or organization can use to set up their own way to collect and visualize information. The core platform will allow for plug-in and extensions so that it can be customized for different locales and needs.

Ushahidi-Haiti

Shortly after the Haitian earthquake, Ushahidi volunteers deployed <http://haiti.ushahidi.com>. The following is a report from Robert Munro, a volunteer, on Ushahidi's blog of what happened next.

It became clear we needed a local SMS short code to make mobile reporting more viable. Josh Nesbit, Co-Founder of Frontline SMS:Medic, took the lead by looking for a contact on the ground in Haiti. Using Twitter, Josh found Jean-Marc Castera who was heading to the DigiCel command Center.

Josh says that, "skyping with Jean-Marc on the ground, and letting the Ushahidi team in Kenya and the US know I had someone from DigiCel's command center on the line was an awesome moment." Working in partnership with the U.S. Department of State (Big thanks to @kateatstate), Ushahidi eventually secured the short code 4636 from DigiCel.

Meanwhile, behind-the-scenes, Brian Herbert worked with Josh, Luke Beckman from InSTEDD, Paul Goodman from DAI, and Rob Munro to structure content. They created an online database at <http://4636.ushahidi.com> where incoming raw SMS reports can be tagged and mapped. Local organizations can subscribe to the SMS feed by contacting Brian Herbert.

On the ground in Haiti, Nicolas di Tada and Eric Rasmussen, CEO of InSTEDD also provided crucial support. Nicolas did the initial testing of the shortcode and is currently handling local outreach. InSTEDD's EIS project and Reuters are using the short code to register mobile numbers from people on the ground for vital information blasts.

The 4636 Process

- People in Haiti text location, name and requests for aid / reports etc. to 4636.
- The data is streamed from different celtels to a server hosted by Ushahidi.
- 100s of Kreyol-speaking volunteers translate, categorize and plot the geocoords of the location if possible.
- The structured data is streamed to different orgs on the ground like Red Cross and InSTEDD, who act on it / pass it to appropriate people there.
- It is also streamed to the main Ushahidi database (the publicly viewable one) where it is combined with other data, further annotated etc. and made available to other orgs.

Robert further explained that In Haiti, 4636 volunteers used a simple form to enter data from the text messages, have parallel screens open with different maps and collaborate with each other on a chat-space dedicated to their work, especially for confirming locations. In many cases, they [volunteers] are often using their own local resources (texting to Haiti) to better translate / clarify the messages. Text volumes vary from one every 5 seconds in the day to every 5 minutes overnight. The average turn-around for us receiving a text and having it translated, categorized and back on the ground with coordinates, message and return # is about 10 minutes.

Access Now

The Access movement is made up of ordinary people from all over the world mobilizing for global digital freedom. Access Now is only about a year old as an organization, but is already mobilizing people to, among other things, join a global proxy cloud. The “cloud” offers those of us who are able to donate our computer’s bandwidth to help those who are shut out behind firewalls.

More directly, more technical members of the Access movement have come together under a Digital Relief Team to provide real-time support to people on the other side of the firewall - working around the clock to help others bypass censors and relay citizen media to news organizations and social media sites. They support civil society, and political freedom movements in particular, to empower themselves through direct access to information technologies - including automatically generated web-based proxies, anonymous twitter relays, low bandwidth projects and a safe house for citizen media.

Access Now also connects digital activists with those in the technology industry, academia and governments, to influence decision makers on key internet governance issues. They aim to keep the concerns of human rights defenders working in cyberspace at the forefront of policy and practice, through providing thought leadership and smart ideas at the national, regional and international level. This currently includes a project to stop the Australian government’s plans to introduce mandatory Internet filtering, a petition to urge Google to hold their line on their recent China policy, and a drive to raise funds to support activists in Iran.

SamaSource

Samasource is a program founded by Leila Chirayath Janah, a former management consultant, to enable refugees and other marginalized people to receive life-changing work opportunities via the Internet. They have worked with 18 small businesses, nonprofit training centers, and rural data centers that provide dignified jobs to more than 500 marginalized individuals in Kenya, Uganda, Cameroon, Ghana, and Pakistan.

The core of this concept is microwork - little bits of labor that can be performed anytime and anywhere that add up to a real livelihood for our partners. In parallel, they enable socially responsible companies, small businesses, nonprofits, and entrepreneurs in the US to contribute to economic development by buying services from their workforce at fair prices.

Their model has three parts. First, SamaSource screens and selects Service Partners, locally-owned small businesses, non-profits, and groups of home-based workers, from the poorest parts of the world. Their service Partners must satisfy stringent social impact and quality criteria that verify their contribution to economic development and their capacity to deliver good work. Next, they provide their service partners with free business training, using live sample projects, web-based tools, and site visits. Finally, they market their service partners’ services to paying clients through a website and sales team based in San Francisco. Their clients range from low-income entrepreneurs in Jersey City to mid-sized nonprofits, such as Benetech, and technology startups.

V. Conflict Transformation

Because conflict resolution and peace-making are broadly complex terms, for purposes of this paper, we will focus on the role that new media can play in what are sometimes generally called “conflict transformation” initiatives – which by Search for Common Ground’s definition, is aimed at changing perceptions and improving communication addressing the roots of conflict, including inequality and social injustice. The concept stems from Multi-Track Diplomacy, which inherently involves citizen participation. The Multi-Track concept conveys the idea that all sectors of society are important and need to be involved, supported, listened to, and trained in a shared language of dialogue, conflict resolution, and peace-building in order to prevent or end violent conflict.

It is evident that there are opportunities within new technology enabled communication channels that can be strategically leveraged to encourage better cross-cultural understanding, and humanizing of “the other,” through mediated citizen-to-citizen communication. Several of the case examples below illustrate just the beginnings of what may be possible.

One Voice Movement

One Voice is a growing online movement to build support for a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine. They have offline activities as well but their online presence main contribution is the use of inspiring online video messages from people like King Abdullah of Jordan, and a growing online petition to support a two-state solution that now numbers more than 650,000.

Mideast Youth

Mideast Youth is a grassroots, indigenous digital network that leverages the power of new media to combat oppression in the Middle East and North Africa. In an interview with Ashoka, the founder and Director of MidEast Youth, Esra’a Al Shafei, described their work with new media this way:

“We leverage the power of new media to facilitate our struggle against oppression in the Middle East and North Africa. We’re driven by our passion for civil engagement, freedom of speech, and employing innovative solutions to these pervasive and persistent human problems. Relying on open source platforms like WordPress and Ruby on Rails, we began experimenting with community-based sites, widget applications, Facebook applications, Twitter applications, Google map apps, iPhone and BlackBerry applications as well as comics, video animations and infographics that document and expose human rights violations against ethnic, religious, sexual and intellectual minorities in the region. Aside from building our own websites and tools, we also provide free hosting, development, and design to organizations and free speech advocates throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Our latest projects include **Mideast Tunes**, a platform profiling and connecting underground musicians using music as a tool for social change, and CrowdVoice.org, user-powered service that tracks voices of protest from around the world. In total we operate 15 campaigns, but support the development of hundreds throughout the region.”

VideoLetters Project

The **Videoletters project** was an ambitious and innovative project begun by Dutch filmmakers Katarina Rejger and Eric van den Broekhas in 2000, to foster reconciliation in post-war countries in the former Yugoslavia by attempting to re-establish friendships that were ruptured by the conflict. Individuals in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Monte Negro, and Kosovo were invited to exchange greetings through a video message, in an attempt to **open channels of communication**.

The idea was simple: someone who had lost touch with, say, a childhood friend or a lifelong neighbor from a different ethnic group was invited to record a message. The directors then traced and showed the video letter to the “lost” friend, who was usually eager to reply. In most cases, the exchange resulted in an emotional reunion. The original documentary project by Rejger and Broekhas eventually expanded to include television broadcasts (in 2005, several videoletters were aired on television stations in each of the seven nations that were once Yugoslavia), a mobile caravan, help-lines and an interactive website.

Currently the project is currently **on hiatus**, and the website is no longer active. However, the idea behind the VideoLetters projects persists, and could potentially be emulated today in other regions and in a more deeply web or mobile enabled format.

VI. Advocacy and Virtual Support for Global Social Causes

One of the fastest growing areas for the use of new media in citizen diplomacy has been in international advocacy and direct action, which makes perfect sense because of the way that new media allows awareness and mobilization to be joined without concern for physical borders. New organizations have appeared since the launch of the web that simply would not have been possible before and they are mobilizing millions to advocate to governments, often other than their own, and to international organizations.

What is unique is not only the tools which are available, but the people using them. Today's digitally literate young generation is poised to have an outsized impact on global affairs because of their connectivity, access to information, and hundreds of billions in buying power. What they decide is important can be made important even if the rest of the world does not see it at first. One recent example includes the flurry of international online attention around the protests and violent aftermath of Iran's 2009 elections thanks to savvy young people equipped with mobile phones and recording devices, and YouTube, Facebook and Twitter as mechanisms to distribute the news widely.

Genocide Intervention Network (GI-Net)

The **Genocide Intervention Network (GI-Net)** was established in 2005 to empower individuals and communities with the tools to prevent and stop genocide. GI says on its website that it is "mobilizing the first permanent anti-genocide constituency committed to stopping the worst atrocities around the world." They focus on situations of genocide and mass atrocity, which they define as the systematic killing, severe torture or rape of civilians on a massive scale. GI uses new media tools to build the constituency and empower it to stop genocide.

The Save Darfur Coalition

Save Darfur is an alliance of more than 190 faith-based, advocacy and human rights organizations – raises public awareness about the ongoing crisis in Darfur and mobilizes a unified response to promote peace throughout the Darfur region and all of Sudan. The coalition's member organizations represent 130 million people of all ages, races, religions and political affiliations united together to help the people of Sudan.

The Save Darfur Coalition works closely with US-based and international partners to connect American citizens with international activists and the people on the ground in the conflict areas on which they focus. Some examples of these connections are:

Stop Genocide Now - iAct

iACT (**interactive-ACTivism**) seeks to empower individuals within communities, institutions, and governments to take personal responsibility to act on behalf of those affected by genocide, mass atrocities, and crimes against humanity. iACT is a global team dedicated to putting a face on the numbers of dead, dying, and displaced while creating mutually enriching relationships between those in danger and those willing and able to act, fostering a new culture of participation.

iACT connects the surviving victims of the Darfur genocide with those willing and able to help. iACT uses the power of the internet and cutting edge technology to put a face to the mind numbing numbers of dead, dying, and displaced. The iACT team visits refugee camps in Eastern Chad and provides daily video webcasting, interactive blogging and pictures, and continuous social media communication (Facebook, Twitter). Visitors to the website see the human face of this ongoing crisis through the daily field-reports; get visuals of conditions in the refugee camps; make comments, ask questions, and post suggestions on our website's interactive blog feature. SGN has visited the camps eight times since 2005.

For World Refugee Day, June 20, 2009, i-ACT partnered with UNHCR on World Refugee Day Live (<http://www.refugeedaylive.org/>), a 24-hour live webcast from refugee camps around the world. i-ACT used cutting edge technology to stream live from refugee camps in Chad, where there is no existing technological infrastructure.

Videos, photographs and testimonies from i-ACT are compiled and utilized to create multi-media presentations that build relationships between the survivors of Darfur and those who can advocate on their behalf. Materials are available for grassroots groups to use to further engage their communities.

Darfur Multi-Media Content Distribution:

Using their extensive i-ACT video, audio, and photo library, i-ACT sends content to a wide variety of organizations, groups, television producers, and documentarians. They also provide live (when in the camps) and on-going video exchanges that help develop relationships and build bridges between Darfur and the world. In 2007, i-ACT's question, filmed in a refugee camp in Chad, was answered in the **Democratic YouTube/CNN debate**.

Groups directly connected to the refugees through their multi-media content continue to work for Darfur and Sudan. They also continuously distribute i-ACT DVDs that have a variety of "episodes" that connect activist groups with the people on the ground.

Invisible Children

Invisible Children uses film to tell the story of the conflict in Uganda and specifically the tragedy of child soldiers. They use the web to share powerful videos with a wider audience than they ever would have had available prior to the web. They then use the tools that the web offers for advocacy to channel the moral outrage that the videos generate into action.

According to their website, with the support they receive from their tours and young supporters, they implement cutting edge programs on the ground in Uganda. They raise money to rebuild schools devastated by war, benefiting over 8,400 Ugandan youth in the areas of water and sanitation, books and equipment, refurbishment of structures, teacher support, and technology and power. They provide 690 scholarships to specifically chosen secondary students and 180 full ride scholarships to University. They employ mentors that holistically oversee healthy development for our students. They have also implemented micro-economic initiatives that are impacting 360 Ugandan's in transition from internally displaced camps to their original homes as well as 13 formerly abducted child mothers who are now self-sufficient through our tailoring center that provides training in savings, investment, numeracy, literacy and health. These savings-and-loans initiatives have allowed villagers to save money and earn interest for the first time, freeing them to start their own businesses and provide for their families like never before.

One Million Voices Against FARC

In February 2008, an out of work engineer in Colombia, Oscar Morales, managed to mobilize millions of people around the world to march in protest against the FARC guerilla movement in Colombia. It took Morales a little over a month to organize the campaign entirely on Facebook. After setting up a page on Facebook in response to the outrage he felt about the continuing pattern of atrocity by the FARC, Morales discovered first 1500, then 4000, then 8000 people on the Facebook page. At that point, he decided to call for a demonstration and the page continued to grow, domestically and internationally. In the end more than 10 million marched, 2 million of them outside Colombia and many of them were Americans.

Survivors Connect

Human trafficking and modern-day slavery is a global problem. The scourge of slavery is a serious problem, as it poses a threat to basic human rights – the right to life, to free movement and the right to be free of torture. It is a complete disregard for the rights of people for pure economic gain.

Founded in 2009, Survivors Connect is a non-profit dedicated to working with grassroots anti-slavery advocacy movements and networks around the world using new media and connective technology. The organization is comprised of a small group of technology experts, researchers, activists and survivors who research latest tools in

social networking, mobile and web technology and other innovations that can be used to strengthen anti-trafficking protection, prosecution and prevention efforts. With new and open-source technologies emerging daily, Survivors Connect is constantly working to find ways in which they can reduce trafficking and build community resiliency and improve responses to trafficking in a way that translates to real results.

Survivors Connect has a variety of programs that which use open-source crowdsourcing and mobile communication tools to enhance anti-trafficking prevention and protection efforts. Most recently, Survivors Connect has partnered with Fondation Espoir and several other grassroots organizations in Haiti to pilot “Ayiti SMS SOS: Human Rights Observatory and Helpline Initiative.” Using tools such as Frontline SMS and Ushahidi, this project seeks to monitor and combat gender-based violence, child abuse, exploitation and human trafficking through out several IDP camps and the broader community. In the absence of a formal centralized system for recording cases of violence, the project works on a grassroots level to support camp managers and community leaders to protect women and encourage people to report violence. Using SMS allows a cost-effective, quick, discrete, and private means to communicate for help from someone they can trust. Survivors Connect’s work is part of an action plan to train leaders on how to actively and effectively campaign to stop violence and prevent human rights violations such as human trafficking in their communities.

Individuals, camp managers and other leaders can email, Tweet, text (SMS) or directly report on the Survivors Connect website instances of gender-based violence, sexual violence, child abuse, missing persons, and other forms of human rights abuses. Partners process messages, and summaries of cases and instances appear on a crowd sourced map intended for future advocacy purposes. Several NGO partners both verify deliver services as needed (by referral or direct intervention). Survivors Connect’s implementation of Ushahidi and Frontline SMS allows them to keep track of all reported cases and address problem areas (there is similar programming in Vietnam, Nepal and soon in the US). Various other programming at Survivors Connect include global crowdsourcing on the scale and scope of anti-trafficking efforts and cases (Freedom GeoMap), a web-based learning service (Abolition Classroom) and soon using digital video and media to strengthen social justice legal advocacy in the courtroom for prosecution efforts.

New media and technology have allowed activists and supporters to experience a new level activism and “connectivity” to the cause of modern-day slavery. No longer is it about that issue that exist abroad or far away, but it is very much in our back yard and information about it is accessible at your fingertips. Through various programs, Survivors Connect is working to change the experience of activism, from passive to an active way of life. In many of the countries the organization works in, slavery, human trafficking and violence against women have never traditionally been topics of conversation nor activism. New media tools allow us to create easier ways to get information with near ubiquitous tools in hand.

Combining traditional anti-trafficking awareness, prevention, protection and prosecution tactics with the vast reach of new media, gives everyday activists new ways to support the cause and thus exponentially creating a greater impact. Whether it’s sending an SMS about suspected slavery, or looking up what resources are available their area on a crowdsourced map, new media also contributes to a new level of visibility and transparency to the movement against modern-day slavery.

Avaaz.org

Avaaz is a truly international advocacy organization with members from around the world. They use new media to organize people and to get them to advocate on behalf of causes.

Avaaz.org is a global online advocacy community that brings people-powered politics to global decision-making. Avaaz—meaning “voice” in several European, Middle Eastern and Asian languages—was launched in January 2007 with a simple democratic mission: organize citizens everywhere to help close the gap between the world we have and the world most people want.

In 3 years, Avaaz has grown to 5.5 million members from every country on earth, becoming the largest global web movement in history. Avaaz empowers its members to take action on pressing issues of international concern, from global poverty to the crises in the Middle East to climate change. **Its model of internet organising allows thousands of individual efforts, however small, to be rapidly combined into a powerful collective force.**

The Economist writes of Avaaz’ power to “give world leaders a deafening wake-up call”; the Indian Express heralds “the biggest web campaigner across the world, rooting for crucial global issues.” and *Suddeutsche Zeitung* calls Avaaz “a transnational community that is more democratic, and could be more effective than the United Nations.” Run by a virtual team on 3 continents, Avaaz operates in 14 languages.

Since 2007, Avaaz has: Taken over 20 million actions online and offline, including messages sent, phone calls and petition signatures, and over 70 million friends told. Raised over \$10 million online, including millions in funding and high tech support for human rights and democracy advocates in Burma, Zimbabwe, Tibet, Iran, Haiti and more. Organized almost 10,000 rallies, flashmobs, vigils, marches and other online events—giving a massive boost to the climate change movement. Won YouTube’s Best Political Video of the Year Award, and the Huffington Post’s “Ultimate Gamechanger in Politics” award. Avaaz’s command of the tools of online organising, and its ability to simultaneously field them in every part of the world, is unique.

Former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown says Avaaz “has driven forward the idealism of the world.” Al Gore says “Avaaz is inspiring... it has already made a significant difference.” Zainab Bangura, the foreign minister of Sierra Leone, describes Avaaz as “an ally, and a rallying place, for disadvantaged people everywhere to help create real change.”
[From the Avaaz website]

CONCLUSIONS AND STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

Our study of new media work in the field of citizen diplomacy led us to develop the taxonomy outlined in the previous section. The review of the groups/projects covered within the taxonomy, and our own experience as practitioners in the field, leads us to several conclusions or strategic assumptions about this young field.

- **Connections spark communities.** The digital world can have communities more rich and diverse than those limited by geography in the real world. The digital tools create the potential for connection.
- **There is not a shortage of tools.** There is a shortage of creative and effective strategies that utilize the tools by inspiring people and engaging them to act.
- **Acting together deepens community.** When people participate in a project together, whether for work, recreation, education or social pleasure, it deepens a sense of community that is the foundation of citizen diplomacy.
- **More access to digital technologies creates more opportunities for citizen diplomacy.** As access grows, so grow the opportunities and as access retreats whether through cost or through censorship, so retreats opportunities. Closing off the Internet is like closing off a border.
- **Social media doesn't dissolve borders.** The World Wide Web does not imply an absence of political fault lines. The same problems that exist in the real world exist in the virtual world – stereotyping, conflict, etc. etc., so it is important not to be naïve or approach social media with an expectation that it will, in and of itself, produce community. You still have to work (hard!) to do this. In fact, in many ways the absence of accountability and the assumed level of anonymity can compel many to abandon their speech filters. The same diplomatic skills and citizen engagement tools that we learn in the “real world” are necessary in the virtual one.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Mobile-phone based citizen diplomacy programs should be developed to reach wider audiences.** Even more than the web-enabled PC, the mobile phone allows people of the world to connect and has begun to bridge the modern problem of the “digital divide.” Most recent statistics reveal that there are currently 5 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide (as compared to 1.8 billion internet users worldwide), and two-thirds of those are people living in the developing world – bringing into reach some of the previously most disconnected populations & communities on earth. The Ushahidi 4636 program in Haiti for example would not have worked without the widespread use of mobile phones in that country. Increasingly going forward, when creating citizen diplomacy programs, phones will be the platform of choice. However, barriers include the complex pricing (mobile phone fees are extremely expensive in some countries) and technical disparities between mobile platforms & operators in various countries. Government and business leaders should play a role in advocating for more “fair mobile” practices with regard to pricing and taxes, and interoperability so to more easily allow for social and humanitarian initiatives over mobile.
2. **Governments, corporations and civil society should promote the importance of open Internet access globally.** An open accessible Internet helps people reach across borders to establish social, business and educational relationships. Business and government stand to gain far more from the opportunities present in an open environment than they do in a closed one. Online citizen diplomacy requires free and open Internet, and global civil society, corporations, and governments all have a role in advancing freedom of speech and association online. Efforts include policy reform, advocacy efforts, and informed business decisions. Multinational corporations need to play a leading role in this regard, rather than sitting on the sidelines or worse, assisting countries in shutting down or closing off access.
3. **Support global digital literacy** There is still a great “digital divide” between communities with effective access to digital and information technology, and those with very limited or no access at all. Programs that work

to improve access, and focus on training and teaching digital literacy and media skills should be supported (either through prioritizing this area of work for governmental international aid funding, or through support of NGO initiatives such as GeekCorps). If people around the world are well versed and comfortable using new technologies, then citizen diplomacy initiatives can be easily implemented and more widely accessible.

- 4. Invest in facilitating on-line simultaneous or near-simultaneous translation.** The language barrier is one of the most significant technical obstacles to more connections between people from different nations around the world. There are obvious business reasons to facilitate the development of this technology, and President Obama has said that finding the solution for this is one of the “big ideas” needed for the 21st century. Naturally, there are social and specifically citizen diplomacy benefits to be had as well. The corporate world and the government world will have to drive the research, but organizations doing citizen diplomacy could be helpful in testing software and possibly, such as in the case of LiveMocha, or the video-translation and subtitling platform DotSub, even in playing a role as human translators to support machine translation. Imagine a project whereby people used machine translation but if they ran into a problem they could chat with a live person who would check the machine translation?
- 5. Make more strategic use of available video-conferencing technologies.** More strategic and nationwide attempts should be designed to more effectively utilize videoconferencing and virtual exchanges for citizen diplomacy. For example, public schools could regularly schedule an hour once a month to connect with a school abroad. These on-camera virtual exchanges would provide an opportunity for students here and abroad to establish more solid linkages, as they allow simultaneous and personal/visual communication. The same applies to building linkages virtually between professional networks here and abroad. In addition to the many freely available desktop technologies (Skype, Google Voice, etc.), we recommend that citizen diplomacy programs also explore forming partnerships with enterprise/private sector companies (Cisco, etc.) to design programs which utilize their highly developed and robust videoconferencing platforms during off-work hours.
- 6. New media tools should be incorporated more quickly into existing citizen diplomacy programs.** Much of the work we discovered being done is being run by organizations that have developed in the last one to three years. More established organizations with deeper resources can bring their weight to bear on effective programming that utilizes new media. Several classic or “analog” citizen diplomacy efforts, such as professional networks, could be greatly enhanced by adopting new media tools, if implemented strategically.
- 7. Program funders should demand new media fluency.** Until the primary funders of citizen diplomacy programs require that the organizations developing and implementing these projects demonstrate fluency in new media, most efforts will remain with the young, entrepreneurial organizations.
- 8. Create an online marketplace** where people interested in participating in programs can search a program listing based on their interest or can post what they are interested in doing and groups that are looking for volunteers can find them. USCCD currently offers something like this but it needs more participants to be effective.
- 9. Establish a working group to determine best practices.** Because this field is so new and most of the groups doing it effectively are less than five years old, it is suggested that a working group be established made up of the new organizations and some of the older organizations that have more experience in citizen diplomacy but much less in new media. The working group should identify an academic to work with them to report on, analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs to determine best practices. This working group could also include representatives from technology providers so that they can also learn how their tools are being used and how they might be improved.
- 10. Identify common standards.** Given the limited use of new media for citizen diplomacy purposes, there are little to no standards for how it should be used. Issues may include best practice for running or moderating online

discussion groups, basic standards and awareness of international telecommunications laws, appropriate use and dissemination or endorsement of commercial or open-source technologies internationally, etc. We recommend developing a document that outlines appropriate standards of behavior for the field.

APPENDIX: HISTORY

On September 11, 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower called a conference entitled “People to People Partnership” at the Red Cross Building in Washington, D.C. The President invited individuals who excelled in their respective fields of American society to participate in a conference packed with workshops, speakers, discussion, and planning, to coordinate the People to People program. Eisenhower’s idea was that these people to people contacts would help the United States improve its image abroad and create a foundation for peace in a time of high tensions and strained international relationships. The opening speech of the conference was delivered by the President himself, emphasizing the need for Americans to become active in the foreign policy of their country. To do this, Eisenhower wanted American citizens to reach out to foreign citizens abroad and tell of U.S. policies, intentions and goals. He predicted that this movement by the American people will reduce the propaganda of U.S. opponents and warm relations with governments around the world. Eisenhower said,

“...I am talking about the exchange of professors and students and executives, the providing of technical assistance, and of the ordinary traveler abroad. I am talking about doctors helping in the conquering of disease, of our free labor unions showing other people how they work, what they earn, how they achieve their pay and the real take home pay that they get.” PRESIDENT DWIGHT D EISENHOWER, 1956

This quote formed the basis of the People to People program and provided the American public with a goal to achieve in American foreign policy. The conference was able to piece together and create a successful citizen diplomacy organization that is still in operation today, influencing thousands of people abroad and in the U.S. each year.

The People to People program was formed as a response to demand for “a specific counter-aggressive foreign policy” that would allow the government to utilize its non-military resources to improve America’s foreign relations. The idea of the program can be traced back to Abbott Washburn, deputy director of the U.S. Information Agency from 1953 to 1961. Washburn outlined his ideas for a “New Look” for the USIA in a memo to the director, Theodore Streibert. He based his ideas on the President’s goal of “a freer flow of people, ideas, and goods” to create and foster understanding of the U.S. among foreign citizens abroad. Washburn proposed ideas such as groups of scholars working on tourist-education literature; a Hollywood film on the U.S. dedication to Peace, and another on Atoms-for-Peace; a committee to encourage cooperation by U.S. industry, labor, and other groups with contacts overseas; expansion of the exchange-of-persons programs, especially specialized delegations, expanded cultural-artistic tours and a publishers’ program to ask leaders of American industry, labor and education to join with the government in the task of explaining our modern economic system to people overseas. These ideas along with the new “President’s Program for International Understanding” became the framework in which the People to People program was eventually constructed. (Washburn, 1968) Several well-known programs grew out of the People to People program. A few are described below.

Sister Cities

Grew from the Civic Committee at the 1956 People to People Conference (chaired by Dr. George Shuster, President of Hunter College in New York City).

The Civic Committee and the National League of Cities provided joint administrative support until 1973.

During the mid-1960's, city affiliations realized they needed a central coordinating authority for their efforts. In 1967, Town Affiliation Association or TAA (popularly known as Sister Cities) was created. Ambassador George V. Allen became the first president (director of USIA under Eisenhower).

In the mid-1970's, the TAA created its first School Affiliation Program.

By its 25th anniversary in 1981, there were 720 US cities that were linked to over 1,000 communities in 77 countries. This year was also when Sister Cities was adopted as the official title of the organization.

Now, there are 694 cities in the US with 1,992 partnerships; 1,749 international communities in 134 countries.

Project HOPE

Grew from the Medical and Health Groups Committee (chaired by Dr. Louis H. Bauer, Secretary General, World Medical Association, New York City). The first president of Project HOPE (originally called the People to People Health Foundation) was Dr. William B. Walsh, a member of the Medical and Health Groups Committee and the impetus behind getting Project HOPE up and running.

Through the help of President Eisenhower and the donation of the USS Consolation in 1958, a Haven-class hospital ship used by the Navy, Dr. Walsh was able to travel around the world in his newly renamed floating hospital, the SS Hope, providing medical assistance and technical skills to impoverished areas.

The ship was painted all white and was unarmed. Dr. Walsh called upon American doctors, nurses and technologists to share their skills and knowledge with the people of developing nations – teaching while healing. The maiden voyage was September 22, 1960 to Indonesia.

Business Council for International Understanding

Began as a loose organization of American businessmen with operations overseas in 1955 with an initiative spearheaded by President Eisenhower. The organization had its own committee at the 1956 Conference, co-chaired by Meade Brunet, Vice President of Radio Corporation America, New York City and Sigmund Larmon, President, Young & Rubicam, New York City. Sigmund Larmon became the first chairman after the '56 Conference.

BCIU was originally created to aid the Office of Public Cooperation (IOC) in stimulating the private sector. They were to be internationally focused as the Advertising Council was domestically. The idea was for BCIU to be a “national business mechanism, which will mobilize American commerce and industry in a nationwide campaign to meet the Communist threat in market places of the world.”

The IOC moved away from fathering BCIU shortly after the '56 Conference. However, they still continued to distribute USIA literature and use advertisements consistent with USIA themes, along with other programs that aimed to increase understanding of America as well as American businessmen's understanding of other nations. BCIU was considered the ‘vanguard’ or model of the People to People Program.

Post-Eisenhower

In later years as President Eisenhower reflected back on his terms in office he saw the People to People program as one of his proudest accomplishments. Many of the committees phased into their own entities and are still active today. The Business Council for International Understanding is still aiding businesses in the U.S. that conduct operations overseas, Project Hope (Medical and Health Committee) has been a successful organization helping alleviate suffering in developing countries, and Sister Cities International has been connecting cities, promoting cultural understanding and citizen diplomacy for over fifty years.

With Eisenhower's initial interest in utilizing the private sector with citizen diplomacy efforts, he set a precedent that many presidents followed while in office. President Kennedy continued the support for People to People and created the Peace Corps in an effort to improve the image of America abroad by giving development assistance to third world and developing countries. President Carter established the Friendship Force and has remained a large advocate of diplomacy in his post-presidential career. Deteriorating opinions abroad and disapproval of foreign policy actions have created ideal conditions for a new president to step in and secure his place in history and with past presidents who broke with tradition and forged a new path in foreign policy.

THANK YOU

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