Minutes from Friday 13th December Meeting on the Brazilian Knowledge Bank – SPB

Participants:

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Background:

The meeting took place following discussions between UNDP and Brazil on the possibilities of reviving the Public Software initiative from the Government of Brazil. During 2009, UNDP Brazil and BDP under the ICT4D Trust Fund supported an initiative from the Brazilian Government with regards to a free software project, which is about making available free software used by institutions in Brazil to institutions in other countries. The rationale is that this make affordable technology available to Government institutions at central, regional and local levels (in cases where they can´t afford solutions from commercial software) and they would furthermore not need to reinvent the wheel since something was already developed in another country.

Following discussions between UNDP and Brazil, the Brazilian Government has developed another approach to the IPS project. Brazil made a presentation of the enhanced proposal, which consists of the identification of an initiative related to transparency, knowledge management or relevant subject for more than one country. From there, it is intended to identify technologies that can be made available as public software, and deploy the solution in at least two countries.

In summary:

* The Brazilian Government proposal has evolved towards the implementation of an International Knowledge Bank (attached document);
* We are expecting the participation of the country members of Gealc (<http://www.redgealc.net/>) and the manager confirmed today his interest in this initiative;
* The project would be implemented as a pilot in Brazil and in another country (maybe Colombia, since Jonas Rabinovitch-UNDESA is lending his support to this initiative)
* The gateway (platform) of the Bank will be developed by the University of Brasília and its initial cost is USD 200,000. The development process has not yet begun.

What is being proposed is a global platform that allows countries to freely share digital assets. This includes open source software, digital goods, theories, data, learning objects and courses, public policies, and social technology. The idea is for countries to leverage work and advancements already realized by another country and to promote their reuse within the region and globally. Such a platform would greatly facilitate South-South Cooperation.

* Countries contribute Open Source Software (OSS) and digital assets for free reuse
* OSS and digital assets are easily searchable based on key words
* OSS and assets contain meta data / information on their purpose, intended use, and how to reuse
* Discussion forum built around each OSS / asset
* Countries (owners) of OSS and digital assets participate in forums
* Issue tracking for OSS and digital assets managed in the platform
* Source code and digital assets downloadable from platform

The knowledge bank would be a "platform" that could be coupled with other initiatives and at the same time shared between countries. The bank could be used as a pilot project in the Brazilian National Infrastructure digital assets, creating the Brazilian bank with five layers while the Colombian government could study this implementation at the center of innovation. It is possible to study for an interaction with Digital TV and other technologies.

How can UNDP contribute?

* 1. Research:  Before undertaking this initiative, it is important to identify and learn of similar initiatives that are being developed or implemented in the region.  What other knowledge management platforms are out there that are trying to serve as a repository or knowledge bank of public digital goods?  UNDP is being asked to contribute to this effort by reaching out to organizations throughout the region to identify similar initiatives. Following the research, a concept note would be developed in order sketch out what this initiative proposes to do, and how this would be positioned vis-à-vis other similar initiatives and what its differentiators are.
  2. Financial:  There is some minimal funding available to start this initiative, but long-term funding will be needed to sustain and manage such a global platform.  UNDP is being asked to map out possible partners and donors for this initiative.
  3. Resource Management: There is a need to build a core team to develop the global platform and to manage the initiative, both in the short-term and in the long-term.  UNDP is being asked to play a role in managing resources.  This would include writing Terms of Reference (ToRs), posting announcement for consultants, manage the hiring process and interviews, etc.
  4. Multiplier: Once the platform has been developed and successfully piloted in one or two countries, it will need to be launched at a regional and global level.  UNDP is being asked to play a role in promoting the use of global platform at the country level.  UNDP has a great regional presence with offices in 24 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Conclusion:

The proposed initiative really captures the essence of South-South cooperation, as best experiences from Brazil are replicated to other countries. UNDP through the LACRCS is well position to promote the initiative, with expertise in ICT4D, South-South, Governance combined with UNDP´s network in the COs and also vis-à-vis national counterparts (network of Development Coordinators Directors in MPs) and potential to leverage existing collaborations tools. In addition, initiatives like these are specifically mentioned in the ICT Roadmap of UNDP, which is derived from the Strategic Plan.

The proposal is furthermore a good idea to encourage learning and knowledge sharing in the region, and globally in the long term. For the platform it would also be interesting to have spaces where users can also contribute to improving the digital assets. The project obviously needs funding and people to manage it and is best conceived as a Regional project, but with close cooperation between UNDP Brazil and RBLAC through RSC, which means that it will be very important to define roles/responsibilities between UNDP Brazil and the RSCLAC.

Next steps:

* Develop minutes to ensure that we have a strong understanding and that we are all on the same page.
* UNDP to revert with outcome of the research and funding options.