COMMENTS BY DR. CLOETE

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Thank you Clippers, I would just like to make a few comments. It will be in the form basically of commenting generally on issues that I found relevant in these three papers that I have read as well as incorporating some of my own experiences and observations elsewhere. The comments would be in the form of two sections. First section is few general comments that you see on the screen there that are applicable not only to NGO's on what afford in my country, not many CSO's but CBO's especially community based organization more than civil society organization. So, few comments and general comments relevant to government, to these volunteer organizations and as well as business and then a few NGO specific comments.

Let's start off in terms of general comment.

Current public delivery process is inadequate to meet needs of new knowledge society. We have seen some mini intermediate change through the information revolution and globalization that we are increasingly realizing that situations have changed, environments have changed. We dramatically need new approaches to be more effective, efficient and due to meet our needs and we have to distinguish internal management issues as well as our external service delivery objectives.

Those objectives that we strive to achieve and these issues are irrelevant in the all aspects for new organizations that want to be relevant in the new information age. A set point is that technological change is deterministic. Whether we like it or not, we look at an era of globalization. We live in an era where change is forced upon us. It is some time possible to delay the stages of changes, but we can't really get away from that in the local village. We can't isolate ourselves because then we will not be able to re-flourish and develop. The adoption of new technologies is already international standard. In many cases especially developing countries where I come from where no choice but to follow suit and re-engineer, both our internal management process and external government delivery and interaction processes. And this obviously is relevant not only for governments, but I would say for other organization that we are talking about here this afternoon. The question then for is not whether we should proceed to change our approach. We must do so. The only question is how we should proceed to in that, not whether wee should do so or when we should migrate to new approaches. This sets a little stricter approach to the application of technology than it is taken by other people, but I make an apology by taking this deterministic view point.

There is a paradox in the existence of a circle digital divide. The digital divide or divides as I would prefer to call them because they exist not only between information wealthy and information poor countries on societies but also with inner societies as we now between information rich groups or individuals or classes in one hand, information poor groups and classes in the other hand and volunteer organizations like NGO's and CSO's and others are normally classified or have been classified up to now as basically information poor and resources are poor. Therefore their potential to compete with other organizations are not so good. These digital divides are caused or aggravated by technology. But simultaneously, one can use technology to reduce the digital divides, if we apply the technology, instruments that we have appropriately.

Success and failure in our attempts to transfer our operations are also relative concepts we have to take that into account. What might in the short-term look like failures but in the longer terms prove to be more successful and vise versa? What might be short term is successful but longer term proved to be not so successful. And we have to take this into account in assessing the impact of technology on volunteer organizations. We might struggle at the moment, in implementing it might be expensive and soon but in the longer term once the management committees, the executive of those bodies make the investment, it might prove in the longer term to be beneficial and more sustainable than in the short term.

There are various conditions for successful e-development. We need in any organization definite socio, what I call sociopolitical conditions will exist. We need among the leaderships of the organization, the will, the organizational will, the vision, the commitment, leadership, the allocation of sufficient resources and sufficiently adequate management procedures in order to do what is to be done. Whether it is basically implementation of technologies or not, but specially when comes to reach that changes in the investment. There are several technological conditions that need to be complying with and I have mentioned them there that they are basically hardware and software, infrastructure. You have seen some of the data coming out from our Hong Kong example and from the Korean example. So we are never talking about that.

We need certain educational conditions. We need prioritization of the availability of these systems where they are needed. If the smaller NGOs in Hong Kong and in other places are in the most need for these systems, from the government's perspective if they really want to do assist with these organizations' development, they need to intervene and to assist in providing the necessary conditions. For government, obviously to place

these systems in community locations and to do training are important. Similarly for NGOs and for other volunteer organizations the same conditions are applied. And if they want to be relevant, they have to do the same things that will governments do to continue to be successful, also in terms of financial and economic resources, prioritization of financial allocations for those above purposes.

What I am concluding therefore here, is that the conditions, the promises and expectations that exists for e-government are very similar in the arena of volunteer organizations. They are very similar and need to comply with these conditions if you want to succeed that extend.

Let us look now some in-general procedures. Like this happened in the area of governments and private sector organizations. There is an inevitable new role definition that we must adopt for NGOs, in the knowledge society, if NGOs want to be relevant in the knowledge society, we have seen from the case studies that have been represented to us that the immediate impact in the short term is that there is less of intermediary need for NGOs now that governments can directly over the heads of these organizations address the citizens directly. Volunteer organizations are autonomous that needs to change in strategy, in strategic positioning to achieve the objectives. Secondly the same need exists in voluntary organizations for not only the traditional narrow definition of literacy but a new definition of literacy. This is why educating your own members in the organizations is important. Where a standard content, a standard definition of literacy is important and this means again an elaborate decision, a strategic decision to change the operations, to do a business process reengineer exercise, do a thorough assessment of the future needs of the organization and they have to follow that up with sufficient strategic operational management initiatives to achieve their objectives. In the mean time there is an ambivalent transitional relationship between NGOs and government, because in the short term NGOs are severely dependant on governments of general education initiatives and the establishment of electronic infrastructures where they do not exist. In the Asian regions you are fortunate, more fortunate than other regions where these infrastructures and the e-literacy among citizens do not exist in sufficiently to the extend they do in Asia. And you should hold on those conditions that you have available. We are way behind in Africa for example, and even in countries like Latin America where different strategies are needed to be adopted. There is a new paradigm that is developing e-development as electronic empowerment, in short term I have said access resource problems still abound. You are better than other regions. But one can't

talk about in capitalist terms if you want to follow capitalist assessment. Asset creation means investment in ICT can be in the long term create value or improve value in the form of intellectual economic and other forms of asset development, capitalist asset developments, in the redistributive terms not necessarily capitalist terms. We can talk about capacity building.

It's something improving the ability to achieve your set objectives by performing appropriate tasks more effectively and ambitiously. So, along these lines one can see that empowerment is very important. I think I am getting to leave this here, may be just conclude with few suggestions for potential empowerment or capacity building. In the form of direct access to revenue sources, we should look at the implications of the United States election campaign that you have seen last few months. How the lobbies succeeded especially how do these lobbies in achieving more revenue for this purposes and also another point I am going to discuss detail would be the impact of the Seattle, Debrarko during the World Trade Organization meetings where internationally coalition of volunteer organizations came together and proved to be very effective by organizing their activities via e-mail and via internet. Let us discuss these issues during question time.