



Microsoft®

Accelerating Development in the Americas

“I believe that information technology is essential for the economic development of our countries as it is part of the process of globalisation and therefore impossible to separate. This knowledge will allow our countries to move forward, these are the elements that will lead us to economic development.”

Jose Miguel Insulza, OAS Secretary General

The partnership between Microsoft and the Organization of American States (OAS) began in March 2001 when a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed to collaborate on technological and educational development in OAS member states. The relationship was extended in 2003 to focus on the acceleration of e-Government technologies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The main goal of the public-private partnership is to accelerate development for the region through strategic investments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In order to focus efforts three main areas were chosen as a foundation:

- Educating political leaders on the relevance of ICT for governments and as a strategic tool for development strategies;
- Creating reference cases and best practices in the use of technology in key socio-economic areas;
- Ensuring that ICT becomes part of the hemispheric policy discussion at the highest level represented at ministerial summits and in the Summit of the Americas.

Tackling Unemployment - POETA

In the spring of 2005, the OAS' not-for-profit affiliate Trust for the Americas, teamed up with Microsoft to launch the Partnership in Opportunities for Employment through Technology in the Americas (POETA). The partnership provides technology and job training centers for people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups throughout Latin America, helping them enter growing economic sectors including telecommunications, telemarketing and the hospitality industry.

Approximately 50 million people living in Latin America with disabilities, 80-90% of which are unemployed or outside the workforce, and 82% living in poverty. The program seeks not only to improve their quality of life and self-esteem by making them feel useful, but also that of their families.





80-90% of those with disabilities are unemployed, 82% live in poverty



80-90%

POETA offers several complementary services:

- 1** POETA Centers: Community Technical Learning Centers to provide training to the disabled in job-ready computer skills and to serve as an after-hour's community computer center, providing internet access and additional skills training.
- 2** Job-readiness and job-placement training: Training on how to present, write resumes, and address particular issues often faced by people with disabilities in the workplace..
- 3** Awareness campaign: To inform and educate local business and government on the importance of giving fair employment access to the disabled and the benefits of employing them.
- 4** Actual job-placement: Actively seeking job placement opportunities, creating spaces where local business and participants meet to promote employment.

The long term goal is to have at least one center providing these services in every country in Latin America. Working with local partners the Trust trains volunteer instructors on using of software at each of the 50 centers, in 18 countries, currently in operation. Additional training is given in the use of applicable adaptive technologies and, where appropriate, instructors are trained in job interview skills training and other relevant curricula. The collaborative relationship already in place with local academic institutions enhances the success of the project as by involving students as project volunteers providing support to both the training and administrative areas of the POETA Centers.

"The program really opened up a world of opportunity for people who, before that, stayed in their homes and very often didn't have education and certainly weren't employed," highlights Linda Eddelman, Executive Director, for the Trust of the Americas, OAS.

Former mechanic, Iván Bolívar Riera, received a high voltage shock from a faulty power line 17 years ago, resulting in severe burns and the loss of an arm and both his legs. He joined the POETA center in Cuenca, Ecuador over a year ago for technology and job placement training. Today he works for an insurance company, processing claims, and looks forward to continuing to develop ICT skills that will help him advance in his new profession.

"I liked computers so much that I started looking for a job related to it; I want to dedicate myself exclusively to this technology. I managed to get a job and I am happy," explains Iván Bolívar Riera after participating in POETA in Ecuador.

Since its conception, the project has extended to more countries including Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Panama, reaching 50,000 people by 2008. In 2006, at the Santo Domingo General Assembly, it was agreed that POETA would also be expanded to the Caribbean. By 2010, the POETA program plans to reach 90,000 individuals throughout the Americas.



In April 2008, the OAS and Microsoft extended the POETA partnership with the addition of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), who along with Microsoft announced a US\$4 million joint fund to support further expansion of the POETA program in Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru. By the end of 2011, it is expected that the job placement rate will be 40% in these 4 countries, with an additional 10,000 persons with disabilities trained and ready to enter the workforce. By 2011, over 700 companies will be linked to the program across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Encouraging the Development of E-Government

Microsoft also supports the OAS in establishing e-portals for municipalities and government agencies throughout the Americas. Successful projects completed across Latin America and the Caribbean are used as reference cases to help share best practices and foster quicker deployment in the region. For example, in Central America, Microsoft and OAS helped develop ministerial portals, enabling government ministries to share online information about the latest policies, laws and procedures with citizens, in turn giving them the opportunity to submit comments and feedback.

In other countries such as Peru and Uruguay, collaboration has focused on the development of municipal portals. The municipality of San Borja, near Lima in Peru for example, now has a citizen services portal which enables public services to be delivered online through a secure and easy to manage platform. In 2007, more than 2,360 documents were processed online, 1,830 documents were viewed on topics such as the cleanliness of public places and public safety, and 9,240 petitions were posted.

50 million people in Latin America are disabled, representing 15% of the population



50 million people

Supporting Community Technology Centers

Microsoft also works with the OAS and governments in Latin America and the Caribbean to promote the use of ICT through community technology centers – also known as telecenters. In Ecuador, the partners have collaborated since 2004 with the ChasquiNet Foundation, an Ecuadorian non-profit organization that helps bring ICT to underserved communities, to help establish a national telecenter hub to facilitate the management of a network of community telecenters.

The project seeks to process and manage capacity building for the *somos@telecentros* Latin American telecenters network members through the use of the Microsoft solution for Digital Community Centers (DCC), a tool designed to improve the management of services offered by the telecenters. Originally managing 10 centers, the solution has since been extended to the entire region, offering support for more than 2,000 centers in 12 countries.

The project was designed by the Integral Development Executive Secretariat (SEDI) of the OAS in the framework of a program aimed at promoting the use of digital technologies for development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Microsoft developed the tool for the telecenters and provided additional software and licenses to legalize the software existing in the beneficiary telecenters and the economical resources to make the project viable.

Enabling Education through Technology – www.educoas.org

The OAS and Microsoft developed the first regional public educational portal to support Latin America and the Caribbean, the Educational Portal of the Americas (www.educoas.org). Educoas is an internet portal aimed at promoting the formation and training of human resources through the Internet, primarily through distance learning.

25%

For every person with a disability, another stays out of work to care for them – in reality affecting close to 25% of the workforce





It provides online courses, information about distance learning, a virtual campus, digital library and scholarship information for students, enabling them to learn at all levels from anywhere in Latin America and the Caribbean. It also provides training for government officials, and teacher quality and professional development resources for educators. Since 2001, the portal has become a recognized resource in education accumulating over 1 million unique visitors and offering 4,500 distance education programs.

The regional portal has also served to establish the value of online educational and many of the region's governments have since developed their own national educational portals to provide information specifically tailored for their citizens.

Building Capacity in Science & Technology, Engineering and Innovation

Microsoft Research is collaborating with the OAS to develop capacity building and research in the region. One of the main priorities of the Science & Technology Department within the OAS is to promote policy and government prioritization to Science, Technology, Innovation and Engineering development as a way to increase competitiveness and economic development.

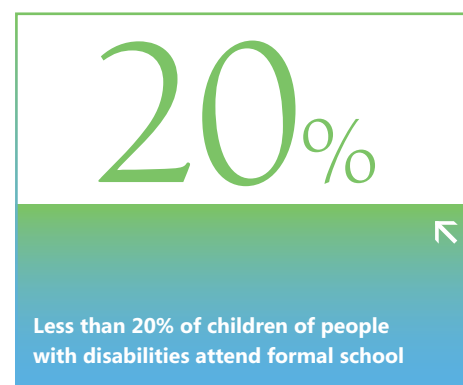
Some of the most important results of the joint work of the OAS and Microsoft have been the inclusion of a set of science, technology and ICT development agreements in all OAS declarations approved and signed by Ministerial Summits, General Assemblies and Summits of the Americas since 2000.

In 2006, the OAS General Assembly theme was on Good Governance and Development in the Knowledge-based Society. In the final declaration, the 34 member states called on the integration of ICT as a "cross-cutting tool" in designing inter-American policies and programs related to governance and equitable, sustainable development.

Specific programs resulting from the declarations include the creation of the 'Engineering for the Americas' (www.efta.org) in partnership with Microsoft, HP and other members of the private sector and engineering-related institutions. The program was developed to improve the overall quality of engineering education across the region and to promote the standardization and harmonization of engineering curriculum across countries. 'Engineering for the Americas' collaborates closely with science and technology ministries. It has also received US\$600,000 in funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to support harmonization in the Greater Caribbean region (Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Panama).

In May 2007, Microsoft and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) also launched the Latin American and Caribbean Collaborative ICT Research (LACCIR) Federation, which has established a Virtual Institute based in Chile to advance the research agenda on ICT applied to social and economic development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Virtual Research Institute is currently interacting with 215 researchers from 29 universities in 11 countries in Latin America, one of the largest cross-country collaborative efforts of this kind, bringing together talent and expertise to address societal issues and stimulate local economies. OAS is supporting the institute at the political level, to promote the inclusion of ICT into the region's political agenda.



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