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Notes

G8's Dotforce Initiative: Bridging the Digital Divide or Widening It?

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> [Information and communication technologies can] help to ignite a virtuous circle of sustainable development. But misapplied, they can result in marginalisation of the poor and the unconnected.[1]

INTRODUCTION

The increasingly bleak outlook for the majority of people in developing countries has led many to question the process of globalization,[2] which promised a decade ago to bring wealth and prosperity to all.[3] Instead, it has brought unbounded prosperity for some and continuing, or even increased, poverty for most.[4] Sixty-six countries are worse off than they were a decade ago.[5] The rich are richer than ever before, while 2.8 billion people live on just a few dollars a day.[6]

Access to information has become a determinative factor of whether an individual is a 'have' or a 'have not' in today's tech-

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1. G8, THE FINAL REPORT OF THE DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY TASK FORCE, DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL: MEETING THE CHALLENGE, 4, May 11, 2001 *available at* http://www.dotforce.org [hereinafter THE DOTFORCE REPORT].

2. *See* GLOBALIZATION, GROWTH AND MARGINALIZATION 2-8 (A.S. Bhalla ed., 1998).

3. *See Speakers Address 'Digital Divide' Inequities in Globalization, as Dialogue on International Economic Cooperation Continues*, M2 PRESSWIRE, Sept. 21, 2001 ("Globalization had promised unprecedented wealth and prosperity, but that promise has not been realized.").

4. *See id.* ("[Globalization] ha[s] resulted in a world with prosperity in a smaller part and poverty in the larger part.").

5. *Id.*

6. *Id.*

nological world.[7] Those with access to information and commu-
nication technologies (ICT) are prospering, while those without
access to ICT are struggling.[8] The social and economic disparity
between those with access to ICT and those without access is
commonly referred to as the "digital divide."[9] There is little
doubt that the digital divide is growing, and will continue to
grow if steps are not taken to help developing countries catch-
up.[10]

G8, an informal group of the world's strongest economic na-
tions, recently joined the effort to close the digital divide by cre-
ating the Digital Opportunity Task Force (Dotforce), an initia-
tive to introduce ICT into developing countries.[11] The goal of
Dotforce is to "create digital opportunities for all."[12] Some be-
lieve, however, that instead of empowering and enriching the
underserved of the developing world, Dotforce may actually ex-
acerbate the inequality between the rich and the poor.[13]

This Note will discuss the problems of Dotforce, the prob-
able effects of the initiative on developing countries, and what
more is needed to close the digital divide. Part I of the Note ex-
plains the digital divide, outlines the development of the Dot-
force initiative, and discusses some of the different viewpoints
on the introduction of ICT into developing countries. Part II of
the Note explains why the Dotforce program is likely to widen
the digital divide and discusses the probable motivations behind

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7. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 6-8; *see also* K. M. Nurul
Huda, *The Digital Divide Vis-à-vis Developing Countries*, THE INDEP. (London), June
14, 2001, WL5978071 (defining the digital divide as "the gross disparity between the
rich information haves and the information have nots"); Wallys W. Conhaim, *The
Global Digital Divide*, INFO. TODAY, July 1, 2001, at 1 (noting that most of the 'have'
countries are in the northern hemisphere, while most of the 'have not' countries are
in the southern hemisphere); Ernest J. Wilson III, *Closing the Digital Divide: An
Initial Review*, Internet Policy Institute, *available at* http://www.internetpolicy.org/
briefing/ErnestWilson0700.htm (last visited Apr. 3, 2002) (referring to the digital
divide as the "have-have-not-gap").

8. *See* Doug Alexander, *The IT Gap?*, AFRICAN BUS., June 1, 2001, 2001 WL
11994415 ("The division is basically between the rich and poor. Those with access to
the Internet tend to be better-off, better-educated, and urban."); Roisin Wolnough,
Bridging the Digital Divide, COMPUTER WKLY., Sept. 13, 2001, 2001 WL 28561145
("While there is no doubt that IT has been a boon to many . . . it has also widened
the gap between the rich and the poor.").

9. *See, e.g.,* J.M. Spectar, *Bridging the Global Digital Divide: Frameworks for
Access and the World Wireless Web*, 26 N.C. J. INT'L L. & COM. REG. 57, 59 (2000).

10. *See* Conhaim, *supra* note 7, at 1.

11. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 3; *see also G8 Steps Up Digital
Aid Plans*, NEWSWIRE, July 30, 2001, 2001 WL 7309689 [hereinafter *G8 Steps Up*].

12. THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 3.

13. *See infra* text accompanying notes 53, 161-168.

the Dotforce initiative. Part II also suggests solutions to the problems of the Dotforce initiative and the digital divide generally. This Note concludes that, unless changes are made to the program, Dotforce will widen the digital divide between the rich and the poor within each country.

I. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND DOTFORCE

A. DEFINING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital divide has been defined as, "the differentiation or separation between those with access to the essential tools of the information society and those without such access."[14] Lack of access, the key cause of the digital divide, is a broad concept. People in developing countries not only lack physical access to computers and ICT, but also financial access, production access, cognitive access, and political access.[15] Described in more precise terms, the access related problems include: "inadequate infrastructure, high connectivity costs, a lack of locally relevant content, language barriers, a dearth of venture capital and workers' incapability to derive economic and social benefit from information-intensive activities."[16]

The fact that a digital divide exists on the world scale is not seriously disputed. Citizens in developed countries comprise 90% of Internet users, although they represent only 16% of the world population.[17] In fact, 98% of Latin Americans, 99.5% of Africans, and 98% of Asians are not connected to the Internet.[18] The United States and Canada alone account for 57% of world Internet use, whereas Africa and the Middle East together account for only 1% of global Internet use.[19] There is more Internet use in New York City than in all of Africa.[20] The digital divide reflects a disparity not only in Internet use, but also in the

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14. Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 59. The digital divide has also been defined as, "a substantial asymmetry between two or more populations in the distribution and effective use of information and communication resources." Wilson, *supra* note 7.

15. Wilson, *supra* note 7 (describing in more detail these five access problems).

16. Rowan Callick, *Asia's Digital Divide*, AUSTL. FIN. REV., Sept. 17, 2001, 2001 WL 7309689 (citing a Deutsche Bank study on information economy in Asia); *see also* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 6.

17. *G8 Steps Up*, *supra* note 11.

18. Wilson, *supra* note 7.

19. Alexander, *supra* note 8.

20. *G8 Steps Up*, *supra* note 11.

use of other, older technologies. Television, telephones and even electrical power are absent in parts of the developing world.[21] For example, half of the world's population has never used a telephone.[22]

Moreover, the divide is widening. Internet access is growing at a more rapid rate in developed countries than in developing countries.[23] Also, there are indications that the rate of growth in Internet usage in developing countries is actually slowing down.[24] For instance, now that the African economic upper class is using the Internet, "penetration of the Internet is reaching saturation levels" in Africa.[25] Some assert that the digital divide is not just widening, but is "growing exponentially."[26]

B.   THE DOTFORCE INITIATIVE

G8, an informal intergovernmental organization[27] whose eight members have the strongest economies in the world,[28] addressed the digital divide problem when they met in Okinawa,

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21.   Alexander, *supra* note 8.

22.   *See* Callick, *supra* note 16.

23.   Conhaim, *supra* note 7 at 1.

24.   *See* Paul Cullen, *Computimes: 'Not a Significant Market'—Will the Poor Always be With Us, Even in the Digital Age?*, IRISH TIMES, Dec. 18, 2000, 2000 WL 30757976 (describing the slowdown of the rate of Internet use in Africa).

25.   *Id.*

26.   Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 63 (quoting World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn).

27.   *See* G8, *How the G8 Works, at* http://www.g8.gc.ca/abouthow-e.asp ("G8 is an informal group of eight countries."); *see also* Birmingham Summit, G8 Structure: An Informal Club, *at* http://birmingham.g8summit.gov.uk/brief0398/what.is. g8.shtml (last visited Apr.3, 2002) ("G8 is an informal organisation, with no rules or permanent Secretariat staff.").

As an 'informal club,' G8 does not have a legal international personality recognized by international law. *Cf.* E. LUARD, INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES: THE EMERGING FRAMEWORK OF INTERDEPENDENCE 1-3, *reprinted as excerpt in* FREDERICK L. KIRGIS, JR., INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THEIR LEGAL SETTING 522 (3d ed. 1993). G8, does not have power to dictate directives to member or non-member countries, but must try to induce countries to act by offering incentives. *See id.* at 522 ("International bodies do not possess the ultimate sanction of authority, the power to impose decisions, which in the final resort, national governments can exert. Instead, decisions are reached, programmes initiated . . . mainly through the voluntary acceptance of sovereign national states.").

Organizations of an international scope have drawn an increasing amount of protest in recent years. *See, e.g.*, Eric J. Lyman, *Violence Erupts at G8 Parley*, HOUSTON CHRON., July 21, 2001, LEXIS Library File. G8 may have an especially bad public image after the violent protests in Genoa, Italy in July of 2001. *See id.*

28.   *See, e.g.*, Alexander, *supra* note 8 (listing the G8 countries: Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States).

Japan in July 2000.[29] At that meeting, the organization adopted
an 'IT charter' in which G8 members agreed to establish 'The
Digital Opportunity Task Force' (Dotforce) to solve the digital
divide problem.[30] In the course of three formal meetings in 2000
and 2001, Dotforce produced a report entitled "The Genoa Plan
of Action," detailing the digital divide and outlining a plan of ac-
tion for creating digital opportunities for all.[31]   More recently,

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29.   *See* Digital Opportunity Task Force, *Okinawa Charter on Global Informa-
tion Society*, July, 2000, *available at* http://www.dotforce.org (last visited Feb. 25,
2002).
   30.   THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 3. Dotforce consists of forty-three
government, non-government, business, and non-profit representatives: seventeen
governmental representatives (Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, European Commis-
sion, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Russia, Senegal, South Af-
rica, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and the United States); seven representatives
from International/Multilateral Organizations (ECOSOC, ITU, OCED, UNDP,
UNCTAD, UNESCO, and World Bank); eleven representatives from the private sec-
tor (one representative for each G8 country plus three global networks, the Global
Information Infrastructure Commission (GIIC), the Global Business Dialogue on E-
Commerce (GBDE), and the World Economic Forum (WEF)); and eight representa-
tives from the non-profit sector (one representative from each G8 country). *Id.* at 21.
Dotforce was created in the fourth quarter of 2000. *Id.*
       The 'Digital Opportunity Initiative" (DOI) was also created at the 2000
Okinawa summit. *See* DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE, FROM DIGITAL DIVIDE TO
DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT, *at* http://www.opt-init.org (last visited
Apr. 3, 2002).   DOI is a public private partnership between Accenture, The Markel
Foundation, and the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). *Id.* Whereas
Dotforce is designed to coordinate the efforts of governments, the private sector,
foundations and international institutions, The Digital Opportunity Initiative is de-
signed to mobilize action "on the ground" from the international community. *See*
DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE, CREATING A DEVELOPMENT DYNAMIC; FINAL
REPORT OF THE DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE July 2001, at 32-33, *available at*
http://www.opt-init.org/framework/DOI-Final-Report.pdf   [hereinafter   FINAL
INITIATIVE REPORT]. There is no indication, however, that the two groups are acting
in tandem. *See id.* Indeed, neither of the reports details the relationship between
the two organizations, except to make very brief mention of the other. *Id.* at 7-8; *see
also* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 8. Importantly, DOI does not provide
the concrete guidelines that are absent from the Dotforce report, but is similarly un-
specific about the details of how ICT will flow into developing countries. FINAL
INITIATIVE REPORT at 7.
   31.   *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-20. The formal meetings
occurred in Tokyo, November 27-28, 2000, in Cape Town, March 1-2, 2001, and in
Siena, Italy, April 23-24, 2001. *Id.* at 23. Dotforce also met informally at the follow-
ing meetings: OECD Dubai Emerging Market Economy Forum on E-Commerce,
January 16-18, 2001; Berlin, DSE Policy Forum on "Digital Inclusion", January 24,
2001; Davos, World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, January 29, 2001; Cairo,
IDSC/Egyptian Cabinet Conference on E-Business and Development, February 12-
15, 2001; and Naples, Third Global Forum, March 14-17, 2001. *Id.* at 23.
       This report bears similarities to other international efforts to solve global
problems. For instance, in response to the shrinking ozone layer, a series of multi-
lateral treaties were produced between 1985 and 1997. *See* John K. Setear, *Ozone,*

Dotforce produced a 'Framework for Implementation'[32] in an effort to push the plan forward.

The main premise of the Dotforce report is that ICT, once the cause of the divide between rich and poor, can be strategically introduced into developing countries to provide sustainable growth that will reach all people.[33] The Report sets out nine 'action points' that constitute a plan of action for closing the digital divide.[34] Along with the nine action points, there are four main ideas in the Report. First, Dotforce and its affiliates plan to work closely with each developing nation to establish governmental policies and regulations that facilitate the introduction of technology.[35] Second, Dotforce aims to improve connectivity, increase ICT access, and lower the costs of ICT for people in developing countries.[36] Third, recognizing that ICT development requires skilled workers, the report advocates building human capacity.[37] Fourth, Dotforce plans to encourage participation in global e-Commerce by supporting entrepreneurship and local

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Iteration, and International Law, 40 VA. J. INT'L L. 193, 209-16 (1999) (listing the treaties). The first treaty, the Vienna Convention, simply stated that the subject required further attention and included some specific procedural provisions to govern future protocols. *See id.* at 210. The purpose of this multi-step process is twofold. First, more countries are likely to participate in a treaty that only gradually becomes demanding over time, rather than agreeing to a demanding treaty that is 'take it or leave it' at the outset. *See id.* at 214-216. Second, the convention—protocol framework allows for the inclusion of new technology or scientific data as it is discovered. *See id.* at 214. Despite the similarities however, THE DOTFORCE REPORT is not a "framework," but is intended to be a final solution. *See infra* notes 185-190 and accompanying text.

    32. *See* DOT Force (Genoa) Plan of Action: Framework for Implementation, October 10, 2001 *available at* http://www.dotforce.org/reports/matrix.html (last visited Feb. 25, 2002) [hereinafter Framework]. Although the aim of the Framework is to "serve as the basis for carrying the work [of the Report] forward," *DOT Force Implementation Phase, The Way Forward, at* http://www.dotforce.org/reports/montreal-report.html (last visited Apr. 4, 2002), it mostly repeats what was said in the report, and does not provide the concrete guidelines that appear to be missing from the Report. *See id; see also infra* text accompanying notes 41-44.

    Also recently produced by Dotforce is Dotforce, G8, *Update on the Implementation of the Dotforce Genoa Plan of Action,* December 21, 2001 *available at* http://www.dotforce.org/reports/confcall_Dec_01.pdf [hereinafter *Dotforce Update*]. The primary "updates" that are reported are that 'Implementation Teams" have been organized to carry out each of the action points in the report, and that 8 developing countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania) are participating in the implementation work. *Id.*

    33. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 4, 6-7.

    34. *See id.* at 13-20.

    35. *Id.* at 4.

    36. *Id.*

    37. *Id.* at 5.

ICT development.[38] The Report envisions that ICT will help create sustainable development in developing countries and will reduce poverty by stimulating economic growth.[39] The Report states the goal of "harnessing the power of [ICT] and global networks to assure opportunity, empowerment, and inclusion for all."[40]

The Report is not specific about how its goals will be achieved or who will provide the funding.[41] The Report simply lists priorities and initiatives. These priorities and initiatives are "unarguable," says one commentator, but they "will need massive resources and it is not clear where these will come from."[42] It is also not clear who is responsible for putting the plan in motion.[43] Thus, while parts of the Report implicitly suggest that enormous resources will be flowing from the developed world to the developing world, other parts of the Report suggest that the primary role of Dotforce will merely be to advise developing countries and to encourage awareness.[44]

In either case, it appears that much of the burden will fall on the governments of the developing countries,[45] who are to generate "National e-Strategies" to provide frameworks for their development goals.[46] Unfortunately, governments of many developing countries are ineffective or corrupt.[47] This has led some to conclude that giving aid to these countries will not help the people who need the aid most because it must be channeled through these corrupt or ineffective governments.[48]

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38. *Id.*
39. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, supra note 1, at 3-4.
40. *Id.* at 3.
41. Russell Southwood, *G8 Dot Force Has Plans But No Money, available at* http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/back/balancing-act_62.html (last visited Apr. 4, 2002).
42. *Id.*
43. *See id.* ("So we have a plan, but as yet no idea as to who will implement [it].")
44. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 3-4.
45. *See id.* at 10 ("The main responsibility for relevant actions remains in the hands of developing country governments.").
46. *See id.* at 13.
47. *See, e.g.,* David Moberg, *How to Fix the IMF; First, Do No Harm,* IN THESE TIMES, May 15, 2000, at 9, 10 (stating, in regard to their obligations to the IMF, that many developing countries are "corrupt, ill-managed, inefficient, undemocratic, inequitable and ineffective in their basic tasks."); Muddassir Rizvi, *Skepticism Greets E-Government Plan,* INTER PRESS SERVICE, Aug. 7, 2000, LEXIS, News Group File.
48. *See* Allen L. Hammond, *Digitally Empowered Development,* 80 NO. 2 FOREIGN AFF. 96, 103 (2001) (stating that "access to new technology . . . will not be enough to ensure a more secure future, however; poor communities also need simple justice. Such justice must include protection from the dangerous or unlawful actions

Finally, the Report does not explain how Dotforce fits in with other international efforts to bridge the digital divide.[49] The report stresses "partnership," and "cooperation," but is inconsistent as to whether this applies to the worldwide efforts to close the digital divide or just to Dotforce stakeholders.[50] In short, the Report reiterates generally accepted principles, but does not speak to when, where, or how those principles will become reality.[51]

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of private interests or corrupt governments—especially in developing countries, where regulations are often weak or unenforced."); *see also* Md. Tofazzel Hossain, *World Bank and Aid Flows to the Developing Countries,* THE INDEP., Mar. 21, 2001, 2001 WL 5976232 (suggesting that aid actually "bolsters dictatorial and corrupt governments . . ."); *From the Slovak Press,* CTK NAT'L NEWS WIRE, Sept. 26, 2000, LEXIS, News Group File ("money allotted by the World Bank to the economic revival in developing countries has often ended up in the pockets of a few members of the ruling elite . . . ."); Jeffrey Sachs, *Sachs on Globalisation: A New Map of the World: Today's World is Divided not by Ideology, but by Technology,* THE ECONOMIST, June 24, 2000, at 81, 82 (describing three main channels by which technologies can flow into a country, all of which depend on government action or control).

    49.   Other international efforts to close the digital divide include: the United Nation's Information and Communications Technology Task Force, The Digital Opportunity Initiative (a public private partnership of Accenture, the Markel Foundation, the United Nation Development Programme); the 'Wire the World' program (a program being organized by the World Intellectual Property Organization in Geneva, as well as numerous efforts from the private sector and from countries acting independently). *See* Eric R. Biel, *The Impact of Technological Change on Developing Countries,* 25 CAN.-U.S. L.J. 257, 263 (1999) (giving a sampling of what the U.S. is doing to help developing countries); Dan Biers, *Connecting the Masses: Hewlett-Packard has a Grand Plan to Bring Silicon Valley to the Developing World; Nice Idea, But Will it Pay?,* FAR E. ECON REV., Mar. 29, 2001, 2001 WL-FEER 6645956; Cullen, *supra* note 24 (explaining efforts by Oreland, the United Nations Development Programme, and Grameen Phone, a private mobile phone business); Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Remarks at the Launching of the Information and Communications Technology Task Force, *printed in Launching Information and Communications Technology Task Force, Secretary-General Appeals for Support from Private Sector,* M2 PRESSWIRE, Nov. 21, 2001, 2001 WL 30049599 [hereinafter *Launching ICT*].

    50.   *See generally* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 10-20 (calling for cohesive action but not explaining how initiatives can or will cohere).

        Whatever was intended, the reality is that the efforts to bridge the digital divide remain separate. For instance, in announcing the launching of the United Nations' "Information and Communications Technology Task Force," on November 20, 2001, Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that this UN initiative was designed "to avoid duplicating the many initiatives that are already under way, such as the Digital Opportunity Task Force." *Launching ICT, supra* note 49.

    51.   Southwood, *supra* note 41 ("The generally unarguable proposition has not been translated into the more difficult practical approach.").

C. CONFLICTING VIEWPOINTS ABOUT DOTFORCE AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The role of ICT in the development of third world countries is a highly debated question, with a variety of conflicting viewpoints about the likelihood of success of the Dotforce program. The spectrum of viewpoints ranges from a belief that the introduction of technology in developing countries will necessarily produce favorable results,[52] to a belief that ICT will inevitably have a negative and regressive effect on developing countries.[53] An intermediate perspective is that ICT can have either a positive or negative effect, and that the effect of it is highly contingent on the interaction between how ICT is introduced and the actual conditions within the country.[54] Dotforce embraces this last view, recognizing that ICT can widen the digital divide if not strategically implemented.[55]

Despite Dotforce's sensitivity to the possibility of failure and its efforts to ensure success, many critics argue that Dotforce is a flawed program that will produce negative results. First, they argue that impoverished people in developing countries need basic services—not ICT.[56] For instance, one protest group argued that "you could vaccinate 2000 children against six killer diseases for the price of a computer."[57] While most critics recognize that the digital divide is an important issue, they feel that resources should not be drawn away from providing basic needs to support the program.[58] Supporters of Dotforce argue, however, that it is not a matter of deciding between basic needs and technology.[59] Developing countries will never

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52. *See* Wilson, *supra* note 7.

53. *See id.*

54. *See id.*

55. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 7.

56. *See G8 Steps Up, supra* note 11; *see also* Alexander, *supra* note 8 (quoting Seth Amgott, a spokesman for Oxfam America: "If you live in a village that is not on an electrical grid, or phone system, which doesn't have access to safe drinking water or a school, the want of a computer or Internet access aren't your primary problems."); Jim Krane, *To Have and Have Not Summit Tackling Problem of a Global Digital Divide*, THE REC., July 16, 2001, at L5 (stating that Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates said that the poor would be better served by electricity, healthcare, and clean water than ICT).

57. *IT Industry Urged to Fix Digital Divide*, NEWSWIRE, July 27, 2000, 2000 WL 7655252 (identifying the protest group as Jubilee 2000).

58. *See, e.g.,* Alexander, *supra* note 8.

59. *Bridging the Digital Divide Linked to Broad Development*, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, Jan. 18, 2001, 2001 WL 2324049 (quoting Vincenzo Schioppa, head of Dotforce, "It is not ICT or food. It is ICT for food, for health, for teaching and for social

be able to feed their hungry if they continue to fall behind technologically, but must embrace ICT to benefit from increased productivity and new trade markets.[60]

Second, critics of the plan point out that the infrastructures of developing countries cannot support a sudden influx of ICT.[61] For instance, although the developing world makes up three-quarters of the world's population, it only has 12% of the world's telephone lines.[62] Likewise, nearly 80% of the world's population does not have a telephone.[63] Proponents of the plan reply that this is exactly the point. The Dotforce program will work with developing countries to institute creative solutions to infrastructure problems.[64] For instance, new innovations in wireless technology may make the lack of telephone wire infrastructure irrelevant.[65]

Third, social problems like language barriers, illiteracy, and lack of skilled workers are impossible obstacles for the program to overcome.[66] One critic could think of twelve reasons why there are no skilled workers in developing countries, including lack of proper training and flight of skilled workers to other countries for higher pay.[67] Dotforce repeats that one of its pri-

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and human development."); *see also G8 Steps Up, supra* note 11; Krane, *supra* note 56.

   60. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13, 16; *see also* Krane, *supra* note 56.

   61. *See, e.g.,* Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 61-62.

   62. *Id.*

   63. *Id.*

   64. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 10 (stating that Dotforce will "tak[e] advantage of new and emerging technologies").

   65. *See* Krane, *supra* note 56.

   66. *See id.* ("Much of humanity cannot read or write."); *see* Nurul Huda, *supra* note 7.

   67. The twelve reasons are:
      (a) Lack of trained manpower both in private or public sectors, (b) Most of the trained persons are not adequately aware of Information Technology or use of website, local area network, world area network, online, e-mail, etc., (c) Salary structure in public offices for IT professionals is poor, (d) Computer experts that the nation produces from various universities or institutions opt to go abroad in search of better employment, (e) Officials of the public offices do not/ cannot spend time to learn IT or computer system[s], (f) Officers mostly depend on personal staff for using computers and then only for typing, (g) Senior officers and policy makers do not always disseminate their knowledge and expertise among the subordinate staff, leaving them ignorant of the importance of the Information and Communication Technology . . . (h) [The] language is yet to fit the computer system, (i) Most people in the offices do not have command of English so

mary initiatives is to train people to use the technology.[68] The hope is that increased training together with increased ICT infrastructure will result in skilled workers remaining in their own countries.

Fourth, critics argue that Dotforce is a selfish program designed primarily to open up new trade markets for G8 companies: "[t]o G8 governments, the technology gap is . . . a barrier to global free trade."[69] Technology corporations in G8 countries are eager to be a part of the program because they stand to profit enormously from the ICT growth Dotforce envisions.[70] It would not be the first time major trading nations "introduc[ed] electronic-commerce into global trading arrangements to enhance their own wealth, power, and market access at the expense of others."[71] The ICT revolution, it is argued, benefits the wealthy countries by "revitalising the so-called 'old economy' while at the same [time], expanding into new product areas and markets."[72] Some contend, however, that increased trade is mutually beneficial, and that G8 should not be criticized for creating a win-win solution to the problem.[73]

Finally, the problem of the chicken and the egg relates to all of the arguments above. What needs to come first, development

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they cannot access the modern information network, (j) Scope of ICT Application within the country is yet to expand, (k) Low level of information-based knowledge is denying the benefits of plenty of information generated every moment in the world, and (l) Very limited opportunity of jobs are available at home for talented people in computer science.

Nurul Huda, *supra* note 7.

68. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 15-16 (identifying action point 3 as: "Enhance Human Capacity Development, Knowledge, Creation and Sharing").

69. Alexander, *supra* note 8.

70. *See id.* (quoting Adrian Lovett of Jubilee 2000 successor Drop the Debt, saying that technology firms just "want to get their hardware out there"); *see also* Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 87 ("The new wireless order will be a bonanza for global business."); Shawn McCarthy, *G8 to Focus on 'Digital Divide' Between Rich and Poor*, THE GLOBE AND MAIL, July 19, 2001, at A12 (suggesting that Canada's enthusiasm for the Dotforce project can be explained by the fact that the Canadian "government is pushing the digital divide as a way to sell Canadian technology and expertise").

71. Wiwit Wirsatyo, *E-Commerce at Global Negotiation*, JAKARTA POST, Mar. 31, 1999, 1999 WL 5634036 (internal parentheses omitted).

72. Hamisah Hamid, *ICT Risks Widening of Digital Divide*, BUS. TIMES, Mar. 29, 2001, 2001 WL 3844719.

73. *See* Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 88 ("The 'emerging networked world,' augurs well for economic globalization as it dissolves barriers to market access and opportunity . . . ."); *see also* Biers, *supra* note 49 (stating, in reference to Hewlett-Packard's program targeting the developing world, "At stake is not just a boost to the company's bottom line but to economic development in the developing world as well.").

or technology?[74] Many critics of the initiative hold that a developing country needs a basic level of literacy and wealth for technology to take hold.[75] The more popular view, and the one embraced by Dotforce proponents, is that introducing technology into a developing country will itself lead to increased wealth and literacy.[76] The Dotforce report is based on the assumption that if technology is made available, people will use it to further their social and economic prosperity and the development of their communities.[77]

One area where there appears to be more agreement is the development of ICT in developing countries to improve health care. According to the Report of the Digital Opportunity Initiative, "some of the most promising and clearly demonstrated applications for ICT in development are in the improvement of health care delivery."[78]

D. ICT FAILURES IN THE PAST

Any effort to close the digital divide will be difficult and will face many obstacles. While there seems to be agreement on this point, there is a wide range of opinion on exactly how difficult the effort will be and how big the obstacles are. The following case study demonstrates the difficulties Dotforce may face when introducing ICT into communities that are not accustomed to computers and the Internet.

In Forst, Germany, population 25,000, the local government spent one million Euros to build a call center for area retailers and financial companies.[79] The project was meant to eliminate the 19% unemployment rate in Forst.[80] The call center was the centerpiece of a three-year plan to move Forst from an old industrial economy into the new digital economy.[81]

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74. Cullen, *supra* note 24.
75. *See id.*
76. *See id.*
77. *See, e.g.,* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 3-4.
78. FINAL INITIATIVE REPORT, *supra* note 30, at 10-11 (listing the health care benefits of ICT as: 1. remote consultation, diagnosis and treatment; 2. facilitation of collaboration among physicians for both treatment and research; 3. facilitation of disease prevention and epidemic response efforts; 4. dissemination of public health messages; and 5. more efficient public health systems and facility administration).
79. *See* Christopher Rhoads, *All Dressed Up, Nowhere to Go: Forlorn Textile Town Sees Net Dreams Die,* THE WALL ST. J. EUR., Jan. 25, 2001, 2001 WL-WSJE 2841512.
80. *See id.*
81. *Id.*

The plan did not work.[82] While one third of the 11,000 households had high-speed cable modems installed, only thirty of these households opted to buy the service that would connect them to the Internet.[83] The 'online marketplace' for Forst companies is merely a list of company addresses because the companies are afraid to reveal prices to one another.[84] One of the remaining textile firms in town has generated only nine new customers in fifteen months from its website.[85] No new jobs were developed because the local workforce was inadequately qualified for the jobs available.[86]

The experience of Forst has been replicated elsewhere. For instance, Internet use is not growing quickly in Russia due to heavy-handed governmental control on the movement of information.[87] In the United Kingdom, there is also a growing digital divide.[88] Chris Yapp, from the Imperial College London, notes that the United Kingdom "need[s] to avoid exacerbating the divide." [89]

While the United States is the leader in Internet use, it also has problems with the digital divide.[90] At a House Committee hearing on this subject, one speaker explained that the same problems that face developing countries face rural America: lack of physical access, lack of skilled workers, lack of educational opportunities in ICT, and a lack of governmental help.[91]

In contrast to what happened in Forst, the proponents of Dotforce are quick to point out that there have also been documented cases of success in introducing technology to developing countries. For instance, India has succeeded in integrating its workforce into the "new economy" using ICT.[92] Its software ex-

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82. *Id.* ("The mayor conceded that the eighty jobs he promised with the completion of . . . [the] call center wouldn't materialize after all.").

83. *See id.*

84. *See* Rhoads, *supra* note 79.

85. *See id.*

86. *See id.*

87. John McLaughlin, *Planet Web: Putting Russia's Democracy to the Test,* THE INDUSTRY STANDARD, Dec. 4, 2000, *at* http://www.thestandard.com/article/0,1902,20573,00.html.

88. *IT Industry Urged To Fix Digital Divide, supra* note 57 ("Forty-eight percent of the most affluent UK households have access to the internet, compared with fewer than six percent of the poorest.").

89. *Id.*

90. *Rural Access to Technology: Connecting the Last American Frontier: Hearing before the Subcomm. on Tech. of the House Comm. on Science,* 106th Cong. 104-106 (2000).

91. *See id.*

92. *See* Wolnough, *supra* note 8.

ports topped $4 billion, and the service economy accounted for as much as 60% of the total economy in some of the large cities.[93] One commentator explains that the reason for success of ICT in India is the investment friendly laws of its cities and an "eagerness displayed by all to learn computer skills."[94] Others note that the reason for India's success is the large number of English speakers and India's world-class educational institutions.[95] The impetus for India's improvement, however, was from the government and the people of India themselves—not outside groups.[96]

In summary, while everyone agrees that something must be done to help the poor in developing countries, there is no consensus on whether ICT generally, and Dotforce in particular, is the answer. The trouble is that ICT is both the cause and the cure of the digital divide problem, thus any proposed solution is in danger of actually exacerbating the problem. In the next section, this Note discusses why the Dotforce initiative is a solution that will actually exacerbate the problem.

II. THE LIKELY EFFECTS OF DOTFORCE AND THE MOTIVATIONS OF G8

Success stories seem to suggest that developing countries can integrate themselves into the "high-tech" economy,[97] while other stories, such as Forst's, suggest that change on a nationwide scale is likely to be difficult or even impossible.[98] As will be shown below, Dotforce does not provide the tools for developing countries to replicate these successes. In fact, the ambiguities of the program and its lack of structure threaten to contribute to the problem of the digital divide.

A. DOTFORCE WILL WIDEN THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Dotforce is flawed because of the unspecific language of the Report and problems in its implementation. The Report does not provide clear directives for action to solve the digital di-

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93. *Id.*
94. Hoosain Kagee, *Interesting Questions on the Digital Divide*, BUS. DAY, July 16, 2001, at 8.
95. FINAL INITIATIVE REPORT, *supra* note 30, at 63.
96. *See id.* at 62-63.
97. *See* Wolnough, *supra* note 8 ("India is a prime example of a country that has capitalized on the benefits of an IT literate work force.").
98. *See* Rhoads, *supra* note 79; *see also supra* text accompanying note 70.

vide.[99]   Likewise, it fails to provide incentives to encourage de-
veloping countries to participate in, and comply with, the Re-
port.[100] The cumulative effect of these flaws will be to enrich the
government and industry elite of developing countries, but not
to help the poor and unconnected.

1. Dotforce Does Not Provide Clear Directives for Action

The primary problem with Dotforce is that it is merely ad-
visory in scope and has no real power to effect change.[101] The
Report does not oblige anyone to act to close the divide.[102] In the
section of the Dotforce report entitled "Role for the G8 and other
development stakeholders," the responsibilities are defined as:
"*offering* a fresh vision . . . *proposing* innovative tools and proc-
esses . . . *call[ing] on* the support and continued commitment of
the leaders of G8 . . . *addressing* the issue of the digital divide in
an open and imaginative fashion."[103]   Thus, Dotforce and its
stakeholders have only an advisory role, not an active role, in
closing the digital divide.

This point is further evidenced by the fact that, although it
is dubbed a "Plan of Action," the final report of Dotforce does not
establish any clear directives for action.[104] It does not describe
how the initiative will be funded.[105] It does not explain who is
responsible for initiating the "action points" in the Report.[106]
The Report does not give a time when the intervention should
begin.[107] Finally, the Report does not describe specifically what
communities or nations will be helped.[108] The Report is simply a
collection of general, positive sounding assertions, with no indi-
cation of how change will actually occur.[109]

The recently produced Framework for Implementation

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    99.   *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1 at 13-20; *see also* Southwood, *su-
pra* note 41.
    100. *See* Southwood, *supra* note 41; *see also* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note
1, at 13-20.
    101. *See supra* text accompanying notes 41-51.
    102. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-20.
    103. *Id*. at 9 (emphasis added).
    104. *See id*. at 13-20.
    105. *See* Southwood, *supra* note 41.
    106. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-20; *see also* Southwood, *su-
pra* note 41.
    107. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-20.
    108. *See id.*
    109. *See id*; *see also* Southwood, *supra* note 41 ("The generally unarguable
proposition has not been translated into the more difficult practical approach.").

(Framework) does not provide the missing details.[110] Instead, it mostly repeats the policy goals and 'initiatives' listed in the Report.[111] For example, one of the only differences between the Report and the Framework under the first action point is that the Framework lists as a "12-month deliverable" to "Finalize the strategic plan for the International e-Development Resource Network."[112] This new twelve-month time frame represents a change from the Report, which called for a final plan for that network six months after the Genoa G8 summit, or January 22, 2002. [113] Perhaps the plan is being delayed because the Dotforce Report did not correctly identify who was responsible for producing the finalized network.[114] The framework for implementation suffers from the same ambiguity as the Report, and it will not motivate countries to act to solve the digital divide.

The Report does not make clear what benefits are being offered to developing countries that choose to participate in the program.[115] The G8 only promises help and advice, while emphasizing that "the main responsibility for relevant actions remains in the hands of developing country governments . . . ."[116] The Report also stresses that the main focus of the initiative is to enable the underserved.[117] Cognizant of the enormity of this task, developing countries may be unwilling to participate in the initiative with only vague promises of help and advice from Dotforce. Perhaps this is why only eight developing countries are presently participating in the program.[118]

A final problem caused by the ambiguity of the Report is that there is no structure in place to ensure that ICT will get dispersed to underserved citizens of countries with ineffective or corrupt governments.[119] Instead, Dotforce makes these governments completely responsible. The Report states that develop-

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110. *See* Framework, *supra* note 32.
111. *See generally* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1; Framework, *supra* note 32..
112. Framework, *supra* note 32; *see also* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-14.
113. THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 14.
114. *See id.*
115. *See generally id.*
116. *See id.* at 10.
117. *See id.* at 11 ("Special efforts should aim at enhancing the level of connectivity among the poorest, women and children and less densely populated areas of the planet.").
118. *See Dotforce Update, supra* note 32, at 1 (listing the developing countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania).
119. *See generally* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1.

ing countries' "governments will . . . establish the environment within which the new technologies can spread to their citizens."[120] As a result, any aid given to a country may remain in the hands of the government and industry elite, who may not be inclined to share.[121] Put another way, The Dotforce Report overflows with talk of cooperation,[122] but cooperation is a two way street. The Report does not indicate what will happen if a government fails to cooperate.[123]

2. *Three Problems Regarding the Implementation of Dotforce*

Dotforce faces grave challenges actualizing the goals laid out in the Report. The Report is silent about what benefits will be provided for developing countries that participate in the program, who will pay for these benefits, and how and when they will be provided.[124] The role of Dotforce is primarily advisory in scope,[125] while the bulk of responsibility is on the governments of developing countries.[126] As a result of these characteristics of Dotforce, there will be three big obstacles to implementing the program successfully.

First, many governments of developing countries will lack incentive or believe it impractical to, participate in the program. Despite Dotforce's promises of support, developing countries may not be eager to tackle such an enormous problem.[127] Also, in less stable countries, governments simply may not be capable of implementing the program.[128] As a result, some, even most, of the developing world may get left out of the effort to close the digital divide.[129]

Second, even if these governments are willing and able to

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120. *Id.* at 10.
121. *See From the Slovak Press, supra* note 48 ("Money allotted . . . to the economic revival in developing countries has often ended up in the pockets of a few members of the ruling elite.").
122. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 3, 4, 10, 12, 13.
123. *See id.* at 10-20.
124. *See* Southwood, *supra* note 41; *see also* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-20.
125. *See supra* text and accompanying notes 41-51.
126. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 10 ("The main responsibility for relevant actions remains in the hands of developing country governments, enterprises and non-governmental organizations, working in tandem.").
127. *See, e.g.,* Krane, *supra* note 56; Moberg, *supra* note 47, at 10.
128. *See* Moberg, *supra* note 47, at 10.
129. For instance, only eight developing countries are currently participating in the Dotforce program. *See Dotforce Update, supra* note 32, at 1.

MINN. J. GLOBAL TRADE   [Vol.11:311

develop ICT in their countries, the benefits may not reach all of their citizens.[130] As mentioned above, the governments of developing countries will control how, and the extent to which, ICT will flow into their countries.[131] The problem with this, as one critic suggests, is that "the elites in government and business may not be predisposed to share the benefits of technology more broadly and help empower the dispossessed parts of their populations."[132] Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that an oppressive government that already hoards the citizens' wealth will set up a complex and hard-to-implement program to help empower its citizens.

The Dotforce Report does not include any enforcement mechanisms that address the possibility that a government will not cooperate.[133] This puts Dotforce in a very uncomfortable position. Dotforce wants to help the industry and government as well as the poor and rural populations of developing countries.[134] Dotforce believes that industry and developing countries' populations will grow together.[135] What will Dotforce do, however, if a government uses Dotforce aid to benefit the government and industry elite, but not the underserved majority of citizens? On the one hand, the digital divide will appear to shrink because the developing country will begin to develop an ICT economy and therefore catch up to developed countries. On the other hand, the aid may not help the people who need it most.[136] Dotforce may be reluctant to withdraw assistance from these countries, hoping that the benefits of ICT will at least trickle down to the poor, with the result that the program will continue to support corrupt and ineffective governments that have no intention or ability to help their citizens. The other option would be to withdraw aid altogether, which would not help anybody. Dot-

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130.   *See* Moberg, *supra* note 47, at 10.
131.   *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 10 (stating "the main responsibility for relevant actions remains in the hands of developing country governments . . ." and "governments will have to establish the environment within which the new technologies can spread to their citizens . . . ."); *see also* Sachs, *supra* note 48, at 81.
132.   Biel, *supra* note 49, at 265.
133.   *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-20.
134.   *See id.*
135.   *See* Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 88 ("The 'emerging networked world' augers well for economic globalization.").
136.   *See* Moberg, *supra* note 47, at 10 (stating that governmental problems impair the path of aid to the people who need it). *But see* Biel, *supra* note 49, at 261 (hoping that "more imaginative and farsighted leaders may see that embracing technology can help build greater public support as more people feel a part of the emerging new economy.").

force has no effective way of making countries comply with its program. Thus, for ineffective or uncooperative governments, Dotforce may not succeed in getting aid to the rural and poor.

Third, even if the governments of developing countries do make a sincere effort to close the digital divide for all of their citizens, there is little reason to believe that it will work, because Dotforce's limited scope,[137] does not provide the structure or muscle to close the digital divide.[138] In this regard, the example of what happened in Forst is very discouraging.[139] Germany, the biggest economy in Europe, was spending billions of Marks to bring Eastern Germany into the new, "high tech" economy.[140] The town of Forst already had a good infrastructure, which was being bolstered by a project to install high-speed cable modems in each household.[141] Even in this community, which is in a developed country and has the full financial support of the government, technology did not catch on.[142] No new economic opportunities were created.[143]

This example should lead Dotforce to question some of its basic assumptions about ICT in developing countries. ICT did not spur economic growth in a place as developed as Forst, Germany.[144] Those places where basic needs are not met will have even greater difficulty bridging the divide.[145]

Proponents of Dotforce, point to those countries where ICT has been successfully introduced, and reason that these good outcomes can be replicated everywhere.[146] For instance, India is often cited as a developing country that has succeeded, due to its explosion onto the software and telecommunications front in the last decade.[147]

India, however, is a unique case where conditions that are not present in other developing countries contributed to the ICT boom.[148] First, India succeeded in introducing ICT only because of strong governmental intervention.[149] The government made a

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137. *See, e.g.*, THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13.
138. *See supra* text accompanying notes 41-44.
139. *See* Rhoads, *supra* note 79.
140. *See id.*
141. *See id.*
142. *See id.*
143. *See id.*
144. *See supra* text accompanying notes 56-68.
145. *See* Alexander, *supra* note 8; *see also* Krane, *supra* note 56.
146. *See* Wolnough, *supra* note 8.
147. *See id.*
148. *See id.*; *see also* Kagee, *supra* note 94.
149. *See* Kagee, *supra* note 94.

conscious decision to rebuild their industrial economies into new "digital economies."[150] Among other initiatives, The Indian government passed laws to make it profitable for foreign companies to invest and build in its cities, including protective intellectual property laws.[151] Other characteristics that made ICT a success included a well-educated population eager to learn computer skills and a large number of English speakers who could understand the predominantly English-text Internet.[152] Most developing countries do not have the same conditions that existed in India.[153] For example, in the places that have the greatest need for the benefits of ICT, there is neither an eager, well-educated population, English speakers, nor strong government support.[154]

Dotforce does not appear to provide the structure and resources to overcome these problems.[155] Again, this problem stems from the Report's vagueness.[156] The Report refers in an abstract fashion about aiding governments of developing countries to pass laws making it easier for ICT to thrive,[157] but is silent as to who or how it will aid, or what incentives there are for developing countries to cooperate.[158] Likewise, the report mentions building human capacity, but again, it does explain specifically who will do the educating, where the resources will come from, or what these people will be trained to do.[159]

A further problem not addressed in the Dotforce report is that, for a population not already eager to use ICT, the hardest task will be to make people understand why ICT is important to them. This was a problem in Forst,[160] and, as one might imagine, is bound to be an even bigger problem in less developed areas. Thus, while India provides a good model of how the digital divide can be closed, the example highlights the deficiencies of the Dotforce program, which does not provide the structure and support to help countries not already willing and able to em-

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150. *See id.*
151. *See id.*
152. *See* Kagee, *supra* note 94; *see also* FINAL INITIATIVE REPORT, *supra* note 30, at 63.
153. *See* Kagee, *supra* note 94.
154. *See id.*
155. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-20.
156. *See id.*
157. *See id.*
158. *See id.* at 11 ("Fundamentally, awareness must be encouraged among developing countries to help their governments to undertake the reforms necessary to ensure that pro-competitive policy and regulatory frameworks are in place . . . .").
159. *See id.* at 15-16.
160. *See* Rhoads, *supra* note 79.

brace ICT.

3. *Dotforce Will Widen the Digital Divide*

As discussed above, some developing countries will not try to close their digital divides, others will participate in Dotforce but not share the benefits with their poor citizens, and still others will sincerely try to enable all their citizens with ICT but will fail due to inadequate support and structure from Dotforce. The cumulative effect of these implementation problems will be to widen the digital divide within each developing country. To the extent that the Dotforce program has any effect at all, it will likely benefit the elite and technologically sophisticated within each country, but not the rural and poor.

There are really two levels of the digital divide.[161] The first is between developed and undeveloped countries.[162] The second is between the powerful and the powerless within a single country.[163] Even if Dotforce narrows the gap between countries by giving ICT resources to the government and industry elite of developing countries, there is little reason to hope that this second type of digital divide will shrink.

Dotforce gives the resources and control of ICT to the government and industry of developing countries, causing the digital divide to grow between the sophisticated elite and the poor. The Dotforce Report provides that governments will control "the environment within which the new technologies can spread to their citizens . . . ."[164] The Report also encourages the development of industry.[165] By structuring the program so that ICT runs through the government and industry of each country, Dotforce will further advantage the educated elite that have the sophistication to use ICT to produce wealth. Even if governments and their industries make an effort to enable their poor rural populations,[166] these populations will not be able to keep up with the high-tech elite of each country. The elite control the spread of ICT and already have the resources and know-how to use ICT to its fullest potential. This situation reflects the dual nature of ICT.[167] ICT is the solution to the digital divide, "but

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161. *See, e.g.,* Wilson, *supra* note 7.
162. *Id.*
163. *Id.*
164. THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 10.
165. *See generally id.*
166. *See* Moberg, *supra* note 47, at 10; *see also* text accompanying notes 47-48.
167. *See supra* text accompanying note 1; *see also* Wilson, *supra* note 7.

misapplied, [it] can result in marginalisation of the poor and un-connected."[168]   Under the Dotforce program, the sophisticated elite will control the ICT, leaving the poor far behind.

This grim prediction is supported by evidence that even within the most developed countries, there remains a gap be-tween the technologically sophisticated urban population and the technologically unsophisticated rural population.[169] Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, all G8 countries, are struggling to close the digital divide in their own countries.[170] G8 countries propose to solve problems in develop-ing countries that they cannot resolve in their own.

B.   THE REAL PURPOSE OF DOTFORCE

The Dotforce Report has so few concrete guidelines and so little incentive for developing countries to participate, that one must wonder whether it was even intended to be an effective agent for change. The drafters of the Dotforce Report must have recognized that it would provide little real improvement without concrete guidelines, attractive incentives to developing coun-tries, and specifically delegated responsibilities to G8 stake-holders. As it stands, however, few developing countries are in-terested, and nobody is obliged to take action to solve the problem. Is this really a solution, or does G8 have other mo-tives? There are several possibilities.

First, many critics argue that the true purpose of Dotforce is to open new trade for the benefit of G8 countries.[171] They ar-gue that all the philanthropic talk is merely a pretense for ena-bling G8's multinational corporations to get their tentacles into developing countries to suck resources out.[172] This is not an ac-curate portrayal of Dotforce.

While it is likely that bringing developing countries up to speed technologically would produce new markets for G8 com-panies,[173] it would not be accurate to tag the initiative as moti-vated completely, or even primarily, by greed. ICT creates eco-nomic opportunities in the form of increased production and trade.[174] This economic stimulus can be mutually beneficial to

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168.   THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 4.
169.   *See e.g. IT Industry Urged to Fix Digital Divide, supra* note 57.
170.   *Id.*
171.   *See, e.g.,* Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 87; *see also* McCarthy, *supra* note 70.
172.   *See* Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 87.
173.   *See* Hamid, *supra* note 72.
174.   *See supra* text accompanying notes 33-40.

both developing countries and the G8 countries.[175] Thus, while the program is greedy in the sense that it is not wholly philanthropic, it is probably not sinister or malicious. Everyone has an interest in seeing the digital divide close.

Second, the Dotforce initiative may simply be an enormous public relations campaign to help better its image. International groups do not have the best reputations after the violent protests at Seattle, Washington and Genoa, Italy.[176] Many see the efforts at globalization as merely the imposition of western values on the world, or worse, the exploitation of the powerless for the benefit of huge western multinational corporations.[177] G8, a group that consists of the richest countries, probably has a worse public image than most.[178]

In this context, it is not outrageous to suggest that G8 is using Dotforce as a publicity stunt to better G8's image. The language of the Report seems to reflect this.[179] First, the Report is filled with philanthropic gushing that comes across as self-congratulatory.[180] Second, as mentioned above, the Report assigns no obligations.[181] G8 can therefore have its moment on center stage, but then the issue can quietly disappear with no one being held directly responsible for its failure.

A third theory, more sympathetic to Dotforce, is that the program may simply be a beginning, or a framework for change.[182] Change of this magnitude requires time and planning. Success is bound to be the product of a slow gradual process, and this initial Report could be construed as just the first step in getting the world to think about the issue.[183] Multi-step solutions to international problems are not uncommon in international law.[184]

However, in regard to Dotforce, the framework theory is not convincing for a number of reasons. First, Dotforce regards the report discussed in this Note as a *final* report. If it were intended to be a framework Report, other reports would follow.[185]

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175.   *See e.g.* Spectar, *supra* note 9, at 88; *see also* Biers, *supra* note 49.
176.   *See* Lyman, *supra* note 27.
177.   *See id.*
178.   *See id.*
179.   *See generally* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1.
180.   *See id.*
181.   *See id.*
182.   *See* Setear, *supra* note 31, at 209-16 (discussing the solution to the shrinking of the Ozone layer).
183.   *See id.*
184.   *See id.*
185.   *See* Setear, *supra* note 31, at 213 (describing multi-step treaties).

Second, under the present circumstances, a framework report is not needed—a plan of action is needed. The digital divide has long been recognized as a problem, and there are already many international groups acting, or ready to act, to help bridge the divide.[186] Third, the goal of a Framework report should be to unify the efforts into a single cause.[187] But the Dotforce Report does not unify.[188] In fact, there remain numerous independent efforts, in addition to the G8 effort, to close the digital divide.[189]

A final theory regarding G8's motivation is that Dotforce may be a sincere program to achieve all of the things it says in the Report, but G8 may not be the type of organization best suited to make it all possible. While each of the members of G8 is powerful by itself, the organization has no authority to tell developing countries what to do.[190] One possible reason the Report does not have concrete guidelines is that G8 simply lacks the authority to command action. Thus, the Report is simply a reflection of the powerlessness of G8 to create and encourage change, especially when that change may require strong-arming governments to support the initiative.

Which of these scenarios seems the most likely? It is probable that each of them played a role in shaping the Report of the Dotforce initiative. There is no reason to suspect that the members of G8 do not feel a real obligation to help those in need. However, it is not unthinkable that G8 would like to polish its international image and open new markets across the world. One must remember that G8 and Dotforce are large organizations with delegates who represent, and are responsible for advocating, all kinds of different interests. There is probably not just one single motivation behind the program, but a number of different interests, some philanthropic and some selfish.

C. SOLUTIONS

Everyone agrees that something should be done to help the impoverished people of developing countries. But is introducing ICT into developing countries the answer? As discussed above, this solution may actually exacerbate the problem by widening

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186. *See* Biel, *supra* note 49, at 263; *see also* Biers, *supra* note 49.
187. *See* Setear, *supra* note 31, at 210 (discussing the solution to the shrinking of the Ozone layer).
188. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1, at 13-20.
189. *See* Biel, *supra* note 49, at 263; *see also* Biers, *supra* note 49; *see also* Cullen, *supra* note 24.
190. *See* KIRGIS JR., *supra* note 27, at 522.

the disparity between the rich and the poor within each coun-try.[191] There are several improvements that could be made to the Dotforce program that would help minimize this effect.

First, the language of the Report should specify what bene-fits are available to developing countries, who is responsible for putting those programs in action, when and how they would be put into action, and who would pay for it. Only this kind of spe-cific plan is likely to inspire developing countries to participate and trigger action on the part of G8 stakeholders.

Second, if Dotforce is serious about closing the digital divide for all developing countries, it should offer attractive incentives for countries that participate and for governments that pass the benefits on to all of their citizens. Presently, only eight develop-ing countries have shown an interest in Dotforce.[192] G8 cannot force developing countries to participate.[193] Furthermore, G8 cannot force governments to share the benefits of ICT.[194] The only means of controlling the actions of developing countries is by offering or withholding incentives.[195] Dotforce should create, and state clearly in its Report, incentives for participation and compliance with the program.

Third, Dotforce should not channel aid through the govern-ments and industry of developing countries.[196] As discussed above, the likely result of this will be to enrich the hi-tech elite of developing countries, but not the poor.[197] Instead, Dotforce should, upon consent of the developing country, create its own programs to work directly with poor and rural populations of that country.

Fourth, closing the digital divide will occur most quickly by focusing ICT on healthcare.[198] Not only is healthcare where ICT is needed most, but it is also where ICT has been shown to have the greatest positive effect.[199] The spread of ICT, for purposes other than healthcare, will be more likely in areas where basic health services are being provided.[200] Finally, if people see an example of ICT being used in hospitals to improve people's lives,

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191. *See supra* text accompanying notes 164-68.
192. *See DOTFORCE UPDATE, supra* note 32, at 1.
193. *See* LUARD, *supra* note 27, at 522.
194. *See id.*
195. *See id.*
196. *See* Hammond, *supra* note 48, at 103; *see also* Moberg, *supra* note 47, at 10.
197. *See supra* text accompanying notes 161-68.
198. *See* FINAL INITIATIVE REPORT, *supra* note 30, at 10-11.
199. *See Bridging Digital Divide Linked to Broad Development, supra* note 59.
200. *See* THE DOTFORCE REPORT, *supra* note 1.

they may be eager to find ways ICT can improve their own lives.

Finally, there does not appear to be an easy solution to the inherent difficulties that exist in connecting people to the Internet who do not do not have basic services and do not understand how ICT can improve their lives. Perhaps the best aspect of the Dotforce program is its optimism that this problem can be solved. However, for a better solution, that same optimism should accompany a more carefully and specifically designed effort to close the digital divide.

CONCLUSION

The digital divide is a complex problem because the solution to closing the divide can also be the cause of its growth between the rich and poor. As a result, any initiative to solve the digital divide must carefully avoid exacerbating the problem by further empowering the rich and educated who have access to ICT. Dotforce, unfortunately, will do just that. Due to ambiguities in the Report and problems of implementation, the likely result of Dotforce will be to enrich the developing countries' elite, and not help the poor. Some critics have speculated that G8 has selfish motivations. Although Dotforce is not wholly philanthropic, it is not completely self-serving. G8 is interested in both polishing its international image and opening new trade markets for its corporations, but there is no reason to suspect that G8 is not also sincere in its desire to close the digital divide and help the world's poor. A more specific, concrete plan is needed to accomplish that goal, as well as incentives for third world governments who are reluctant to either participate in the program or to pass along the benefits of ICT to all of their citizens.