The Earth Charter Global Learning Opportunity-
An evaluation of an Online Course in Digital Storytelling and Community Leadership

June 27, 2008

This work takes the form of an evaluation of an online course. Nothing is more challenging to electronic communications in the information age than the digital divide. A network that believes in global ethics and sustainability needs to bridge this divide in order to move ahead together. A case study of an online course, the Earth Charter Global Learning Opportunity (e-GLO) demonstrates how regions with even the least digital access may benefit from the usage of information and communication technologies, particularly digital storytelling techniques. Youth from around the world come together in a pioneering capacity-building endeavor to share knowledge on their social and community activities while learning to express their messages and stories digitally. This work explores the pitfalls of reliance on technology when attempting to bridge the divide, grounding itself in the network society model of the information age, exploring the democratization of information with Web 2.0 technologies, and gauging the extent to which a digital course in digital skills may succeed in bridging the digital divide. Ultimately, recommendations are made on the basis of its findings.

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, Media, Peace and Conflict Studies.
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<td>Centre for Policy Alternatives</td>
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<td>CSD</td>
<td>Commission on Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>DOI</td>
<td>Digital Opportunity Index</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>Earth Charter</td>
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<td>Evolving Personalized Information Construct</td>
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<td>GCS</td>
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<td>HIAE</td>
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<td>ICEE</td>
<td>International Conference on Environmental Education</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<td>IGADD</td>
<td>Investor Group Against Digital Divide</td>
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<td>IMPACS</td>
<td>Institute for Media, Peace and Civil Society</td>
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<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<td>KISS</td>
<td>Keep It Short and Simple</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<td>PCI</td>
<td>Peace Child International</td>
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<td>TIG</td>
<td>Taking It Global</td>
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<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environmental Program</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNOY</td>
<td>United Nations Network of Young Peacebuilders</td>
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Part 1- Background and theory

*We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology.*

- Carl Sagan

1.1 Introduction

The information age, the global village, the digital divide. All expressions we have heard and perhaps reiterated to describe our times. The information age is, of course, a time, while the global village is an idea that implies that we share a set of values, with the digital divide acting as an obstacle to this way of being. It is these three concepts that provide the context for this research. Situated in a world saturated with information, challenged with the task of sharing knowledge trans-continentally, and attempting to avail communication technologies to reap the benefits of this age, we are presented with the promise of advancing our human development by harnessing these three notions and channeling them in the direction of our common good.

The aim of this research, an evaluation, is to determine whether educational usage of information and communication technologies can help ensure equitable distribution of knowledge and understanding to further the overarching principles of the Earth Charter\(^1\). A case analysis will be presented, an evaluation of the pilot course of e-GLO, the Earth Charter Global Learning Opportunity, an online, distance-learning initiative undertaken by the Earth Charter Youth Initiative and focusing on skills of digital storytelling and community leadership. Course participants are 26 youth from 23 countries, and its 7

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1 Appendix A: The Earth Charter
youth facilitators and presenters from 7 countries, altogether spanning 5 continents. In its content and in its mode of delivery, the course represents a test to the three concepts above that together can advance the principles of the Earth Charter, ‘a widely recognized, global consensus statement on ethics and values for a sustainable future. Developed over a period of ten years, in what has been called the most extensive global consultation process ever associated with an international declaration, the Earth Charter has been formally endorsed by over 4,000 organizations, including global institutions such as UNESCO and the World Conservation Union (IUCN)\textsuperscript{2}. Through the evaluation of this case, it will be made clear whether the attempt by e-GLO to bridge the digital divide is successful in fostering shared values within the global village.

My personal motivation for this research stems from an involvement in the development of the course under evaluation, during which an increasing fascination with it developed. Passion for youth empowerment through active use of electronic media materialized in an invitation by the Earth Charter Youth Initiative at the start of 2008 to play a role in developing e-GLO. As the preparation phase for the course concluded, personal doubts began to emerge about whether the course would be successful. It became clear that research that would provide a thorough evaluation of the course could address any such doubts.

Since the target audience of this first e-GLO course is a young group (mostly aged 30 and under) that are active in the peacebuilding and development sectors, and its content focused essentially on the use of new media technologies to advance their activities, this research begins with a broad look at the importance of media and

\begin{enumerate}
\item From the website of the Earth Charter International, at http://earthcharterinaction.org/about_charter.html. The updated figure of 4,000 endorsements is according to Earth Charter International’s Youth Coordinator, Dominic Stucker.
\end{enumerate}
communications for peacebuilding and sustainable development. The Earth Charter’s principles of a sustainable ethic towards development are themselves advanced only by efficient awareness raising that must employ the usage of information and communication technologies (ICT’s), such as that demonstrated by the case at hand. According to executive director of the Earth Charter International Secretariat and Center for Education for Sustainable Development Mirian Vilela, it is an advancement that is demonstrated in using media to give people the practical skills to empower them to be change agents in their own communities, including skills of media communication.

This first section of the research will go on to develop ideas of information society, network society and the challenges posed by the digital divide. The section concludes with a look at the Earth Charter and its youth initiative and how they relate to the concepts of the network society, before investigating how these concepts of network society and digital divide in the information age actually apply to the case of e-GLO.

Section two of this research is devoted to a multi-dimensional evaluation of e-GLO. It outlines successes and pitfalls of the course concept and content, measuring achievement of its stated objectives, before going on to analyze if the pilot course succeeds in acting as a junction between the three points of inquiry. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the evaluation and recommendations are made regarding both the continuity of the course and its suitability as a medium to communicate and advance the principles of the Earth Charter.
1.2.1 Media and Communications

The first significant development in communications came in the year 1438. The invention of the printing press, known as the Gutenberg press, provided for the first time the possibility of multiple reproductions of books at a rate unheard of until that year. The world of communications has come a long way since then.

Few people were literate at the time of Gutenberg, and not many more were literate at the time of the world’s first ever monthly periodical, appearing in Germany in 1660. From here on the pace accelerates. Less than half a century later the first daily appears in London under the name “The Daily Current.” It was in the mid nineteenth century that the first ‘modern information revolution’ began and lasted around 100 years. Technologies such as the telephone, telegraph and radio came of age, transforming not only the way we communicate, but with it, the way we live.3

The second modern information revolution began in the 1950’s and lasted roughly 30 years, thrusting us powerfully into the age of television and the personal computer, the age of information, where knowledge, and lack of it, would determine the ways we led our lives, and often that of others. This new age, one that relied so much on information that information could come to symbolize it, began its journey in the fast lane of the so-called information superhighway. Society would come to identify itself with the information it sends, receives, produces, consumes, and believes.

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1.2.2 Civil Society in the Information Age

Peacebuilding, a field that encompasses post-conflict reintegration, reconstruction, reconciliation, development, human rights and democratization, among other activities, is a vast operation that relies heavily on awareness, cooperation and funding. Communications are integral to all peacebuilding activities, particularly those that involve awareness raising. Communications in the form of outreach is equally important for fundraising purposes, as organizations strive to bring their projects and their beneficiaries to the attention of donors and potential donors.

Effective communications and adequate use of information and communication technologies (ICT’s) can make the difference between the survival and continuity of a development initiative and its demise. Furthermore, media communications can spread messages to a wide audience, helping to create a sense of community amongst civil society that is working on shared goals. Such collective goals and the knowledge of them creates opportunities for cooperation, while helping progress towards the goal to reach a critical level of momentum where it may become a social movement, loosely organized and sharing a common motivation or vision. A social movement can be described as "… a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity."

As the Earth Charter proves, however, not all social movements must necessarily rise out of any sort of conflict. The movement represented by the Earth Charter is not

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actually in contradiction to conflict, but is rather a positive and progressive all-inclusive vision concerned with the interest of all.

For civil society, effective communications planning can yield numerous results. It can help to give the organization a public profile delivering a focused, consistent message. It can also ensure everyone in the organization delivers the same message and understands the impact desired. Communications can also equip the organization with power to act quickly when necessary and make the organization’s points accessible, digestible, and timely for policy discussions. An essential role it plays for any civil society organization is that of raising awareness of services with potential beneficiaries, mobilizing and organizing people, while raising debate on pertinent issues.

Communications also educate about an issue and deepen the organization’s roots in the community or sector – local, regional, national or international. They can be used to encourage partnerships and clarify the organization’s stance in the political arena, while increasing its visibility and the possibility for even small, remote organizations to become known internationally. On the financial side, communications help get the most of the organization’s budget, create a strong argument for funders to support the organization’s initiatives and play an important fundraising function.5

By keeping up with media and communications, civil society can make sure that it is not excluded from today’s global society, a society that in the information age, has increasingly had information as its defining feature.6

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5 Lisa Mighton (2006), Communications Planning for Civil Society and Community- Based Organisations. IMPACS (The Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society) in collaboration with The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), Sri Lanka
The term ‘information society’ is a rough translation of the Japanese *joho shakai*, a term developed by Japanese scholars and policy makers in the 1970’s to describe a new model for society and economy in post-industrialist times, ‘one that revolved specifically around the increasingly flexible functionality of microcomputers’.\(^7\) As envisioned by Japanese futurist Yoneji Masuda in 1981, ‘information society would feature voluntary communities, participatory democracy, generalized affluence, equality and psychic well-being; the information society would be, in Masuda’s vision, a ‘Computopia’ in which a person could paint one’s own design on the invisible canvas of one’s future, and then set out to create it’.\(^8\)

Masuda’s ‘computopian’ vision today seems closer to reality that ever before. In it’s positive projection of the information society, it offers a vast array of potential for the individual, the community and those who seek to further their message in a virtual, borderless society, while acting in the local, real community.

1.3 From Information Society to the Network Society

The information society, society as we know it in the Information Age, is one that refuses to respect borders. In light of globalization, this comes as no surprise. Together they shift the pattern of communication within the global society into a jointed societal yoke that can be called the Network Society. The definition of a network is best expressed in the words of Darin Barney:

\(^8\) ibid.
Networks are comprised of three main elements: nodes, ties and flows. A node is a distinct point connected to at least one other point, though it often simultaneously acts as a point of connection between two or more other points. A tie connects one node to another. Flows are what pass between and through the nodes along ties. To illustrate, we might consider a group of friends as a network: each friend is a node, connected to at least one other friend but typically to many others who are also connected, both independently and through one another; the regular contacts between these friends, either in speech or other activities, whether immediate or mediated by technology, are the ties that connect them; that which passes between them - gossip, camaraderie, support, love, aid - are flows.9

In the network society, it is information that flows between the nodes of a network and along the ties. The example given in this definition points to a recent and relevant phenomenon of ‘social networking’ on the Internet, from its beginnings in the mid 1990’s to the recent explosion of the website Facebook.com. This occurrence will be discussed in further detail in part two of this research.

Returning to our definition of networks, we can see that a network is essentially a structural condition whereby distinct points are related to one another by connections that are usually multiple and intersecting.10 As demonstrated in Barney’s example above, networks may be at the inter-personal scale. Yet the structure may be found at every level of communication, be it the inter-organizational, inter-governmental or the international.

Amongst common metaphors ascribed to networks are ‘web’ and ‘matrix.’ The web naturally brings to mind the World Wide Web or the Internet, today’s most pervasive network. The Apple Macintosh dictionary defines a matrix, among other things, as ‘an environment or material in which something develops; a surrounding medium or structure.’ Another possible definition is provided as an ‘organizational

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structure in which two or more lines of command, responsibility or communication may run through the same individual.’ Together these definitions do well to illustrate the networks within our information society. The origin of the word ‘matrix’ is the Latin *mater* for ‘mother’, connotating the womb, a place where a new form of society is being born, the Network Society, one which, like a matrix, evokes the logic of decentralized, proliferating connectivity.\(^{11}\)

The network society, powered by the information engine, has some very distinct identifying features to it. Firstly, it is a society that transcends time and space. ‘In the network society, with significant social, political and economic activity increasingly concentrated on flows of information, and with the proliferation of technologies that enable widespread communication of large volumes of information across vast territories instantaneously, the human experience of time and space as essentially localized is nearly obliterated. Computerized networks introduce unprecedented levels of speed, automation and reach into human communication, which decrease the need to synchronize and localize activity in a particular place.’\(^{12}\)

Not only are time and space compressed in the network society, but equally significant is that the networks are essentially de-territorialized, opening up possibilities of a global lattice in which social movements can multiply their support as can any set of relations within the structure. Time-space compression has led to the common term ‘the global village,’ implying that the world has become a smaller place. This is a result of digital communications technologies mediating communication of large amounts of information at remarkable speeds, the result of which is a network technology that has led to the proliferation of ‘new media,’ generally embodied in the technological breakthroughs of the Internet, wireless and satellite based communications.\(^{13}\)

\(^{11}\) ibid
\(^{13}\) Darin Barney, *The Network Society*. Polity 2004 pp. 61
Yet another feature of network society not to be overlooked is interactivity. Human communication is interactive by nature, as it always requires some degree of interaction. In digital network communications, this interactivity is put forward through dialogic applications such as e-mail, chat rooms, forums and the such. The interactivity offered by digital networks offers more than mere interactivity however. It allows for intervention and choice by the individual, by receivers of information\(^\text{14}\), making them not passive consumers of this information as in the traditional mass communication model, but rather empowered and active producers as well. Open source technology, most popularly demonstrated by Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia that allows anybody to edit its content, best demonstrates this occurrence. Such participatory elements of the network society are not only democratic, but shape the network itself, when viewed from a mass communication perspective, into one that relies less and less on a controlled, centralized sender of messages to a mass number of receivers, but more on a decentralized flow of messages from mass senders to mass receivers, both of which may play interchangeable roles. The technology that has made this participatory transformation possible, in a way that may be regarded as the latest information revolution, is called Web 2.0. It is the technology that has enabled and empowered so many to publish information on the Internet without the deep technical know how required to build an actual website. Such publishing, the creation on of user generated content, has taken the form of blogging (the creation and maintenance of weblogs), open source Wiki technology, and the ability to ‘upload’ files by any Internet user, be they audio, visual or moving picture (video). The

technology is advancing at a rapid pace, and we must expect to see more and more opportunities for user generated content in the coming years.

The creation of global networks in the network society, facilitated by modern mass communications technologies, allows for the creation of networked identities as well. These occur when a network shares a common goal, a common project, which is their formed identity, their project identity. According to Manuel Castells, the project identity is created when ‘social actors, on the basis of whichever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that defines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure.’\(^{15}\) Simply put, project identities are proactive movements which aim at transforming society as a whole, rather than merely establishing the conditions for their own survival in opposition to the dominant actors.\(^{16}\)

Examples of this sort of identity are the global environmental movement or the identities that drive the international peace movement, or, according to Castells, the feminist movement.\(^{17}\)

Project identity is an example of network identities. These are generally collective identities that do not ask the question ‘Who am I?’ but rather ‘Who am we?’\(^{18}\)

One cannot ignore here the fact that most conventional critiques of technology point to its effect in reducing direct human interactions. This is the challenge of the information age. Social movements within the network society must be seen as an opportunity to bridge geographic distances, and with the advent of audio and visual

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\(^{17}\) ibid.

interactivity between users of the technology, members of the network, the human element is slowly finding its way back into the technology paradigm.

What must be recognized, however, is that the network society is by no means all-inclusive. Although the network society carries with it the wonders of deterritorialization, "it is difficult to sustain an argument that altogether dismisses the importance of geography in this equation in a time when the majority of the population of the affluent world enjoy high speed wireless internet connectivity and similar majorities in poorer regions lack access to a basic telephone line."19

1.4 The Digital Divide

The digital divide is an undeniable reality of today’s information age. What concerns us here is the distinction between understanding the divide as a matter of access, or as a matter of understanding and benefiting from digital technology. To what extent does the network society bridge the digital divide?

According to the Investor Group Against Digital Divide (IGADD)20 in Indonesia, it took digital-divide researchers a whole decade to figure out that the real issue is not so much about access to digital technology but about the benefits derived from access. Such gaps can exist even between the technologically rich and the technologically poor in developed nations21. "Digital Divide" refers to the gap between those who benefit from

20 An Indonesia based group committed to bridging the digital divide and using Indonesia to set an example of their model. http://www.digitaldivide.org/dd/index.html
21 David Buckingham, Media Education, Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture. Polity 2003. pp. 181. Buckingham cites the example of the UK, where research in the late 1990s ‘found that middle-class
digital technology and those who do not. This divide may take shape in various distinguishing layers, rural and urban, poor and rich, old and young, disabled and able, or developing nation and developed nation. In a world where poverty alleviation may seem a priority over digital benefits, IGADD believes that closing the digital divide is a precondition for reducing poverty.

Many antipoverty experts believe that closing the Digital Divide is not a top priority, arguing instead that the poor need clean water and jobs before they need computers. However, what they do not realize is that access to digital technology greatly enhances the effectiveness and affordability of efforts to improve the water supply, improve rural health and education, generate jobs and address any of the other interrelated problems of poverty. Closing the digital divide is not a silver bullet for reducing poverty. But there is a much lower likelihood of large scale and sustainable poverty reduction without doing so.

The gap between rich and poor, developed and developing, as going hand in hand with bridging the digital divide, is a view shared by the community of sustainable science. Sustainability science is the field of science that ‘seeks to understand the fundamental character of interactions between nature and society, in order to support the advance of sustainable development, the meeting of fundamental human needs in a way that preserves the life support systems of planet Earth’. The divide is seen both as a barrier to sustainable development and as a potential for building a digital bridge that would narrow the grave disparity that exists in levels of development today. The figure below illustrates the challenge of the digital divide in relation to sustainability.

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children were roughly three times more likely than working-class children to use multimedia computers at home, and eight times more likely to use the Internet (Livingstone and Bovill, 1999).

For Manuel Castells, the underprivileged in the information society, those on the losing side of the digital divide, represent ‘black holes of information capitalism’. For Castells, such regions are classified as the fourth world, one that misses out on the opportunities and benefits of the information society, let alone the network society. He does not acknowledge, in this case, the potential, if any, for the network society to act as a bridge in itself of the expansive gap that exists. In order to look beyond the disparity that exists and into the potential for networks to remedy such a disparity, we must first make the distinction between access and usage, whereby usage is a prerequisite for benefits of information technology. Access and even usage are not the main obstacles in the quagmire of the digital divide. Very few areas even of the least developed regions of the world can complain of lack of access. Perhaps remote areas may have a deficiency, but at the national levels, headway has been made in recent years in increasing

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25 ibid.
accessibility\textsuperscript{27}. The case is not so much one of availability of ICT’s, but one of benefiting from their usage. Such distinction helps us clarify that the grounding for the divide comes in two forms, that of infrastructure and lack of it, and that of knowledge and capacity and their absence. Improving infrastructure is of course a daunting task, one that is rarely undertaken by civil society in the telecommunications sector. Knowledge and capacity building, however, are its specialties.

According to Jakob Nielson’s article on the digital divide in 2006, the divide and its bridge can be categorized into three stages: the economic divide (infrastructure), the usability divide (computer literacy, education), and the empowerment divide (knowledge sharing, capacity building). Nielson points particularly to the challenges posed by the third phase of the divide, ‘We have the knowledge needed to close the usability divide, and I remain hopeful that we'll get the job done. The empowerment divide, however, is the hard one: even if computers and the Internet were extraordinarily easy to use, not everybody would make full use of the opportunities that such technology affords.’\textsuperscript{28} Can networks and the network society be utilized to further the knowledge base and build capacities in the developing world with regards to the usage and benefits of ICT’s? The case evaluated in part two of this research, that of the Earth Charter Global Learning Opportunity (e-GLO) will examine an online attempt to bridge Nielson’s empowerment divide.

\textsuperscript{27} International Telecommunication Union, http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/doi/index.html
1.5 Background to the Earth Charter

The Earth Charter has its beginnings in the 1987 call for a universal declaration and charter to set the norms for transition to sustainable development. The call was made by the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission. A draft UN Earth Charter was developed for the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the proposal for an Earth Charter received considerable support from global civil society, who were central to the drafting process. After numerous drafts and after considering the input of over 5,000 people, the Earth Charter Commission came to consensus on the Earth Charter in March 2000, at a meeting held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The Earth Charter was formally launched later that year, in ceremonies at The Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands. Since that time, a formal endorsement campaign has attracted over 4,000 organizational endorsements, representing millions of people, including numerous national and international associations. Today the Earth Charter continues to grow in support, as endorsements multiply through an online endorsement system.

The Earth Charter Initiative is the collective name for the extraordinarily diverse, global network of people, organizations, and institutions that participate in promoting the Earth Charter, and in implementing its principles in practice. The Initiative is a broad-based, voluntary, civil society effort, but participants include leading international institutions, national government agencies, university associations, NGOs, cities, faith groups, and many well-known leaders in sustainable development.

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29 Earth Charter in Action website, http://earthcharterinaction.org/about_charter.html
30 ibid.
Earth Charter International (ECI) is the coordination and communications hub serving the global Earth Charter Initiative. ECI manages a small number of centrally coordinated programs and partnerships, and facilitates communication and networking for the much broader, voluntary Initiative, which has involved thousands of organizations, many hundreds of thousands of individuals, hundreds of cities, dozens of global institutions, and a growing number of national governments, over nearly two decades. ECI's small main office is maintained in Costa Rica at the United Nations-mandated University for Peace, with Affiliates and Partners in over 75 countries around the world. The organization is governed by an International Council.\textsuperscript{31}

The Earth Charter website states that ‘decentralization paves the way for a rapid expansion in Earth Charter-related activity the world over.’\textsuperscript{32} According to its executive director, Mirian Vilela, the initiative has always followed a decentralized structure, if only informally. She says that the Earth Charter is not organized like a conventional non-governmental organization, but rather like a network of individuals and organizations from around the world, who are using the Earth Charter in different ways. Her belief is that the best approach for the Earth Charter is one of ‘decentralized empowerment.’ She stresses the importance of identifying the nodes, the strong points of the network and engaging and empowering them. What is essential is facilitation and general support amongst the network so that the movement has a synchronized way of working, but not so much in a command and control manner. A global initiative such as the Earth Charter’s identification of itself as a network is indicative of today’s network society, where decentralization is a key feature. Coupled with this decentralization is the role of

\textsuperscript{31} ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} ibid.
ICT’s in facilitating communications and knowledge sharing between the nodes of the network.

The concept of global civil society (GCS) involves some extraordinary claims. Through emerging forms of transnational associational life, a new political, economic, and cultural order is said to be under construction. The agents of these developments are a "medley of boundary-eclipsing actors-social movements, interest groups, indigenous peoples, cultural groups, and global citizens" (Pasha and Blaney, 1998:418). Structurally, new interactive communications technologies are providing groups and individuals with unprecedented capacities to form meaningful transnational networks.33

The Earth Charter, as a network of global civil society, therefore carries all the features of a significant social movement, ‘a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, and/or organizations.’34 For director Vilela, it is a social movement to which there are many points of entry, a multi-faceted social movement with many doors through which individuals and organizations may enter, allowing them the chance to reflect on their ethical responsibilities and their role in society.

1.6 Earth Charter Youth Initiative

Among the most important groups engaged by the ECI is youth. The Earth Charter Youth Initiative (ECYI) is an action-oriented network of youth aged

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approximately 15-35. It is active in over 50 countries with a diverse membership, youth groups, and partners.\textsuperscript{35}

According to ECI executive director, Mirian Vilela, empowering youth is a central principle of the Earth Charter. She believes it is important to empower young people as educational institutions are slow to change, and are currently not engaging youth to think critically about their role in society.

ECYI undertakes a wide range of activities. Programs include the Earth Charter Youth Groups (ECYG), among whose activities in 2007 included\textsuperscript{36}: translating the Earth Charter into Finnish and Belorussian; holding youth conferences on the Earth Charter in Belorussia, Latvia, and Ethiopia; promoting sustainable livelihoods on Lake Victoria and in the slums around Nairobi, Kenya; promoting organic agriculture in China; cleaning up beaches in the Philippines; providing humanitarian assistance after the August 2007 earthquake in Peru; and campaigning for renewable energy on university campuses in the USA. Members of the ECYI have also attended numerous conferences in 2007 such as UPEACE’s International Conference on Climate Change and Vulnerability in The Hague, Global Youth Service Day, Earth Charter International Council Meeting in Sao Paulo, Brazil, United Nation’s Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) in New York City, CIVICUS Youth and World Assemblies in Glasgow, Scotland, UNEP’s Tunza Conference in Leverkusen, Germany, and International Youth Forum in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. ECYI maintains collaborative partnerships with Global Youth Action Network (GYAN), TakingITGlobal (TIG), United Network of Young Peacebuilders

\textsuperscript{35} Earth Charter in Action website, http://earthcharterinaction.org/about_charter.html
\textsuperscript{36} Earth Charter Initiative, Annual Report, 2007
(UNOY), Youth Action for Change (YAC), Peace Child International (PCI), BeatBoard and Plan Netherlands, among others.

Current programs in 2008 include the publishing of “Youth in Global Governance for Sustainability: An ECYI Guide.” Another major program of the initiative is the case being evaluated by this research, e-GLO (Earth Charter Global Learning Opportunity), a semester-long, online course focused on community leadership and digital story telling, developed by the ECYI. ECYI is also developing the Alliance for Intergenerational Partnership for Sustainability, which was launched at the ICEE Conference in India in November 2007 by the ECYI. Along with partner organizations, ECYI wrote a draft Resolution on intergenerational partnership and successfully lobbied IUCN members to submit it to their General Assembly for voting at the World Conservation Congress this October. Finally, the Youth Leadership Team, elected in 2007, will launch a global Earth Charter radio campaign, as well as an international youth-led publication on Earth Charter-related themes in print, digital, and online formats.

The course under evaluation in this research, e-GLO, is a fruit of many months of preparation by ECYI and its partners in a desire to create training in leadership skills and communication skills, reaching out to an international audience.

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37 ibid.
Part 2- Analyzing the case of e-GLO

“There can be no gainsaying about the fact that a great revolution is taking place in the world today... That is, a technological revolution with the impact of automation and cybernation... Modern man through scientific genius has been able to dwarf distance. Through our genius we have made this world a neighborhood. And yet we — we have not yet had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood. But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this.”
- Martin Luther King Jr., 1968

2.1 e-GLO Vision, Mission and Objectives

The Earth Charter Global Learning opportunity, e-GLO, was launched by the Earth Charter Youth Initiative in Spring 2008. It consists of eight online sessions over a period of three months, and brings together young participants from 23 countries and presenters and facilitators from 7 countries, together spanning 5 continents. The e-GLO development team consisted of Dominic Stucker, Earth Charter’s International Youth Coordinator and e-GLO Program Director; Mike Sheehan, e-GLO Program Manager; and Advisors Camila Godinho and Leah Wener. According to Mike Sheehan, founder and director of Beatboard, a main partner in the project, the idea to hold the training online came from the wish to have a global pool of participants who could attend from within their communities, whether at home, or at a community centre or Internet café. The desire was to create a course that would allow for the sharing of information, creation of media
that was representative of the thoughts and ideas of participants, mixing leadership and multimeda training in a way that would tap into the stories of participants from around the globe.

The following are the vision, mission and objectives of the project, as stated in March 2007\textsuperscript{38}.

**Vision for E-GLO**

*Millions of inspired, highly capable, and connected youth all around the world bringing about justice, sustainability, and peace in their own lives, local communities, and the world.*

**Mission for E-GLO**

*Develop and implement an online leadership training for youth that is:*

- *Inspired by the Earth Charter;*
- *Accessible to all motivated youth world-wide;*
- *Interactive, fun, and full of hope; and*

*Succeeds in:*

- *Inspiring youth to engage in critical and creative thinking about the challenges that currently confront humanity and the Earth;*
- *Helping them to develop the skills they will need to engage in successful human rights, sustainable development, and peacebuilding projects and initiatives; and*
- *Forming a strong network of friends and colleagues who collaborate with one another, offering advice, support, and encouragement.*

**Objectives for E-GLO**

\textsuperscript{38} Appendix B: e-GLO Mission, Vision and Objectives, 27/03/2007
Inspired by the Earth Charter

- Apply the Earth Charter’s vision of a “just, sustainable, and peaceful world” throughout;
- Conduct one or more sessions on the Earth Charter and the ECYI, complete with tangible examples and inspiring stories, with a special focus on the consultation process, “The Way Forward” section, and “Beacon Projects;”

Accessible to all Motivated Youth

- Make special efforts to bridge the digital divide;
- Make special efforts to inform a diversity of youth and invite them to participate; and
- Make special efforts to translate E-GLO into other languages, and involve non-English-speaking participants in meaningful ways.

This particular program will operate predominantly in English while looking for opportunities to involve other language speakers in meaningful way through various art based components. I.e. Live performances, visual presentations including video, slide shows.

Interactive, Fun, and Full of Hope

- Utilize cutting edge online technologies and offline activities to ensure a high degree of interaction. The web based technologies used in this program will be selected for their popular accessibility and ease of operation;
- Employ teambuilding activities that are fun, help create a trusting environment, help participants explore and move beyond their own comfort zones, and promote a sense of belonging;
• Employ and teach digital storytelling to promote a strong sense of community among participants and to fill them with hope;

Challenges to Humanity and the Earth

• Engage participants with sessions in which we identify and critically discuss current pressing challenges, while coming up with creative approaches to overcoming obstacles;

• Offer sessions that encourage participants to consider both local actions and involvement in global governance processes;

• Take in presentations and interact with experienced guest speakers who have made advances in areas of social justice and environmental and economic sustainability through organizational and community leadership, and artistic vision.

We continue to look for ways to engage a balanced and culturally diverse group of guest presenters and participants valuing a global conversation as much as possible.

Skills Development

• Hold sessions on individual learning styles, celebrating diversity, nonviolent communication, group dynamics, and conflict resolution and peacebuilding; as well as

• Digital storytelling, engaging online media, presentation skills, facilitation skills, and resume and cover letter writing;

• Hold sessions on visualization and strategizing, project design, grant writing, fundraising resources, social entrepreneurship, and report writing;

A Strong and Lasting Network
- Draw on Internet resources, such as an e-mail list, blog, website, Skype, etc. to keep network of youth in touch and active after E-GLO;

- Encourage participants to join the ECYI as a strong and growing network through which to remain connected and make new connections, while benefiting from the International Youth Coordinator’s support of their work;

- Provide opportunities to alumni to contribute to future trainings.

In general, engage participants at three levels: individual, community, and world. Draw on inspiring experts, especially youth, to facilitate sessions.

The evaluation of the course will begin by examining the degree to which the course has achieved these objectives.

2.2 The Partners

The Earth Charter’s partners in the project are Plan Netherlands, the Dutch Chapter of Plan International, Beatboard, and Heart in Action Enterprises (HIAE). While Plan Netherlands plays an ongoing supporting role as a partner with ECI, Beatboard played a central role in the development and implementation of the course. Beatboard is a Canada based organization ‘committed to effecting positive change in communities through delivering leading-edge experiential education programs that value diversity, inclusion and solutions for healthy living.’ According to Beatboard founder Mike Sheehan, “it is not necessary for every community around the world to have the Internet as part of their daily life, yet the Internet as a tool for information sharing is important,

39 Beatboard website, http://www.beatboard.org/
and when people want access to that global community, it should be provided.” He has high hopes for the “network that e-GLO is creating” and has a vision of “a global gallery that gets a million hits a day, where people are visiting and checking out the content.” It’s about young people’s voice and about making partnerships with someone else on the other side of the globe and working on a project together… This whole concept of bridging the digital divide, e-GLO is actively interested in seeking out diverse perspectives, and will take the time to work with individuals to secure this technology, having access to it and understanding it better.”

HIAE provides the technological platform for the project. Heart In Action Enterprises is a New Media, multimedia event planning social enterprise. A co-organizer of live interactive multimedia communication broadcast conferences and forums over the Internet, with the theme of “Power of Technology as Used by youth, young professionals to make changes in the lives of persons around the world.” Heart In Action's mission is to empower and inspire today's youth, young professionals, 'generation now' leaders, and nurture solid leadership skills utilizing the most current communication and educational technology tools available. In doing so, this enables them to achieve their purpose and realize their goals as they work to bridge the "digital divide".

According to the organization’s Executive Director, Ashie Hirji, it is important when bridging the divide to “think about what you are bringing people in the developing world.” She stresses the importance of security in communications, and the safety that the platform provided by HIAE offers. In her view, this platform is “the most cost-effective way to bridge the divide, create sustainability and help the environment” as people do not have to travel great distances to attend large conferences.

40 A generic term that describes a generation that has grown up with computer technology and daily Internet usage.
2.3 The Challenges

e-GLO’s stated objectives will be evaluated and results measured in the following pages, in order to determine its success and to make recommendations for its future.

Its main challenge is to reach a globally representative group of youth while bearing in mind the digital divide. The extent of its success in bridging the divide in its first course will demonstrate the extent to which the network society is able to do so, while at the same time measuring the success of the online platform that hosts it.

Mike Sheehan of Beatboard asserts that from the start, there was a concern that there would be too many participants from the northern hemisphere. The team was pleasantly surprised, however, by the numbers of applicants from developing countries with low access to digital opportunities, and by their desire and passion to learn the skills of new media. As the core team for developing the training, of which Mr. Sheehan was a part, processed applications, they were concerned with having geographic diversity and gender balance, which they largely achieved.

2.4 The Course- Media Education

The project’s debut course is a fitting one in media education. Its content revolves around digital storytelling and community leadership. According to the project’s ‘group page’ on social networking website Facebook, ‘Digital Storytelling happens when people of all ages and experience make an emotional connection with others through using a blend of digital devices in the sharing of stories from their lives or imagination. This new form of storytelling is emerging with the arrival of more accessible media production
techniques using computers, digital cameras, video recorders and software. Stories can be shared over the Internet in the form of pictures, video, animation, websites, blogs, podcasts, vidcasts and more. Web 2.0 technologies have made this type of sharing possible.

The content of the course is one of media education, a field that is relatively low in popularity within the formal education establishment. It is possible to find an element of media education in the syllabi of a few Anglophone countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia, yet the struggle to mainstream media education into public education has been an uphill one. Media education revolves around the development of critical and analytical skills to understand media messages. It is often referred to as ‘media literacy’ as it provides students with the skills necessary to ‘read’ the media. Similarly, media education involves an element of teaching how to ‘write’ media as well. Media literacy is therefore both the ability to read and write media messages. It aims to develop both critical understanding and active participation. 42 “Enabling young people to take control of the ‘means of production’ can empower them in relation to the adult world, and in relation to the media themselves. They become active producers rather than passive consumers, able to give voice to their own concerns, and to create positive alternatives to dominant media representations.” 43 According to David Buckingham, elements of a media education strategy should include the involvement of youth groups as they are likely to function more effectively in less formal situations, particularly with

disadvantaged groups who might not otherwise gain access to the media.\textsuperscript{44} In this regard, the Earth Charter Youth Initiative is an ideal place from which to launch such an educational program.

The e-GLO project is also in keeping with the Earth Charter endorser UNESCO’s 1982 declaration on media education, which states:

‘Rather than condemn or endorse the undoubted power of the media, we need to accept their significant impact and penetration throughout the world as an established fact, and also appreciate their importance as an element of culture in today’s world. The role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor the function of media as instruments for the citizen’s active participation in society. Political and educational systems need to recognize their obligations to promote in their citizens a critical understanding of the phenomena of communication’.\textsuperscript{45}

Buckingham states in his policy paper on media education, presented to UNESCO in 2001, that ‘the range of parties and institutions involved in media education would include at least the following:

- Activist groups, of a variety of political and moral persuasions
- Youth-led groups and organizations, often based in local communities.\textsuperscript{46}

Buckingham repeatedly stresses that media education should not be confined to schools and that many successful initiatives have involved groups such as community organizations and activist groups among others, adding that partnerships should be forged


\textsuperscript{45} Appendix C: UNESCO Grunwald Declaration, 1982

with a range of organizations outside formal education.\footnote{David Buckingham, \textit{Media Education, Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture}. Polity 2003. pp. 191} This strategy for media education is well aligned with the approach of the Earth Charter.


In the Millennium Declaration, UN Member States agreed upon a number of key development goals. In addition to a commitment to reduce poverty, improve health, ensure environmental sustainability and promote education, one Millennium Development Goal (MDG) requires making available "the benefits of new technologies-especially information and communication technologies".

This potential for spreading to a wider population, particularly in the underprivileged nations, the knowledge and capacity needed to maximize these benefits, can be seen as an objective of the Earth Charter Youth Initiative’s latest course. Sehrt goes on to say that “There is a broader debate that comes to mind when thinking of the introduction of e-learning in the developing world: what comes first-information technology (including e-learning) or addressing citizens' basic needs? Development organizations must continue to focus on addressing the most basic needs, such as building more classrooms and providing clean water. However, ICTs can be part of the solution. If education and capacity-building are critical steps for entering into the new global economy, e-learning
should be considered a critical facet of basic development, an alternative medium of capacity-building and a means to people's empowerment.”

2.5 The Medium is the Message- A Digital Course for Digital Skills

In 1964, Marshal McLuhan, the famous communications theorist, first introduced his famous paradox, ‘the medium is the message’ in his book Understanding Media. What was to become known as ‘The McLuhan Equation’ was a statement that would shape communication studies for decades to come. The ‘equation’ has been interpreted in many ways, but for the purposes of this research, it is the belief that the characteristics of any given medium are intrinsically part and parcel of the message delivered. According to McLuhan, it is typical that the content of a message blinds us to the character of the medium. In essence, it is that character of the medium to which we must turn to understand the content of the message.

A prime characteristic of the Internet as a medium of (mass) communication is that it is decentralized. The Internet is a decentralized network of networks, the constituent parts of which are owned and administered by autonomous organizations: the private networks of households, small businesses, large enterprises and nonprofit organizations as well as the (usually privately owned) public data networks, both large and small, of Internet Service Providers and telecommunication companies. The

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49 ibid.
Internet does not have a single central hub, but much like the typical structure of networks, its junctures occur at independent and intertwined nodes of the network. In this sense, the course that is inspired by the Earth Charter, a decentralized network itself, teaches digital storytelling techniques that allow for an empowered citizenry via the Internet, the medium that is itself a decentralized network.

2.6 Session 3- Media for Peacebuilding- Prospects for the Global Community

The course was conducted in 8 sessions over the span of a three-month period. The titles for sessions were as follows:

Session 1- Intro to e-GLO
Session 2- Intro to one another
Session 3- Media for Peacebuilding
Session 4- Grassroots Community Organizing
Session 5- Unearthing and Addressing Key Sustainability Challenges through Interviews and Digital Storytelling
Session 6- Making Social and Environmental Documentaries
Session 7- Animated Youth Voice
Session 8- Live, Interactive, Multi-media Event Open to the Global Public

As evident from the session names, the first two sessions were meant to provide space for an informal exchange, while introducing the Earth Charter. Participants learnt about each other and acquainted themselves with the platform on which the course was being hosted. Session three provided a broad view to the field of media and peacebuilding, demonstrating the need for a course such as e-GLO and for the skills of digital storytelling which were to follow in the next sessions. As already noted in the introduction of this research, session three’s content was prepared, and the session presented by the author of this research himself. The following is a brief description of
the content development process of the session, as well as a summary of its presentation. The recording of the session may be viewed in its entirety on the DVD in Appendix I\textsuperscript{52}.

The session was developed upon the request of the ECYI coordinator, Dominic Stucker, after his description of the course and its objectives. The speaker was free to develop the content of the session in whatever way he deemed fit, in close collaboration with the ECYI coordinator. Mutual agreement was reached on the structure of the session, that it would be divided into a general introduction into the field of media and peacebuilding, i.e. the potential for using the media and various ICT’s to further participants’ community leadership activities, and a workshop on blogging. The workshop would act as the first skills based section of the course, providing participants with a powerful Web 2.0 tool with which they could aggregate the rest of the products that they may be producing during the course of the training and afterwards, while enabling the creation and linking of a strong network that would evolve out of the e-GLO experience.

The session, which lasted nearly three hours, was titled ‘Media for Peacebuilding—Prospects for the Global Community.’ It was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation that was uploaded to the platform prior to the beginning of the session, and step-by-step blogging instructions that were sent via email to participants the day before the session. Prior to the session, participants were also sent resources that they could retain for future references. These were: (a) A document titled ‘Communications Planning for Civil

\textsuperscript{52} The DVD (Appendix I) contains the 160 minute recording of session 3, along with recordings of three interviews conducted for this research. It is recorded using a demo version of screen capture software \textit{iShowU}, resulting in the demo text appearing on the screen throughout the recording. The screen shot recording is of the session recording playing back through the HIAE platform using Adobe Macromedia Breeze. The recording is provided here in Quicktime format (.mov), and was not available in any format other than Adobe Macromedia Breeze from HIAE.
Session three began with an invitation for participants to view, online, an eight-minute film titled EPIC 2015, made for the fictional Museum of Media History\textsuperscript{53}. The film is a fantastic portrayal of the future of the Internet where EPIC, the Evolving Personalized Information Construct, is a hypothetical reality that makes viewers think twice about the nature of information technology and its relation to humans. It evokes a critique of the information age and sets the stage for the session. The presentation then began with a clarification of the meaning of ‘media.’ The emphasis was both on the literal definition of the term, as the plural of medium, that which carries a message from sender to receiver, and also on the types of media, namely radio, print, television and the Internet. Participants were asked to think of other media of communications that were not listed. A poll (also pre-prepared on the platform) then appeared for participants to answer.

\textsuperscript{53} EPIC 2014 and a revised version of the film, EPIC 2015, were first available on the Internet on three blogs, Convergence Chaser, Snarkmarket, and Jason Kottke’s blog. They later became available (still in Flash movie format) on various websites and blogs. For reasons of familiarity with popular video sharing website Youtube, and due to its ability to pause video while it loads (helpful for slower Internet connections), participants were invited to view the updated film (EPIC 2015) on Youtube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQDBhg60UNI
the question “Where do you get your information?” The results revealed the popularity of the medium through which the course itself was being held:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and magazines</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-of-mouth</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1- Session 3 Poll “Where do you get your information?”

The session then moved onto a broad talk on the mass media landscape, first highlighting a few words that the participants themselves had used in the first session of e-GLO when discussing the challenges to world peace. These words were ‘misunderstanding’, ‘misconception’, ‘propaganda’ and lack of ‘awareness.’ A discussion ensued on how these challenges could be overcome to achieve peace, which led into the next discussion on the power of the media to spread a culture of peace. Focus was on the reach of various media as well as emotional appeal as being an important characteristic of audio-visual media in particular.

The question was then posed to participants. “What about technological limitations?” This question was a direct reference to the digital divide, and the limitations it brings to the use of media communications. An answer was offered by the presenter, emphasizing the importance of using a ‘media mix,’ a combination of various media, both electronic and non-electronic, from radio to simple flyers and hand written messages that could reach a mass audience.
The discussion of the mass media landscape then progressed onto a clarification of all the actors that have a role in deciding what enters the discourse of the mainstream mass media, pointing out the roles played by owners of media establishments, advertisers, journalists and editors, governments, military and other combatants, and audiences. Finally participants were drawn into the discussion on the role that civil society plays in defining the big media agenda. This element of the presentation engaged the participants, and was followed by a final topic of the media landscape, a note that media is a part of society and a reflection of it, not a separate entity from it, and that society must act to produce messages of peace.

The acronym ACT was presented to participants as a way to remember to match their messages to those of the mass media by focusing on angle, creativity and timing. The purpose here was to explain to participants that in order for their messages to get into the mainstream media and reach a wider audience, they needed to match the agenda of the mainstream establishment, which could be done by finding an angle that was new and interesting on the issue, presenting the message in a creative manner (such as those used in later e-GLO sessions), and by choosing the right timing to bring their messages to the media’s attention. The example was provided of the organization trying to spread messages of HIV/AIDS awareness, and timing its media products to match the period in which mass media were focused on health issues.

The next part of the session revolved around the concept of ‘information peace.’ Participants were introduced to the idea of information war in order to understand information peace. A discussion on media wars, psychological operations, and the pervasive culture of war in the media helped clarify the concept of information peace in
opposition to these elements of information war. On media wars, participants were introduced to the idea of different media establishments having conflicting agendas and points of view. The example of BBC and Al Jazeera was used, where the narrative from one on a given issue may be contradictory to the narrative of the other. With regards to psychological operations, the phenomenon using media by governments or military to target civilian populations of another country was presented. The culture of war that exists in the media was also briefly discussed, highlighting the news media’s focus on violence and on conflict evolution rather than conflict resolution. The presentation pointed to the medium of film as well, with its focus on war rather than peace.

The final topic of discussion before the session moved onto blogs and the blogging workshop was a call to participants to become active producers of media that can contribute to a culture of peace. This gave meaning to their presence at e-GLO and the skills they would be learning in successive sessions. Participants were encouraged to produce their own messages rather than being passive consumers of media messages. They were encouraged to use art and culture in delivering their messages in a creative manner that appealed to the emotions of audiences. Again, they were provided with an acronym to remember in their active production of media messages. KISS was the acronym provided, much to the admiration of participants. It reminds writers and producers of media messages to ‘keep it short and simple.’ This helps the audiences retain the message and makes it generally more effective.
Figure 2- Screenshot from session 3

After participants were encouraged to become active producers of media content, they were introduced to an important Web 2.0 tool, that of blogging. They were told how blogs (short for weblogs) were similar to being personal websites that could be created free of charge, could include text, photo and video content, and could link to any number of other blogs and online sources, creating a network of bloggers and young activists. Several participants expressed their previous reluctance to take up blogging and their intention to make use of the communication tool after attending the session. A workshop ensued on how to create a blog using the website www.Blogger.com, one of the simpler blog formats. The session thus introduced the idea of utilizing media for furthering a peaceful cause, and highlighted the role that civil society can play by becoming active producers of media content themselves. Participants requested also that there be a central blog to which they could connect. The request was not favored by the presenter, as the
initial idea of the workshop producing a collective e-GLO blog had been abandoned for the sake of individual blogs by participants that would link to each other in a manner, like networks, that was decentralized and constantly expanding. At the time of writing this research (one session before the end of the course), such expansion and complete linkage of the blogs has yet to fully materialize. Such proliferation in the future will be indicative of the formation of a successful network.

2.7 Evaluation (Participant feedback)

The evaluation here of the debut e-GLO course is based on participant feedback, gathered at six different periods. Further evaluation to include comments made in interviews with the project’s partners, is provided in part three. Regular ‘participant feedback forms’ were gathered via e-mail periodically after each of the first five sessions, providing a combination of quantitative and qualitative feedback. These surveys or ‘feedback forms’ followed the same structure and contained the same questions at each interval. The questions on the forms (and their answers in the case of multiple choice answers) were as follows. The text sent to participants regarding the forms can be found in Appendix D:

1- For how long did you attend session (session number) on (session date), 2008 (NOT including informal chat time after the session ended)?
   - The whole session
   - More than half of the session
   - Half of the session (about 1 hour)
- Less than half of the session
- I could not attend the session

2- Do you feel you participated actively in the session?
- Yes
- Yes, but I hope to participate more actively in coming sessions
- No, but I hope to participate more actively in coming sessions
- No, because of technical problems
- No, because I could not fully understand the written and/or text discussions
- No

3- What do you think about the technology being used?

4- Which part or topic of the session did you benefit from most? Why?

5- What comments do you have about the facilitation of the session?

6- How do the topics discussed apply to your work / studies?

7- Do you feel the course is achieving its goals?
   a) Bridging the digital divide: yes no
   b) Providing a safe space to discuss the challenges facing Earth and humanity: yes no
   c) Helping you develop important skills: yes no
   d) Creating a global network of youth: yes no

A separate, more comprehensive survey, titled ‘e-GLO Evaluation Survey’ was conducted after the end of the sixth session, using an online survey tool, Survey Monkey54, to gauge the progress of participants and to provide a comprehensive

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54 www.surveymonkey.com
evaluation of the course and the platform through which it was delivered. The questions and results of the survey are available in Appendix E. Although two sessions remained in the course at the time of the comprehensive survey (session seven and session eight), the timeline of this research could not include an evaluation of the two final sessions.

The following sections will attempt to illustrate the extent to which the participants themselves deemed the course successful. It is divided into four parts, drawing on responses from both surveys conducted. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be used to demonstrate results:

(a) The extent to which participants perceive the course to have achieved its stated objectives,

(b) The extent to which participants perceive the course to be forming a network,

(c) The extent to which participants perceive the course to be bridging the digital divide, and

(d) Further feedback from participants regarding the technology being employed (the platform provided by HIAE), the content of the course, homework assignments, facilitation, attendance and relevance and applicability of the course to their fields of work and study.

2.7.1 Response rates

Given the hurdles of access to Internet in many participants’ countries, response rates to the surveys conducted has been satisfactory. e-GLO has a total of 26 participants, with an average total of 19.8 attending every session. Many participants are not able to
attend the entirety of sessions. The busiest time of any given session is around the middle of the roughly three hour length. This can be attributed (according to discussion chats available in the session summaries) to late arrival due to miscalculation of time zone and early departure due to other obligations, although the course schedule had been determined based on the expressed availability of participants. All surveys were completed on a voluntary basis, and the comprehensive evaluation survey was completed on an anonymous basis. In the regular feedback forms, a certain degree of anonymity was guaranteed by a clause included in each email carrying the feedback form that stated: ‘The confidentiality of participants’ responses on the participant feedback forms is guaranteed. This means that your responses will be shared with the e-GLO team after your names have been removed.’

Only the author of this research had access to the identity of each respondent on the regular participant feedback forms.

The average response to each of the five regular feedback forms has been 12 respondents, including those whose reply is that they were not able to attend the session. Deducting those who responded that they did not attend, an average of 60.6% of the average number of participants attending each session responded.

Response to the comprehensive evaluation survey, conducted after session six, is slightly lower, with 19 of the 26 participants responding and 15 of them actually completing the survey (approximately 57.7%). The four respondents who did not manage to complete to the survey in its entirety have been disregarded in the quantitative data analysis for the maintenance of accuracy in results. Any qualitative feedback, however,
from these four respondents is seen as valuable and has been considered in the qualitative analysis.

With regards to the comprehensive evaluation survey, the most responses came from the 26-30 age bracket, with only 1 less response coming from the 21-25 bracket.

Table 2- Age distribution of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31+</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7.2 Evaluation- Achieving e-GLO Objectives

Of the objectives outlined in the vision, mission and objectives statement of March of 2007 (see 2.1), several are overarching objectives for the initiative, while many were aimed at achievement in the debut course. Offering the course in several languages is for example, a long-term vision. The following are the objectives that the debut course aimed at achieving.

**Objective: Inspired by the Earth Charter**

- Apply the Earth Charter’s vision of a “just, sustainable, and peaceful world throughout;
**Conduct one or more sessions on the Earth Charter and the ECYI**

Prior to the first session of the first ever e-GLO course, participants were asked to read the Earth Charter and the document outlining the vision, mission and objectives for the course. This may have been the first time many participants had ever read the Earth Charter. After initial introductions and interactive activities such as polls, an interactive workshop ensued on ‘The Earth Charter and Sustainability Values.’ Asked in the feedback form about which topic of the session they benefited from most, four of twelve respondents mentioned the sustainability presentation as their most beneficial topic from the session, noting its ‘mention to practical cases and the topic of “is sustainable development possible without peace?” It opened my mind to the diverse views of people from around the world.’

Additionally, when asked if they felt e-GLO helped advance the Earth Charter, 12 of 14 respondents in the evaluation survey said yes. Their additional comments are listed below:

- I'm sure e-GLO will be the best way to advance in the Earth Charter knowledge
- I think it is moving in that direction.
- e-GLO first of all LINKS individuals from ALL around the world, thus letting each one of participants to get to know about Earth Charter and get to know more about its initiatives! Thus e-GLO works as promoter tool for development and improvement of the initiatives of the Earth Charter and contributes toward fulfilling EC mission
- It helps advance the Earth Charter because you contact people all around the world who are working in any area of the Earth Chapter and you can see that you need specialists of every area to address the issues present in different countries.

- It connects people, resources and ideas which leads to communication, understanding and collaborative systems towards EC goals.

**Objective: Accessible to all Motivated Youth**

- **Make special efforts to bridge the digital divide:**

With regard to bridging the digital divide, significant effort was made to accept applicants to the course from a diversity of regions and having adequate representation from the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Many of the participants themselves demonstrate characteristics of community leadership and are an effective vehicle for transferring of knowledge to a wider audience locally.

Participants came from 23 countries and provided broad regional representation: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Latvia, Malawi, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sweden, Venezuela, Thailand and USA. Of these 23 countries represented, only 6 rank in the top 50 countries on the Digital Opportunity Index of 2006 (Appendix F)\(^\text{55}\), 8 between the top 50 and the top 100, and 8 above the 100

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\(^{55}\) [http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/doi/index.html](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/doi/index.html). “The Digital Opportunity Index is a composite index that measures “digital opportunity” or the possibility for the citizens of a particular country to benefit from access to information that is “universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable” (WSIS Tunis Commitment, para 10). It uses a range of indicators, including data on service prices and the take-up of latest ICTs, to assess countries’ performance and prospects to measure progress in building the Information Society in 180 economies worldwide... The DOI follows the same methodology as the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Program.”
mark. Data for Somalia is unavailable. In terms of digital opportunity, significant effort has clearly been made to bridge the digital divide. Table 3 illustrates these rankings.

**Table 3- Digital Opportunity Index of countries represented by participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>DOI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sweden</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Finland</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Norway</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Germany</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 USA</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Latvia</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Russia</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Brazil</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Mexico</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Venezuela</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 China</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Thailand</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 DRC</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 El Salvador</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Iran</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Indonesia</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Pakistan</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Bangladesh</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Kenya</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Nigeria</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Sierra Leone</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Malawi</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Somalia</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective:

- Make special efforts to inform a diversity of youth and invite them to participate

A diverse group of youth participated in the course, as evident from their geographic distribution. Additionally, it is clear from the comprehensive evaluation survey that one third of respondents who completed the survey came from rural areas.

Table 4- Urban/ Rural distribution of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban area (big town, city)</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural area (agricultural, countryside)</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On numerous occasions, participants were invited to share their experiences via the course platform’s ‘camera and voice pod’, where they could not always be heard and seen by all participants. Such occasions were not always successful due to technical mishaps, usually in the form of the participants being unable to successfully activate their camera and microphone, resulting in a time consuming scenario that would be abandoned after several attempts.

Successful examples of participants invited to participate by sharing their experiences via audio and video include a Chinese participant’s rendition of the events surrounding the devastating May 12th earthquake that had taken place in between the
sessions, and a brief presentation by a Kenyan participant on her experience with the Youth Action for Change program and *wikispace*\(^{56}\) technology.

Participants were highly active in discussion chats that took place as sessions progressed, often sharing experiences from their field. Asked in the regular feedback survey about their feelings on how actively they had participated, there is an increase of people answering ‘yes’ from 18.18 % after session 1 to 44.44 % after session 5, with the actual number of respondents answering ‘yes’ doubling from 2 to 4 by session 5.

### Table 5- Active participation of respondents in the sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Do you feel you participated actively in the session?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, but more actively next time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>10/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 4</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>19/19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{56}\) [www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com)
Objective: Interactive, Fun, and Full of Hope

- Utilize cutting edge online technologies and offline activities to ensure a high degree of interaction. The web based technologies used in this program will be selected for their popular accessibility and ease of operation;

In the comprehensive evaluation survey, participants were asked about several aspects pertaining to the technological platform being used to deliver the course. Their degree of agreement on the ease of use of the platform varied, with 60% of respondents agreeing to any extent with the statement that the platform was indeed easy to use:

Table 6- Ease of use of the platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the degree of interaction offered by the platform, participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement that it allows them to express their views on the topic of the session, the majority of respondents strongly agreed or at least agreed with the statement:

Table 7- Degree of interaction offered by the platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective:
- Employ teambuilding activities that are fun, help create a **trusting** environment, help participants explore and move beyond their own comfort zones, and promote a sense of **belonging**;

- Employ and teach digital storytelling to promote a strong sense of **community** among participants and to fill them with hope;

On statements that the course created a trusting environment, sense of community and sense of belonging, more than three fourths of respondents expressed some degree of agreement in each case, with an overall average of 91.1% expressing some degree of agreement between the three questions. The sense of community was strongly evident in times of crisis, when, for example, a devastating earthquake struck China and participants were given the opportunity of hearing a first hand rendering of the events from a fellow participant in China. Expressions of solidarity from fellow participants were a clear indicator of community.

### Table 8- Trusting environment, community and belonging created by the course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trusting environment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Related to the issues of trust and community was a question asked in the regular feedback forms as to whether participants felt the course was providing a ‘safe space to discuss the challenges facing Earth and humanity’. Out of a total of 51 responses after 5 sessions, 48 had answered yes to the question, indicating overall approval that a safe space had indeed been provided. The three answers not in agreement had come after sessions 1 and 2, perhaps before a rapport had been built amongst participants and facilitators.

Objective:

- Engage participants with sessions in which we identify and critically discuss current pressing challenges, while coming up with creative approaches to overcoming obstacles;

Almost all respondents agreed to some extent with the statements that they were engaged to think critically and come up with solutions to the challenges currently facing humanity and Earth:

Table 9- Engaged to think critically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged to think critically</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged to come up with creative solutions</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective:

- Encourage participants to consider both local actions and involvement in global governance processes;

Almost all respondents also felt that they were encouraged to think both locally and globally. The sentiment was strong, as it was the objective to which the most respondents (40%) strongly agreed:

Table 10- Encouraged to think locally and globally

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As one participant put it after the second session, “Being a part of this group will allow me to see these issues that I work on at a local level, in a larger view.”

Objective:

- Take in presentations and interact with experienced guest speakers

Similarly, there was overwhelming agreement by participants that they were given a chance to interact with guest speakers, but the majority of that agreement was not strong:
Table 11- Given a chance to interact with guest speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given a chance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to interact with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presenters</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective:

- **Hold sessions on individual learning styles, celebrating diversity, nonviolent communication, group dynamics, and conflict resolution and peacebuilding; as well as**
- **Digital storytelling, engaging online media, presentation skills, facilitation skills, and resume and cover letter writing;**
- **Hold sessions on visualization and strategizing, project design, grant writing, fundraising resources, social entrepreneurship, and report writing;**

With regard to the three objectives stated above, the focus of this debut course was on the second, specifically on digital storytelling and engaging online media. With that came other skills not explicitly stated in the objectives statement, such as interview techniques, filmmaking, animation filmmaking, and digital photography tips. It should be verified for future courses that participants do not come to the course already equipped with the skills the course aims to teach, so as not to be dissatisfied with the course.
Table 12- Development of skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developed important skills</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gained new skills in digital storytelling</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective:

- *Encourage participants to join the ECYI*

There is a clear indication that the course has indeed encouraged participants to join the Earth Charter Youth Initiative if they were not already a part of it. Prior to the beginning of the course, only 2 of 15 respondents were members of the youth initiative. By the time the comprehensive evaluation survey was conducted (after session 6), another 8 had become members of the ECYI, and the remaining 5 expressed their intention to join.

2.7.3 Evaluation- Forming a Network

One of the main stated objectives of e-GLO was the development of ‘a strong and lasting network.’ Such a network, as outlined in part one of this research, is one that exists mainly through the Internet. The objective states:
“A Strong and Lasting Network

- Draw on Internet resources, such as an e-mail list, blog, website, Skype, etc. to keep network of youth in touch and active after E-GLO;
- Encourage participants to join the ECYI as a strong and growing network through which to remain connected and make new connections, while benefiting from the International Youth Coordinator’s support of their work”

The following data will examine whether or not the course, from the perspective of the participants, is succeeding in creating such networks.

The regular feedback forms asked participants if they felt the course was creating a global network of youth.

Table 13- Creating a global network of youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Do you think the course is achieving its goals in creating a global network of youth?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clearly, participants felt from the start that the course was creating such a network. Only one respondent did not agree, responding after only the first session.

In the comprehensive evaluation survey after session six, participants were asked about the extent to which they agreed that they had formed a strong network of friends and colleagues who can collaborate with one another, offering advice, support and encouragement.

Table 14- Forming a strong network of friends and colleagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formed a Strong network</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant 20% of respondents here expressed no opinion on the statement, casting doubts over whether they felt a strong network had been created.

Another indicator from the same survey relates to whether respondents think the Earth Charter is a social movement. Of 12 respondents, two (14.3%) answered ‘No’, this time casting doubts over whether the course had formed a network that was affiliated with the Earth Charter. The accuracy of answers may, however, be disputed as the question ‘Do you feel the Earth Charter is a social movement?’ may be misunderstood as referring to the Earth Charter as a document rather than an initiative. The comments made by respondents upon answering this question, however, point to a positive impression of the Earth Charter as related to the network structure of the social movement:
1. It can be considered a bridge between social movements.

2. It's an instrument to promote the creation of social movements. The EC, because its principles, could be the ethical support for any social or ecological movement.

3. The Earth Charter is a brilliant focal point for a full spectrum of creative implementation.

4. Yes, it is for the sustainable development through active involvement of the people of grassroots, program and policy level. It is something that is by society and for the society to better understand the needs of environmental issues for a better and sustainable and more equitable world.

5. We are a community now.

6. Earth Charter connects individuals, creates sense of belonging, and deals with bringing solutions to social and environmental challenges by utilizing human resource.

7. Due to its behavior like Family Learning Program not Distance Learning Program and I think that it is the better Social Movement.

8. It can be a social movement, because even though the problems are different, a common objective unites us.

9. It could be if more people were aware of it.

10. It addresses issues that when left unattended can destroy the habitat for a human being. They try to advocate for the world to become a safe place to live in.

Several of the above comments indicate the ability of the course to form a network. The word ‘bridge’ in comment number 1 is an example of such, as is the word ‘connects’ in comment number 6. The respondent who provided comment number 3 points directly to a
feature of networks, mentioning that the Earth Charter is a ‘focal point,’ like a node of a network. This answer from the feedback form following session 2 is expressive of one participant’s opinion, “Is good to build network with various youth from different parts of the world, to know about their communities and activities!!! We can learn much from each other!”

2.7.4 Evaluation- Bridging the Digital Divide

The digital divide, as mentioned in part one, is a challenge to the global village. To what extent can the network society bridge the divide, and to what extent does e-GLO bridge, in particular, the digital empowerment divide? In evaluating how much course participants felt the course was achieving its stated objectives, we saw that significant effort was indeed made to reach out to participants from less developed countries, with only 8 of 23 countries represented by participants coming from countries which rank in the top 50 of the Digital Opportunity Index.

Of a total of 47 applicants to the course, seven countries were represented by multiple applicants. They were Pakistan (8 applicants), Nigeria (5 applicants), Brazil (3 applicants), Kenya (3 applicants), China, Russia and USA (2 applicants from each). Of these seven countries with the highest application rate, only one country (USA) ranks in the top 50 countries on the Digital Opportunity Index, a clear indication that the call for applications had succeeded in reaching regions with low digital opportunity and where such a course may be most beneficial. Additionally the core team of e-GLO made special efforts to work with applicants to ensure that they had access to, and understood the
technological requirements for admittance to the course, holding three separate open houses for applicants to test their access and technological capacities before being fully accepted to participate in the course. Those whose technical capacities were not sufficient could be asked to partake as ‘observers’ to the course (one applicant requested to be an observer and it was suggested by the e-GLO Team that three other applicants be observers as well). A ‘technical access and skill survey’ accompanied the invitation to attend open houses, and with it was added a note stating that ‘You will not be disqualified for answering questions with no.’ In the survey, potential participants were asked the following questions:

1. Do you have a functioning webcam?
2. Do you have a functioning microphone?
3. Do you have a functioning digital camera?
4. Do you have a functioning digital camcorder?
5. Can you upload images to your computer?
6. Can you upload video to your computer?

Exhaustive efforts were made to assist potential participants in reaching the necessary level of technology required for attending the course. Prior to the course beginning, efforts were also made to clarify technical procedures for using the platform, with participants being provided with a document titled ‘e-GLO, Guidelines for Participating in Online Seminar Room.’ The document (Appendix G) detailed every step necessary for effective use of the platform on which the course was delivered. Below is an image from the document, explaining to participants the layout and various buttons and features of the platform, so that they may understand how to use it.
The e-GLO team had also made efforts to ensure that in the event of connectivity problems, participants would still be able to follow the sessions. Facilitators regularly requested volunteers to act as ‘real-time scribes’, taking real time minutes of sessions as they progressed. These minutes were visible in a ‘real time minutes pod’ on screen, so that participants who had any difficulty with audio would still be able to follow the session.

When asked on the regular feedback forms if they felt the course was achieving its objective of bridging the digital divide, 92% of total responses felt that the course was indeed bridging the divide.
Table 15- Bridging the digital divide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Do you think the course is achieving its goals in bridging the digital divide?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comprehensive evaluation survey, conducted after the sixth session of the course, inquired in further detail about the participants' opinions as to the course’s ability to bridge the digital divide. Again, the distinction was made between the varying meanings of the term ‘digital divide,’ with respondents asked if they thought the term referred to (a) A gap between those who have technology and those who do not, (b) A gap between those who understand technology and those who do not, and (c) A gap between those who benefit from using technology and those who do not. Multiple answers were permitted.
The varying results indicate that according to the respondents’ understanding of the concept, the digital divide is a culmination of those who have access to technology, those who understand it, and those who benefit from using it. The first of these, the matter of access, is one that is addressed by the course in its regional distribution of applicants and participants, in their rural/urban distribution (one third attending e-GLO from rural areas), and in accepting that participants not have direct access, i.e. those that log on from Internet cafes. The understanding as well as the benefits that come from using the technology are precisely what the course aimed to teach and to encourage, the skills required for using Web 2.0 tools, and the potential uses for furthering local activities. Regardless of what they felt the divide was about, when asked on the comprehensive survey if e-GLO was bridging it, all 15 respondents answered yes. The following table shows a selection of responses when respondents were asked to explain why they felt the course was bridging the divide (left column). A total of ten responses were collected, of

Table 16- Perceived meaning of ‘digital divide’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A gap between those who have technology and those who do not</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A gap between those who understand technology and those who do not</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A gap between those who benefit from using technology and those who do not</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The varying results indicate that according to the respondents’ understanding of the concept, the digital divide is a culmination of those who have access to technology, those who understand it, and those who benefit from using it. The first of these, the matter of access, is one that is addressed by the course in its regional distribution of applicants and participants, in their rural/urban distribution (one third attending e-GLO from rural areas), and in accepting that participants not have direct access, i.e. those that log on from Internet cafes. The understanding as well as the benefits that come from using the technology are precisely what the course aimed to teach and to encourage, the skills required for using Web 2.0 tools, and the potential uses for furthering local activities. Regardless of what they felt the divide was about, when asked on the comprehensive survey if e-GLO was bridging it, all 15 respondents answered yes. The following table shows a selection of responses when respondents were asked to explain why they felt the course was bridging the divide (left column). A total of ten responses were collected, of
which the seven presented here are the ones that clearly relate to one of the three definitions. The column on the right classifies the responses as relating to access, understanding or benefits of usage.

**Table 17- Participants’ definitions of digital divide**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Definition of Digital Divide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through the online course, would be participants will be interested to participate even if I means using paid internet cafes</td>
<td>ACCESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because there where people from different countries in the world represented. Places where people have high speed internet and other places where the internet is slow. To a certain extent e-GLO is helping to bridge the digital divide. In the next courses it should work hard to include other sectors of the community - rural areas, low income communities where maybe the e-GLO Alumni who took the course earlier could set up a computer and teach others like the e-GLO course and other speakers could come online some time</td>
<td>ACCESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-GLO is pretty clear in each step</td>
<td>UNDERSTANDING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
e-GLO gave opportunity to get to know more about the blogs, and about linking people in seminar room. It already brings knowledge about new technical opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERTANDING, BENEFITS OF USING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e-GLO is best solution to get benefit of technology properly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENEFITS OF USING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It starts the process of digital story telling which will serve as a bridge to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENEFITS OF USING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get many benefits in using technology well in e-GLO sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENEFITS OF USING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident that responses relate most to the definition concerning the benefits of using technology, indeed the one most relevant to the task of bridging the divide as far as e-GLO is concerned. Such perceived success in bridging the empowerment divide is valuable as it not only succeeds in doing so, but also succeeds in achieving a sense of satisfaction amongst the recipients of such knowledge and capacity.

2.7.5 Evaluation- Further feedback

The next section evaluates further feedback provided by participants regarding the technology being employed (the platform provided by HIAE), the content of the course, homework assignments, facilitation, attendance, and relevance and applicability of
e-GLO to participants’ fields of work and study.

The Platform

With regards to the technological platform being used to deliver the course, participants were asked their opinion after every session, in the regular feedback forms, as well in more detail in the comprehensive evaluation survey. Generally, it can be said that the technology was improving from one session to the next. The following responses are indicators of that:

After Session 2:

- I think technology has improved since first session.

After Session 3:

- PowerPoint is working better this week. That's good.
- With each session it’s working better and better!

After Session 4:

- I am impressed with how quickly the smoothness of the sessions are improving every single time.
- Compared to the other session I think the technology has improved.
- Good! I think it is improving each session.
- The technology keeps getting better with each presentation.
The platform, a cutting edge technological feat, of which a beta version was employed, seems to have succeeded in working out many of the technological glitches that may have hindered the flow of earlier sessions, yet participants also voiced concern about some of these glitches as the sessions progressed:

After Session 1:

- I felt some inconvenience about data transfer properly. It might be problem of our net connection, having low speed
- Highly technical for developing nations that are still backward in information technology
- I like! However being honest - still feel bit uncomfortable seeing myself in webcam (my first experience) or talking to microphone. Chat is more easier to use sometimes
- Advanced but the good hearing can't be ensured every time
I have some problem to see the PowerPoint presentation live

After Session 2:

- Technology is good but I think we need high speed connection for this technology. My speed was 230kb even than I suffered a lot
- Much time is lost due to technical difficulties with users in other countries. I have a very good Internet connection, and even though there were parts of the conversation that I could [not] follow, because there were interruptions.
- The typing I write does not reach/appear on the board immediately or sometimes I have to re-type it and don’t know where my initially typing went (don’t know if this problem was because of my internet speed which was quite fast or with the technology itself).
- I like the technologies used, and they as well are pioneer for my technical experience, however I as well see at the same time that various problems occur during the session. For example, the presentation on e-GLO participants shall last 15 min according to the schedule, but it took much longer time because lot of participants unnecessary tried to push different bottoms, and presentation either became full screen, or disappeared at all, or all the time changed the slide consequence! And many of participants unfortunately as well didn't listen to Mike who actually INFORMED not to push unnecessary anything, and just to follow the slides. That means that personal factor is important too - not only that technologies are provided, but as well is important to ensure that participants follow the instructions of proper use on what they can do or not during the session!
- There glitches can make communication difficult (e.g. people's voices cut out at times)

After Session 3:

- The chatting is well going but how to visual each other through their cam, while we discussing is still have to improve, while we discussing.

After Session 4:

- Is challenging to have the same quality among all participants.

After Session 5:

- Sometimes it is annoying when there appear some technical problem for long time, e.g. with the sound, and you don't hear what has been said by participant clearly, or almost at all.
- I wish that the people with low speeds and wireless can freeze their web camera so that the sound is better. Moreover users seem to have utilized the technology in a great manner

Participants were also asked about the platform in the comprehensive survey after session 6, showing that only one participant thought of the platform as an inappropriate way to host e-GLO.
Table 18- Feedback on the platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is an appropriate way to host e-GLO</td>
<td>60.0% (9)</td>
<td>33.3% (5)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>6.7% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps create a community</td>
<td>46.7% (7)</td>
<td>53.3% (8)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It allows us to express our views on the topic of the session</td>
<td>53.3% (8)</td>
<td>33.3% (5)</td>
<td>13.3% (2)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy to use</td>
<td>33.3% (5)</td>
<td>26.7% (4)</td>
<td>20.0% (3)</td>
<td>20.0% (3)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments 2

answered question 15

skipped question 0

Further feedback provided insight into respondents’ answers:

- No comments! It's a perfect work!
- Still has a strong beta feel to it, but I have seen a LOT of wrinkles ironed out over the course of just a few short weeks. I know that a lot of similar platforms like this are trying to figure out ways to beef up their own server and bandwidth in a way that isn’t so dependent on individual users, it would be interesting to look into what progress could be made in that direction.
- Improvement for people with low band width

With regard to the course being taught as an online distance-learning course, participants also rated the course fairly well. Of 15 respondents, 9 had taken an online/ e-learning/ distance-learning course before. They offered mixed reviews of the e-GLO experience as compared to their previous experiences:

- Honestly, there is not a way to compare. The other course was more interactive.

We had classes everyday, same hour, teachers call us, we also could call teachers
and they help us in social projects development. Right now I’m finishing that course, it's about Companies Social Responsibility.

- Less structured, and I like that
- Oh, it is much better. e-GLO is interactive and involving and you know the participants and facilitators more. The other e-courses though I learnt a lot from them was not very interactive
- Better organized and the online discussions made them alive
- Better
- In country where I study, the online courses are PART of the studies. There are around 10 courses available online for all students in various departments. Thus even all students from other towns can participate at the same course from different universities. The difference is that the course is held without any individual involvement at some concrete time using such tools as video camera or microphone etc., online studying courses have little bit different environment.
- Excellent. I like that I can see you. In my previous experience it was just PowerPoint and chat.

Content of the Course

When participants were asked a general question in the comprehensive evaluation about whether they thought that media, especially digital storytelling, can help in peacebuilding and sustainable development, 14 of 15 respondents answered yes. The following ten responses express the views of respondents on the topic:
• We must use all ways possible to increase peacebuilding and sustainability, and this one is an excellent way because it's more global, it doesn't depend on local politics, it's fast and it's possible to share the same data in real time.

• It is the key to inspiring and motivating rather than scaring people

• Media when used in a positive way could be a change agent. It reaches a large audience and at time makes people think

• Its helps to learn share and exchange views, problems and its solutions globally

• It can be the medium but again we should make it comprehensive by involving all the stakeholders. Even this time media should be more sensitized in giving share to news reports for social and environmental issues. Media gives 100% focus to political issues as compared to important issues related to sustainable development.

• It is an innovative way to communicate

• Digital storytelling maybe not much, but MEDIA - definitely YES!!! Especially mass media - as a tool for reflecting and creating reality. Thus by making environmental issues to be popular, and raising people awareness about what could be done etc. creates a positive contribution toward sustainable development and peacebuilding.

• Due to the international experience sharing by the media, it can be possible that media can play role towards Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development Globally.

• By seeing the videos you can be sensitize about the issues, problems that a country/city is facing.
 Peace can only happen with communication. People communicate to connect. Storytelling connects people.

With regard to the content of each of the six sessions conducted before the evaluation survey, session three, the introduction to media and peacebuilding, along with its blogging workshop, seemed to be most popular. Respondents were able to select more than one answer when asked about which of the sessions they benefited from most. Session 3 was followed closely in rating as most beneficial by the following session, Session 4, which focused on elements of effective community leadership and included a presentation with e-GLO core team member and Beatboard founder Mike Sheehan, on working with groups, creating high functioning teams, and running meetings.

Table 19- Most beneficial sessions (among sessions 1-6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1- Intro to e-GLO</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2- Intro to one another</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 3- Media for Peacebuilding</strong></td>
<td><strong>80.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 4- Grassroots Community Organizing</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 5- Unearthing and Addressing Key Sustainability Challenges through Interviews and Digital Storytelling</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 6- Making Social and Environmental documentaries</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>answered question</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>skipped question</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We will therefore look here at which part or topic of these two sessions participants said they benefited from most, and why they chose these parts:

Session 3:

- Workshop was really very informative and useful
- Creating a new blog - I'm familiar with this technology but was nice to direct energies for an e-GLO blog.
- When we talked about who do the media. Because I believe we don't consider us like as journalist
- All, because the first part I could learn information about the media and NGO’s and in the second part I could learn about one of the most common tools nowadays: the blogs.
- The presentation on media. Because I could have been in conflict with them when I was trying to advocate for peace and stability in my country. The media reported wrongly. They included abusive / arrogant words which I did not say.

Session 4:

- Both Camila's presentation and Mike's presentation were great.
- Very practitioner-oriented.
- The presentations both gave me much needed insight. Mike’s very specific and very honest discussions of some of the challenges he has faced in his development as a facilitator were right on point, and not something that most facilitators will talk about that openly. It was quite an inspiration. It illuminated huge portions of the group experience that often go unnoticed by many.
Mike's presentation, it had many practical examples and it was relevant to what I am involved in.

I liked a lot this session in general! It was truly something productive! I like the presentation of Camila, and of Mike especially! It definitely brought some useful knowledge to me!

About Mike Sheehan’s explanations on how to be a good facilitator

Homework

With regards to the homework that was assigned following each session, 14 of 15 respondents to the comprehensive evaluation survey considered the amount of homework to be a good amount, with 12 of them approving of the difficulty of the homework as ‘appropriate.’ Comments regarding the homework on the survey, however, reveal more. One respondent commented, ‘some were not applicable to what it is that I am doing,’ and another responded, ‘There was nothing difficult only that access to facilities at individual participant level was an issue.’ This may be an indicator that some participants had overstated their technological capacities with regards to digital equipment (still and video cameras), in an effort to secure a space in the course. The e-GLO team remedied such obstacles by offering homework options, as pointed out by one respondent, ‘there are a lot of options to accommodate people with different levels of knowledge and resources.’

Facilitation

Facilitation of the sessions was undertaken by Dominic Stucker, Earth Charter International’s Youth Coordinator and e-GLO Program Director, and Mike Sheehan, the
e-GLO Program Manager and founder of Beatboard. Their use of ‘real-time scribes’,
taking real time minutes of sessions that were immediately visible on screen, greatly
enhanced the ability of any participant to follow the sessions. Facilitation was generally
very smooth and was appreciated by participants. Below are a few of the positive
comments regarding facilitation:

- Aside from the glitches I think it was run rather well.
- Sometimes I think there are too many people involved, and very difficult to
  follow the discussion. But Mike and Dominic do great job in facilitating us to
  send regular feedbacks, and encourage us to interact! They both are very friendly
  and great.
- Good and helpful.
- Mike Sheehan is a very caring person who makes everyone feel part of the group
  and he encourages each one of us to be part of the conversation, the facilitation
  was great!
- The facilitation was good overall but the biggest problem is the voice keeps
  breaking and I miss some of the things that are being said.
- The glitches make facilitation difficult, but I think they have done a fairly good
  job so far.
- Facilitators are experienced and able to manage the session perfectly.
- Facilitation is really very cooperative.
- Greatly appreciate both Mike and Dominic's efficiency, and I really appreciated
  the input from Karim [e-GLO speaker and researcher] and to Ashie [HIAE
  Executive Director] for sitting in on the sessions like she has been doing. I am
glad that the glitches around the random button pushing have been resolved, that was a pretty comical situation.

- It was great! It was participatory, and I enjoyed it. I just want to add maybe give participants some time to come and share their experiences. Paty tried to share her experience but there were problems with her mic. I would like to see more of that.

There were, of course, some constructive criticisms regarding facilitation of the sessions:

- It is possible to observe the enthusiasm and the desires of doing everything very well, but perhaps, it is necessary to carry or to guide more the conversations and each of the topics

- It is excellent, but sometimes, a presenter is talking and the chat is discussing something else. I think we should do efforts to focus the attention of everybody on the topic being discussed.

- Respect everyone’s time. The interview piece went on very long and was contradictory to the comments about “respecting the interviewees time”.

- I think someone should be also facilitating the chat discussions, if there are misunderstandings, nobody facilitates this situation and it can be annoying to enter into a discussion that should not be taking place

 Attendance

Attendance by participants was sporadic. Participants often arrived late to sessions and left early, not only missing out on the knowledge flow of the session, but also distracting other participants and presenters themselves. Although 7 of 15 respondents attributed their absences to technical problems with Internet connectivity,
this was clearly not the only reason, as chats amongst participants showed other reasons such as inaccuracy in calculation of time zones. Despite 14 of 15 respondents saying that they had attended 4 or more of the first six sessions, this answer is disputed by the attendance taken by facilitators at the sessions, and such discrepancy may be attributed to respondents fearing a failure in receiving certificates for lack of sufficient attendance.

Of 14 respondents, exactly half said that an enrollment fee for the course would provide additional incentive for them to attend. The other 7 respondents disagreed. 11 of 13 respondents stated that they would be willing and able to pay under USD 50 as an enrollment fee for the course.

Relevance and Applicability

Participants were asked on the regular feedback forms about how the topics discussed in each session were relevant to their respective fields of work or study. The following are their answers, divided into feedback following each of the first five sessions:

Session 1

- I am affiliate to Human Development Work and Topics were of much relevancy and I enjoyed it a lot
- Almost all of my work relates to various environmental/sustainability issues.
- It applies not only in my work but for the development of my country, with a grounded knowledge of this nature, it will be possible to create change
- Topics on sustainable development has direct link to my personal interest and academic background
• I throw the topics to our organization volunteers to talk about, and find out what’s suitable to our organization’s development.

Session 2

• The topics about environment and climate change are 100% related to my job. The same apply to the topics of education and raising awareness.

• I am a Human Rights Activist. From the discussions though I was not able to grasp each and every word but the pictures like the Action for Food Rights had an impact on my work as I also do advocacy. I learnt that we must never take it for granted that every human being will have food, we need to advocate for that through awareness and community mobilizations. People must be taught on how to demand and defend their right to food.

• Being a part of this group will allow me to see these issues that I work on at a local level, in a larger view.

• All of my work is tied to environmental issues.

Session 3

• Blogging was intimidating for me prior to this session and I didn't see real value in it. Now I intend to create a blog specific to a project I am working on at work.

• I think that citizen journalism is a way of professionalizing/formalizing what societies have been using as a "social fuel/fluid" which is the creation of stories, dissemination of different versions of facts, diffusion of news. Providing/creating new tools to bridge digital divide is not only a way of updating this kind of thing. I mean: to make the transmission of information (at/across different levels)
"contemporary", connected to the needs of today's people/generations. Blogs are for instance a great tool not only because is free and open; but because (they) foster creative ways of communicating and thus NEW/FRESH mind frameworks (those we need to make peace).

• I am responsible for implementation of my organization's media strategy. I am the link between my organization and the media. I organize press conferences, interviews and book / allocate media personnel to a number of our activities.

• The topic of the last session was very useful for my studies, get the knowledge.

• It's benefit for my Environmental network. I updated new technology to being used.

Session 4

• I used to work with communities and even if the topics approached were not NEW for me,

• Was VERY interesting to listen to Camila's and Mike's perspectives. I think that if I had had that kind of preparation before or during that work, I could have benefited a lot.

• But it also makes a lot of sense now...as I can see exactly where it can be applied.

• These are key points for a lot of the strategies I plan on implementing in the coming months with my project. I am getting a clearer and clearer view every day of why I was drawn to the Earth Charter in the first place.

• To know how to promote project in targeted community is really a practical and debatable topic. I am quite interested in it since I encountered a lot of problems when I went to different communities. For NGO officers, at least my friends in
NGOs, sharing experiences in indigenous and rural communities is always the most exciting, inspiring and moving part. Therefore some of Camila's points are good principles when deal with community members.

- Mike's presentation was very relevant. I do facilitate sessions and his sharing challenges and techniques were very interesting. I could apply them in my work.
- Topics discussed are under my personal interest, and will help me to be able to improve my personal traits and professional competencies, since for example both presentation of Camila and Mike I find very useful for my future career in sustainable development field, and project management
- They are within project management and also form part of our learning point.
- It applies to my experience and to my current duties, because being a good facilitator is a necessary skill. It also adds to my knowledge of building a blog and uploading videos.

**Session 5**

- It is sort of telling us how to empower myself so as to make my voice heard.
- Probably most beneficial part was from Jordy about conducting interviews, since making any academic research, and in case of collecting qualitative data, the interview with some respondents is a necessity, therefore all the interesting points about interviewing, highlighted by Jordy, could be very useful and applicable in my academic studies
- I believe interviewing community members will assist with community building and collaborative efforts.
• I do documentation of the organizations activities and publicity through the media. I will be able to use internet as the cheapest mode of publicity. Apart from that I also conduct human rights activities where we promote empowerment of vulnerable groups like women.

• It is extremely important in my area to be able to conduct good interviews and to know how to answer to an interview as well.

• I think a photo can tell a million words and I wish to use photography to pass my message. I am very interested in digital story telling and the photography session as well as the interview session was great.

The great number of responses collected shows that the course was relevant and applicable to participants’ work and studies in various ways. The diversity of answers in the table point to the wide range of potential uses and relevance of the course. It has indeed reached a wide variety of participants and their respective fields, and may have impact on a broad spectrum of activities. Hence it is valid to say that the course has created a *project identity*, ‘a proactive movement which aims at transforming society as a whole.’

57 Project identities are, of course, characteristic of networks, and this feature of e-GLO is an indication of its role in the network society. It is a model of how the creation of global networks in the network society, facilitated by modern mass communications technologies, allows for the creation of networked identities as well.

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Part 3- Key Conclusions of the Evaluation

The course has enjoyed overall success in bridging the digital divide in terms of understanding digital technologies, as well as in terms of benefiting from their usage. According to HIAE Executive Director Ashie Hirji, ‘e-GLO is currently mapping and designing a model to bridge the divide.’ She adds that in the developing world, ‘not everybody has a TV, but every child can find a computer somewhere.’ Her impressions are that e-GLO is ‘empowering youth, the ones that don’t have a voice, educating them and allowing them to share, save the environment and create quality content.’

Participants would like to see more stringent guidance in behavior, in technical as well as topical terms, inside the seminar room. In terms of topics discussed inside the seminar room, there were many digressions that may have weakened the learning experience for some participants, particularly in the discussion chats. Although guidelines were sent to participants prior to the beginning of the course, the need for a moderator and for self-discipline by participants in experimenting with the technology is evident.

Participants would also like to see more interaction with guest speakers. Although such interaction is possible on the platform used, it requires a high degree of familiarity with the technology. Although efforts were made to allow for active participation, there was a feeling, expressed in qualitative feedback, of inability to interact directly with speakers. Although participants were able to hear and see guest speakers in real time, they felt they would have enjoyed more opportunity to reciprocate such communication using the audio and video features provided by the platform.

As far as the technology employed goes, the initiative has performed well for its debut course. In the words of Beatboard founder and e-GLO Program Manager Mike
Sheehan, part of e-GLO’s success lies in “the willingness for some of the core members [e-GLO team] to spend time with other people to get their technology up to the standard so they can communicate freely on the platform.” Twenty percent of respondents, however, felt that the platform used to deliver the course was not easy to use. This may be due to their low frequency in using the platform, with sessions taking place only once every one or two weeks. It may also be due to lack of regular attendance by some participants, or due to their low level of familiarity with the platform, which may again be attributed to low frequency of use. Although computer literate, participants may not be frequent users of the Internet, lowering their familiarity with the use of some features related to using the platform, such as opening links in separate windows of their Internet browsers. In an effort to bridge the divide, where access to and understanding of the tools of the information age may be limited, one cannot expect high degrees of familiarity from respondents in low digital opportunity regions.

It is premature to say that a single, strong network was or was not formed by the initiative, since we are yet to see if the initiative yields a proliferating effect in the period following the end of the course. Rather, in a decentralized fashion, several networks have been expanded, strengthened and connected. The Facebook group, for example, with its own 235 members, represents a new and expanding network on its own. The environmental social movement was linked to the Earth Charter movement, and they too were linked to the human rights movement. In this manner the network society came into effect, with e-GLO serving as a hub, a bridge, and a node that in an ever-evolving global village, has created new nodes and new ties through the flows of information it has delivered.
Part 4- Recommendations for e-GLO, ECYI and ECI

The following recommendations are made for e-GLO as a course format, for the course on digital storytelling and community leadership, and for the general use of the HIAE platform for any purpose. They are based on the data collected in the preceding evaluation and on the subjective opinions of the researcher as a presenter in the course and user of the platform himself.

4.1 e-GLO as a Course Format

- The course should be continued, yet the time between the present course and the next should be long enough for ECYI to follow up on the achievements of this first course.
- It should be verified for future courses that participants do not come to the course already equipped with the skills the course aims to teach, so as not to be dissatisfied with the course.
- Capitalize on the networks that e-GLO has tapped into. The activity on the social networking site Facebook shows that while the debut course had 26 participants, the course’s Facebook ‘group page’ had 235 members at the time of writing. These members are active in separate networks, organizations, and activities of their own. They provide a new audience for the ECYI.
- Recruit e-GLO alumni in various roles for future courses. They will feel empowered, and ECYI will capitalize on their familiarity with the platform.
- Use course alumni to pass on knowledge gained from the course. Follow up with them and equip them with the resources necessary from the e-GLO course to
enable them to apply similar courses on a local level. The intent to do so has been expressed by Program Manager Mike Sheehan as “the people who have made a connection with e-GLO… there’s such enthusiasm and interest that I see these people taking on leadership roles for the program… these people that all meet under the umbrella of the Earth Charter, there’s excitement for these people and a want to collaborate more, and there’s an interest with online communication, there’s an interest with sustainability, an interest with education and change and digital media, and through that they’re going to be connecting with people who can be facilitators and specialists, bringing sessions for an e-GLO 2… these people who are going to go back to their communities, use e-GLO as a template and to co-create a program connected with e-GLO that might take place in more specific languages and regions.” Such proliferation is in line with the decentralized expansion of the Earth Charter and of any successful network. After all, e-GLO is a fitting example of what Earth Charter International’s Executive Director Mirian Vilela calls ‘using media to give people practical skills to empower them to be change agents in their own communities.’

- Facilitate the chat discussions taking place in the seminar room. They often digress, draining from the valuable time and space in the discussion box.
- Make completion of homework an important requirement, even prerequisite for continued attendance of the course. It is easy for participants of distance learning courses to attend without applying the knowledge and skills they are receiving.
- Make sure all course sessions are recorded. There can be multiple uses for such recordings, such as course participants referring back to the recordings, viewing
them in case of absence, even retaining a copy for future reference. They may also be used for internal documentation and accountability purposes within ECI, and for review in preparation of future courses.

- If a managerial decision is made to charge an enrollment fee for the course, it may be an incentive for participants to attend and engage more punctually and seriously. Any enrollment fee, however, should be below USD 50.

4.2 The Course in Digital Storytelling and Community Leadership

- Focus on one digital storytelling skill in the course. The low results of homework demonstrating digital storytelling products at the time of writing may indicate that an understanding of the skills required are not strong enough for participants to produce their own media. Although several participants created blogs, very few had video or photo interviews to share, and none have yet shown their own animation films. They may have expressed a good understanding of digital storytelling skills, yet there is little evidence that the depth of that understanding reached the extent that they may comfortable apply it themselves. At the time of writing this research, however, homework was not yet due from participants, so it is possible that once presented, it may indicate otherwise.

- Verify that potential participants do not already possess the skills around which the course content revolves to avoid redundancy and possible dissatisfaction.

- When teaching skills of video production, provide step-by-step instruction on how to post a video. Consider also use of simpler techniques that may be more familiar
and more accessible to participants, such as cameras built into mobile telephones. An example of a guide to such instruction can be seen in Appendix H\textsuperscript{58}.

- Encourage alumni to continue producing their own media and sharing it with other alumni.
- As the course promotes, ECI and ECYI should also be active producers of media messages, utilizing Web 2.0 tools to spread their messages in cost-efficient and creative ways. Messages should also make use of all available networks of which ECI is a part. An excellent example of such action is the recent video call for submission to ECI’s global book on the theme of oneness, currently in circulation on video sharing website Youtube and social networking website Facebook, as well as ECYI’s own blog. This type of communication should be employed on a regular basis by ECI.

4.3 Use of HIAE Platform for Any Purpose

- Lower familiarity requirements necessary for users to find their way around the seminar room and effectively make use of the platform. This may include reductions in activity necessary on the part of a user, such as activation and deactivation of camera voice functions. They may be always activated as soon as a user logs into the seminar room, and to be temporarily paused and/or muted by one party in charge.

\textsuperscript{58} The guide was developed for telecommunications company Nokia’s partnership with Pangea Day, a May 10, 2008 event, \url{www.pangeaday.org}. Pangea Day is a project of the Sapling Foundation, a U.S. based non-profit organization.
➢ Do not offer complicated features to users who are not yet familiar enough with the platform. Their inability to use the features may frustrate them and lower the quality of their overall experience.

➢ In the words of HIAE Executive Director, Ashie Hirji, “ECI could become a pioneer and set a role model for using communication technologies.” It is recommended that ECI use the platform on a regular basis with major partners to gradually increase their familiarity with the technology and their capacity to communicate through it, eventually reaching a stage where whole conferences may be held on the HIAE platform.

Part 5- Conclusion

The aim of this research was to determine whether educational usage of information and communication technologies could help ensure equitable distribution of knowledge and understanding to further the overarching principles of the Earth Charter. e-GLO has certainly contributed to doing so, and it is clear that its attempt to bridge the digital divide has been successful in fostering shared values within the global village, while increasing the benefits of using technology that may be realized by those on the less fortunate side of the divide. Such capacity building falls directly under bridging the empowerment divide, harnessing the network society to empower youth to make “full use of the opportunities that technology affords.”

For successful advancement of the initiative, problems that have been identified here should be addressed in any future e-GLO course. The network created by e-GLO is yet to be tested, for the matrix— the mater— that has formed has yet to bear the fruit of its womb. Blogs, interviews, photographs, videos and animation films will all be names for the newborn, out of which knowledge and capacities shall grow and messages of justice, sustainability and peace shall spread. The case of e-GLO can itself be viewed best as both a network generating tool, as well as a peacebuilding media intervention, one that uses ICT’s, particularly new media technologies, in educational, capacity building and awareness raising functions. The digital divide should not be left to inhibit knowledge sharing and capacity building in the global village of the information age, and ongoing efforts such as e-GLO should be nurtured to bring about a truly networked society under the ethics and values of the Earth Charter.
Postscript

As this research was being concluded, with only the closing (eighth) session of the debut e-GLO course remaining, an e-GLO participant from Bangladesh presented a proposal to the e-GLO team and to all course participants, outlining his initiative to adapt e-GLO to his or her own country. He has proposed the creation of an ‘e-GLO Country Workshop Team’ that would act as a working group to advance the proposal in Bangladesh and elsewhere, and requested volunteers for the group. Ten of e-GLO’s participants have volunteered to join the group.

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Appendices

A- The Earth Charter

B- e-GLO mission, vision, and objectives, 27/03/2007

C- UNESCO Grunwald Declaration on Media Education

D- Text of email sent with participant feedback forms following each e-GLO session

E- Quantitative results of e-GLO comprehensive evaluation survey

F- Digital Opportunity Index, 2007

G- e-GLO, Guidelines for Participating in Online Seminar Room

H- Nokia/ Pangea Day ‘How to… a quick guide to mobile filmmaking’

I- DVD containing recording of session 3 in Quicktime format (.mov) and audio recordings of 3 interviews (Mike Sheehan, Founder and Director of Beatboard, and e-GLO Program Manager; Mirian Vilela, Executive Director of the Earth Charter International Secretariat and Center for Education for Sustainable Development; Ashie Hirji, Executive Director of Heart in Action Enterprises)