

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OUTPUTS OF THE DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP</b> <b>December 9, 2006</b></p>
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the creation of CIVIC in 2002, the virtual community has seen the dominance of the English language and participation of people from the English Caribbean. To address this issue, a diversity facilitator position had been created with the following terms of reference:

- Promote a balanced participation from all Caribbean cultural/linguistic sub regions in the main virtual community (CIVIC) and the thematic working groups (TWGs)
- Ensure that concerns, views, and interests of all Caribbean cultural/linguistic sub regions are reflected in the CIVIC and TWG outputs
- Promote actions that formalize collaboration and vision sharing among participants from different Caribbean cultural/linguistic sub regions

Unfortunately, this has not produced any significant result, and the bias on the English Caribbean persisted. Thus, a sub-group on diversity has been created to address this issue.

The objective of this working group is to determine why the participation of non-English speaking people is so low and how to improve the cultural diversity of this community.

The sub-group should provide a strategy and concrete actions to improve the cultural diversity of the community. The proposals will be used by the CARISNET consortium to implement them.

Participants in this working group were: Vidyaratha Kisson, Roosevelt O. King, Chanzo Greenidge, Pascale Marie-Claire, Candia Alleyne, Karole Gizolme, Yacine Khelladi and Stéphane Bruno (moderator).

## **DEFINITION OF DIVERSITY**

The group started by defining what is diversity, and more specifically cultural diversity, in the context of CIVIC. We agreed that diversity was about:

- 1) The origin/location of people participating in CIVIC
- 2) Language spoken as well as language used in communications inside CIVIC
- 3) Language of official documents produced within CIVIC

We agreed that a “well diversified” CIVIC should be a combination of those three aspects, that is:

- 1) That the different Caribbean countries should be well represented within CIVIC

- 2) That communications should be done in a more balanced way in all languages spoken in the Caribbean, and at least in French, Spanish and English
- 3) That, in order for CIVIC to respect its diversity principles, all official documents should be produced at least in French, Spanish and English

The concept of diversity conveys the meaning of “representativeness” and of rich participation.

- Representativeness: a good/solid representation in numbers (quality balanced with quantity) of languages, countries, skills/expertise and even gender.
- Rich participation: members are able to and do engage one another in a single forum to bring their diverse experiences to bear on the issues, where the output makes for informed policy and decision making.

This means that the community should deploy efforts to encourage participation of all the region and that this participation be rich and full. This also means that every member should be able to express his/her views in his/her own language and be sure that the other members will understand and listen.

## **OBSTACLES TO PARTICIPATION**

The problem of the language barrier was at the center of all discussions. The sub-group agrees that 'diversity' in CIVIC is closely linked to language, since language is the most important factor that inhibits the participation of other linguistic groups in the community. Based on the figures about language and country representation in CIVIC, it is clear that the English-speaking Caribbean is better represented.

The sub-group also realized that most people were not satisfied or were not using the translation facility fully. We believe that, although the translation is not perfect, it is better than nothing for people who really cannot read a given language. However, it is almost of no use for people who can more or less read other languages than their mother language.

Also, we all agree that the main reason why French-speaking and Spanish-speaking people do not engage in discussions in their own language, it is because they have the sentiment that they will not be heard, mainly because the French and Spanish population of CIVIC is non significant and that the English population won't make the effort.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the discussions, the following recommendations have been made:

- 1) CIVIC members should respect simple writing rules to improve the efficiency of the translation, and so make the translation facility more usable

- 2) Face-to-face meetings should be organized regularly in different countries (like the original one in Barbados) to complement the virtual experience. It was decided in Barbados, but finally has never happened
- 3) Organize CIVIC meetings in non English-speaking countries in order to encourage more participation from the other linguistic groups and, thus, increase the French and Spanish population of CIVIC. As a test meeting, a suggestion has been made to organize a CIVIC presentation in Haiti at the end of November
- 4) Finally, the suggestion has been made to further the CARDICIS experience in the diversity field, mainly in the following areas (detailed in CARDICIS meeting outputs):
  - a. Caribbean diaspora
  - b. Mainstreaming of cultural diversity on ICT/ICT4D
  - c. Regional ICT4D information gathering and dissemination
  - d. Education, research and cultural exchange