



# Center for Digital Inclusion – Investing in Networks

## **Organization(s):**

CDI –Center for Digital Inclusion (formerly known as The Committee for Democracy in Information Technology)

## **Country (ies):**

BRAZIL ARGENTINA CHILE COLÔMBIA ECUADOR MÉXICO PERU URUGUAY  
JORDAN CDI Community Centers exist in 66 communities and 22 municipalities in Argentina; and respectively Chile has 51/11; Columbia 4/2; Ecuador 16/4; Mexico 30/21, Peru 5/5; Uruguay with 32/10 and Brazil with 650+ community centers in 23 regions. Jordan: 120 schools.

## **Overview:**

Delivering on our mission; the CDI Network is working to replicate CDI’s experience and educational strategy in a true model of “social franchise” globally leading to human and community development through ICT education and citizenship building skills that transform lives and communities. Today CDI schools graduate 70,000 students per year from 800+ schools in 9 countries from the global south. Since 1995 we have graduated more than 1.25 million students.

## **Background:**

CDI works throughout Latin America and now the MENA region to end the digital apartheid that exists in underdeveloped countries and communities, impeding the development of human capital. With a goal to integrate excluded people into the global knowledge economy through access to IT and tools that teach people to understand and work with technology to gain access to markets, jobs, networks, and information which enables people to transform their lives and their communities. What is at stake for today’s digital “have-nots” – especially youth – is whether they may find themselves marginalized for life lacking the skills and tools to participate in our globalized, knowledge-based economy. Huge segments of populations are simply excluded from access to the technologies that are today driving the development of the new global economy. Simply put bridging the digital divide is about delivering access to telecommunications infrastructures- particularly the Internet, essential to participate in the emerging electronic economy. CDI headquarters works in a client-centric culture enabling our schools and our student and community’s development and success. We expect that students and communities where our schools operate will have the ability to use the power of the internet and the tools and skills that they gain in our schools and through our methodology; to access information bridging this divide. One empowered student can teach a community how to save a polluted river, to combat dengue fever, to gain skills to find a job. One classroom of students can create community leaders, create networks with local, national and international groups, open up supply chains etc. With a strong social franchise model CDI opens territories based on need and requests

for our solution. When approached we look for strong leadership, potentiality for success and partnerships across a broad sector of society, grassroots, governmental, corporate, multi-lateral and institutional cooperation et al. We seek like minded vision and mission, evidence of sustainability and ambition for replication and ability to maintain CDI standard of quality. In general CDI does not choose the communities where our schools are located. Instead communities, donors, companies and governments among others apply to open a CDI Community (school/s). CDI headquarters analyzes the requests through committee. From the day that we opened our first school in a favela in Rio de Janeiro in 1995, demand for new schools has outpaced CDI's ability to meet the demand.

### **Implementation:**

CDI has encouraged the collaboration of the schools internationally and formed a network that meets bi-annually in Brazil and on the national's level as well. This formal network has meant that our growth is fueled by a culture of bottom up innovation. CDI collects best practices and formalizes their methodology and disseminates information throughout the network giving each region the opportunity to adapt what is relevant to each country's and community's reality. As well, in 2009 CDI created an on-line platform through our website that encourages ongoing collaboration throughout the network of international programs. This platform has more than 2,000 active members accessing 109 working groups to date. CDI's unique value proposition is based on the work that we have carried out since 1995. The Center for Digital Inclusion (CDI) is a nongovernmental, non-profit organization working primarily in low-income communities and with institutions assisting individuals with special needs including, among others, the physically and mentally disabled, the visually impaired, homeless youth, prisoners, and indigenous populations. The CDI network has expanded internationally, with 800+ schools in ten countries in Latin America and as of last quarter of 2009 another 120 schools in Amman Jordan. With regional offices in 19 Brazilian states and in 13 countries, on four continents; CDI has developed a non-profit "social franchise" with defined quality standards. It has the essential role of representing the Network, in which it updates CDI's educational model, validates and shares best practices and continuously innovates, fundraises, trains and follows-up with Regional offices. CDI Regional offices are self-managed, responding to CDI Headquarters guidelines. Their mission is to replicate CDI's methodology and educational model when implementing the schools. CDI opens CDI Community Centers (Information Technology and Citizens Rights Schools) in partnership with community based associations, providing free computer equipment, software and implementing educational strategies for a continuous training of local instructors. Each of the schools is an autonomous unit, self managed and self-sustainable through a symbolic contribution collected from its students and through a self sustaining social enterprise scheme that has been introduced throughout the network. To promote digital inclusion, CDI forms partnerships with national and international philanthropic organizations, companies, government agencies and individual donors. CDI has developed our own pedagogy for ICT education that includes in each four month course, a component whereby students will have used technology as the main tool to initiate, plan, implement and complete a "social advocacy project" aimed at changing an aspect of their realities. Some CDI Communities are established and operated entirely on public funds, while others have a private-public partnership, and yet others are run entirely by NGOs or even corporate entities. Many projects are associated with public schools and government telecenters. People from the communities generally form the staff and take

decision making roles in the local instances of the projects. In terms of technology, one can find projects using donated new or used computers, and in the area of software, most of the newer projects tend to be using free and open source software entirely, and many including CDI HQ use Windows.

### **Outcomes:**

When CDI began in 1995 there did not exist one country in LATAM whose Technology Minister had policies in place to bridge the digital divide for their citizens. CDI founder Rodrigo Baggio - a pioneer in social inclusion through the use of ICT's for the base of the pyramid- spent five years as a lone voice addressing organizations such as the UN, World Bank, UNICEF, and IADB to the importance of ICT for development. Planned: the delivery of capacity building skills to poor people and their communities and the collaboration of our network of schools. Unplanned: CDI Uruguay a member of Uruguayan network of telecenters- Rutelco- in collaboration with the Uruguayan government to implement the national One Laptop per Child initiative intended to reach every single child and teacher in public schools and now every telecenter in the country with educational objectives to include social and economical development. CDI Uruguay is the first NGO chosen to administrates and execute RUTELCO's projects. This initiative has been financed solely by the government. In February 2009, three networks: CDI Chile; Asociación de Telecentros de Información y Negocios (ATN) of Brazil and Fundación Empresas Publicas de Medellin (EPM) of Colombia, launched "Project 360 LATAM" whose goal is to help affiliated telecenter networks distribute products and services that member telecenters can use to generate revenue and deliver value by plugging them into supply chains for the distribution of products and services; and provide useful benefits to the communities served by the telecenters. Our methodology is highly replicable and adaptable across cultures. Our model for self managed, self-sustaining community centers count on the autonomy of the projects to integrate our model and once established our experience shows these groups take the talents and opportunities that exist within their communities and countries and form partnerships relevant to the needs in the local where they work. The tremendous demand and CDI's aggressive growth rates presented substantial challenges in maintaining the quality of CDI's courses and number of students graduating per school. To reverse this, in 2004 CDI invited key representatives from our network to a participative strategic planning process. The result: CDI reduced the pace of its expansion and improved its procedures for monitoring, evaluating, and tracking results. We reduced our total number schools by 20%, but compensated with gains in productivity and have since resumed scaling.

### **Aid Effectiveness:**

Taking into account the five principles for aid effectiveness: CDI believes strongly in ownership at the local level and the core methodology of our programs is based on this principal. We believe this is the greatest contributing factor to our ability to replicate with such success. Subsequently, this effectiveness of replication and scalability aids in our Alignment with partners. Having been at the forefront of ICT for development, and our years of success, provide the credibility for partners to align with our goals and mission where we operate. We are the experts in our field. Harmonisation: CDI seeks this type of collaboration throughout our network and is more apt to move in this direction when seeking partnerships. Managing for Results is achieved when partners rely on one another's core competencies and when out of our depths we

seek expertise and counsel from the world around us. As well we make certain that roles and expectations are clearly outlined. Mutual Accountability: social return on investment, outcomes and impact are the keys to our credibility. In serving our client beneficiaries, CDI headquarters strive to make sure that our network is able to deliver results that are clear. CDI has recently been awarded a grant from the Inter-American Development Bank's Technical Cooperation Program that is specifically for the re-development of our on-line monitoring platform. The objective of the Technical Cooperation is to support the sustainable scaling of our social enterprise model through the further development of our online platform which will enable CDI to better manage its growing network of digital inclusion centers. CDI strives to work with local, state and federal government in cases where there is a transparency and a workable partnership. Due to the autonomous nature of our scaling solution, CDI regional offices and local schools make their own partnerships and alliances that make the most sense for the reality that exists where they operate. This autonomy leads to creative organic solutions that have shown great impact for the beneficiaries of the CDI schools and communities. We believe the examples cited in the 'Outcomes' section of this entry form demonstrate these efforts. If not for the limitations of this form we could supply many more. In most instances managing for results is built into initial development plans.

**Capacity Development:**

CDI a pioneer of and a leader in the delivery of ICT for development. The success of our work has been a catalyst for adaption of ICT in the Global South. CDI has also consulted with actors from the public and private sector such as Coca Cola and other retailers and various government entities to open schools based on the CDI model. A recent initiative - CDI LAN- we have enrolled 2,062 LAN Houses (cybercafés) that are part of an affiliate program CDI began in Brazil to insure the sustainability, quality and longevity of these internet related essential services for the greater underserved populations. The affiliation program requires LAN Houses adopt a code of conduct and offers mentoring, training, business development and other services.

**Duration:** Founded in 1995. CDI is an ongoing project expanding outside of Latin America in 2009.

**Budget (Optional):** Annual Operating Budget: 2,542,740 USD (4.5 million Brazilian Reais)

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