informal Wireless Roadshow

The Wireless Roadshow is aimed at introducing new low-cost, decentralized wireless technologies to the NGO sector in the developing world. The Roadshow approaches this task on 3 levels:

- Hands-on training of technology NGO's (and private sector firms consulting to the NGO sector) in planning and deployment of decentralized wireless networks.

- Raising awareness by planning and constructing functioning networks, thereby demonstrating the opportunities for low-cost connectivity presented by these technologies.

- Development and distribution of documentation and tool sets based on our experiences from training sessions.

The initial roadshow will visit between 3 and 5 developing countries for periods of approximately 3 weeks each. During these periods the Roadshow will deliver theoretical training as well as hands-on practical experience in planning and deploying wireless networks based on the 802.11 series of standards.

The wireless technologies used are based on Open Standards, using spectrum (frequencies) that is license exempt in most countries around the world (following ITU recommendations). The focus is on using locally available standard hardware, and basing systems on Open Source software. This ensures the ability of local partners to duplicate their experiences after the event.

Project Goals

The goals of the Wireless Roadshow are:

- To increase the ability of NGOs and civil society entities in the developing world to plan and deploy their own network infrastructure.

- To transfer skills from wireless experts around the world to technology implementers in the developing world.

- To establish an information resource and tool sets for wireless networking in the developing world.

- To improve connectivity in some of the least connected countries and areas around the world, by enabling local organisations to better plan and deploy independent networks.

- To raise awareness of the existence of the vast range of Open technologies, including Open Standards-based, license exempt wireless technologies and Open Source software, and to show that these systems offer real alternatives to proprietary and closed systems.

- To build on-line communities of NGOs and network developers in the developing world and to connect these to existing communities in Europe and the US.

- To act as a proof-of-concept of the Roadshow idea, opening the way for further roadshows, both within the wireless area and within other areas of Open technology.

There have been, and currently are, a large number of projects dealing specifically with license exempt wireless technologies for deployment in the developing world. We add to these technically focused projects an approach that focuses specifically on building local capacity in the NGO / Civil Society sector. The ability to own and operate network infrastructure at a local level empowers communities and encourages independence from externally dominated markets.

In many countries the NGO sector is also the only channel through which ICT networks will be brought to remote areas (so-called 'areas of market failure' .)Building up this sectors capacity to do so, and their awareness of the existence of cheap, well-suited technologies, is a key element in catalysing this opportunity.