« Promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society, with a view to enhancing digital opportunities for all people »

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Position Paper of Bangladesh

For the Panel of UNCSTD on
Promoting the building of a people-centered, development-oriented and inclusive information society

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Introduction

Bangladesh, being the highest population dense country in the world, has placed poverty alleviation on top of its development agenda and adopted ICT as one of the priority tool to fight hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, discrimination against women, children, aged and disabled.

The need to invest in ICT infrastructure and especially ICT human resources is paramount.
ICT developments in Bangladesh

- **Thrust sector**
- Country’s ICT Policy aims at building an ICT-driven nation comprising of knowledge-based society
- The government emphasizes greatly on the implementation of the National ICT policy for achieving the MDGs and WSIS Plan of Action
- ICT/Internet access facilities to the grass root level people
ICT developments in Bangladesh

- **Computer Education**
- **The telecom sector is encouraged for private investment**
- **Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has been established**
ICT development initiatives

• The Government of Bangladesh has attached due attention to introduce e-governance to make the government more accessible/transparent.

• All public universities are conducting undergraduate/post graduate courses in ICT and government is allocating more funds to these institutions.

• In order to encourage startup companies in software/ITES development and export, the government has set up an ICT Incubation Centre in the heart of Dhaka City.
Some experiences of Bangladesh

I. Role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

- Comprehensive ICT Policy in October 2002

- The civil society has also come forward by initiating some projects that aim to use ICTs for development goals

- The media is taking on a particularly important role in promoting ICTs to general citizens

- The international agencies, such as World Bank, ADB, SDC, UNDP, ESCAP, SEDF, CIDA, USAID, JICA, KOICA, are particularly active in the area of promoting and financing projects that are aimed towards the effective use of ICTs for development
Some experiences of Bangladesh-

II. Information and Communication Infrastructure

- People’s access to telephones has improved significantly over the past few years with a number of mobile phone service providers operating even at remote corners of the country.
- To enhance tele-density and tele-access in the country the government has liberalized telecom sector for private sector participation.
- A number of private operators are providing broadband Internet services in the city areas.
III. Access to Information and Knowledge

- Almost all universities in the country have access to the Internet. The urban-based ones generally have Internet facilities being used by the students.
- Cyber cafes are commonly available in all urban areas, which are being used mostly by the students. Some sub-urban areas also have cyber cafes.
- Most of the public libraries do not have Internet facilities yet, but libraries of private universities generally have access to Internet.
- “Knowledge and research portals” are being developed through civil society initiatives.
Some experiences of Bangladesh-

IV. Capacity Building

- Computer science as a subject has been introduced at the secondary/higher secondary school level
- Almost all public and private universities pay particular emphasis on training students in ICT-related fields
- Different public offices have taken up initiatives to provide ICT training to government officials and staff
- The government is undertaking distribution of computers to secondary/higher secondary schools and ICT training programme for teachers of those schools
- Private ICT training institutes have sprung up in large numbers over the last few years
Some experiences of Bangladesh-

IV. Capacity Building

- The Ministry of Science and ICT has introduced an ICT Internship Program in cooperation with the private sector, to support the development of quality professionals for the ICT industry.

- The Ministry of Education has introduced ICT scholarship programme for the students of secondary to tertiary education.

- Government and Banks are providing low interest loans for purchasing computer and other ICT equipment.
Some experiences of Bangladesh:

V. Building Confidence and Security in the use of ICTs

- The ICT Act has been enacted
- Software copyright has been enacted
- A standardized Unicode compliant Bangla keyboard has been developed
Some experiences of Bangladesh-

VI. Enabling Environment

- The Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTTB) are managing the country domain
- Legal framework for safeguarding use of ICT has been included in the ICT Act
- The telecom sector has been liberalized
- An independent telecommunication regulatory commission has been established
- The government has exempted customs duties and VAT on computers, hardware and accessories, which has created a significant boost to the ICT industry
- ISP/VSAT license fee, domestic and overseas telephone call charge has been reduced significantly
- An equity fund has been established to provide support to software and IT-enabled services companies
Some experiences of Bangladesh -

VII. ICT Applications: Benefits in All Aspects of Life

• Several G2C services have been computerized and are providing online services such as railway ticketing, Hajj information service, web-based tender information system etc.

• Several B2C e-Commerce web sites have been established, with varying degrees of popularity.

• A few business-to-business (B2B) e-Commerce portals have been launched (for example for the garments industry).
Some experiences of Bangladesh -

VIII. Cultural Diversity and Identity, Linguistic Diversity and Local Content

• Several government and privately run websites give online information about the cultural heritage of Bangladesh. The website of Bangladesh National Museum is an important example in this regard.
Some experiences of Bangladesh-

IX. Media

• ICT journalism has become a career for a few journalists.

• The general media have begun to post advertisements online.

• The media has played an overall positive role in popularizing ICT
Some experiences of Bangladesh-

X. Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society

• Some human rights and environmental groups have developed websites to convey their messages to a wider audience
XI. International and Regional Cooperation

- UNESCAP & ADB with the help of JFICT have taken a programme to set up 5 rural Community e-Centres in each of the SASEC countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan) as pilot basis.

- The World Bank has come up with the EMTAP projects to help the government to built up network among various government bodies under which government officials will receive training on ICT application.

- KOICA has setup an advanced ICT training center.

- CISCO in collaboration with universities is conducting training programs.
Challenges

- Inadequate awareness
- Inadequate ICT infrastructure
- Inadequate access to electricity
- Little online content in local language (Bangla)
- High cost
- Inadequate number of working computers
- Lack of jobs for ICT-trained HR
- Lack of a coordinated national effort to build ICT capacity in the government
Challenges

- Need for improvement in **security issues**
- An online **payment gateway** - yet to be implemented
- Comprehensive **intellectual property rights** are yet to be formulated
- Lack of **ICT standards and common architecture** for ICT systems has also created impediments
- E-Government projects are taken up by different government bodies with **little national-level coordination**
- **Sustainability**
Challenges

- Due to lack of online payment system, B2C services are not yet widely popular
- Absence of good content developers
- Absence of good incentive to attract high-level ICT professionals working in-country
- Low penetration of electronic and printing media
- Poor coordination among donors government and other stakeholders
Conclusion

• Bangladesh *reaffirms its commitment* to the WSIS process and supports implementation of the Plan of Action.

• To build *people centered inclusive and development oriented* information society, Bangladesh has already declared *Information and Communications Technology* as *Thrust sector*
Conclusion

• A number of initiatives have already been taken by the govt. in collaboration with other stakeholders (such as private sector, civil society and media) in line with the national ICT policy and WSIS Plan of Action.

• The Govt. has created enabling environment such as liberalization of Telecom Sector, infrastructure development, capacity building etc to bring the ICT benefits to the mass people at affordable cost.
Conclusion

• To implement the WSIS Plan of Action, Bangladesh as a developing country is facing many challenges like shortage of ICT4D fund, lack of commitment of the major stakeholders towards achievement of Plan of Action, building multi stakeholder partnership, lack of skilled manpower in ICT etc

• Bangladesh has still huge unfinished tasks ahead to be done in the process of formation of information society
Conclusion

• Bangladesh *reaffirms its support* to the UN & ITU efforts towards implementation of WSIS Plan of Action and it *appeals* to the international community to *increase its support to LDCs’ initiatives* in development of sustainable infrastructure/human resource/capacity building that will make LDCs part of the information society
Thank you