

**APT - InfoDev – World Bank Seminar on
Digital Opportunity for all: ICTs & fight against poverty**

29 July – 1 August 2002 – Chiang Rai, Thailand

Proceedings

I. Introduction

- 1.1. A seminar on Digital Opportunity for all: ICTs & fight against poverty was held from 29 July to 1 August 2002 in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The seminar was organized jointly by the APT with the InfoDev and the World Bank.
- 1.2. In total 96 participants including representatives from the Members, Associate Members, Affiliate Members, Participating Companies, International Organizations, experts and private sectors attended this seminar.

II. Session 1: Opening Session

- 2.1 While welcoming all delegates Mr. A. Narayan, Executive Director of APT thanked InfoDev and the World Bank for their collaboration with APT for this seminar. He stated that Information Communication Technologies can significantly improve the productivity of all sectors of economy. He briefed the seminar on the processes that will lead to the implementation of the Tokyo Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the APT Summit on Information Society. He mentioned that the world is going through a dramatic phase of development in which ICTs will support education, health, environment, governance and other areas. He wished that this seminar will provide an opportunity to exchange views on regional preparations for the WSIS. He thanked all others who have supported APT to make the seminar a success and hoped that the participants will gain rich experiences from each other and benefit in their mutual objective to alleviate poverty through the application of ICTs.
- 2.2 Mr. Peter Smith, Lead Telecom Policy Specialist of the World Bank, in his welcome address, pointed out that it is the fourth collaboration between the APT and the World Bank in organizing meetings on key topics related to telecommunications and ICTs. He said the World Bank recognises the vitally important role of communications and information technologies in promoting economic development, creating economic opportunities, reducing isolation and poverty. He said ICTs can dramatically improve access to knowledge, increase participation in trade with job creation and income generation and improve the delivery of public services thereby offering potential for accelerating economic growth, improving equity and reducing poverty. In conclusion

he hoped that seminar will provide an excellent opportunity for sharing knowledge and experience on digital divide and digital opportunity issues and to learn from each other.

- 2.3 Mr. Hamadoun Toure, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU welcoming all the participants said that ITU is strongly committed to fighting the ravages of under-development worldwide through the application of telecommunications and information communication technologies. Then he reiterated the important theme of “transforming the digital divide into digital opportunities”. He said that one of the major outputs of the ITU’s World Telecommunication Development Conference was the Istanbul Declaration – a statement of vision and purpose for the development sector of the ITU for the next four years. The Declaration points to several important factors which are critical if we are to be successful in our war on poverty, and reflects many of the themes of this meeting.

He briefed the Seminar on the salient features of the Istanbul declaration including political, economic, social and cultural development. He touched upon the role on poverty alleviation, environmental protection and mitigation of natural and other disasters. Mr. Toure pointed to international and regional cooperation as a key factor to help developing countries close the digital divide. He concluded by saying that ITU’s Istanbul Declaration gives some guiding principles for the transformation of digital divide into digital opportunities and charts out the course for developing countries need to take to kick-start this transformation to achieve their social, economic, educational and health objectives.

- 2.4 The Inaugural Address was delivered by Dr. Kim Hak-Su, the Executive Secretary of the UNESCAP. In his welcome to the participants to the seminar Dr. Kim Hak-Su emphasized the importance of ICTs in narrowing down the socio-economic inequalities. He also stated that the ICT market in the Asia-Pacific region is the largest and the fastest developing. Dr. Kim also brought into notice the highly visible issue of digital divide between the countries of the region and the rural and urban areas within the countries. Highlighting the deficiencies, he mentioned about the initiatives being taken at all levels. He announced that UN ESCAP has established the Regional UNICT Task Force that will work with the other organizations of Asia Pacific. In conclusion he, expressed confidence that the seminar would achieve its set goal of alleviating poverty in the region by means of the use of ICTs.

III. Adoption of Agenda and Programme

- 3.1 The Provisional Agenda and Tentative Programme were adopted.

IV. Nomination of Office Bearers

- 4.1 Mr. Bishwa Nath Dhakal, Under Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication, Nepal was elected as Chairman of the Drafting Committee. He was assisted by Mr. Tapan Kumar Chakrovorty, Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Post & Telecommunications, Bangladesh.

V. Session 1: ICTs and poverty: Challenges and opportunities in the Asia Pacific region

Chairman: Dr. Kim Hak-Sue

- 5.1 Mr. Michael Riggs, Information Management Specialist of FAO presented the paper titled “The FAO WAICENT: Fighting poverty with information”.

In his introduction, Mr. Riggs highlighted the growth of food and nutrition requirements in the developing countries in the next 25 years. He mentioned the extensive library of information on food, agriculture and nutrition that FAO has developed in the past fifty years. He said that the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit highlighted information as one of the priority areas in achieving food security. In accordance with this recommendation, FAO has established the World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT) as its strategic program for agricultural information management and dissemination of information. Mr. Riggs identified that there was a significant gap between availability of information and its accessibility. He said that FAO and its partners have been working to define the critical challenges that have to be addressed to improve access to and use of information, for purposes of improving food security and livelihoods of the poorest strata of rural populations in developing countries. Effective content development, information exchange, human resources and institutional capacity are essential. In conclusion Mr. Riggs highlighted the complexity in information management and emphasized the need for cooperation among the agencies involved.

- 5.2 Mr. John Daly, Senior Consultant, Critical Path Asia Pacific, presented a paper entitled “Practical ICT to Combat Poverty”.

Mr. Daly commenced by saying that he wanted to outline some of the practical issues that have relevance to the use of ICT to assist the less advantaged in our communities. He presented some statistics which underline the relatively low penetration of ICT overall within Asia Pacific. He emphasized the vital importance of not blindly copying the ICT policies and technologies of developed countries, but of focusing on local realities. Technologies must be encouraged that are simple, low cost and appropriate and he gave some examples from around the world of the work being done on suitable ICT devices, whilst stressing the need to extend the use of existing technologies such as telephone, television and radio. Mr. Daly suggested that Universities should develop courses teaching the use of ICT to help with development in poorer communities and that ICT should be included as a required subject in the training of extension workers in many fields. The very active collaborative participation of Government in its role as both regulator and promoter, of Academia in research, of Industry as producer of low cost hardware and software and, most importantly, of the Community as a key player in implementation, are all absolutely vital if ICT is to help combating poverty in emerging economies, and such collaboration must be properly orchestrated at a national level.

- 5.3 Mr. R.B. Kumarapathirana, Director, Project Development of APT presented the paper titled “APT Summit on Information Society and thereafter”

In his presentation he outlined the APT Asia Pacific Summit on the Information Society and the recommendations of the Tokyo Declaration and Action Plan adopted

at the Summit. He briefed on the various programs implemented by APT towards the implementation of the Tokyo Declaration and Action Plan which included an extensive HRD program, a series of pilot projects on ICTs to assist member countries, expert missions, inter agency coordination work and assistance to establish telecentres etc. He concluded inviting partners to join APT to bridge the digital divide to assist in bringing prosperity to the poor.

- 5.4 Chairman concluded that e-government, e-strategy and policy are important issues today and there is a need for the invention of simple and cheap ICT terminals and gadgets.
- 5.5 Mr. Eknath Khatiwada of SMELC-UNDP/UNOPS, Nepal asked Mr. John Daly to what extent the building social capital and social mobilisation in rural community should relate? What are the major indicators to assess the capacity of community?

Mr. Daly replied that generation of social capital is a requirement. An assessment using community survey to assist information needs is required. Awareness programme on ICT and the rural community is also needed.

Prof. Sadananda from AIT asked Mr. John Daly if he was saying the developing countries governments should regulate the telecommunications and information infrastructure, rather than devolving this responsibility to private enterprise. It appears that the speaker assumed that regulating authorities are fair and democratic. Are these assumptions correct? Mr. Daly replied that is not necessary so and that is an important issue. He continued to identify that every country has different approaches and that countries need to vary their policies to meet their circumstances.

VI. Session 2: Extending ICT access to all *Chairman: Mr. Hamadou Toure*

- 6.1 Mr. David Townsend, President David N. Townsend & Associates presented the paper titled “The World Cup and Communications Development” and also touched upon the information paper on, “Extending ICT access to all” by Dr. Wellinius.

Mr. Townsend commenced his presentation mentioning the popularity that the football enjoys today and the influence on Information Communication technologies of the recent World Cup competition. He explained how the development of communications including print media, radio, television using the latest communications technologies along with the access to Internet had helped a vast population view the matches. He used the World Cup as an example in explaining the supply and demand, and the profitability of ICTs. He explained the economic viability of Multi-media centers and compared use of TV and telephone as information platforms.

His strongest recommendation was that access to television should be made a priority of ICT policies, as this is commensurate with market demand, and could become an “anchor” in rural communities for development of other technologies.

- 6.2 Mr. Kittipong Tameyapradit, Vice President of TOT, Thailand presented the paper “Approaching poverty reduction through ICT-a leading operator”.

Mr. Kittipong introduced to the seminar the “Thailand ICT Policy Framework: IT 2010”. He highlighted the move towards the knowledge-based and sustainable society, by presenting the current Information Society indicators for Thailand. He described the role of ICTs in today’s Thai economy, and the projects like ‘One Tambon One Product Program’ initiated by the Thai Government, with supporting figures and data. He then presented some of the success stories of the Tambon Projects, where ICTs were used for poverty reduction through capacity building through Internet usage and promoting innovative ideas. He concluded that for long-term sustainability, it was imperative that the Government and the private sector worked together to achieve the objectives.

- 6.3 Prof. R. Sadananda, School of Advanced Technologies, AIT made a presentation on “The Role of Institutional Development in the Context of ICTs and the fight against Poverty” Prof. Sadananda commenced his presentation defining the word digital divide and went on to explain growth in ICT institutions. He mentioned that the institutions for ICT education are mushrooming as a result of competition of offering education on ICT. Some institutions follow a strong academic tradition while some offer skilled based programs. He stated that it is important to note that these institutions need to meet the increasing demand for a growing variety of high quality programmes.

He identified that the issue of poverty is complex and has many dimensions, economic, cultural, environmental, technological and structural. The convergence of computing technologies, content and communication, offer opportunities in all these dimensions. He mentioned it is important to develop institutions that do in depth research and address these dimensions of poverty while building leadership and capability.

The Chairman summarised the presentation and opened the floor for discussions. Mr. AB. Malik Warsian of Malaysia asked from Mr. Kittipong Tameyapradit about the ownership and sustainability of Tambon.com. Mr. Kittipong replied the ownership is with the SAOs. Malaysia asked Mr. Townsend the issue of deregularization of TV broadcasting and Internet access, and Mr. Townsend responded by saying that it is difficult to address the said issues.

Mr. John Daly cited an example from Peru, as to how a person made money by using a video player to record news and other programs for later replay.

Bhutan asked should cable TV’s be regulated when it is dominated by satellite programs. Mr. Townsend replied it should be judged by individual governments but felt that the creating access to all TV programs will increase opportunity to develop local programme and content.

VII. Session 3: ICTs and rural development *Chairman: Dr. Guennadi M.Fedorov*

- 7.1 Mr. Magdi M. Amin of the World Bank presented the paper “ICT and rural development: What are local communities telling us”.

Mr. Amen identified that access to knowledge is the heart of poverty reduction and access to markets. Information and services are positively correlated with productivity and income. He showed how the digital divide varies by country, by age, by gender and by region within a country. He made a hypothetical analysis of the elements for rural ICT innovation, capacity, content, community and connectivity. The key questions of local ownership of content, cost and sustainability of access, technology trade offs and measuring the impact were discussed. He touched on the community needs assessment and explained the Thai innovation day projects. He made an analysis of the various projects offered and briefed the Seminar on the lessons from innovative projects, identifying clearly the lessons for replication.

- 7.2 Mr. Warren Wong, Partner, TeleCommons Development Group and Hickling Corporation presented the paper “Towards Universal Access for Rural & Remote Communities”.

After a brief introduction of the TeleCommons Development Group and Hickling Corporation, Mr. Wong introduced the notion of Universal Access by mentioning its characteristics, challenges and interpretations. The importance of measurable targets was stressed upon vis-à-vis ills such as ‘line dumping’ and non-achievement of socio-economic results. The difference in *universal access and service* was clarified. Various regulatory and commercial management issues like ‘myth of unprofitable rural service’ and commercial viability was introduced. The different universal access approaches like ‘conditional licensing’, ‘fee for backbone connection’ etc., were presented. Mr. Wong explained the Rural Telecom financing bottlenecks, and the appropriate measures by that need to be taken for success.

- 7.3 Mr. Warren Wong made a further presentation on the “Thailand Canada Telecentre Project”. (TCTP)

The salient features of the Thailand Canada Telecentre Project (TCTP) along with, the general approach and the objectives were presented. In his presentation, Mr. Wong explained the Operating Principles and Key Operational Indicators of the TCTP. He described the support and training functions along with the organizational aspects. He also gave an example of the preliminary results of profit and loss of the project. Finally, possible measures to improve the Profit and Loss picture were identified. Mr. Wong emphasized that a focus on human capacity and socio-economic development is vital to success.

VIII. Session 4: Success Stories

Chairman: Mr. A. Narayan

- 8.1 Dr. Narong Kasitipradith, Assistant Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Public Health, the Royal Government of Thailand made a presentation on the “Telemedicine Network in Thailand”. In his presentation he explained the concept of Telemedicine and introduced the objectives of the project. The project enabled people in rural communities to access medical specialists and provided an opportunity for healthcare personnel in remote areas to continue their education. The project was carried on a satellite based network via ThaiCom 1A. The network linked multiple Community hospitals to Regional / General Hospitals and a Medical School. In 2002 the project

had 17 stations in the Northern, North Eastern, Central, Eastern and Southern parts of Thailand as well as three in Bangkok.

- 8.2 Mr. Murray Proctor, Assistant Director General, AusAid presented the paper titled “The Virtual Colombo Plan”.

Mr. Proctor said that the Virtual Colombo Plan has been established jointly by the government of Australia and the World Bank. The VCP can play a key role in bridging the digital divide by providing high quality programmes aimed at developing human resources in the rural areas. These can help significantly towards alleviation of rural poverty.

- 8.3 Dr. Chadamas Thuvasethakul, Director, National Information Technology Committee (NITC) Secretariat of NECTEC presented the paper titled “Thailand Success Stories in ICT for Poverty Reduction”.

In her presentation she gave a brief outline about the NITC and went on to explain the IT 2010 vision for a knowledge based economy for promoting innovation, strengthening information infrastructure and building human capacity. She introduced the IT 2010 framework which links the economy (e-commerce, e-industry), society (e-education, e-society) and government (e-government). Dr. Chadamas briefed the Seminar on the ICT infrastructure goals and the programs and projects that included Internet in schools, as well as content creation, community employment and R&D activities. She described the SchoolNet project which will connect 5000 schools to Internet by the end of 2002. The digital library and the digital archives for the SchoolNet were already successful. She explained that 4 telecenter projects have helped with community employment. She also outlined the efforts under taken to develop indigenous technologies at affordable prices.

Dr. Chadamas explained the IT Project of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn for under privileged children as well as rural school children and disabled children where ICTs have helped to improve to their life style. The project covers 72 schools in 37 provinces along with the teaching of computers to inmates in jails. In conclusion she summarized what had been learnt so far and the challenges that lay ahead.

- 8.4 Mr. Jonathan Morris of the Mirror Art Group made a presentation about the activities of this non profit NGO in a hill tribe village near Chiang Rai. Mr. Morris made special mention of three current uses of the Mirror Art Group namely: www.bannok.com, www.ebannok and BannokTV. The bannok.com provides the essential link between the grass root level and Bangkok and facilitates a discussion forum for issues pertaining to the Thai Society. It supports activities such as the volunteer teacher programme, fund raising for the society and volunteer/internship programmes.

e-bannok.com is a success story for e-commerce at the grass root level. Bannok TV is a World Bank sponsored project. It utilizes the existing technology to distribute relevant information to concerned communities. It aims at creating an archive of cultural aspects of tribal culture. Bannok TV also teaches communication/video skills to the community.

IX. Session 5: Success Stories (continued)

Chairman: Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang

- 9.1 Mr. Tapan Kumar Chakravorty, Senior Assistant Secretary, MPT, Bangladesh presented the paper titled “A success story of an ICT project in Bangladesh”.

Mr. Chakravorty outlined the various applications of ICT, citing areas such as education, telemedicine, human development and trade. He presented the vision of the Government in Bangladesh regarding the use of ICTs to bridge the digital divide. He stressed the importance of proper and suitable telecommunication infrastructure before the full implementation of ICTs. Referring to a Bangladesh success story, he mentioned that the number of cellular phones in use has far surpassed that of fixed lines. He also highlighted the empowerment by cellular phones of village women with small resources was presented. He stressed that village phone had made it possible to overcome barriers of time and space allowing contact with family members overseas or in other parts of country. As a conclusion, Mr. Chakravorty reiterated the Government of Bangladesh’s commitment to alleviate poverty by judicious use of ICTs.

- 9.2 Ms. Liping Qiu, Researcher of Ministry of Information Industry, China presented the paper titled “The Development Strategy of Information and Telecommunications in the Western China”.

Ms. Qiu outlined the position, role and status of the Western region of China. The growth of Telecommunications in the Western region and the rest of China was highlighted by a statistical presentation. It was mentioned that a gap in telecomm infrastructure existed between the underdeveloped West and the rest of China. Ms. Qiu outlined the various steps undertaken to redress the imbalance and the corresponding policy measures for the development of info-communications in the West.

- 9.3 Ms. Ritu Pande, ADG (LR-I), DOT, India presented the paper titled “Story of an ICT based project for e-governance & convergence”.

Ms. Pande gave a brief overview of India’s profile and an introduction to its telecomm infrastructure. Ms. Pande then presented to the Seminar Project Gramdoot – a Project in e-Governance and rural convergence which has been promoted as a private sector initiative. The characteristics, governance and revenue models of the project were explained. The current status of the project, its investments and extent of assistance from the government were detailed. The benefits to the people were identified and Ms. Pande concluded by stating the future plans of the project towards e-Governance.

- 9.4 Mr. Falatehan, from Universal Service Obligation Section of Directorate General of Post and Telecommunications, Indonesia presented the paper titled “Success story of IT Development: Indonesia experience”.

Mr. Falatehan gave a brief outline of the telephone access, Internet access, telephone regulation, sector reform and investment climate. He said that the government has established the co-ordinating team of ICT (Telematiks) which is to coordinate the

development and utilization of ICT in all government departments and the private sector. He also described the policies in Internet access, programme in ICT regulation and information access. Mr. Falatehan briefly described the Indonesian government programmes on ICT corridors.

The success programs are:

1. Sekolah 2000

By end year 1999 Director General Post and Telecommunication challenge APJII (association of ISP) to access 2000 schools into Internet. APJII answer the challenge to begin this program in year 2000 and these programs is "Sekolah 2000" or in English call School 2000. Until now this program already connect about 800 schools to Internet. This program not only to provide Internet access also provide computer. To provide computer, APJII cooperate with APKOMINDO (Association computer dealer) to sell a low-priced computer. To success this program, last year APJII, APKOMINDO and Directorate General Post and Telecommunication make seminar in 20 cities. (www.sekolah2000.or.id)

2. E-Government

- Few local government make the owner e-government, example: Takalar in South Sulawesi (www.takalar.go.id) and Kutai Timur in East Kalimantan (www.Kutaitimur.go.id).
- BKKBN (Coordinating Agency for National Family Planning) have software database to using for family and population information system. Until now BKKBN fill the database. This database planning can access to Internet.

9.5 Mr. Bishwa Nath Dhakal, Under Secretary, MIC Nepal, presented the paper titled "A Case of Nepal".

After briefly presenting the geographical status of the country, Mr. Dhakal explained the status of ICT development in Nepal. He highlighted the need for ICT for development. The development process itself is classified into three areas as:

- a) The access to ICT infrastructure,
- b) ICT related education and training opportunities, and
- c) ICT application in the economy, society and the government.

Mr. Dhakal explained the issues involve in the development of ICT in Nepal. He presented the institutional and legal framework, policy guidelines and national objectives.

X. Session 6: ICT applications and income generation: Approach by APT members
Chairman: Mr. David Townsend

Interactive Panel Discussions

Income generation through ICT:

Panelists

Ms. Liping Qiu, China

Ms. Ritu Pande, India

Mr. Faletehan, Indonesia

Mr. Tapan Kumar Chakrovorty, Bangladesh

The Chairman introduced the panelists to the audience and briefed the Seminar on the topic. He said that the purpose of the panel discussion is to exchange ideas on how ICTs can generate income for the poor and how it can be made sustainable. He invited the panelists to make their comments.

Mr. Chakrovorty said that his country, Bangladesh, is a densely populated one, and ICTs are being used for income generation in the rural areas by women whose cellular phones serve as public call offices. He said with the liberalization of the telecom sector, the growth of telecommunication facilities has increased remarkably. Thanks to the private sector initiatives, the number of mobile subscribers has exceeded the fixed line subscribers.

Ms. Qiu said how useful the ICTs were to the farmers in bringing more income by way of providing market information.

Ms. Ritu Pande of India mentioned Public Call Office as a success story of income generation and employment. She said with the increasing number of cyber cafes and liberalization of voice over Internet services more employment opportunities will be available, thereby generating more income.

Mr. Faletahan said how ICTs have helped the rural communities in Indonesia.

The Chairman emphasized the role of ICT in education and training which can provide better jobs and bring in more income. He said in some cases the skilled people leave their countries for better employment. There is a need for the governments to provide better opportunities which can help in arresting the “brain drain”.

Ms. Pande said the liberalization of telecommunications has created a vast market that has reduced the brain drain.

Mr. Malik of Malaysia asked whether any incentives are given to ICT skilled people.

Mr. Dorji of Bhutan questioned that while the basic needs of transport, drinking water, food etc. are yet to be solved how can ICTs bring income generation to the rural population of his country.

Mr. John Daly, Senior Consultant of Critical Path Asia Pacific said now the brain drain has become brain gain, quoting the example of China. He said that instead of taking ICTs to the farmer or handicraft workers, we must take ICTs to the small businessmen who can help the farmers.

ICT applications for rural e-governance

Panelists

Mr. AB. Malik Warsian, Malaysia

Mr. Gari Arua Taravatu, Papua New Guinea

Mr. Graciano L. Sitchon, Philippines

The Chairman introduced the panellists and explained the meaning of e-governance. He then invited the panellists to comment.

Mr. Taravatu of Papua New Guinea said e-governance does not mean physical absence of government services but rather that information is made available to rural areas effectively bringing them government services.

Mr. Sitchon of the Philippines said rural e-governance means easy access to government for meeting their needs. He mentioned about e-readiness of governments and said until there is universally available e-governance it will not be successful.

Mr. Malik of Malaysia also noted the issue of accessibility and e-governance. Accessibility may be in real time or delayed time. It is the obligation of the governments to provide accessibility. He said providing ICT means providing the basic infrastructure. He mentioned the use of satellite and solar energy and the transformation of the agriculture based selected project area of (e Community) to a knowledge-based life in Malaysia.

The Chairman commented about the automation of government processes to bring people closer to government.

Dr. Michael Calvano of ITU remarked that the application is what is important, not the technology. Technology is a tool.

Mr. Ilyas Ahmed of Maldives mentioned the need to minimise the time taken for implementation. Dr. Fedorov of ESCAP commented on the facilities provided by the provincial and central governments.

Mr. A. Narayan, Executive Director of APT said that the telecast of the World Cup matches has generated short-term employment and income. He highlighted the need to bring people to the government and government to the people. He also said that e-government can help substantially in reducing the bureaucracy.

The Chairman said the governments are concerned with money and the computer is the best way to deal with numbers. He mentioned that ICTs is a mechanism for connecting people to government and increasing the efficiency.

Mr. Hugh Railton, Deputy Executive Director of APT said if ICTs are to make a differences in rural areas it needs the government support at all levels.

Mr. AB. Malik Warsian of Malaysia, Mr. Graciano L. Sitchon of the Philippines and Mr. Gari Arua Taravatu of Papua New Guinea supported above view.

XI. Session 7: Role of the international community

Chairman: Dr. Michael A. Calvano

- 11.1 Mr. Chris Brown, Operations Director of Asia IT&C presented the paper titled “Co financing partnerships in information technology & communication between Europe and Asia”.

Mr. Brown gave general information about the programme including the rationale and areas of activity of Asia IT&C. He described the programme components, and the opportunities available. He also presented the co-financing technicalities and formalities to be followed. A detailed statistical representation of the programme, was also presented.

- 11.2 Ms. Viennarat Chuangwiwat, External Relations Assistant, UNFPA presented the paper titled "ICT Applications for Population and Reproductive Health".

Ms. Chuangwiwat gave an introduction to UNFPA and its mission. She mentioned the focus of UNFPA is the spread of education and reproductive health. Applications of ICT like GIS are used by the population and reproductive health programme. ICT applications were used for population data collection and management. UNFPA's distance learning system on population issues was described. Pilot projects in Thailand were explained where the use of GIS and its advantages were cited. The Internet website and CD Rom are also intensively used by UNFPA for information dissemination and advocacy. In conclusion, Ms. Chuangwiwat stressed the need to close the gap between genders whilst closing the poverty gap.

- 11.3 Dr. Motilal Sharma, Managing Director, WIF presented the paper titled "Information and Communication Technology for Poverty Reduction".

In his introduction Dr. Sharma touched upon poverty and mentioned about the large number of people within its grip, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. While realizing the failure in poverty reduction, various donors have renewed their commitment to improve the socio-economic conditions of those affected and have identified lack of human capital as one of the main reasons.

Community based Information technology especially in the rural regions of the emerging economies is very important. Dr. Sharma proposed establishing an Asian Institute of Information Technology for Poverty Reduction as a catalytic agent to assist developing countries in development of IT systems aimed at poverty reduction. In conclusion Dr. Sharma underlined the importance of today's IT driven economy and the shift from an oil-powered economy to the technology driven economy. He mentioned that the poor of the world would be the worst sufferers if deprived for long time, and that in turn would lead to frustration and finally even revolt. Empowerment of the poor by means of training in IT systems and access to IT facilities have been suggested as a solution in poverty elimination to a great extent. This will also facilitate active participation of the poor in governance resulting into strengthening of democracy.

XII. Session 8: The Way Forward: Promote ICT for all

Chair: Mr. Peter Smith

Panel Discussion

Panellist:

Mr. Bishwa Nath Dhakal, Nepal

Ms. Ider Dugarmaa, Mongolia

Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang, Thailand

Dr. Michael A. Calvano, ITU

Dr. G.M. Fedorov, ESCAP
Mr. Hoyt H. Zia, PTC
Mr. Ekaneth Khatiwada, UNDP
Mr. Hugh Railton, APT

The panel discussion was conducted on the following themes:

The Chairman introduced the panel.

Mr. Hoyt H. Zia of Pacific Telecommunications Council said that there is no one answer to the issue of ICT applications for poverty reduction. With change of ideas and collaboration among various partners appropriate solutions can be found.

Mr. Ekanath Khatiwada of SMELC/UNOPS/UNDP, Nepal said that UNDP Nepal has supported many initiatives to eradicate poverty. UNDP Nepal is also establishing Pilot Projects for which the initial, survey has been completed. A programme on community radio has also been started. ICT needs to be introduced in a major way in social mobilisation. Introduction of user friendly ICT for the poor is important and participative planning approach is essential. Transfer of technology should be made, keeping the needs of poor and ultra poor people in mind.

Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang of Thailand referred to the Tokyo Declaration in which the ministers agreed to do their best in both domestic efforts and through international co-operation, to enable people in the Asia-Pacific region to have access to the Internet by the year 2005. The Royal Thai Government is promoting ICT in a big way by having the right policies, the right regulatory environment. The Prime Minister has taken the initiative to mobilise the people for using ICT. Projects like SchoolNet and Thai Tambon.com have been launched with this objective. There is a good coordination between local and central government in promoting ICT. Private sector companies like UCOM are making a useful contribution in promoting ICT. She also quoted the example of Bangladesh and other countries in taking advantage of ICT. She further said ITU & APT should continue the good work they are doing now.

Dr. Calvano referred to the concept of Global Information Infrastructure (GII) introduced by Vice President AL Gore have in the ITU WTDC, Buenos Ares in 1994. Since then the development of GII is an important issue for many countries. However, still some countries are not connected to the GII and they feel excluded. This is an important issue and all possible efforts should be made to get every country interconnected.

It is important to get connected soon even though other preparatory work may not be completed and learn from experience. If we do not do it now we will be excluded from the ICT map.

Mrs. Dugarmaa of Mongolia mentioned the steps taken by the Mongolian government to restructure the telecommunications sector. She said that with the help of various donors, several programmes for promotion of ICT have been initiated. Currently, Mongolia has about 10,000 Internet subscribers and 50,000 users. An IT Park is also being set up.

Mr. Dhakal from Nepal said that it is important to develop ICT to empower people. He said that governments and international organizations should encourage private sector to participate activities in promoting ICT. They should go to the bottom level, not only to the central level. The success of ICT also depends heavily upon the peoples' attitude. We have to help the people in changing their attitude towards the adoption of technologies.

Dr. Fedorov said that while talking about poverty reduction in the Asia Pacific region, we talk about 800 million people who need to use ICT for raising their quality of life. ICT applications can bring difference in many areas the issue has been referred in the millennium declaration.

Replication of the successes is necessary. Local communities should look at the success stories and adapt them for their use. The information about success stories and the available technologies should be compiled and made available to the uses.

Dr. Fedorov also requested the multilateral donor community to actively participate in the inter agency working groups. He also emphasised upon the need for greater involvement of the private sector.

Dr. Fedorov suggested that the WSIS and the Asia Pacific Preparatory meeting for the WSIS should address the issue of poverty alleviation through ICT. He also suggested that the report of this Seminar can be made as a contribution to the preparatory work of the WSIS work.

Mr. Railton felt that the deliberations made at this Seminar should be utilised by countries of the region for promoting the ICT. The work carried out here should be further utilised in various fora such as the preparatory works for the WSIS.

The Chairman appreciated the various comments including those.

Mr. Daly suggested that:

- Universities should pay more attention to ICT in their work. They should train the agriculture extension workers and other village level people on ICT.
- The mailing of the participants in the Seminar is an important resource. Each participant should at least communicate with one other person in the list by the next month.

Mr. Ilyas of Maldives suggested that the idle capacity e.g. the telephone in the district office should be used to provide the Internet facilities in the evening. Similar any available satellite bandwidth should be utilised to facilitate TV broadcast.

Mr. Sunit Shrestha of Thai RuralNet said that voice of the poor does not often come up for consideration. They provide practical wisdom. He asked whether APT, ITU, World Bank can set up a mechanism to listen to the voice of the poor.

The Chairman appreciated the question and said that the World Bank undertakes survey in various countries to listen to the voice of the poor and their valuable input is considered at various levels in the bank.

Appreciating the point, Mr. Narayan said that the international community is very keen to bring the voice of the poor to the attention of all concerned. The Millennium Declaration and the WSIS are examples in this direction. Mr. Narayan also suggested that the important information from the grass root level can be put on the APT and inter agency website. Example of success stories can also be compiled and distributed.

XIII. Recommendations and Conclusions of the Seminar

Given below are some of the sailient points that emerged during the discussions and deliberations:

1. It is desirable to establish an Asia-Pacific Institute of Information Technology for Poverty Reduction (AIITPR) with multi-donor support for the development of critical intervention on strategies of developing ICT capability in developing countries and enable the development agencies to play a more catalytic and responsive role in developing countries to address the issues relating application of ICT to poverty reduction. APT should take initiative in starting dialogue with the Asian Development Bank and other bilateral and multi-lateral donors to meet this objective.
2. APT members should use success stories on e-agriculture, e-governance, e-education, e-health, e-education, to guide them in their development. The experience gained in the pilot project should be replicated to promote the growth of ICT applications.
3. In order to enhance ICT for poverty reduction APT Members should launch programmes to create
 - A knowledge-based and well informed workforce
 - An ICT infrastructure that facilitates poverty reduction in both rural and urban areas. Information content that is both appropriate and effective in enabling poverty reduction taking advantage of existing ICTs but not limited to Internet based technologies.
4. To enhance peoples participation, all APT Members should work towards an environment to bring Government to the people and people to the Government focusing upon information sharing, delegation of authority, transparency and user friendliness.

It is also important to improve infrastructure and connectivity.

5. If ICTs are to succeed in poverty alleviation they should receive the support of the governments at all levels in:

Partnership Projects,
Participation by private sector,
Infrastructure development,
Involvement of people in its e-government initiatives.

6. Development of more rural telecentres should be promoted.
7. Technology is a tool that can increase income generation and promote good governance. However, the focus should be on the needs and applications of ICT.
8. Regional efforts to promote the goals of sustainable development should be intensified, especially on leveraging the potential of ICT towards these efforts and building on success stories of the region.
9. It was recommended that access to television should be made a priority of ICT policies, as this is commensurate with market demand, and could become an “anchor” in rural communities for development of other technologies.
10. Keeping in mind the goals of the Millennium Declaration, as well as the World Summits on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August 2002) and Information Society (Geneva, December 2003), regional initiatives on ICT and sustainable development should be promoted.
11. The regional initiative such as ICT and the environment in the Asia-Pacific (ICTEAP) and others should continue regional networking, pilot projects, and capacity building efforts so as promote the linkages between ICT and sustainable development.
12. Noting that efforts are being made in many areas from the UN General Assembly to village communication centers provided by a single telephone, it is essential that input be gathered from all the people. To this end the APT in collaboration with the UN agencies should provide the opportunity for rural practitioners to participate and contribute in the work.
13. To facilitate the above a process needs to be developed to bring the rural practitioners together possibly using link on the APT / UN interagency website, publications, etc.
14. For effective dissemination of the concept of ICT and Poverty Reduction, the universities should be requested to incorporate ICT and Poverty Reduction related courses in their regular degree continuing education and extension worker courses.
15. The mailing of the participants in the Seminar is an important resource. Each participant should at least communicate with one other person in the list by the next month.

XIV. Presentation and Adoption of Report

- 14.1 The draft report was presented by the Chairman of the drafting committee and was adopted by the meeting.

XV. Closing

- 15.1 Mr. Peter Smith thanked the APT secretariat for efficient organization of the seminar. He also expressed his gratitude to the delegates for their active participation.

 - 15.2 Mr. A. Narayan thanked the InfoDev and the World Bank for support to the APT for organizing this important event. He said that the seminar has been successful due to the valuable contribution made by the participants. He also appreciated the support extended by the Post and Telegraph Department of the Royal Government of Thailand and the Telephone Organization of Thailand in organizing the seminar and the Mirror Art Group for facilitating the field visit to their Centre. Mr. Narayan also thanked his colleagues from the APT Secretariat for their dedicated work which ensured the success of the seminar.
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