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WSIS and Bangladesh

In the first phase of WSIS the government of Bangladesh, NGOs, private sectors and media participated and presented their activities. Honourable Prime Minister has joined with her highest commitment to build an equal information society. Bangladesh was one of the recommending countries to establish the Solidarity Fund.

Bangladesh is committed to continue the WSIS process at regional and national levels and now in process of implementation of the strategic actions. Also in the second phase Bangladesh will review the process and a progress made by the all stakeholders.

Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology (MOSICT) played an important role in coordinating the first phase of WSIS and designated to act as a Focal Point for WSIS. MOSICT has formed a committee with relevant governmental Ministries, private sectors, media and civil society who are active in WSIS implementing process.

The ICT sector of Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing sectors of its economy. The Government has declared ICT as the thrust sector. Realizing the importance of ICT, the name of the Ministry has been changed from "Ministry of Science and Technology" to the "Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology". The Government organization entrusted for the development and promotion of the ICT sector is the Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology. Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC), the apex body for promotion of all kinds of ICT activities in the country, works under the Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology.

The Government of Bangladesh has given immense importance to ICT for development (ICT4D) for economic growth and poverty reduction. To develop this sector, the government has taken several projects and programs, formulated legal frameworks to implement the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action of WSIS process. The committee is holding regular meeting, agenda consultation, sharing of information to keep themselves prepared to play the right role in the process for the second phase. The following table shows the present status of MOSICT activities according to Declaration of Principles and Action Plan of WSIS.

Bangladesh in line of WSIS Declaration and Plan of Action

Declaration of Principles	Plan of Action	Bangladesh
<p>An Information Society for All: The key principles for building an inclusive information society that have been agreed by all are:</p>	<p>Action Lines</p>	<p>The Government of Bangladesh has given immense importance to ICT for development for economic growth and poverty reduction. To develop this sector, the government has taken several projects and programs.</p> <p>Bangladesh government has adopted a comprehensive IT Policy. There are also some legal policy adopted such as IPR and an IT act has been enacted.</p> <p>A National ICT Task Force has been set up and is operational. There are several committees working to foster the projects and programs:</p> <p>The Executive Committee of National ICT Task Force, National Committee of Bio-Technology, National Council for Science and Technology with an Executive Committee.</p> <p>Five Technical Committees on Crop Bio-Technology, Animal and Fish Bio-Technology, Medical Bio-Technology, Bio-Safety and Bio-Diversity have been formed.</p>
<p>1. The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development: Building a people-centred Information Society is a joint effort, which requires cooperation and partnership among all stakeholders.</p>	<p>1. An effective participation of governments & all stakeholders in the promotion of ICT4D.</p>	<p>Public-Private Partnership: Ministry is closely working in collaboration with the ICT industry, educational institutions for building the technical ICT skills of young people of the country. Need based ICT services including training facility have been identified for mass participation and curriculum has been developed.</p> <p>Bangladesh Computer Council has taken a project titled "Assistance to Secondary Schools for Introducing Computer Course" under which computer and accessories are given to secondary schools and one teacher of those schools are also given ICT training.</p> <p>Taka eighteen crore has been allocated to seven universities to develop human resources through offering Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) in IT so that skilled manpower and trainers are available for ICT development activities. More universities are being brought under this program. The grant is given to these universities to conduct a standard 1 year Post Graduate Diploma Course in ICT.</p>

		<p>A Bangladesh -Korea Institute of Information and Communication Technology (BKIICT) is being set up at the Bangladesh Computer Council with Technical Assistance of 1 million dollar from Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).</p> <p>In order to disseminate ICT services including ICT education and training to disperse locations outside the capital Dhaka city, Government has taken up a project 'Conducting Standard Computer Training Courses in the Divisional Headquarters'. Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology, in cooperation with the public/private sector, has taken program to produce quality professionals and skilled manpower in ICT to ensure the success of the software and IT Enabled Services (ITES) industries by introducing ICT Internship Award Program in country.</p>
<p>2. Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for inclusive information for a well-developed information & communication network infrastructure should be developed with a policies to create a favorable climate for stability, predictability & fair competition at all levels & should be implemented in a manner that will attracts private investment for ICT infrastructure development.</p>	<p>2. Building an Information & communication infrastructure: that is an essential foundation for the Information Society.</p>	<p>Bangladesh is expecting to be connected through optical fiber backbone by the year 2005 which will create an ample scope to develop its IT horizon vigorously.</p> <p>Bangladesh tele-density has been improved quite significantly and mobile connection is expanded the services most of the corners of remote villages.</p> <p>Internet connectivity expanded to the sub-district level.</p> <p>Tk 300 core has been earmarked in Bangladesh Bank as Equity and Entrepreneur fund (EEF) for facilitating the ICT/Software and agro based Industries.</p>
<p>3. Access to information and knowledge: The ability for all access and contribute information, ideas and knowledge is essential by removing all barriers and making affordable access to software, which is an important component of a truly inclusive Information Society.</p>	<p>3. Access to information and knowledge benefits individuals, organizations and communities to develop.</p>	<p>Scientific Research & Development (R&D) in ICT: Research and development activities in ICT are be strengthened. ICT is being used to spur the development of innovative programs and research in other sectors such as, agriculture, biotechnology, environment, etc. The Ministry of Science and Information Technology has allocated Tk. 12 core for conducting research in Science, Technology and ICT.</p> <p>Contributions of Scientific and Industrial Research: Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) is carrying out research on various fields of Research and Development (R&D) related to important sectors of the country such as, agriculture and biotechnology, food and food products, medicine, polymer and natural products, fuel and energy, building materials, applied Physics, Instrument fabrication and chemical products.</p>

<p>4. Capacity building: The use of ICTs in all stages of education, training and human resource development should be promoted, taking into account the special needs of persons with disabilities and disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. To achieve a sustainable development of the Information Society, national capability in ICT research and development should be enhanced.</p>	<p>4. Everyone should have the necessary skills to benefit fully from the Information Society. Therefore capacity building and ICT literacy are essential.</p>	<p>Development of Software industry for Local and Export market: Strategies for software industry emphasizes to include increased local utilization of software capabilities, increased earnings through software export, and employment generation. In order to popularize the use & application of computers, the government has exempted custom duties and VAT on computer hardware, software & accessories. This has appreciably increased the computer utilization & doubled the yearly computer growth rate from 20 % to 40 %. Government has offered tax holiday for the IT industry and set up an ICT Incubator to promote the sector.</p> <p>The ICT education could provide young people with opportunities to develop ICT literacy through the education system and / or ICT training facilities, and also provide them with affordable access to computers and the Internet.</p>
<p>5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs: Strengthening the trust framework, including information security & network security, authentication, privacy & consumer protection, is a prerequisite for the development of the Information Society & for building confidence among users of ICTs. Spam & cyber-security should be dealt with at appropriate national and international levels.</p>	<p>5. Building confidence & security in the use of ICTs.</p>	<p>Institutional Frameworks for ICT – Legislative Laws & Regulations: For substantive growth of ICT sector in a shortest time, it is essential to create an enabling environment, appropriate policies and legislative frameworks. The ICT & IPR Law is enacted.</p>
<p>6. Enabling environment: An enabling environment at national and international levels is essential for the Information Society. ICTs should be used as an important tool for good governance.</p>	<p>6. To maximize benefits of the Information Society, government need to create a trustworthy, transparent & non-discriminatory legal, regulatory & policy environment.</p>	<p>To develop an enabling environment on Internet use, services and to ensure quality services the government has formulated/adopted related legal and regulatory framework. Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has established under the Telecommunication Act 2001 to ensure enabling environments for the sector. Mass awareness has been increased which made popular the ICT use at all level.</p>
<p>7. ICT applications: benefits in all aspects of life: The usage and deployment of ICTs should seek to create benefits in all aspects of our daily life. ICTs should also contribute to sustainable production and consumption patterns and reduce traditional barriers, providing an opportunity for all to access local and global markets in a more equitable manner.</p>	<p>7. ICT applications can support sustainable development, in the fields of public administration, business, education and training, health, employment, environment, agriculture and science within the framework of national e-strategies.</p>	<p>National Portal is under development process to uphold country image worldwide and also by which citizen to government (C to G) relationship is expected to be enhanced..</p> <p>e-Governance: Governments are using ICT to improve the quality and efficiency of public services delivery systems. To this end ICT may help government strengthen internal information flows, accountability and transparency, and procurement of goods and services.</p>

<p>8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content: The Information Society should harness & preserve cultural heritage for the future by all appropriate methods.</p>	<p>8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content.</p>	<p>Bangladesh has long cultural history and potential of archeological background. The UNESCO declares two World heritages and the International Mother Language day (21 February), which also derived from Bangladesh language movement history.</p> <p>Bangladesh Government is committed to the cultural preservation and shares the information to the world through communication technology.</p> <p>Bangladesh has done the standardization of Unicode compliant Bangla Keyboard and Fonts.</p>
<p>9. Media: Our commitment to the principles of freedom of the press and of freedom of information, as well as those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of media, which are essential to the Information Society.</p>	<p>9. Media have an essential role in the development of the Information Society and are recognized as an important contributor to freedom of expression and plurality of information.</p>	<p>Government is considering the Freedom of Press as an important right. Media are also encouraged to collect and publish necessary information related to ICT4D. The electronic and satellite media is encouraged to promote media services worldwide.</p>
<p>10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society: The Information Society should respect peace & uphold the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, shared responsibility, & respect for nature.</p>	<p>10. It is the responsibility of every state to ensure the ethical dimensions of the Information Society.</p>	<p>Gender Equity: Steps are taken to bridge the ICT gender divide within the country by eradicating factors that restrict equal access to ICT through greater use of both new and traditional ICT as tools for development and for greater voice and empowerment of women.</p> <p>Bangladesh believes in equal right where applicable for disable/disadvantaged group to access the ICT facility.</p>
<p>11. International and regional cooperation: The core competences of the ITU in the fields of ICTs— assistance in bridging the digital divide, international & regional cooperation, radio spectrum management, standards development and the dissemination of information—are of crucial importance for building the Information Society.</p>	<p>11. International and regional cooperation among all stakeholders is vital in implementation of this plan of action and needs to be strengthened with a view to promoting universal access and bridging the digital divide, <i>inter alia</i>, by provision of means of implementation.</p>	<p>Bangladesh Foreign Policy is based on friendly relationship with others. Government of Bangladesh is participating in all international and regional activities related to WSIS process. As well as encourages the collaboration and partnership with any private sectors and foreign investments in the field of ICT.</p>
<p>Towards WSIS Phase 2 (Tunis)</p>	<p>A preparatory meeting will be held in the first half of 2004 to review those issues of the Information Society, which should form the focus of the Tunis phase of the WSIS, and to agree on the structure of the preparatory process for the second phase.</p>	<p>Bangladesh Government has a WSIS Cell to develop a strategic plan to implement the Plan of Action & Declaration of Principles of WSIS. There is a committee has been formulated with all stakeholders for sharing information, consultation on WSIS and for the preparation for the Tunisia Phase. Chief Executive of the Ministry is leading this process.</p>
