

Editorial

Integration of ICTs into traditional education system is indispensable to produce skilled human resource in order to materialise the Digital Bangladesh dream. The focus of integration of ICTs at a national level should start from secondary level. At the secondary level, there should be a two-pronged approach: a) make the facilities available for ICT education and b) most importantly make multimedia facilities available for imparting teaching of core subjects like Mathematics, Science and English by the teachers. As it is not possible to provide individualised access to ICTs by all students due to resource constraints, we should target to cover all secondary schools with at least one state-of-the-art ICT lab and one to two class rooms with multimedia facilities. This is also ambitious but possible if we can bring on board private sector, NGOs, non-resident Bangladeshis and schools. D.Net with support from Volunteers' Association for Bangladesh, New Jersey (VAB-NJ) launched Computer Learning Programme (CLP), which proved that how partnership among NRBs, local institutions and schools can deploy a sustainable model for ensuring ICT education.

Currently the government has established 128 well-furnished high-end computer labs in 64 districts. The government is also going to provide facilities of multimedia education in 632 schools. It is a welcome start, compared to "one school one computer" approach. However, compared to the total number of schools (around 20,000), this is still inadequate. The most important matter is the sustainability aspect of the projects was not well-designed except a clause in the agreement between schools and the government about maintenance after the project period. The inclusion of a position of "programmer" was unnecessary, which is now creating a conflicting situation between teachers and "outsider". One important reality was ignored in the project design, the situation of electricity supply. Although, the computers in the lab is with UPS, a comprehensive power backup system is absent, which will eventually make the labs useless.

D.Net strongly advocates for partnership with all possible players and ensure coverage of all schools by 2012. It is possible because the stakeholders are encouraged with the vision of "Digital Bangladesh" and want to contribute to realise this vision. Ensuring that there is no duplication of efforts in a single school, a partnership between the government, donors, NGOs, NRBs, private sector and most importantly schools themselves will make it possible. It is to be ensured that all critical success factors and failure factors to be considered. The implementation and management of the projects should be given to private sector or NGOs, who have shown results to have potential to do so. The stakeholders other than the government are ready to contribute with financial resources; this momentum should be captured by the government. D.Net wishes to be all the government initiatives, where it has experience and competence.

"Protifolon" a new policy brief series published

D.Net and IDS (Institute of Development Studies), University of Sussex, UK jointly organised the launching ceremony of Protifolon on April 22 at IDB Bhabon. Protifolon is a policy brief series highlights cutting edge thinking on the emerging issues affecting Bangladesh.



The vision of the series is to create a world where social justice is achieved through collective decision making with participation of all stakeholders. Mission of the series is to create a global platform of Knowledge Infomediaries Cooperation to make them able to enhance their effectiveness and expand their horizon for their stakeholders.

Dr. Ananya Raihan, Executive Director, D.Net explained the background of producing and promoting this policy brief series. Georgina Aboud from IDS described the objectives of the initiative and mentioned that IDS is interested to work with other organisations gradually. Participants from various organisations appreciated the initiative and gave their valuable feedback to make the policy brief series more effective. They also showed their keen interest to contribute to this publication. Participants discussed the importance of the policy brief, Protifolon. They added that it would easily update policy makers understanding, make them more responsive, and update development workers about current development issues as reviewed by subject experts, build capacity among advocacy actors, save time for researchers and practitioners, partner collaboration for dissemination purpose. The participants advised to publish a Bangla version of protifolon.

The series is published by Bangladesh Online Research Network (BORN) www.bdresearch.org, an information and knowledge intermediation initiative of D.Net. The first issue of Protifolon examines the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in the context of trade, exports migration and remittances. It summarises recommendations for the policy makers. To read the policy brief please visit www.bdresearch.org/protifolon. Next two issues will be on Digital Bangladesh and Gender and Right to Information and Good Governance.

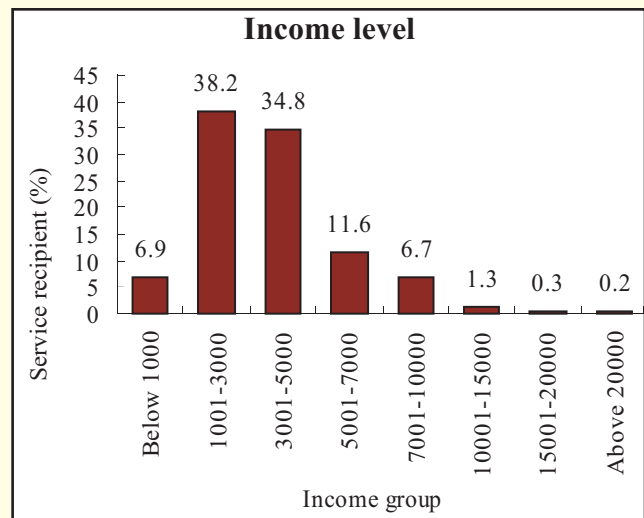
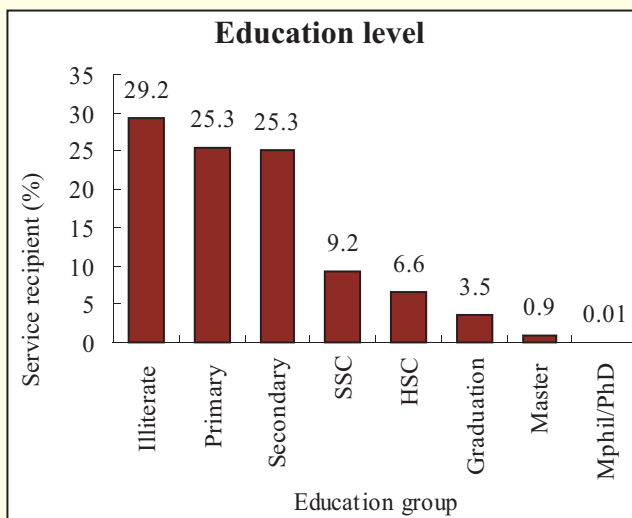
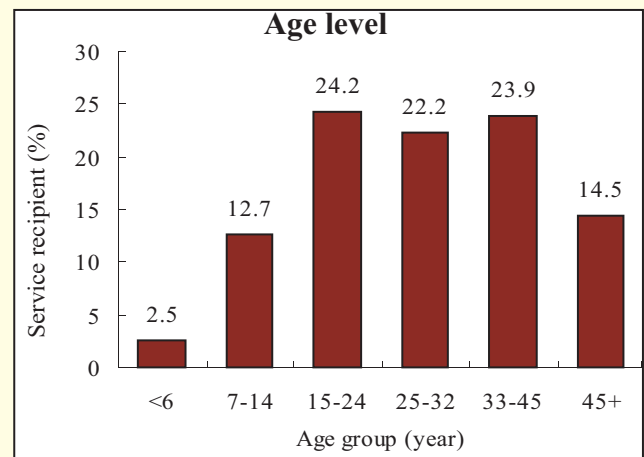
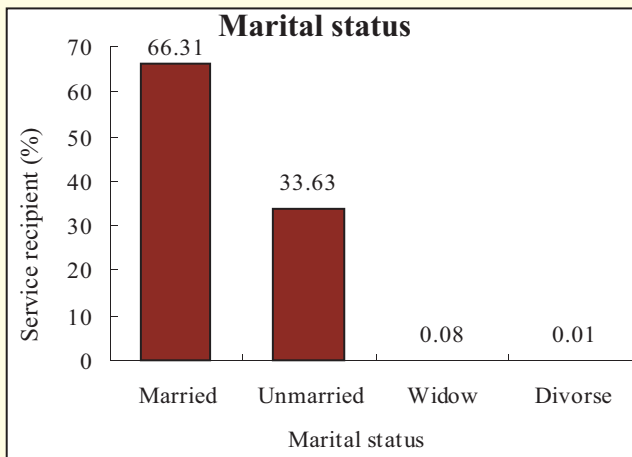
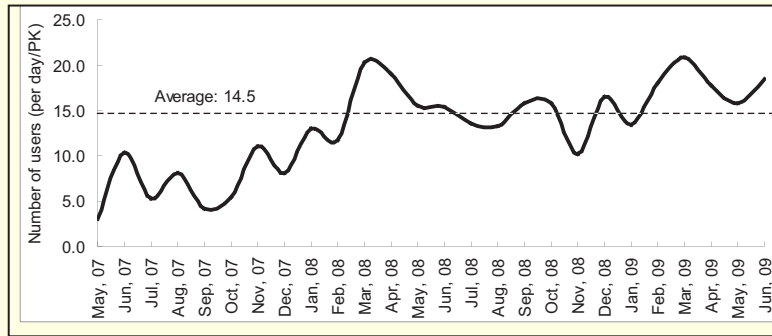
Project update: Abolombon II

This is the third and last year for Abolombon II project, which was started in March 2007 with the financial support of Manusher Jonno Foundation. Establishment of 25 Pallitathya Kendras (PKs) has already been completed in collaboration with 25 grassroots organisations in 19 districts. PKs have been established in the district of Bagerhat, Jessore, Jhenaidah, Chuadanga, Satkhira, Gopalganj, Barisal, Jhalakathi, Noakhali, Chittagong, Comilla, Pirojpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Tangail, Netrokona, Moulvibazar and Sunamganj.

Every PK functioned with 2-4 staffs. A total of 80 infomediaries received 'infomediary training' under this project. Infomediaries move in the field to collect queries and carry the response next day by searching out from the PK content database. They conduct group/yard meeting

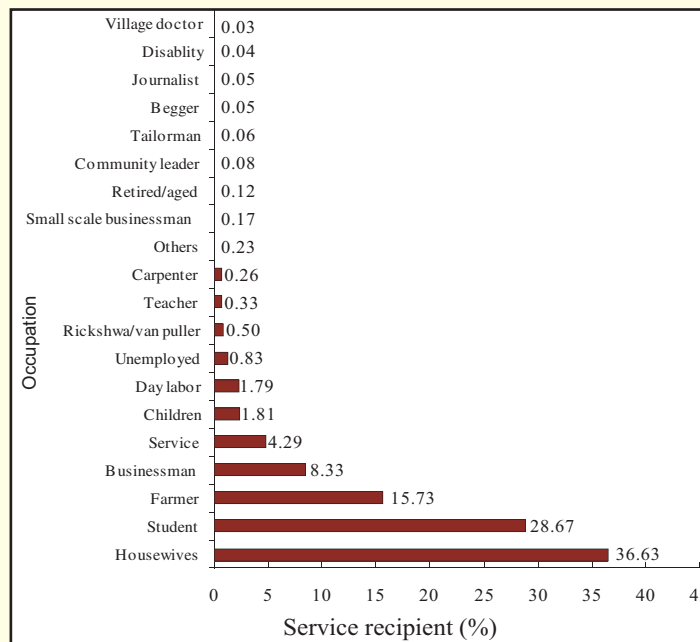
with different professionals for promoting PK services. Infomediaries collect livelihood questions from the meeting and provide answer either in the next meeting or invite them to PK for receiving answer. They go to households in the village and learn about particular problem from women and physically challenged people. If anyone wants to ask a question and infomediaries can understand that the response of question is available in the PK content database then they do not forward the question to the

helpdesk, rather bring the question to PK and search out the answer from content database and provide it to them who asked it. PK organises issue based camp that helps linking local service providers and rural people for better service. In January 2009, EEE PCs have been introduced with nine PKs. Now infomediaries move door to door with a bunch of services. The total information services have become



mobile and it serves the people at their doorsteps. Additionally, it plays a significant role to increase the income for PKs. In August 2009, Classmate PCs will be introduced with four more PKs.

During the period of May 2007 to June 2009, a total of 107,843 people received services, among them 78 percent received livelihood information and 22 percent received ancillary services. The sex ratio of service recipient was 51 percent of male and 49 percent of female. Females were at 50.4 percent among information recipients and 44.5 percent among ancillary service recipients. The number of service recipients is being increased with the increase of PK



operation period. It was found that the daily average service recipients per PK were at 14.5 during this period, it was almost double than the Pallitathya research phase (2005-2006).

It was found that PKs served people irrespective of their age; more than two third of the service recipients' (70 percent) age was within the range of 15 to 45 years. The PKs could reach the disadvantaged groups in rural communities, print disability (29 percent) and less education (HSC and below) (63 percent) didn't restrict community beneficiaries receiving both information and ancillary services from

PKs. In terms of occupational categories; housewives (37 percent), students (29 percent) and farmers (16 percent) were the lead users of PK services. It is to be noted that low income group people were the highest user of PK services,

around half of the service recipients' family income level was BDT 3000 and below.

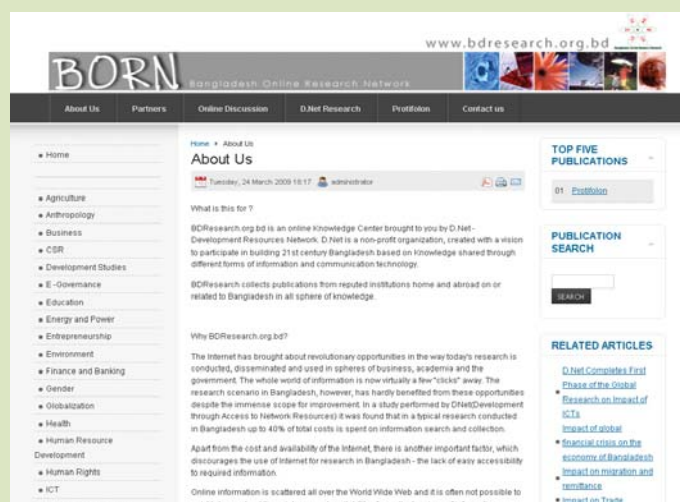
In terms of use of channels, Jeeon-IKB (the local language content base) was the most accessed channel for information and knowledge, 34 percent of information recipients accessed information and knowledge through Jeeon-IKB. Audio-visual content was the second most-used channel, 32 percent community

beneficiaries used this channel for accessing information. Issue based camp met the information requirement for 12 percent information recipients. During the period, a total of 147 camps (42 on agriculture, 41 on health, 24 on education, 34 on law, 2 on government service and 4 on non-farm economic activities) were organised by PKs. A total of 9919 rural people received information and direct consultation services from camps, where 58% were female. Local source, helpline and internet were used to answer 9 percent, 8 percent and 5 percent questions respectively.

New outlook of bdresearch.org

Since 2001, D.Net is operating a program widely known as Bangladesh Online Research Network (BORN). Under this initiative, an online research platform 'bdresearch.org' has been created with the vision to ease the access to research materials through website.

Bdresearch.org is now available on the web with new outlook in a bid to faster the navigation process and turns the site



more purposeful. Beside this, all important links are placed on the left pane of the website so that anyone can easily visit his/her desired topic.

This research web portal currently encompasses numerous research materials (more than 1500 entries) for free of cost and for sale as well. Apart from this, a discussion forum is already in place to share idea and knowledge with the other visitors of this research portal.

D.Net launches ESPT for the professionals

D.Net recently launched a programme named “Enhancing Professional Skill Trough Training (EPST)” with the vision to contribute to skill development for professionals in various fields based on its expertise.

The initial areas, where D.Net is going to concentrate are research methodology, data analysis, market survey, market access, understanding international trade, corporate social responsibility (CSR), digital content development, access to information and knowledge through web (interactive technically independent portal development), knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation



methodology, telecentre managements , ToT on basic computer learning, ToT on advanced computer learning, e-waste management, indigenous knowledge, environmental impact assessment, ICT



integration architecture, integration of IT for developing management, work flow management etc.

The first training titled, “Compliance and Practices of NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) Rules” was held on June 6, 2009 at Wings Centre, Dhanmondi. The objective of the training was to introduce participants with the standard practices and guidelines of NGOAB.

Participants from IRRI, Caritas Bangladesh, NGO Forum, Ankur ICT Foundation, FHDF, Disable and Distress Care, Access Bangladesh, Islam Aftab Kamrul & Co. Chartered Accountants, Jamuna Unnayan Foundation, Impact Foundation Bangladesh, USHA, Grameen Kallayankami Songhta, Humanist Need Development Society (HNBA) etc were present there.

D.Net opens 100th CLC in Khulna

D.Net recently established its 100th Computer Literacy Centre (CLC) at the K G H F Moukhaki United Academy in Pikegacha upazilla of Khulna district. In order to share this achievement and the programme’s chronological advancement, D.Net organised a media briefing at the Reporters Unity in the city on May 23, 2009.

Dr. Ananya Raihan, Executive Director of D.Net, AKM Fahim Mashroor, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chairman of Executive Committee, D.Net, Mahmud Hasan, COO, BTN and Ajoy Kumar Bose, Head of Institutional Affairs, D.Net attended this press conference. It is to be mentioned that the CLP is being implemented since 2005 under a partnership between Volunteers’ Association for Bangladesh, New Jersey (VAB-NJ), D.Net and local schools.

Dr. Ananya Raihan in his speech said, “This is just a milestone in the long journey towards building a 21 century skilled young generation and reduce gap between rural and urban areas in terms of access to ICTs. People in the rural areas are always deprived which leave many potentials remain unexplored. Time has come to create opportunity for them so that they can prove their potential and actively take part in the socio-economic development. We talk about Digital Bangladesh but it is not possible to achieve this if we not able to spread ICT-based education across the country. We would like to work with the government under public private partnership to make all schools ICT enabled”.

AKM Fahim Mashroor stated that, “We actually need a

public-private partnership to expedite the ICT- based development in the rural areas. Organisations that are working in the rural areas need the policy and infrastructural support from the government to move forward their activities. By establishing 100th CLC D.Net and VAB-NJ have proved their keen interest to spread ICT education to unprivileged community. But if we get the government assistance then certainly it would be possible to deploy more CLCs across the country”.

Ajoy Kumar Bose stressed that, “D.Net always committed to explore new areas where it would be possible to ensure best utilisation of IT. We sincerely believe ICT education does not only enhance the traditional academic process but it also creates enormous opportunities to generate financial activities. Many of our graduates from CLCs now have their own ICT business whereas others successfully identified the right career for them. From a comprehensive research we came to know that investment in CLC guarantees faster return of investment (ROI)”.

“We are seeking more players for the active contribution to the CLP activities. Big companies or multinationals can donate or provide their refurbished computers to establish new CLCs. Recently, government announced 10 percent tax rebate for CSR (corporate social responsibility) programmes. Corporate world can utilise this scope by taking part to in CLP initiative. Furthermore, we also welcome government intervention to materialise its previously committed free internet connectivity to all rural schools”, Ajoy added.



D.Net in the Bangladesh Round of WCID 2009

D.Net participated at the Bangladesh Round of World Congress on ICT for Development (WCID 2009) was held at IDB Bhaban, Agargaon on June 27. This event was organised as a part of upcoming WCID International Conference to be held in Beijing, China in September.

Architect Yeafesh Osman, the state minister for Science and ICT was present at the session as the chief guest. Beside this, Professor Dr. M Abdus Sobhan of Independent University Bangladesh chaired the programme whereas Professor Dr. MA Mottalib of Islamic University of Technology presented the keynote speech.

Architect Osman in his speech said, "Government would provide full support to flourish ICT in Bangladesh. The ICT policy will be approved after proper scrutiny. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is one

of the most effective tools to turn our country into digital Bangladesh". Dr. Mottalib in his keynote speech underscored the necessity to launch digital money transaction system and digital land recording process in Bangladesh.

The programme was divided into four sessions where experts presented their papers. These papers encompassed the idea of utilising information technology to alleviate poverty, increase quality of education and reduce the socio-economic discrimination. Apart from this, experts also demonstrated unique communication solution to survive the shock of natural calamity. Seven research papers from D.Net were presented in the programme.



From D.Net total seven papers have been presented to this occasion are given below:

Giving Better Price To Farmers: A Vehicle for Gaining Financial Viability For Telecentres	SK Masudur Rahman and Zahid Al Mahadi
Network Readiness Index and Right to Information	Md Mizanur Rahman
Benefit on Investment: Why should we invest for the Pubic Access to ICTs	Forhad Uddin, Masum Billah and Ananya Raihan
Application of Mobile Technology in Meeting Demand for Education Information: An experience from Bangladesh	Asma Ayub
Risk Assessment of Pregnant Women through Mobile Technology	Muhammad Atiqur Rahman
ICT in Education: Role of Multimedia in English Language	Mostan Zida Al Noor
Measuring Gender Equality In ICT4D: An Application of GEM	Afrina Tanzin

Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) being applied to CLP

Gender gaps that are widespread in access to basic rights, access to and control of resources, in economic opportunities and also in power and political voice are an impediment to development. Technologies are socially constructed and thus have direct impacts on gender. A rural ICT4D project cannot automatically address the gender divide in access, use and appropriation for changing lives in positive ways.

Association for Progressive Communications (www.apc.org) Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) selected an ongoing project operating by D.Net titled "Empowering underprivileged youth in Bangladesh through Computer Literacy Programme (CLP)" for applying their adopted Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) for rural ICT4D project for evaluating the project. As a GEM practitioner D.Net has been applying GEM for its ICT4D projects gradually. This is a one year research project, financed by APC WNCP. The project output will



be a report analyzing the gender dimension of the Computer Literacy Programme. The GEM adaptation process aims at sensitizing the project operation stakeholders about gender issues to become more effective in creating access to computer training for the underprivileged. The main research question is whether application of GEM makes a project more effective for the community.

For the research work we selected 30 schools as of CLP starting date for selecting old and new schools, geographical distribution of schools, rural-urban schools, girls, boys and coeducation schools. The data gathering strategy was defined after defining the evolution indicators. We collected data by conducting focus group discussion, observation and case study and interviewed students, teachers, parents by questionnaire fill up. After completing the survey a report will be prepared and submit the report to APC WNCP and VAB-NJ.

Knowledge sharing workshops for D.Net and DAE officers

Two knowledge sharing workshops were held on April 06 & May 7, 2009 at D.Net under Pallitathya Bikash programme. Officers from DAE (Department of Agriculture Extension) and BARI (Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute) and D.Net's Pallitathya team attended the workshops. The main purpose of these workshops were to share D.Net's innovations and experiences on ICT for development especially on agriculture issues such as how rural people are accessing agriculture information using ICTs from the Pallitathya Kendras (PKs) and how the local agriculture officers can be a part of the whole process. Pallitathya team shared the activities of D.Net, Pallitathya model, Jeeon (digital agriculture content) development process (both text and animation), multiple channels to deliver agriculture information to the rural people and the process of agriculture helpline operation. DAE officers shared their experiences and opportunities of collaboration have been discussed among the participants. Upon fruitful discussion participants agreed to exchange their

experiences and technical expertise through different training programmes, projects and knowledge management.



farmers on agriculture problems. Infomediaries of PKs can communicate them directly for any consultation regarding farmers' problem. DAE officers showed interest in getting full package of Jeeon-IKB content on various livelihood issues (agriculture, health, law, non- farm activities etc.). This content will add a merit in their work, a number of rural people can get benefit from them as they communicate them regularly.

DAE officers emphasised to make a bridge between Deputy Assistant Agriculture officer and infomediaries of PKs. They are interested to participate in the selection process of new PKs location where they can contribute a lot. They may participate as expert in the agriculture camps organised regularly by the Pallitathya Kendra in their working areas; they may allocate time to be present at PKs for live consultation with the rural

Road to Digital Bangladesh: fifteen organisations vow to start Pallitathya Kendra

A workshop titled "An Overview on Pallitathya" was held at the seminar hall of Hunger Free World, Kaligonj in Jhenaidah district under Pallitathya Bikash Programme of D.Net on April 16, 2009.

The daylong workshop included sessions- Pallitathya at a glance, Pallitathya in media, open discussion on threats opportunities and sustainability of Pallitathya Kendra, planning to establish Pallitathya Kendra etc.

Speakers at a workshop stressed the need of establishing Pallitathya Kendra in the rural areas, especially those places where people are deprived of information services needed to maintain a minimum standard of life. The present government deserves appreciation for setting the goal of a 'Digital Bangladesh' by 2021. But a time-bound objective speaks of the urgency of achieving it within the time frame. Pallitathya Programme, a D.Net initiative can play a significant role for building Digital Bangladesh.

Fifteen organisations of Khulna region participated in the workshop. Participants were present from Humanity Watch, Computer Channel, Bihongo and Pizon Mohila Unnayan Sangastha of Khulna, Organisation of Rural Development, Shanghat Polli Unnayan Sangastha and Manob Kallyan Sangastha

of Meherpur, Ma O Shishu Shastha Foundation of Jessore, SDRC of Bagerhat, Prova Society, Bandhujan Samaj Kollyan Sangstha, Prism, Family Development Organisation, OSIK Computer and Goriber Asroy of Jhenaidah district.

Understanding the Model of Pallitathya all organisations expressed their keen interest to establish Pallitathya Kendra in their areas. Mr. Mohammad Ali, a participant from Humanity Watch worked for ensuring the right of deprived and ethnic people like 'Moual' 'Munda' 'Baoali' etc. of Sundarbans, said "Engaging with Pallitathya Programme we will be able to deliver services of ICT to the people living in grassroots level and it will accelerate our activities to attain maximum goal." Another participant named Mr. Zakir Hossain from SDRC highlighting children programme said "We will be grateful if we can connect ourselves with the Pallitathya programme. We hope that our children will be better citizens with the touch of technology." Based on the discussion it was decided that an Infomediary training programme would be arranged within May 2009 on the same venue.

Mr. Mosharrof Hossain, Coordinator, Pallitathya Bikash Programme of D.Net presented the keynote before the participants and Mr. Arif-Uz-zaman, Programme Associate of D.Net assisted him to make the programme successful.



D.Net accomplishes first phase of IPAI

D.Net recently completed the first phase of The Global Impact Study of Public Access to Information and Communication Technologies (IPAI). It is a five-year, \$7.2 million international research project sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and managed by telecentre.org in partnership with the Center for Information & Society at the University of Washington's Information School.

D.Net is an implementation partner of this project in Bangladesh. The Global Impact Study began in October 2007 and will last five years, until 2012. The first phase, which ended in December 2008, focused on secondary data research and three country-level field studies (Chile, Bangladesh, Lithuania) to pilot research methods and frameworks. The project is now in the second phase — researchers are examining evidence of impact from a series of longitudinal and comparative field studies in a number of countries.

D.Net has submitted all deliverables (final report with information ecology mapping) to IDRC for the project. D.Net has applied for extension the project duration which will include the following objectives:

1. Participated and assist in the completion of the following in-depth study (probe) proposals:
 - Analysis of life cycle of public access to ICT venues
 - Infomediaries
 - Mobile nexus with public access
 - End-user sharing
 - Non-instrumental use of ICT
2. Performed background fieldwork or information searches that contributes to the development of additional in-depth (probe) study proposal development.
3. Undertook preparatory work for survey research, including analysis of costs, identification of local institutions/researchers and other prevailing conditions that need to be considered in advance.
4. Contributed to the finalisation of reports to be published in the occasional paper series for the project.
5. As member of the project Dr Ananya Raihan and Md. Forhad Uddin participated in project planning workshops and dissemination of research outputs at the ICTD2009 Conference in Doha, Qatar on April 17-19, 2009.

Press conference of FICC opening

D.Net organised a press conference on June 17 at ULAB conference room ahead of its "Financial IT Case Competition (FICC)". FICC is the first ever talent-hunt contest in Bangladesh funded by Citi Foundation and organised by D.Net where students from both IT and business background are the main contenders.

Parvez Murshed, Head of Global Transaction Service of Citi Bank said the goal of this competition is to promote a culture of business and technology development amongst

Prof. Dr. Syed Akther Hossain, Contest Director of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

The FICC will consist of two preliminary rounds and one final gala round. Two students from business studies and two from IT along with a faculty member as the project manager will form a team.

Prime contest areas of FICC are account transfer through web/SMS, agricultural information and banking system through web and mobile technology, CHURN analysis, consumer behavior prediction model in banking, credit information bureau (CIB) report manager for loan eligibility checking via web, data mining in SMS banking, debit card facilities from mobile account, electronic payment system through SMS, e-SMS Banking, establishing strong platform for loan repayment tracking through mobile telecommunication, financial irregularity management in banking institution, financial management for MFIs etc.



the future leaders of the country based on local needs and global business demands.

54 teams from 20 universities (private 12, public 8) having MIS, BBA and IT department will participate in FICC, said

Dr. Ananya Raihan, Executive Director, Farhat Anwar, Professor of IBA and Muhammad Atiqur Rahman, Head, Knowledge Management Division, D.Net among others were present in the press conference.

Gunijan receives special mention in WSA2009

Gunijan, an initiative of D.Net has received special mention of World Summit Award (WSA) 2009. Thirty four leading e-content experts from different countries met for the WSA 2009 grand Jury in New Delhi, India to consider 545 finalists of 157 countries around the world. Grand Jury has decided that Gunijan is the best e-content in our region and that is to be given a special mention of WSA.

The official announcement and showcase of the Winners' will take place in Monterrey, Mexico from September 02 to 05 with the WSA Gala as the highlight of the four-day celebrations. This year the Winners' event will be held on generous invitation of the Government of Mexico, hosted by Indigo Brainmedia and in cooperation with the UN GAID Global Forum.

The World Summit Award is the global initiative to select and promote the world's best e-content and innovative ICT applications. WSA was started in 2003 in the framework of



the United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) as a contribution of the Austrian Government to the global effort to bridge the digital divide and close the content gap. WSA activities include national contests and selections of best practice. A global contest held every 2 years and content-focused national and international conferences with exhibitions.

D.Net celebrates Bangla New Year 1416

D.Net has celebrated Bangla New Year 1416 at its premise in a very festive mode on April 14, 2009. Staffs and their family members actively participated to this gala occasion.

The prime attraction of the event was delicious Bangla food including, Pitha, Hilsa, and traditional fruit juice. All attendees of this program commemorated



the traditional Bangla culture by performing folk song, staging drama and arranging quiz competition. Special gifts were distributed among the participants in order to beef up the craze of this event. Some ex-D.Net colleagues were also present during the celebration.

Editorial Panel

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Flagship Initiatives of D.Net

