

**Special Meeting of the CIRDAP Governing Council
And Ministerial Retreat on ICT
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I.R. Iran statement

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The Esteemed Chairman, His Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me express, on behalf of His Excellency Eskandari minister of Jihad Agriculture, the most sincere thanks to His Excellency, the esteemed minister of rural development of India for invitation my country to this meeting. He apologized for not being able to attend the meeting owing to intensive programs of the government in these days. Thus arrangements have been made for me to attend and be at your service. Therefore, I, Jan Ali Behzadnasab, express a vote of thanks on behalf of I.R. Iran to the reverend minister of Rural Development of India and the esteemed Director General of CIRDAP, for holding this meeting. This is a nice opportunity for us to be learned about India's success stories on ICT in rural areas.

It is an overview on the ICT focus status in the rural areas that I wish to convey.

The supplementary reports of which is also available.

1 - With an area of 1.6 million square kilometers, Iran's population is 70 million, 33% of which live in 64 thousand villages. Most of the villages are thinly populated, so that the population of 60% of the villages is less than 100 individuals, and that of only 5% of the villages are above 1000.

Classification of Iran's villages for population (2006)

No.	Demographic classification(persons)	%
1	Less than 100	59
2	100-500	10
3	Over 500	10
4	None	21

2 - The Iranian's average per capita income was US\$2,401 in 2006, and normally the rural per capita income is about 75% of the average national per capita income. Agriculture sector, considered as the major sector with regard to rural activities, contributed to 11% of GDP.

3 - For communication, Iran's statistics are as follows:

- 280 telephone lines per thousand individuals
- 64 mobile telephone lines per thousand
- 82 internet users per thousand
- 110 computer systems per thousand

Government's programs for telephone and cell phone development privatization as well as expansion of internet service providers throughout the country show a promising future with respect to rapid development of internet and telephone in Iran. Focusing on connecting villages to telephone lines and covering villages by mobile network is among the priorities of the country.

4 - One of the most significant points to attend is the process of focusing on village development in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The trend

of focusing on village development in the past 30 years can be categorized in two parts.

A. Development of physical infrastructures and services of the villages, specially attended in the first and second decades of the revolution. The Islamic system has particularly focused on rural areas to reduce the disparities/differences between rural and urban access to various services including roads, drinking water and power, so that now all villages have access to municipal roads and electricity and most have access to safe drinking water. Other economic and social services have also been developed rapidly in the rural areas. This period is known as Rural Construction era among the Iranian.

B. In recent years, further foci were made mostly on economic and social development, and inter alia, on skill development, modern technologies and production investments. Among them, extensive programs of the government for ICT development in villages could be mentioned.

5 - In this period of villages development characterized by special attention to people participation in rural management, development of knowledge and technology, especially Information & Communication Technology (ICT), human resource development and economic development particularly employment generation and poverty alleviation, desirable accomplishments have been achieved in each of the said areas, some of which could be presented to mention a few.

5.1. Formation of Islamic Village Council (IVC) in all inhabited villages, and formation and start-up of executive management, known as village

management (Dehyari), in 21 thousands of villages the member of which are elected by the IVC.

5.2. Connection of all inhabited villages to telecommunication network.

5.3. Expansion of skill training and employment creation.

5.4. Quantitative and qualitative development of production cooperatives in rural spaces.

5.5. Organization of agriculture sector graduates for rendering technical and engineering services to rural producers in the mold of private companies supported legally by the government.

6- Special programs on ICT issues have been designed and are implemented by the related ministry. Those programs that have been started around 10 years ago contains of 3 significant phases:

Phase one: Modeling

In this phase, the first ICT center was established in Gharnabad in north Iran by a university professor and his colleagues, who were originally from that village, and some rural ICT centers were gradually established in a few other villages with the help of government support. The following email addresses could be referred to as some examples.

www.gharnabad.ir

www.soh.ir

www.abthane.ir

www.shahkooh.com

www.masoole.ir

In these pilot centers the following possibilities and services are rendered.

1. Data on agriculture production market
2. Data on various services able to be provided with farmers by the executive organs of the government.
3. Internet communication services
4. Initial courier and banking services
5. Various trainings on computer, internet, English language and sometimes practical/work skill training for the youth and women.
6. Reflection of local news, for the rural people to be able to use these sites via internet.

Phase two: Establishment of Rural ICT Centers in 10000 Villages by 2010

At present, about 4600 villages have been equipped with these centers, and the number of these villages planned to grow to 10000 by 2010 (20% of the inhabited villages of Iran). The management of these centers rests on the private sectors of the village itself, or the surrounding villages and cities, and the government helps them in this context to become autonomous gradually. It is anticipated that such centers are funded on the gains earned from rendering services to rural people.

7. From here on, the circumstance/manner of information preparation and usage of national rural ICT that executive programs of which are being developed gets more important for I.R.Iran. From the one hand, this network provides the ground for the rural people activities and their use of ICT services, and on the other hand, it provides the possibility of giving the information and services of private and public sectors active in rural fields.

The exchange of India and Iran's experiences in this respect will undoubtedly be really useful. I hope the Indian Ministry of Rural Development will provide the ground for the exchange of these experiences through holding joint training workshops and making arrangements for the visits of the experts and officials of both countries to observe each other's activities

I wish the grounds are made for further cooperation between both countries during the visits of His Excellency minister of Jihad Agriculture of Iran and His Excellency minister of Indian Rural Development in the general meetings of GC and ministerial meeting in 2009 in Bangladesh.