

Regional Workshop 4-10 May 2005, Agra, India

Managing Sustainable E-Community Centers

**Closing Remarks by Mr. Jeoung-keun Lee, Senior Capacity Building Specialist, ADBI,
10 May 2005**

On behalf of Asian Development Bank Institute, I am very pleased to provide the closing remarks for this successful Regional Workshop on Managing Sustainable E-Community Centers.

This workshop was co-organized by ADBI and the Colombo Plan Staff College to address the major issues, concerns, and challenges that go hand in hand with the region's growing need for e-community centers. The objectives of the workshop were to (i) share experiences of e-community centers in rural areas; (ii) examine issues in operating and establishing e-community centers; (iii) develop business plans and models for sustainable e-community centers; (iv) identify policies that can effectively promote e-community centers; and (v) draft action plans to improve sustainability of these centers.

Over the course of this workshop, we had the privilege of having various resource persons share with us their expertise. We touched upon a number of important topics, ranging from the present needs of e-community center users to the future of information and communications technology; we also assessed various existing models of e-community centers, and worked on developing realistic strategies for improving their sustainability. In many respects, we were able to see for ourselves the power of synergy: we've shared ideas, experiences and skills with each other, which I hope will help you in your future endeavors.

After carefully listening to your discussions, I reached the following conclusions:

- (i) As information is a perishable commodity, timely provision of information is necessary in a form that community members can utilize easily. For this purpose, a robust information gathering, analysis, repackaging and dissemination system is needed.
- (ii) There are many information services available in a community operating under different names. It is necessary to review these services and integrate them into a one-stop service center. In order words, a re-engineering is needed to remove duplication, bridge the service gap, and make information services sustainable.
- (iii) In order to justify government subsidy, government services should be offered through e-community centers. Such services range from obtaining government information

and various certificates to paying taxes. Eventually, community people may be able to vote through electronic media at the center which will empower the community.

(iv) Stakeholder participation is very important not only in the design stage, but also in the operation and maintenance of e-community centers. This will make the information service relevant to the needs of the community and make e-community centers sustainable.

(v) Partnership with local institutions, be they public or private, is essential in achieving appropriate ownership of e-community centers. Without ownership by the local people, good intentions can easily go wrong.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for making this workshop a success. I commend your active and enthusiastic participation in the discussions. Particularly the presentations of your country reports and more importantly your action plans; were indispensable to the success of our workshop. Also, I would like to thank our speakers who flew in from all around the world to share their knowledge with us. The presentations were all excellent, very informative, and insightful.

I would also wish to take this opportunity to thank our host country, India, for providing us with wonderful support for the workshop and giving us all the excellent opportunity to experience and enjoy the wonderful cultural diversity of India.

I wish you all the best for the future and a safe trip home.