

Access to Global Information— A case of Digital Divide in Bangladesh

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Digital Divide

A gap that exists in most countries between

- Those with ready access to the tools of ICTs, and
- Those without such access or skills

OR A division between the “haves” and the “have-nots”

Legard D (2001) expressed in an UN Report— “Use IT to cut global poverty” that:

- ➔ The total Internet bandwidth in Africa is equal to that in the Brazilian city of Sao Paolo.
- ➔ The total Internet bandwidth in all of Latin America is equal to that in Seoul, South Korea.
- ➔ As a proportion of monthly income, Internet access in the United States is 250 times cheaper than in Nepal and 50 times cheaper than in Sri Lanka.
- ➔ In the United States, 54.3 percent of citizens use the Internet, compared to a global average of 6.7 percent and in the Indian subcontinent, the proportion is 0.4 percent.

Sample ICT statistics on world (per 1000 people)

Country	Population (millions)	Radios*	Households with TV sets	Phones		PC	Internet user
				Fixed	Mobile		
Denmark	5.4	1,400	9.8	643	956	656	696
Sweden	9	2,811	9.4	767	1034	763	756
Germany	82.5	570	9.4	661	864	561	500
UK	59.9	1,445	9.9	563	1021	599	628
USA	293.7	2,109	9.7	606	617	749	630
Australia	20.1	1,996	9.6	541	818	682	646
Bangladesh	140	49	2.9	6	31	12	2
India	1,079.7	120	3.7	41	44	12	32
Pakistan	152.1	105	3.9	30	33	5	13
Japan	127.8	956	9.9	460	716	542	587
Singapore	4.2	672	9.8	440	910	763	571
Source: *World development indicators 2005				World development indicators 2006			

ICT status in Bangladesh

- ❑ Started to use computer in Bangladesh in 1964**
- ❑ Internet connectivity in 1996**
- ❑ National ICT policy approved in 2002**
- ❑ Total no. of Internet host 469**
- ❑ SEA-ME-WE-4 submarine cable connectivity 21 May 2006**
- ❑ Internet user 0.5 mil.**
- ❑ Took initiative to start e-governance within 8 Ministries in 6 Divisional Cities**
- ❑ Took initiative to set up an IT village**

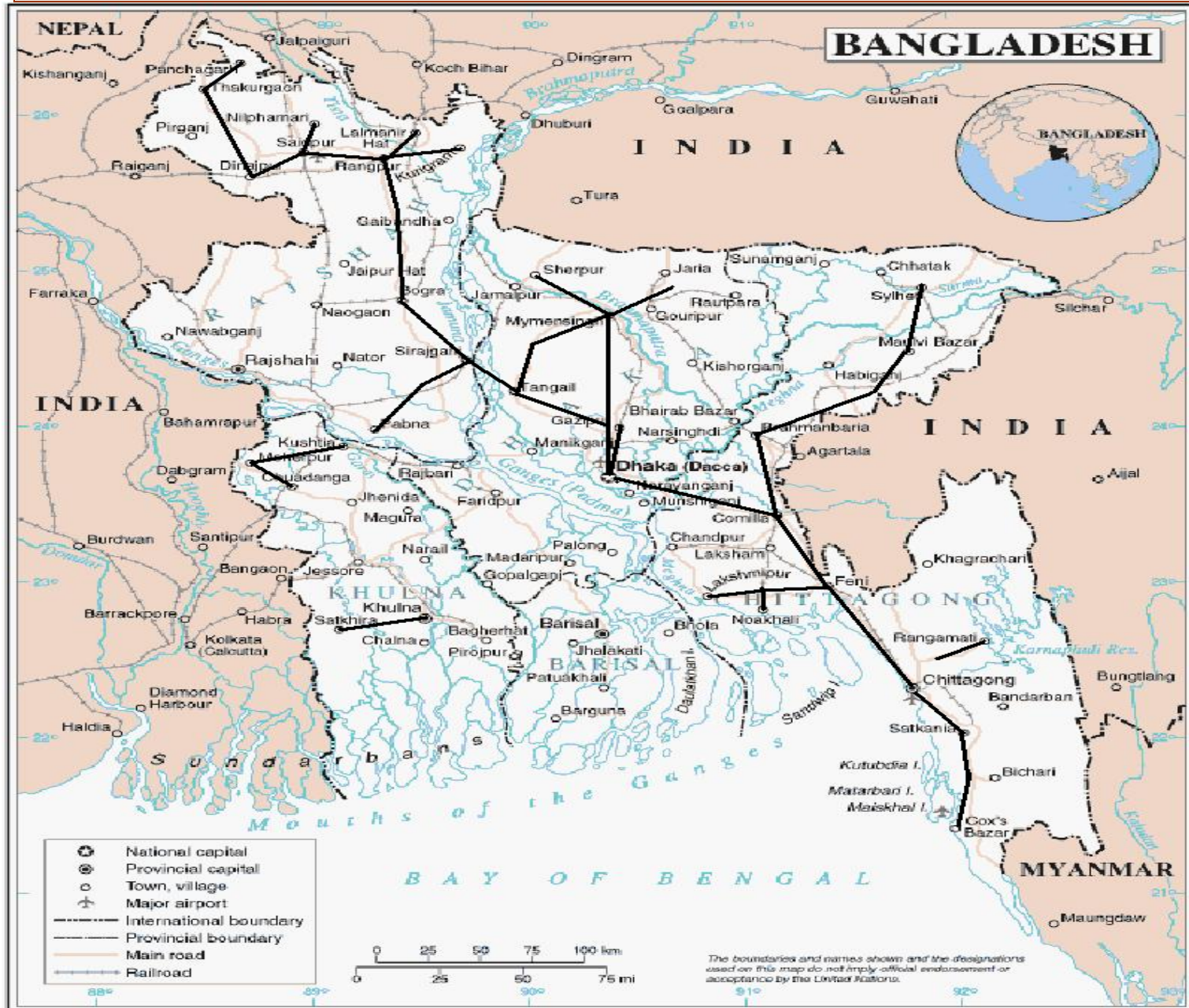
ICT status in Bangladesh

Fixed and Mobile phones user of Bangladesh (in Million)

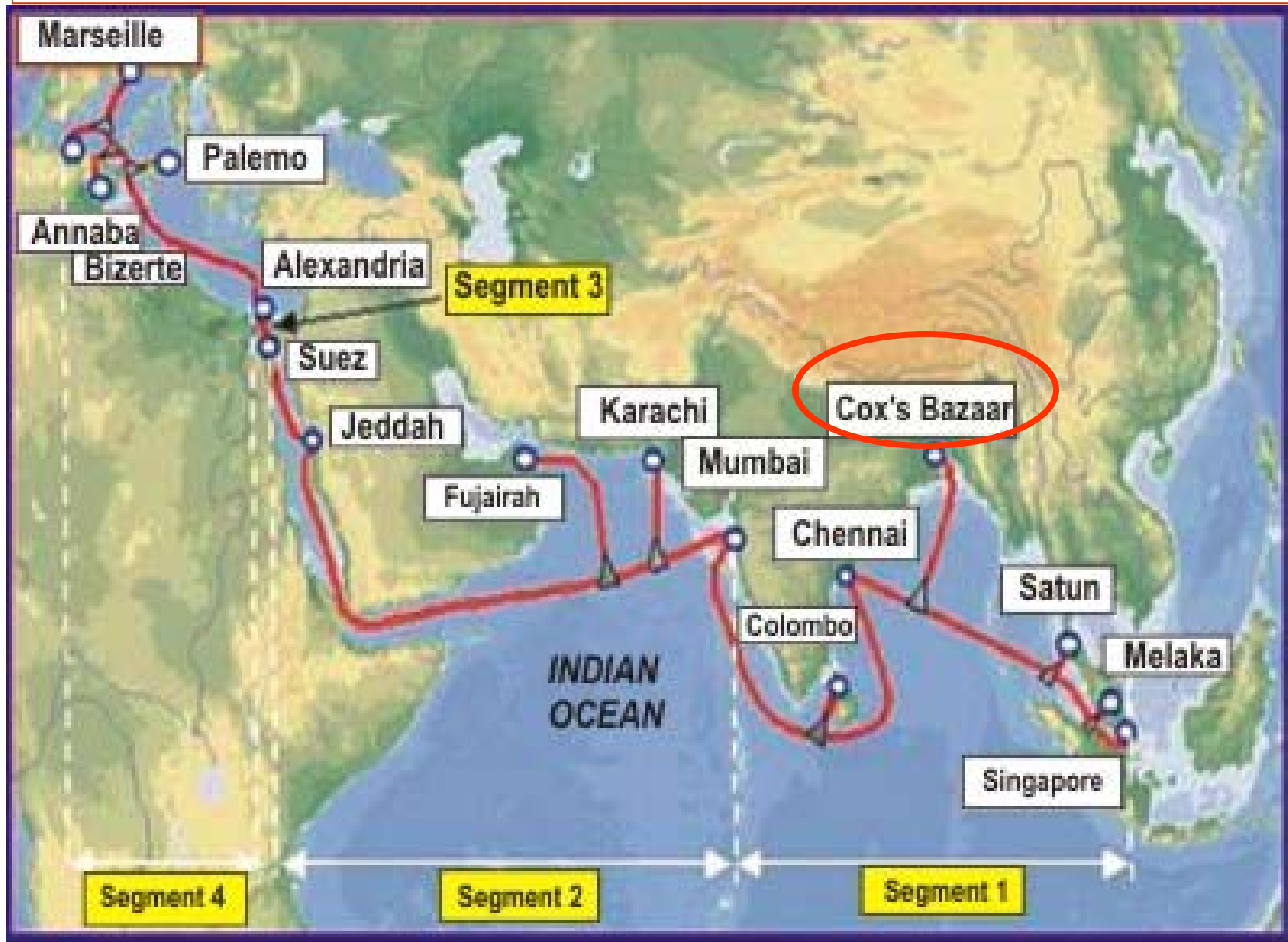
Year	Mobile phones					Total Mobile phone	Total Fixed Phone	Total Mobile & Fixed Phone
	Gameen Phone	AKTel	Banglalink	City Cell	TeleTalk			
2001	0.47	0.08	0.06	0.04	0	0.66	0.56	1.22
2002	0.77	0.16	0.11	0.09	0	1.14	0.68	1.82
2003	1.1	0.40	0.18	0.17	0	1.90	0.71	2.62
2004	2.3	1.09	0.36	0.29	0	4.15	0.83	4.98
2005	5.5	2.07	1.0	0.43	0.19	9.26	1.08	10.35
2006	8.4	2.5	2.3	0.68	0.23	14.20	1.10	15.31

Source: Bangladesh Economic Review 2006

BTTB Optical Fiber (Broadband) Network in Bangladesh



SEA-ME-WE-4 Submarine Cable



Role of libraries in closing the digital divide

Libraries with their commitment to freedom of access to information, and promotion of life long learning have an important role to play in closing the gap of the digital divide.

- ❑ Public libraries provides free access to and training for ICT
- ❑ Life long learning and continuing education programs are being offered through many public libraries in the world
- ❑ The SeniorSurf day offered by the libraries in Finland, Sweden and Norway for older citizen to find out all GOODIES on the Internet.
- ❑ University library offers IcT oriented courses for students and faculty members

Problems to access ICT

- Inadequate ICT infrastructure
- Insufficient budget provision
- Lack of constant power supply
- Lack of proper motivational activities
- Inadequate man machine ration
- Lack of holistic approach to infrastructure creation
- Lack of proper motivational activities to promote e-commerce and e-government
- Lack of Internet facilities in sub-urban & District level

Recommendations

- Telephone & PC density should be raised to a satisfactory level
- Digital divide in urban-rural and national-international level should be narrowed down
- Awareness should be created among the policy makers
- Enacting appropriate laws to support ICT
- Govt. should take steps to build the basic infrastructures in the rural areas: electricity, telephone & Internet connectivity
- Internet facilities have to reach sub-urban and district level

contd....

Recommendations *contd....*

- ❑ Establishment of community information and communication centers to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural population
- ❑ Encourage and assisting mass-people with computer literacy
- ❑ Encourage private investments in telecommunication and IT sector
- ❑ Encourage Joint ventures between local and foreign entrepreneurs in the ICT sector
- ❑ There is a need for holistic approach to ICT infrastructure creation
- ❑ Localizing VOIP

Initiatives of E-governance

Bangladesh is trying to promote e-governance with 3 different perspectives (e-Government, e-Citizen and e-Commerce, as a way of helping government, business community and citizens under several Ministries

- ❑ Interactive website for online complaints, billing information, Internet connection under BTTB
- ❑ Interactive website for employment opportunities
- ❑ Interactive website for downloadable and submittable various forms
- ❑ Taking initiative to prepare voter and national ID card

Bangladesh Tele Centre Network

Bangladesh Telecentre Network (BTN) has been launched on January 2007.

- ❑ Total 15 organizations, which include:
 - Research institutions; NGOs; Private sector enterprises;
 - Development partners
- ❑ To achieving *Mission 2011*
40,000 Tele centre will be set up in the rural area of Bangladesh
- ❑ **The following NINE taskforces have been identified:**
 - Electricity and alternative Power
 - Connectivity
 - Content and service package
 - Capacity Building
 - Innovative solutions
 - Technical support
 - Reference Desk
 - Resource mobilization
 - Policy



<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/GlobalDevelopment/GlobalLibraries/AccessLearningAward/2005Award/default.htm>



<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/GlobalDevelopment/GlobalLibraries/AccessLearningAward/2005Award/default.htm>

Mobile Boat School & Library

- ❑ Bangladesh a nation of 140 million people
- ❑ 20 million people live in river basins
- ❑ In 2002 *Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha (SSS)* introduces innovative use of boats to deliver education and technology to isolated communities in flood-prone regions of Bangladesh

The SSS-supported boats are equipped with solar energy to run

- Computers
- Printers
- Mobile phones
- Multimedia projectors
- Books, and other information resources

Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha (SSS) has been awarded the *2005 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Access to Learning Award*

Conclusion

The digital divide is deepening notably between advanced and developed countries. A collective action approach is required both within countries and among countries to achieve this target.

Within countries:

Collaboration of government, private sector and NGOs is required

Among countries: Advanced and developed countries should cooperate the less developed and developing countries with financial and technical support

The digital divide problem will always be there if

- there many languages cannot be processed and stored by computers
- the personal computers and the software are not be affordable for mass people
- the cost of bandwidth is still high in all over the world
- the ability to use ICTs not increased notably.

Thank You