

Panel on Revitalization of Local Community and Ubiquitous Network Society

Summary of Minutes (4th Meeting)

1. Date and Time

Monday, February 19, 2007, 13:00 to 14:50

2. Location

Conference Room 1, 1st Floor, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

3. Attendees (honorifics omitted)

(1) Panel Members

Shimizu (Chair), Ohyama (Deputy-Chair), Aida, Iizumi, Uemura (Proxy: Okiyama), Kiyohara, Kotani, Kondo, Shimada, Taki, Tsubota, Tsuyuki, Nagayoshi, Hatano, Muraki, Wasai

(2) Observers

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport

(3) MIC Representatives

Taniguchi (Parliamentary Secretary for Internal Affairs and Communications), Terasaki (Director-General of the Telecommunications Bureau), Katsuno (Deputy Director-General of Minister's Secretariat), Imabayashi (Director of the Regional Communications Development Division), Uematsu (Director of the Local Governments ICT Promotion Office), Nakata (Deputy-Director of the Regional Communications Development Division)

4. Minutes of the Meeting

(1) Opening

(2) Introducing the panel members and checking the documents distributed (Secretariat)

Attendance of the members

- Remarks by Governor Iizumi of Tokushima
- Absent member: Sudo
- Proxies: Okiyama for Uemura

Checked the documents distributed.

(3) Summary of Minutes of the Last Meeting (Secretariat)

Reviewed Reference 4-1, the summary of minutes of the last meeting.

(4) Agenda

<Presentation by Ms. Kiyohara>

Ms. Kiyohara made a presentation based on Reference 4-2, which was followed by questions.

[Question and Answer Session]

- Mitaka-mall is an internet shopping mall provided by the Mitaka Town Management Organization, an organization financed by Mitaka City. The web site is managed by a dedicated staff. Business owners in Mitaka City are greatly disadvantaged by the abundance of commercial facilities in the surrounding towns. Under such circumstances, the support given by the municipal government for the management of the e-mall, which uses ICT, lends it credence, and the city should continue to provide such support until certain results are achieved.
- Meanwhile, Mitaka Navi, an organization of business owners in Mitaka City, has conducted similar activities. They have created a new, unique system using ICT which tries to combine commercial promotion activities and also enhance the image and the brand value of the city.
- Mitaka City is attempting to stimulate commercial activity using a two-pronged approach, that is, supporting the e-mall, which has national reach, and promoting local shopping streets, using coupons, for example.

<Presentation by Mr. Iizumi>

- Mr. Iizumi made a presentation based on Reference 4-3, which was followed by questions.

[Question and Answer Session]

- We saw an opportunity to improve the IT literacy of Tokushima Prefecture's elderly residents. In particular, elderly citizens were experiencing difficulties in operating digital television sets. The prefecture responded by increasing the number of places in IT courses run by the "Silver University"—the school for elderly people— from 25 in 2003 to 110 today. In 2004, the prefecture established the "Silver Graduate School," which holds classes for 50 students. The university offers basic IT training, while the graduate school provides IT adviser training

programs for students wanting to acquire the qualification of senior IT adviser (levels 1 through 3). A particular focus of the initiative is the creation of a system in which elderly people, who have a better understanding of particular issues specific to their generation, can help each other.

<Presentation by Mr. Tsuyuki>

Mr. Tsuyuki made a presentation based on Reference 4-4, which was followed by questions.

[Questions and Answer Session]

- The town established a program to provide computers to community associations using the subsidy provided by the Japan Lottery Association, with ongoing operating costs being shouldered by the associations themselves. The town is currently considering ways of forming ties and networks with schools.

<Establishing systems for developing human resources to promote ICT in local communities>

The secretariat explained the details of Reference 4-5, which was followed by questions.

- We are currently dispatching students to rural areas, so they can have a wide variety of experiences. Most of the students report feeling stimulated and refreshed by their encounters with a range of local people, including the elderly, who are working hard to contribute to their communities. These kinds of experiences will stay with students for a long time and having them will help the students become upstanding members of society when they go out into the world. There needs to be more recognition of the importance of hands-on learning as well as classroom-based education.
- The development of caretakers in local communities is an issue that needs to be addressed. I know from experience that establishing qualification or reward systems will accelerate efforts to facilitate regional communication. I think such systems will really make the difference.

[Free Discussion]

[Parliamentary Secretary for Internal Affairs and Communications Taniguchi]

Today's presentations were very informative. In regard to programs for professional development, the education and nurturing of people is a matter of course and we will continue to do this. At the same time, it is important to develop systems to connect people who are working

to promote ICT in local communities so that they can cooperate. Once a network is established, people can exchange information about their own initiatives and consult each other about any difficulties they may have in promoting regional communication. MIC will support networking efforts by providing, for example, registration or qualification programs. I will ask the secretariat to consider the matter, including the provision for a budget.

- In considering the issue of developing skills for regional communications, the prevention of various problems and the elimination of disadvantages is just as important as improving advantages.
- It is widely acknowledged that the decline of downtown areas is a problem. The issue should be considered in parallel with the issue of how regional communication can contribute to the revitalization of communities. It is important to consider the issue not only in terms of developing professionals to promote ICT in local communities, but also in terms of encouraging the participation of local citizens.
- In order to expand the initiatives from the level of government to the level of public participation by local residents, it is crucial to establish cyclical systems in which both younger and older generations participate in the revitalization of their local communities according to their individual skills and expertise, and then to educate newcomers to become players. It is also crucial to recognize that ICT is just a tool to be used for the greatest benefit, and that development of ICT itself is not the ultimate goal. In that sense, system developers must think about interfaces in terms of the needs of users, as well as technological innovation. I believe that with that approach, the development of a ubiquitous network society is possible.