

Panel on Revitalization of Local Community and Ubiquitous Network Society
Summary of Minutes (6th Meeting)

1. Date and Time

Monday, April 23, 2007; 15:00 to 17:00

2. Location

Conference Room 1, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

3. Attendees (honorifics omitted)

(1) Panel Members

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

(2) Observers

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; 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) Introduction of the panel members and checking of distributed documents (Secretariat)

- Attendance of the members

- Absent members: Sudo, Taki

- Proxies: Machida for Iizumi, and Uyama for Kiyohara

Distributed documents were checked

(3) Summary of minutes of the last meeting (Secretariat)

- Reference 6-1 was reviewed as the summary of the minutes of the last meeting.

(4) Agenda

- Presentation by Mr. Hatano

Mr. Hatano gave a presentation based on Reference 6-2, which was followed by a Q&A session.

[Comments during Q&A Session]

- When western Tottori Prefecture was hit by an earthquake, we sent staff to the affected area to gather information, and broadcast their findings not only via the news channel but also via a non-news channel. We also utilized another channel to broadcast videos recorded at the time of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, portraying the situation three minutes, three hours, three days and three months after the quake, thus enabling Tottori residents to make use of this precedent in taking appropriate action at these respective stages in the aftermath of their own disaster. As a cable television broadcaster, we were able to thus utilize these three channels.
- Regarding content distribution, we distribute live broadcasts from various locations to cable television broadcasters in other areas via satellite. We also exchange content packages with other cable TV broadcasters. Compared with other key stations, there is still room for improvement in the number and quality of our programs.
- We achieved outstanding viewer ratings of around 20% for our early broadcasts, largely thanks to our consistency and commitment. We air live broadcasts of city and prefectural assembly meetings and broadcast interviews with the mayor every month. Yesterday (the day of the unified local elections) we aired early election reports for one town and one village. During some of our live programs, we answer calls from viewers and endeavor to flexibly reflect their requests in that very program. We aim to contribute to the development of affluent communities, rather than simply create programs. We also conduct verification measures to ensure we are achieving our objectives.

<Presentation by Mr. Wasai>

Mr. Wasai gave a presentation based on Reference 6-3, which was followed by a Q&A session.

[Comments during Q&A Session]

- A discrepancy exists between the number of registered “.com Masters” and the actual number of masters working from home due to the fact that the majority are IT company employees. Certified masters may register if they wish to work at home. Some are over retirement age.

<Presentation by Ms. Muraki>

Ms. Muraki gave a presentation based on Reference 6-4, which was followed by a Q&A session.

[Comments during Q&A Session]

- In Japan, data on urban renewal is gathered, but data and rankings on the decline of local communities are unavailable, due to the lack of organizations responsible for such activities, and budget constraints. In the United Kingdom, the government commissions data collection to various organizations.
- Some Japanese newspaper companies produce similar rankings, but most of this data is subjective in nature. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, only objective data is employed. I am in favor of this rational, Western approach, and hope that such an approach will be adopted in Japan.

<Presentation on Research into Measures to Promote ICT in Local Communities>

The secretariat gave a presentation based on Reference 6-5, which was followed by a Q&A session.

[Comments during Q&A Session]

MIC's ICT Accessibility and Human Resources Development Division has conducted research on human resources development. While studying their research findings, the panel should hold in-depth discussions on ICT in local communities.

<Presentation on Building a Local Information Platform>

The secretariat gave a presentation based on Reference 6-6, which was followed by a Q&A session.

[Comments during Q&A Session]

- There is a strong need for a local information platform. Changes in the law are inevitably accompanied by changes in the relevant system, requiring considerable expenditure by local governments to effect the system change. For example, the recent changes in the medical care system for the "old-old" (persons aged 75 and older) require our town to spend ¥60 million. With the roles of the central government and local governments under review, MIC should take the initiative in developing a much-needed local information platform.

<Remarks from Parliamentary Secretary for Internal Affairs and Communications Taniguchi>

- There are many points to bear in mind from today's presentations on initiatives aimed at revitalizing local communities. Mr. Hatano and Mr. Wasai focused on the issue from the perspectives of broadcasting and communications, while Ms. Muraki introduced the case of the United Kingdom, where objective data is optimized for urban development.
- In order to promote ICT in local communities, cooperation between the public and private sectors is essential. We, as a public entity, wish to facilitate ICT in collaboration with a broad range of partners, transcending sectoral boundaries.
- The local information platform described earlier by the secretariat is to be built through public-private sector collaboration in system development. The Local ICT Use Model Building Project we described at the last meeting is an initiative for creating a business model of public-private sector collaboration.
- MIC has been launching various projects and wishes to expand them by incorporating ideas from panel members.
- I would like to take the initiative in coordinating this panel and developing specific action plans, and welcome any comments and suggestions from panel members.

<Key Agenda of the Panel>

The secretariat explained the key agenda and direction of the panel based on Reference 6-7.

<Other Matters>

- During my recent business trip to South Korea, I learned of that nation's e-government initiative. The South Korean government provides a total of 0.3 billion won annually to 306 organizations as part of the Information Network Village Project launched in 2001. The project emphasizes the role of information networks in enhancing people's lives and incomes. In fact, a number of success stories have already been reported, including a farmer who boosted his income by 250% in two years, a farmer who succeeded in selling kimchi over the Internet, and a village that became a sightseeing bus tour destination. These examples highlight for us the importance of raising public awareness of ICT's role in improving lives and visualizing the results.

<Other Information>

- The next (seventh) meeting will be held in late May.