

Panel on Revitalization of Local Community and Ubiquitous Network Society  
Summary of Minutes (8th Meeting)

1. Date and Time

Monday, June 25, 2007; 14:00 to 15:10

2. Location

Special Conference Room 1, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

3. Attendees (honorifics omitted)

(1) Panel Members

Shimizu (Chair), Ohyama (Deputy-Chair), Iizumi, Uemura, Kiyohara (Proxy: Uyama), Kotani, Kondo (Proxy: Wakamiya), Shimada, Taki (Proxy: Kubo), Tsubota, Tsuyuki, Hatano, Wasai

(2) Observers

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

(3) MIC Representatives

Tamura (Senior Vice-Minister 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) Remarks from Senior Vice-Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Tamura

This panel has received suggestions for promoting ICT in local communities and on using ICT to revitalize these communities, with stories of both successes and failures. We have also received input on building a ubiquitous community to solve various local issues, on the common ICT infrastructure needed for this, how to promote ICT use, and how to

develop ICT-related human resources in local communities. We found that issues regarding economic efficiency, technology, time, and networking involved in building a community can be solved through the use of ICT. We believe that ubiquitous communities can be built by universities, industry, and local governments working together, with the local residents at the center. MIC is dedicated to continuing to work towards building ubiquitous communities.

(3) Introduction of the panel members and checking of distributed documents (Secretariat)

- Attendance of the members

- Absent members: Aida, Sudo, Nagayoshi, Muraki

- Proxies: Uyama for Kiyohara, Wakamiya for Kondo, Kubo for Taki

Distributed documents were checked.

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

- Reference 8-1 was reviewed as the summary of the minutes of the last meeting.

(5) Agenda

<Report (draft)>

The secretariat gave a presentation based on Reference 8-2 and 8-3, which was followed by an exchange of opinions.

[Comments]

- Elderly people can roughly be categorized into three groups: the 'young-old' who are able to participate in social activities, the 'middle-old' who can somehow manage to live independently on their own, and the 'old-old' who require some form of support. The government has provided little in the way of support for the 'middle-old.' People in this group wish to be connected to other people. In addition, they hope to digitize their knowledge and leave it to future generations. We should make it possible to support these efforts of elderly people to collect such knowledge themselves and accumulate it within local communities so that it can contribute to revitalizing the community.

- Regarding the ICT user environment in care facilities for the elderly, Internet access is not currently available in many facilities. Establishing infrastructure on isolated islands is an important issue, but we should also think about the measures for these care facilities,

which are 'isolated islands' in the metropolitan areas.

- The other day, I attended the joint opening ceremony of Toyama Prefecture's Internet *Shiminjuku* (citizens' seminar), and was surprised to see that many of the instructors were people around retirement age and women. These people have a strong desire to give back what they can to society, as well as to maintain an active social role. We need to make sure we effectively utilize these people in the community.
- MIC recently invited public proposals regarding the development of ICT utilization models. It would be possible to judge whether to make an investment or not for those projects that have progressed to a certain point, but the projects still in the conceptual phase may be applying only because they hope to get some money. It is important to provide support in steps, properly confirming the processes and establishing milestones, so that a project will receive money each time it reaches a milestone. I believe this should be handled with close attention paid to the details while at the same time motivating the party undertaking the project.
- When the government goes beyond the traditional model of building infrastructure to providing support for the running costs, it needs to explain to the local residents why money must be spent by spelling out the benefits of the infrastructure after its construction, in particular the benefits to the public. For example, IP phones can make calls within the area free of charge, or we can secure emergency communications during a disaster.
- In recent days, public works also take life-cycle costs into consideration. Infrastructure building should consider life-cycle costs, including post-construction maintenance. Thus the efficient construction of infrastructure through the integration of various systems such as FTTH, cable television and ADSL should be considered.
- The Report mentions ICT-related training and deployment of trainees. Elderly people who live alone need someone who can give them general answers on all kinds of IT-related issues, not someone with one specific area of expertise. People should be trained to be able to provide comprehensive support for elderly people engaging with the digital world.
- Page 11 of the Report, where the ubiquitous community is explained, seems to have the same content in items number 2 and 3. These should be merged into one, and item number 3 should describe the need to have people who can take the lead in the ubiquitous community.
- There is an argument in the United States that communities based on SNS seem to be open, but are actually quite closed. They say that on the Internet, people gather around a leader

with a strong opinion and that, while trying to adjust their own opinions in order to be accepted into the community, people become unable to communicate with other communities. I think it may be better to clearly state on this page that the goal for the ubiquitous community is something different to this.

- In developing ICT-related human resources in the local community, what is required is not someone who can simply use a computer, but someone who can use a computer as a tool to solve problems in the community. Such skills should not be developed only through skill standards and qualifications, but also through hands-on experience.
- In order to provide support for ICT use in local communities, our challenge going forward is to define what kind of skilled workers will be required. We need people who not only have knowledge of ICT technologies, but who can also properly understand what is needed in the community, what must be done to meet that need, and can act on that understanding. We also need to have various types of coordinated efforts, such as those between different local communities, the central and local governments, and the private and public sectors.

#### <Finalization of the Report>

The draft Report submitted will be revised based on the comments from the panel members, and public comment will then be invited. The comments received will be considered in the preparation of the final Report, scheduled for release by the end of August. Since today is the last Panel meeting, the Panel agreed that the chairman would be entrusted with the finalization of the Report.

#### <Remarks from Parliamentary Secretary for Internal Affairs and Communications Taniguchi (message read by proxy)>

- I regret that I had to miss today's meeting due to official obligations. By participating on the panel on supporting local community initiatives, I have heard many stories of local governments utilizing ICT. It seems to me that expectations for what ICT can deliver are high. We who are sitting on this Panel on Revitalization of Local Community and Ubiquitous Network Society have received input on specific measures, such as strengthening support for guidance for the promotion of local ICT infrastructure development in disadvantaged areas, promoting the use of ICT in local communities through widespread implementation of local information platforms, and clarifying the skills required for local ICT-related human resources and how they can be developed. MIC

wishes to develop specific support plans based on these suggestions.

It is also my hope that ubiquitous communities will be promoted as part of a social movement involving the university, industry, and government sectors. I would ask for the continued support of the panel members and express my deepest gratitude to all.

<Remarks from Director-General of the Telecommunications Bureau Terasaki>

- Thank you for your constructive input. It has been quite some time since we first began hearing about the promotion of ICT in local communities, but we have finally arrived at this point where the infrastructure construction has progressed far enough for us to move on to a new stage in which we can actually launch full-scale efforts. MIC would like to incorporate what we have learned up until this point into specific policy schemes, including the budget demands for the next fiscal year. I would ask for your continued support.