

1st Workgroup Session of the A4AI-Bangladesh National Coalition

Working Group 1: Regulatory Framework and Policy Formulation of Broadband Internet

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Task-1: Strategic Direction for Broadband

- Broadband Service Providers: Mobile Operators, BWA, ISP
- Technology: Fixed, 3G, 4G, BWA
- 5 Mbps is defined nationally, whereas it's 256 Kbps according to UN Broadband Commission and ITU.
- National Broadband policy is already obsolete. It needs to be updated. Policy convergence is also important.
- 4G is not available everywhere. We couldn't achieve our target with mobile BB alone. Need to focus on fixed BB and its infrastructure. OFC network is not strong in rural and semi-urban areas.
- Stakeholders in Value Chain of BB network: ILDC, NTTN, IIG, NIX, ISP
- Transmission cost is a challenge. Need to come up with a competitive and comprehensive cost model and tariff plan for NTTNs.
- IIG PoPs are also not available in all the districts. As a result, an extra amount of transmission cost adds up to ISPs in those Districts and Upazillas.
- NTTN was given 10 years of rollout obligation to reach up to Upazilla level. There was a big gap in this obligation. Just having a LDP fulfills that obligation.

- ILDTS policy is under review. It needs to consider and address the affordability and availability aspect keeping in mind the interests of all the concerned stakeholders.
 - o Competition needs to be increased in the NTTN service domain.
 - o Incentives to be given to IIGs and ISPs in order to provide services to underserved areas.
- A sustainable model needs to be built for the government networks (BTCL, BanglaGovNet, InfoSarker II, InfoSarker III). Unless until the entire network comes under a single management it would be difficult to manage and execute the strategy and vision properly. Connectivity is available up to Union level, but service providers are not available. We may attract the service providers to provide service in the Union levels by providing certain incentives. ISPs and IIGs may be allowed to take bandwidth from this network for building their PoPs at a subsidized rate for the underserved areas.
- Active sharing is important for Mobile Broadband (4G) penetration. This needs to be introduced.

Task-2: Supply-side Operational Directions

- As a long term plan, Government may adopt a National Broadband Implementation Project with a plan to connect every household (ex. FTTH). This could be done in a PPP model.
- Key hurdles in execution and the efficiency in roll-out
 - o In order to achieve broadband penetration there is no clear guideline or objectives.
 - o There is no monitoring and implementation body.
 - o Transmission cost is a challenge.
 - o Since there are lot of authorities concerned in the process of getting permission for network deployment, a one stop solution is important for that. This would also increase inter department coordination.
- Need to encourage the service providers to use latest technologies in providing the last mile connectivity.

Task-3: Demand-side Operational Directions

- Accessibility needs to be improved in the semi-urban and rural areas.
- It's quite affordable in the urban areas. There are **affordability** issues in the semi-urban and rural areas.
- Users in the rural areas are not aware about (i) how to use ICT or lack of digital literacy, (ii) what are the benefits or underlying economics of ICT, (iii) how one can be benefitted by the usage of ICT. There are also shyness in adopting ICTs.
- Government services are available through UDCs. But still content is an issue. Local content is growing. But availability of those local content in rural areas are still an issue. Another important issue is lack of contents in local contents.
- Online safety is not adequately addressed so far. Lot of works need to be done.

Task-4: Implementation Directions for Broadband

- Wherever there is business case, it should be private led.
- Wherever there is less business case, it should be appropriate to adopt PPP **involving all the stakeholders** in the value chain.

Summary of WG-1

1. More coordinated policy focus for fixed broadband penetration all over Bangladesh.
2. Formation of National Broadband Network (NBN) deployment initiative for enhanced coordination and monitoring of the implementation of BB network up to doorsteps of citizens.
3. Early completion of the ongoing revision of ILDTS Policy to give more flexibility and competition to different layers or stakeholders in the value chain.
4. Active Infrastructure sharing (Access, Core, Spectrum etc.) for faster and economically viable 4G network deployment.
5. Strong monitoring of roll-out obligations of different licensees.
6. Increase incentives for ISPs for providing services in the underserved areas.

7. Development of more contents in local language needs to be encouraged and needs to be made available in rural areas.
8. Proper plan for increasing ICT literacy among citizens.
9. More services need to be made available through online and increase awareness among citizens about those services.
10. Coordination among Policies related Broadband (e.g. Telecom Policy, Broadband Policy and ICT Policy).
11. Publication of policy and regulatory roadmap for Spectrum, Infrastructure Sharing and other issues related to investment decisions for BB network.
12. Governance Model:
 - a. Private led with government support with business friendly policies where there is business case;
 - b. Government led with private (local) participation in areas where there is not strong business case.