

# Information Technology

## Bridging the Digital Divide

### Building pilot IT centres to provide individuals with IT training, computer skills and access to internet

In January 2004, UNDP and Microsoft signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that established an overall framework for collaboration focused on ICT for Development. This focus aligned well with Microsoft's new Unlimited Potential initiative and UNDP's focus on use of ICT for human and economic development in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

Many developing countries experience The "Digital Divide", which depicts the inability of people to harness the power of information technologies due to lack of training and access to equipment. Bridging this technological gap presents a difficult problem and significantly affects young populations who are forced to forgo the worldwide information integration and lose out on significant economic and social opportunities that are linked with technological advances. As technology and web-based communities continue to grow at increasingly rapid rates, so does the expanse between those who are exposed to it and those who are not.

As a first effort to inspire field level interaction under the framework, Microsoft provided funding of \$1 million to support joint-programming efforts at the country level. Eventually, through a joint-selection process, 10 country projects have been supported with these funds.

The project aims to provide IT skills training for underserved citizens in community education centres in developing areas of the following countries: Mauritania, Ghana, Turkey, Jamaica, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, El Salvador and Yemen.

The specific goals are:

1. Build pilot IT centres that provide computer literacy and skills training for youth, orphans and disabled individuals
2. Provide easily access to internet for local communities
3. Assist individuals in teaching IT skills to others

- **Countries:** Mauritania, Ghana, Turkey, Jamaica, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, El Salvador and Yemen
- **Launched:** 2004
- **Company:** Microsoft, UNDP
- **Program Highlights:** Over 13,000 people reached, 1 million USD to support joint-programming efforts at the country level



Computer class at Al Khansah Middle School in Yemen.

Across the ten countries, different regions have seen different levels of results. Currently, four countries remain active with their IT training programs, four have completed IT training programs and are currently planning upcoming phases/ evaluations and two are on-hold due to resource mobilization. Highlights include:

- Internet access provided to 9,000 people in Yemen
- 1,300 people have received IT training across in six of the countries
- Approximately 100 individuals have been trained to teach and execute IT training coursework
- Vodafone has agreed to partner in Turkey with a contribution of 750,000 USD
- 872 children and 1,832 students have been trained in Kazakhstan

Currently UNDP and Microsoft are negotiating the next phase of collaboration that will aim at harnessing the markets for making ICT accessible to the poor.

[Microsoft](#)

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