

I. Overview

The Information for All Programme (IFAP) was created by UNESCO in 2000 to provide a framework for international cooperation and partnerships in “building an information society for all.” Since its establishment, it has been acknowledged as “a cornerstone for UNESCO and the multilateral system in addressing the issues of the 21st century arising from the emerging ICT.”

Recognizing the important role of information in development, IFAP focuses on ensuring that all people have access to information that they can use to enhance their lives. Its goal for the Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 is “to help Member States develop and implement national information policies and knowledge strategies in a world increasingly driven by digital technologies.” IFAP has identified the following priority areas: information for development, information literacy, information preservation, information ethics, and information accessibility.

A related development has been the decision of the 4th Asia Pacific Information Network (APIN) Meeting, convened by UNESCO and the National Center for Scientific and Technological Information (NACESTI) of Vietnam and held on 26-28 November 2008 in Hanoi, Vietnam, to focus on information accessibility and information literacy as its priority areas.

In the Philippines, the UNESCO IFAP National Committee was organized in November 2007 and a set of executive committee members were appointed by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in 2008. To date, IFAP Philippines has convened two forums, i.e., Policy Forum on Right to Information (November 2007) and Forum on the Writ of Habeas Data (February 2008). The Executive Committee was ably represented in the 2008 meeting of the Intergovernmental Council for the IFAP in Paris. Execom Members also individually participate in advocacy activities for the passage of the Philippines’ Right to Information Law. The advocacy campaign is spearheaded by the Access to Information Network (ATIN), whose Executive Director is vice chair of the IFAP Philippines Executive Committee.

In 2007, UNESCO provided a modest grant to the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) through IFAP Philippines for the conduct of a study as part of the Participation Programmes for Biennium 2006-2007. Completed in July 2008, the study assessed policies on transparency and public access to information formulated and implemented by the Philippine government since 1986.

Related to the issue of access to information is universal access to the Internet. Leveraging communication and information processes and technologies, especially the Internet, will have far-reaching consequences on information sharing and communication and on realizing the goal of information for all.

The *Sub-Regional Forum on Information for All* brings in delegates from Southeast Asian countries to discuss opportunities and challenges arising from the application of information and communication technologies, under the framework of the IFAP Agenda. It is envisioned that this gathering will contribute to the development of national information policy frameworks in the countries represented.

II. Objectives

- To present the highlights of the Information for All Program (IFAP) Strategic Plan to policy and decision makers in government, business and industry and civil society organizations from selected ASEAN countries as parameters for the following:
 - development of national information policy frameworks
 - inclusion of information-related strategies and components in UN development assistance frameworks and common UN system programming assistance frameworks
 - design of capacity building frameworks and programs for information and media professionals
- To review five priorities of IFAP (i.e., Information for Development, Information Literacy, Information Preservation, Information Ethics, and Information Accessibility) vis-à-vis their relevance and urgency in Southeast Asia;
- To identify policy issues (and gaps) in pursuing the UNESCO and WSIS common goal of universal access to information and knowledge towards building an inclusive Knowledge Society including in the following areas:
 - Digital divide
 - Information access
 - Public domain information vis-à-vis copyright issues
 - Open access (including free and open software)
 - Multilingualism (linguistic diversity)
 - Information ethics
 - Others
- To propose policy options and a program agenda in promoting universal access to the Internet (e.g., setting up of public access centers such as telecentres); and
- To develop national and sub-regional action plans needed in implementing IFAP priorities.

III. Program

Day One

Plenary Session A: The IFAP Agenda

This covers the results of the 180th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board, held on 30 September – 17 October 2008, on IFAP concerns. Included are the IFAP Strategic Plan, Executive Board Decisions, Programme and Budget for 2010-2011, and IFAP Activities.

Presenter: Representative of UNESCO Paris (to be confirmed)

Reactors: Secretary Ray Anthony Roxas Chua (Philippines)
Dr. Basheerhamad Shadrach (IDRCTelecentre.org)

Plenary Session B: Toward a Universal Internet Access

Discussion will cover: national and sub-national policies and programs (best practices) in pursuing the WSIS goal of universal internet access; issues and concerns on universal access and possible appropriate actions in addressing the digital divide (particularly the Internet); and technological trends to facilitate universal access.

Presenters: Dr. Emmanuel C. Lallana (Philippines)

Country representatives (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand)

Workshop A

The participants may draw up a work agenda on how to pursue universal Internet access in their respective countries. The work agenda may include legislative agenda, action programs and projects, capability building, research and development, infrastructure development (including setting up of community e-centers or telecentres), among others. The work agenda may be drawn from the best practices shared by the participants.

Day Two

Workshop B

Sub-regional participants will identify priority program/project areas, taking into consideration the decision adopted by participants in the November 2008 APIN Meeting which identified information access and information literacy as priority areas for Asia Pacific countries.

The workshop will define the parameters of the proposed programs/projects, implementing mechanisms, and potential funding sources.

IFAP Philippines National Committee may present concept notes for proposed programs and projects for validation and enrichment by the participants.

Concluding Plenary Session

Adoption of meeting resolution(s), including workshop outputs, i.e., work agenda or action plans in pursuing IFAP priorities including initiatives to achieve universal Internet access.

IV. Participants

Some 25 official participants are expected to attend the two-day sub-regional forum. Participants will come from government agencies (including executive and legislative branches); libraries and archives; informatics, telematics and telecommunication infrastructure and service providers; education and training institutions in the areas of information science and informatics; users of information and information and communication technology services in education, science, culture and communication.

Invited ASEAN countries are expected to send two to three participants representing the sectors mentioned above. However, the forum convenors will support the travel expenses and accommodation of only one participant per country, preferably from an appropriate government agency, i.e. Indonesia (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology), Malaysia (Ministry of Water, Energy and Communication) and Thailand (Ministry of Information and Communication Technology). Relevant business companies from the three other ASEAN countries will be encouraged to participate through their Manila offices.

V. Institutional Partners

The forum will be convened by the Philippines IFAP National Committee in cooperation with the following agencies:

- Philippine Commission on Information and Communications Technology
- UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines-Communication Committee
- Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication
- Philippine Community eCenter Network (to be invited)
- Telecenter.org Philippine CeC Academy (to be invited)

VI. Date and Venue

The proposed date is 19-20 March 2009. Venue will be in Metro Manila, to be finalized later.

SUB-REGIONAL FORUM ON INFORMATION FOR ALL Initial List of Proposed Participants

ASEAN Countries

Indonesia - Ministry of Communication and Information Technology
Malaysia - Ministry of Water, Energy and Communication
Thailand - Ministry of Information and Communication Technology
Philippines - Commission on Information and Communications Technology

UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines

Philippine Government Agencies

National Computer Center
National Economic and Development Authority
National Telecommunications Commission
Committee on Public Information and Mass Media and Committee on ICT, Senate
Committee on Public Information and Committee on ICT, House of Representatives

Civil Society Organizations

Access to Information Network (ATIN)
Information Technology Association of the Philippines
Philippine Librarians Association Inc.
Philippine Community eCenter Network (to be invited)
Telecenter.org Philippine CeC Academy (to be invited)
Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN)

Business and Industry

Intel
Microsoft
Sun Microsystem