

## Executive Summary

*Internet Inclusion: Advancing Solutions (IIAS)–Delhi* convened government officials and leaders from development banks, industry, the technical community, non-governmental organizations/civil-society organizations (NGOs/CSOs), and others for a day of collaboration on expanding affordable internet access, especially in the South Asian region. (Please visit the event website at <http://internetinitiative.ieee.org/events/conferences/internet-inclusion-advancing-solutions-india> and video showcase at <https://ieeetv.ieee.org/event-showcase/iias-delhi-2016>.)

The Delhi event built on an earlier, globally scoped IEEE Internet Initiative event addressing internet inclusion. At *IEEE Global Connect Stakeholders: Advancing Solutions* on 13 April 2016 in Washington, D.C., technology and policy experts gathered to explore real-world opportunities for extending affordable internet access to underdeveloped and underserved communities and regions around the world. On 15 September, *Internet Inclusion: Advancing Solutions (IIAS)–Delhi* provided a platform for a deeper dive into the challenges, barriers, and opportunities in that pursuit, especially within the local South Asian context and perspective. It is estimated that the percentage of unconnected people is higher in the South Asia region—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—than the estimated 60 percent worldwide.

*Internet Inclusion: Advancing Solutions–Delhi* featured interactive discussion and working sessions with a focus on finding sustainable solutions and models for digital inclusion, such as envisioned in “Digital India,” a flagship program of the Indian government premised on the vision of transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge-based economy.

In his keynote address, Richard R. Verma, U.S. Ambassador to India, spoke about the common challenges that the United States and India face in the digital revolution. He underlined the importance of bridging the digital divide and the role of the Global Connect Initiative, and mentioned that the framework for the U.S.-India Cyber Relationship had been formalized.

In the next keynote address, J.S. Deepak, secretary of India’s Department of Telecommunications, spoke about Digital India and outlined six challenges to be tackled in pursuit of digital inclusion:

- Broadband Connectivity
- Digital Literacy
- Content in Indian languages
- Availability of e-Services
- Quality of Service
- Cybersecurity

A panel of experts from Idea Cellular, IIT Bombay, Nepal Wireless, Qualcomm, and Swaja Labs examined the current internet landscape in South Asia. They highlighted projects and initiatives that are underway or being planned to provide meaningful access to the internet. A separate panel of experts from Digital Empowerment Foundation, Observer Research Foundation (ORF), Telecom Engineering Center, and World Bank discussed barriers to internet access, adoption, and use in India, including infrastructure, funding, end-user affordability, data gaps, gender, awareness, capacity, and skills.

During a “World Café” session, participants dispersed among four breakout groups to jointly imagine India’s internet connectivity in the year 2025. They considered and discussed driving factors, barriers to be overcome, and advancement of solutions to realize the scenario with ubiquitous and meaningful internet access, leading to socio-economic inclusion and tangible economic prosperity. The following key themes emerged:

- Using media to create social pressure to raise awareness or drive change for important issues such as saving electricity and eradicating polio
- Role of government, policy, and regulation
- Looking back at how connectivity options in India evolved in the last 10 years
- Technology and infrastructure
- Funding and investment
- Cross-sector and cross-discipline coordination

Participants heard a presentation on cyber-safety awareness, especially for children. An update was shared on activities since the *IEEE Experts in Technology and Policy (ETAP) Forum on Internet Governance, Cybersecurity, and Privacy* in Delhi on 4 March 2016. White papers on operational challenges to universal access that resulted from the event are being developed to address fundamental issues of access and cost (affordable price points for mobile devices and cost of connectivity at remote locations), as well as predicting internet traffic and taking into account various industry regulations. Finally, a road-mapping session collected ideas and thoughts about issues raised in the various sessions, and explored the way forward.

The effort to achieve universal, affordable connectivity depends on the shared expertise, experiences, and creativity of the *global* technology, technical, and policy communities in forging *locally* relevant

solutions. *Internet Inclusion: Advancing Solutions–Delhi* delivered important insights in understanding the particular challenges found in South Asia.