Digital Transformation Centres

DTC News

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In this third issue of DTC News, we feature the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) of the Philippines. DICT is responsible for the planning, development and promotion of the country's information and communications technology agenda and has been selected as an ITU DTC.

Articles in this issue

DICT strengthens digital skills training initiatives amid COVID-19 pandemic

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), a governing body in the Philippines that has been on the front lines of the national ICT development agenda since its creation in 2015, has strengthened its capacity development initiatives under its Digital Philippines Strategy amid the COVID-19 pandemic. DICT has demonstrated its readiness to fulfil its commitments as a DTC under the ITU Digital Transformation Centres Initiative by taking full advantage of web conferencing tools in delivering training. This has resulted in over 200 000 participants being trained between April and July 2020. These trainings target teachers, learners, and workers through digital upskilling programmes. This article lays out the strategy DICT is deploying to meet the digital skills challenges especially in the face of the pandemic.

The ICT Academy

DICT commits to enhancing ICT literacy and competency through the ICT Academy that serves as a major capacity development hub. The Academy works to improve digital skills in two priority areas, namely Digital Education and Digital Workforce.

The Academy uses two modes of accessibility in enhancing ICT literacy and competency among citizens. One is using Skills Window PH, an online platform. The other is through the community-based digital training centres that are physical venues for ICT training (Tech4ED Centers).

Tech4ED Centers: Community-based access points and digital transformation centres

DICT launched the Technology Empowerment for Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Development (Tech4ED) Project in 2016 - long before the Covid 19 pandemic - to boost digital literacy and digital skills. Tech4ED centres are physical centres through which DICT provides access to online government services to citizens living in far-flung communities. Currently, there are 4 330 Tech4ED centers established nationwide with 161 185 users.

In order to fulfil the DICT commitment to putting up community-based centres, the ICT Literacy

and Capacity Development Bureau (ILCDB) and Project Management Group (PMG) have been tasked with improving the current Tech4ED Project focusing on boosting digital literacy, digital governance and management, and cybersecurity education of the citizens. These community centres will become a network of centres where digital skills – basic, intermediate, advanced digital skills – are developed and acquired, ensuring that citizens are able to participate in an evolving digital society and contribute to the broader goal of building an inclusive digital society.

DICT digital skills development projects

DICT is implementing several digital skills development projects, focusing on different target groups within the society such as professional and technical people, teachers and learners. The specific projects are covered here below.

Digital Learners and Teachers Project

To keep the doors of learning open for students amid the COVID-19 pandemic, DICT conducted a digital teacher training programme, under the auspices of the DTC initiative. Cisco provided the technical support and resource person for the training, which was conducted through WEBEX. The participants of the four-day teacher training programme were educated on alternative learning modes and web conferencing platforms that can be used in virtual classroom settings.

Speaking during a training session for teachers, DICT Secretary Gregorio Honasan II said, *"To ensure the safety of educators and learners amid the pandemic, alternative delivery modes such as online learning and teaching need to be maximized. I am confident that through the partnership between DICT, Department of Education, the local government of San Juan City, and the International Telecommunications Union - we will see a better 'new normal' for the Filipino children."*

Around 12 000 public school learners and over 500 educators across 12 public elementary schools in San Juan City are set to receive tablets, laptops, and pocket Wi-Fi devices that will be utilized for online classes this incoming school year.

"I was enlightened about how students learn that learning is positive, learning is successful if it begins with a positive attitude that the learner's schema should always be the basis in planning lessons - in planning a teaching strategy," said San Juan National High School teacher, Marissa Acuna on her learning experience during the intensive four-day virtual training.

Aside from offering their expertise in virtual training, some speakers also offered words of encouragement to teachers, saying that they should continue their passion for teaching, no matter what the situation is.

*"As teachers, we are not going to be obsolete. The role of technology is to assist us, not replace us. Weare the main element as to how distance learning would best be facilitated even during a pandemic."*Camille Cabatu of Google Philippines and Q Software Research Corporation shared.

Digital Workforce Upskilling Pilot Project

The Digital Workforce Upskilling Pilot Project was launched specifically aiming to develop an ICT competent workforce in the country. The project is a collaborative initiative of the DICT Project Management Group (PMG) and ICT Industry Development Bureau (IIDB), the Information Technology and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP), and Development Academy of the Philippines DAP. The project targets to develop talent in the country's Information Technology and Business Process Management (IT-BPM) industry and sub-sectors such as animation, contact centre, global in-house, game development, healthcare information management, and IT services. University students, career shifters, and professionals can participate in upskilling training programmes.

Chief Information Officer Cadetship Programme

The Chief Information Officer Cadetship Programme aims to select, train, and recruit professionals with academic and technical expertise and professional experience in technology management and senior officers responsible for government ICT systems and applications. Through the programme, DICT expects that the CIOs will be able to identify and address the needs and problems encountered by different government agencies in their programmes, projects, policies, and activities in terms of technology management.

Cybersafe Learning Project

DICT Cybersecurity Bureau launched the Cybersafe Learning Project. The project is designed to ensure children's online safety and to create a conducive, secure, and cooperative ICT environment for vulnerable sectors of the society. The project intends to optimize online platforms in promoting digital literacy and in cultivating responsible use of ICTs among students. It aims to regulate ICT resources in learning institutions and to monitor software that will be used for educational purposes.

A total of 18 000 students are set to receive cybersafe tablets for the coming school year. The tablets will restrict Internet access to education-related content and websites only, to protect learners from online gaming addiction, online pornography, and other Internet sites that might expose them to cyberbullying, cyber-attacks, and similar online threats.

Collaboration and partnerships

DICT has been successful in mobilizing various stakeholders both inside and outside government into a partnership for digital skills training and development. DICT is working with the Department of Education (DepED), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) geared towards developing and enabling teachers to teach learners through digital tools and methodologies. The Department will also work with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) on the provision of Technical and Vocational Education 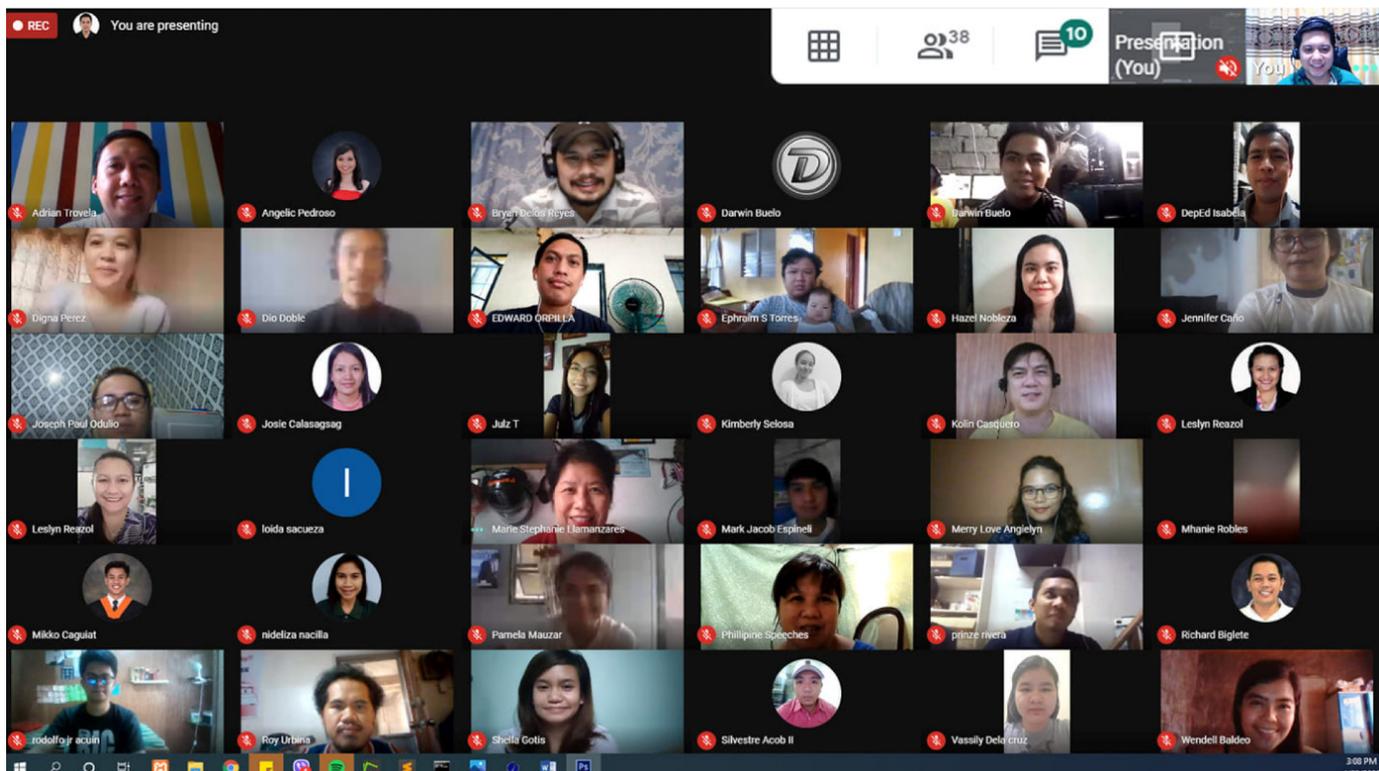and Training (TVET), and with the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) for the upskilling of workers in the Information Technology and Business Process Management (IT-BPM) sector. Outside of government, the Department has partnerships with industry associations, the academy, and UN agencies such as ILO and UNESCO, in identifying the appropriate capacity challenges and solutions.
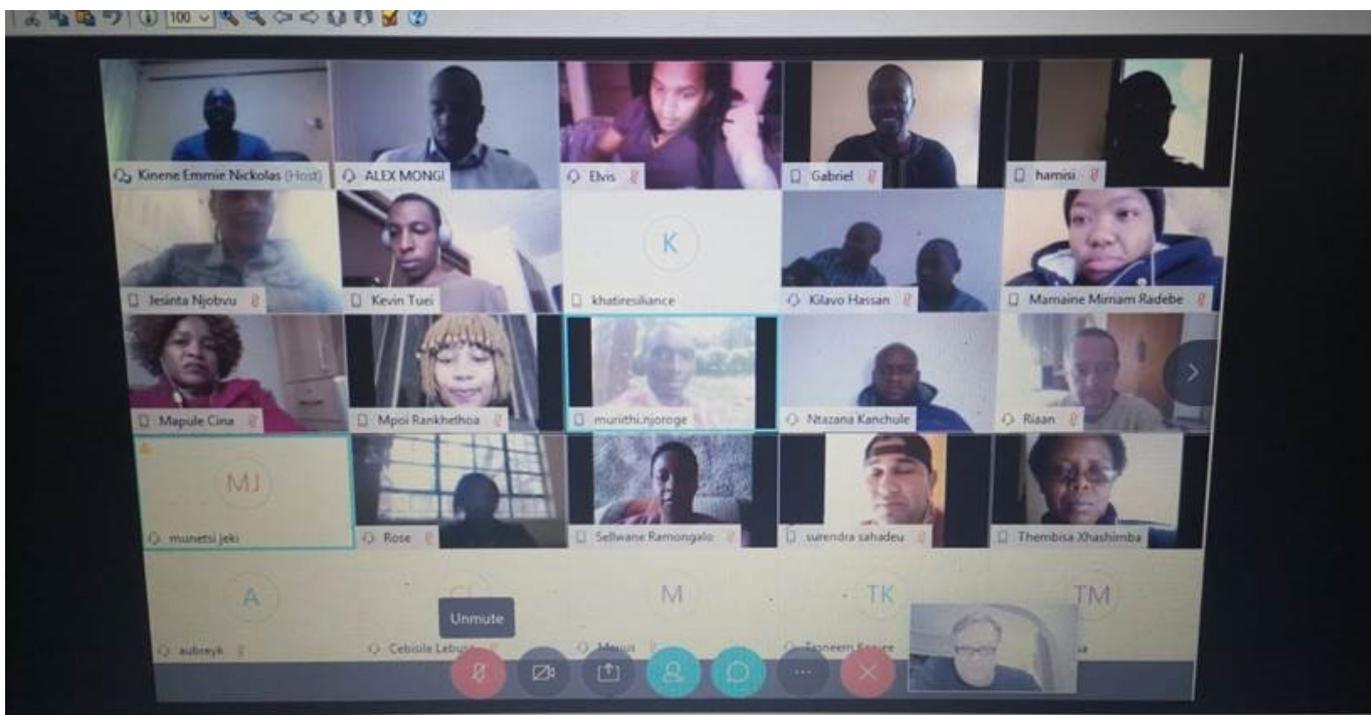
The training courses to be provided by the DTC will be compliant with the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework for educational qualifications.

Towards a Digital Philippines

As face-to-face interactions and mass gatherings continue to be restricted worldwide, the Philippines Government is poised to set an example among developing countries of its readiness for the digital delivery of services and training initiatives, and DICT is proud to be leading that effort as a network member of the ITU Digital Transformation Centres Initiative. In the past few months, DICT has shown that it is fully prepared to equip the Philippines with the tools and the skills to respond to the changing needs of the times.

Zambia celebrates the first group of master trainers

The Smart Zambia Institute (SZI), which was selected as the ITU Digital Transformation Centre based in the Republic of Zambia, celebrated the completion of the training of 72 master trainers in digital skills at basic and intermediate level. The trainings were delivered by Cisco under the auspices of the ITU Digital Transformation Centres Initiative and conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The online training of trainers started during the first week of May, covering a wide range of topics through courses such as IT Essentials, which was completed by 41 master trainers, followed by Get Connected, a course on basic digital skills, which was completed by 42 trainers, Introduction to the Internet of Things (IoT), which was completed by 31 trainers, Introduction to Cybersecurity, which was completed by 42 trainers and finally Python Essentials, a course dedicated to computer programming, which was completed by two of the master trainers. The completion of the trainings marks a major milestone for SZI, as it is now able to deploy the trainers into the communities.

The implementation of the training for trainers came with both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, the challenges posed by the existing Internet connectivity in the country required Cisco and SZI to ensure that each of the trainers enrolled for the training was connected to a stable network during the training sessions. On the other hand, the organizers adapted to the new reality and factored into their planning longer and more realistic time periods, taking into account the possibility of connectivity challenges, as well as the trainers' commitments and schedules, especially during a pandemic time. As a result, the hours dedicated to each of the courses were extended beyond their usual limits to cover a period of up to six weeks, fully supervised by Cisco.

The trainers had very positive feedback on the training.

"The Cisco programs are relevant and up to date with technology, so I will continue with more certifications to come" said Alan Sipatonyana, trainer at SZI.

Cisco and SZI will continue to deliver training of trainers in the coming weeks, before deploying the trainers to communities in Lusaka as well as throughout the country.

In preparation for this deployment, SZI has appointed a core team of coordinators within their headquarters in Lusaka, to assess the e-readiness of the training centre outlets in the communities and to ensure that they are fully functional.

GIFEC launches Master Trainers' programme

Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC) and the ITU Digital Transformation Centre (DTC) in Ghana has launched its first DTC digital skills train-the-trainer programme since the organization joined the DTC initiative. The training, which took place at the Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in Accra, kicked off with the training of 23 master trainers.

The training had three key objectives, namely:

- To adequately equip the master trainers to be able to train other trainers.
- To gain an understanding of the ITU DTC Initiative and the role the trainers must play in the implementation of DTC activities.
- To understand the training needs of each group to be trained within Ghana.

The Master trainers were trained in the Cisco basic digital skills course *Get Connected*, as well as the *Python* programming course. The courses were delivered face-to-face, with all the covid-19 mitigation and prevention measures observed.

These 23 master trainers are now set to conduct training for other trainers, comprising of Community ICT Centres Managers (CICs) and ICT teachers, who will in turn train the various categories of trainees in the communities.

This training of master trainers set the wheel rolling for the implementation of other training activities in the communities. During the reporting period, 25 artisans were trained in Kyebi in the Eastern region of Ghana, while 20 ICT teachers were trained in the Bono region. Another group of 54 ICT teachers were trained in Scratch programming and HTML, while 571 girls were trained in coding in the Oti region.

Plans are already in place to implement training of trainers for the different target groups, with dates for the training of 200 ICT teachers and 100 CIC managers already confirmed. Deployment of the trainers into the communities is set to start in October 2020.

DTCs sign Cooperation Agreements with ITU

Digital Transformations Centres under Phase 1 have signed cooperation agreements with ITU for the implementation of training activities, completing the last formal process to get DTCs up and running. PNGUOT in Papua New Guinea is the latest DTC to submit the signed Cooperation Agreement. The signing of the cooperation agreements was agreed to during the DTC Onboarding workshop held in Geneva from 11 to 13 February 2020.

The cooperation agreement lays out in broad terms the purpose of the agreement between ITU and the DTC, the expected roles and responsibilities of the parties and the legal obligations associated with the agreement. An integral part of the agreement is the DTC Operating Guidelines, that serve to guide DTCs in how they implement their work. The guidelines contain information on how DTCs establish their training plans, conduct training, and report on their activities. They also contain the performance indicators against which DTCs can be measured for their work.

The Cooperation Agreement is co-signed by the BDT Director and the Head of the DTC. The signing effectively recognizes these institutions as part of the global network of DTCs and confers upon them certain rights under the initiative. These include the right to access and use certain facilities of ITU network partners, such as Cisco and HP as defined in the Agreement, the rights to use ITU learning resources such as the Academy platform, and relevant training materials. It also opens doors for possible partnerships for the DTCs with other entities interested in supporting digital skills development activities under the initiative.

Unique Identifiers for DTCs

Each Digital Transformation Centre has been allocated a Unique Identifier to capture all enrolments and training that will take place under the initiative. The Unique Identifier is a Code that will be embedded into the Cisco online learning platform and will assist DTCs in identifying and monitoring the participants who enrol for training under the initiative.

The allocation of unique identifiers follows discussions between ITU and Cisco to facilitate the identification of people who enrol for training under the auspices of the DTC initiative. The unique identifiers are listed below:

DTC Unique Identifiers

DTC Unique Identifier	Country
ITU-DTC-Smart Zambia Institute	Zambia
ITU-DTC-Ecole Multinationale Superieure des Postes d'Abidjan	Côte d'Ivoire
ITU-DTC-Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications	Ghana
ITU-DTC-Rwanda Information Society Authority	Rwanda
ITU-DTC-Centros Tecnológicos Comunitarios	Dominican Republic
ITU-DTC-Instituto Federal de Brasilia	Brasil
ITU-DTC-Department of Information and Communication Technology	Philippines
ITU-DTC-Balai Pelatihan dan Pengembangan Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi	Indonesia
ITU-DTC-Papua New Guinea University of Technology	Papua New Guinea

Following inquiries from several DTCs in the network, proposals are being finalized to have certificates acquired from the training taken under the initiative to be co-branded with the key partners involved in that training. ITU and Cisco have already agreed to this, and discussions will be held with other partners to this effect.

The unique identifiers, the branding of certificates and the DTC logo are part of the process to create an identity for the DTC initiative.

Know Your DTCs

Americas
IFB - Brazil
CTC - Dominican Republic

Africa
EMSP - Côte d'Ivoire
GIFEC - Ghana
RISA - Rwanda
SZI - Zambia

Asia-Pacific
BPPTIK - Indonesia
PNGUoT - Papua New Guinea
DICT - Philippines

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