MCIT EGYPT

ICDL and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (Egypt) – Empowering 1,000,000 Citizens through ICT

Background to the Project

Egypt has successfully mainstreamed information and communication technology (ICT) as part of its national development strategy over the last decade. The government formulated an 'ICT Master Plan' in 2000 to ensure the effective deployment and use of ICT for the benefit of its citizens and enterprises. Comprehensive assessment and review mechanisms were established to analyse the policy challenges and opportunities of ICT for the information economy[1].

As a result of this process, in 2006, ECDL Foundation, UNESCO Cairo Office (the ICDL national operator in Egypt), and the Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), in cooperation with Ministries of Education, Higher Education, and Administrative Development, launched a programme to certify 1,000,000 Egyptians in ICDL over a five-year period.

ICDL in State Strategy – The Aims of a Truly National Initiative

The Egyptian government considers it of the utmost importance that the Egyptian community has a strong presence in the field of ICT, and has, therefore, launched numerous programmes and initiatives to empower Egyptians through the enhancement of their ICT skills. Improving the basic ICT skills of the general population empowers individuals, both at home and at work, and benefits institutions and the nation as a whole. The long-term aims of the Egyptian government in this regard are to achieve computer literacy for the whole population and a general level of ICT skills that allows Egypt to participate fully and profitably in the global economy[2].

Why ICDL for the Egyptian Government?

To achieve these goals, the government required a training and certification programme to eradicate computer illiteracy in the populace and to upgrade both professional and community use of ICT. The ICDL programme was considered the best option as it is an international indicator of competency designed in line with global ICT standards and covering key concepts and practical application.

For the past four years, MCIT has worked, in conjunction with three other ministries and a growing number of local private sector SMEs and other enterprises, on the National ICDL Scholarship Programme. The aim is to create a pool of ICDL-certified human capital resources, with the focus on young people.

Details of the Roll-out of ICDL on a National Scale

The ICDL programme is available at over 340 training and testing centres across the country. MCIT is committed to ensuring that ECDL Foundation's quality standards are implemented throughout the project. MCIT offers the ICDL training and learning material, Skills Cards (candidate registrations), and the seven module[3] tests free of charge to all applicants.

[1] Egypt's ICT Strategy 2007-2010

[2] MCIT Egypt – ICDL Implementation Guide – 'Egyptian Government Experience' (2010)

[3] For a detailed explanation of the modules offered by the ECDL / ICDL programme, visit: www.ecdl.org

With the aim of empowering all citizens with basic ICT skills, the government adopted an 'ICDL for all' approach, opting to implement the programme as a scholarship as this was deemed the most effective means of reaching citizens of all ages and income groups. This approach was supported by:
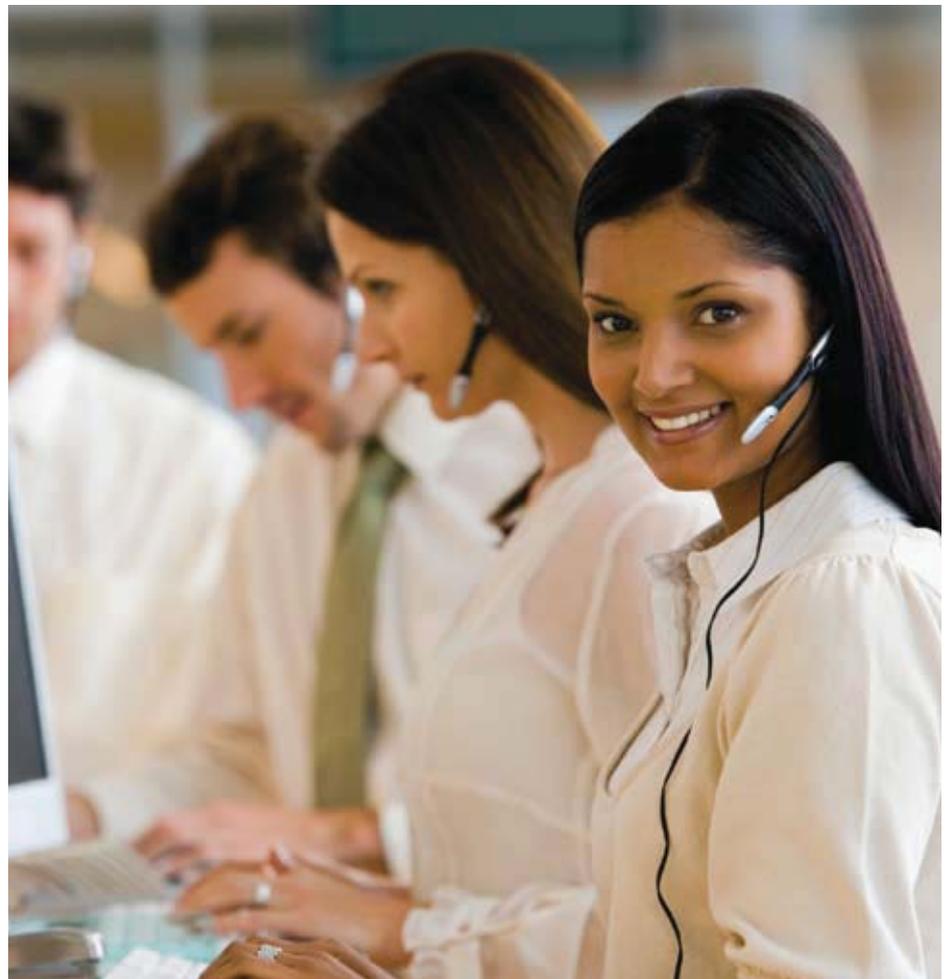
- **Funding Mechanisms**
  Support for the ICDL programme came from a number of ministries. Their sharing of responsibilities in its establishment and administration, led to the government providing full financial support for the project, which is seen as a means to enhance the skills of the workforce and reduce unemployment.

- **Sustainability Plan**
  Any large-scale programme must include a sustainability strategy to ensure continued success. The government guarantees the sustainability of the ICDL programme by providing full financing and administration for its scholarship programme.

- **Programme Lifecycle and Future Expansion**
  The government's initial plan for 2006-11 targeted one million participants. Following this stage, further expansion will be considered in line with demand.

Impact of the Project

In early 2010, it became clear to the partners involved in the project that the MCIT programme had reached a state of close-to-optimum performance and was set to deliver results in excess of anticipated performance. Since that discussion, this opinion has been validated through the registration and examination of tens of thousands of candidates over the course of that one year.

By December 2010, more than 700,000 candidates had been enrolled in this project. MCIT commissioned experts to devise and implement an impact assessment study focusing on one particular target group – recently graduated students – in order to assess the immediate and long-term effects of the New Graduates ICDL Programme on individual Egyptian beneficiaries who have obtained their ICDL certification. Some of their findings are recorded in the following extracts from that study:

"Overall, the ICDL programme contributed directly to the employment or enhancement of employment, of 35% of all beneficiaries [within a period of no less than five months after certification]."

"ICDL skills, when used at work, change the way people conduct their job. Only 2% of those who utilised their ICDL skills at work experienced no changes, while 45% found that it had completely changed the way they worked, and 53% reported that this introduced some changes to their work."

"Overall, 67% of all (candidates assessed) utilised their ICDL skills at home and 58% at work. This saved a lot of time for 59% of ICDL beneficiaries and some time for another 31%. The extent and significance of home utilisation of ICDL skills indicates that ICDL skills are contributing to enhanced education, livelihood, and leisure of ICDL-certified beneficiaries..."