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UN chief highlights benefits of information technologies for rural people



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From connecting village schools to the Internet to using telemedicine in remote health clinics to providing accurate weather information to farmers, information and communication technology can bring enormous benefits to the lives of rural people worldwide, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said today.

In a [message](#) marking *World Telecommunication and Information Society Day*, Mr. Ban urged policy-makers around the globe to do more to ensure that rural communities are able to take advantage of the latest technologies and not fall victim to the “digital divide” that can separate rich and poor.

“As we bridge the digital divide, we narrow the chasm that separates those with and without access to information and knowledge, thereby broadening opportunities for a better life,” the Secretary-General said.

“Greater access means earlier achievement of the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)),” he added, referring to the social and economic targets that world leaders have pledged to try to attain by 2015.

“It means less poverty and hunger, and more environmental sustainability. And it translates into greater equality and empowerment for women and the underprivileged.”

This year's theme of the Day is “better life in rural communities with ICTs,” and Mr. Ban noted in his message that the lives of the estimated 1.4 billion rural poor worldwide can be transformed by information and communication technologies.

He said broadband telecommunications can make it possible for critical content to reach even the remotest rural areas, facilitating trade and commerce, opening up access to health care and education, and bringing together people from different cultures and backgrounds.

Meanwhile, the Finnish President Tarja Halonen, Indian telecommunication innovator Sam Pitroda and Kristin Peterson, the co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Inveneo, an ICT non-profit social enterprise, were today honoured with this year’s World Telecommunication and Information Society Award.

Hamadoun Touré lauded the laureates for their dedication to promoting ICTs as a means of improving lives, particularly in rural communities.

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[Ban underlines the role of information technologies in accelerating development](#)