

**Press Release**

## **a2i wins the WSIS awards for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year for Information Technology and Innovation**

**Dhaka, Thursday, 10 September 2020:** The a2i Programme has succeeded at the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) awards for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive time as two of its projects were declared Champions at two different categories. E-Commerce initiative ‘EkShop’ (ekshop.gov.bd) claimed the Champion prize at the ‘e-Business’ category and ‘Collective Intelligence Platform for Skills, Employment and Entrepreneurship’ (skills.gov.bd) was declared Champion in the ‘e-Employment’ category.

The names of the final winners are announced at the end of the selection process and online voting process after applications are received from hundreds of countries around the world. Applications were accepted in 18 categories, with 354 of 762 applications receiving nominations. Of the nominated submissions, 18 are declared as Winners and 72 as Champions. Two projects from Bangladesh have become Champions while one earned the Winner prize.

This year, the prize distribution and closing ceremony could not be hosted physically due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, winning projects were announced virtually and representatives of the winning projects attended the virtual session today, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Dr. Abdul Mannan PAA, Project Director (Additional Secretary) of a2i and Rezwanul Haque Jami, Team Lead – Rural e-Commerce of a2i represented a2i in the event.

a2i’s Project Director Dr. Abdul Mannan PAA said, “It’s an honor for us to win the WSIS award for 7 consecutive years. During this pandemic, the a2i Programme of the Government of Bangladesh has introduced virtual classes on technical and vocational subjects for youth to obtain skills and to fulfill our Honorable Prime Minister’s dream of Digital Bangladesh.”

Team Lead of Rural e-Commerce Rezwanul Haque Jami expressed his delight at EkShop becoming a Champion and described how it transformed the lives of rural entrepreneurs. “EkShop is the sole distributor of essential items to the remote rural areas of Bangladesh. The rural population seldom gets access to digital markets. EkShop has ensured such items reach their doorstep,” he remarked.

An initiative of the Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme of the ICT Division and Cabinet Division, supported by UNDP, ‘EkShop’, the first assisted rural e-Commerce platform of Bangladesh, brings daily necessities to the doorsteps of citizens in an easy and quick manner. So far, more than 5 lakh people availed e-Commerce services from EkShop. EkShop has integrated more than 10 lakh items to its platform with the purpose of distributing products of local entrepreneurs throughout the country. At present, 1,531 rural sellers are selling products through EkShop and more than 6.5 lakh items have been delivered through EkShop across the country on Cash-On-Delivery method. On the otherhand, the ‘Collective Intelligence Platform for Skills, Employment and Entrepreneurship’ is a one-stop collaboration hub for industries, skills providers, and unemployed youth. The platform encompasses a number of features that reduce the difficulties of jobs and skills seekers to find all the opportunities in one single platform, for industries to reach out to more people from youth database, and for training service providers to provide market demand-driven skills training.

The WSIS Prizes, given by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), recognize individuals, governments, civil society, local, regional and international agencies, research institutions and private-sector companies for leveraging the power of technology that promote basic and human welfare. a2i, through its works to bring services to the doorsteps of citizens, have previously won WSIS prizes in 2014 through its initiative ‘Union Digital Center’, in 2015 through ‘National Portal’, in 2016 through ‘Service Process Simplification (SPS)’, the Department of Environment’s ‘Environmental Clearance Certificate’, ‘Teacher’s Portal’ and ‘Krishoker Janala’, in 2017 through ‘Multimedia Talking Book’, Dhaka University’s ‘Telemedicine Project’, ‘Use of Social Media for Citizen Service Innovation’, and ‘e-Nothi’, in 2018 through ‘MuktoPaath’ and ‘Police Clearance Certificate Management System’ and in 2019 through ‘Teacher’s Portal’ and ‘Mobile Based Age Verification Before Marriage Registration to Stop Child Marriage’.

**For more information:**

Mr. Adnan Faisal, Cell Number: 01617070024; e-mail: adnan.faisal@a2i.gov.bd