

**Memorandum of Understanding
Trio Strategic Partnership
IRFD/TEK Foundations/CIER**

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Whereas, The International Research Foundation for Development operates within its special category, as an NGO with a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations as specified in the UN Charter Article 71.

Whereas, IRFD is a policy research and advocacy organization, the foundation acts as a think tank and mobilizes the scientific research community, policy makers, NGOs and members of the business community into the arena of global policy making. To that effect the foundation represents the above groups to the United Nations meetings/general assembly sessions/world summits, and a variety of commissions within the framework of consultative status granted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

Whereas, TEK Foundation is desirous of building a Globally Based Computerized and Electronic Education Infrastructure Network of 50,000 Educational Resource Centers (ERC), located in all countries of the known world, and positioned geographically according to population clusters. These ERCs will provide children and adults (i.e., students) adequate,

affordable, and quality access to Internet-based education programs offered by accredited public and private educational institutions for levels, kindergarten through Ph.D., in all basic subjects and areas of study, etc.

Whereas, TEK Foundation's project will provide a significant positive impact in the effort to close the gap in the digital divide that exists between developed countries and emerging nations of the world, as it relates to education of all children, teenagers, and adults.

Whereas, CIER undertakes advanced research, both national and international economics, stimulating academic exchange to facilitate closer contact between scholars by conducting symposiums, seminars, and other activities of scientific interest. CIER will provide support services and vital information and data to relevant institutions and personnel.

Whereas, CIER is willing to mobilize resources and expertise from other organizations and government as well as private sector resources to assist in achieving the objectives toward bridging digital divide, particularly in Asia, through the "Trio Strategic Partnership"

Whereas, all countries located in the world have been earmarked by TEK Foundation and placed in its project plan to build several thousand ERCs.

Whereas, IRFD, TEK Foundation, and CIER have joint interests in promoting and assisting in the development of ICT related projects that will lead to the closure in the digital gap that exists between nations.

Therefore, as a first step toward this strategic partnership, trio partners agree to strengthen their institutional structure designed for the project outlined below. To this effect, IRFD, TEK Foundation, and CIER will engage in planning and preparing proposals.

Furthermore, IRFD, TEK foundation, and CIER are in common agreement that the aforementioned institutional structure is necessary to strengthen their "**joint action project relationship**" to maximize their resolve and capabilities in achieving the following core objectives: **(i)** educating children, youth, women, adults, disabled; **(ii)** generating and disseminating knowledge; **(iii)** promoting access to information and communication rights; **(iv)** application of ICT into socio-economic, politico-cultural development, particularly in marginalized communities, and regions (both rural and urban). Therefore, IRFD, TEK foundation, and CIER will integrate and implement their projects in collaboration with all other stakeholders.

Launching IRFD's "**E-Community Development Strategy**" using ICT through TEK's "**Education Resource Centers**", together with CIER's specific interest in helping LDCs in ICT education through "**e-government and e-education**," will bring all the sectors (governmental bodies, business and industry, NGO/CBOs) to maximize full human potential, institutional capacity building, and sustainable utilization of local resources, thereby integrating marginalized communities into the national and global process of development. The final aim is to "**bridge the digital divide**" between peripheries and the centers within national boundaries, regions, and the global division between North and South.

In the case of IRFD, as an International NGO with consultative status granted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), it is a critical need to establish institutional structure at the center, five major regions, and at targeted country levels to carry out the strategic partnership and to implement this massive project. IRFD regional institutions will work in close collaboration with the UN regional offices, and other stakeholders of respective regions and countries for optimal operationalization of this

project. This method of operation not only legitimizes our "Trio Strategic Partnership", but also accelerates UN endorsement of the project.

Having recognized the importance of establishing the institutional structure, and planning for implementation, the funds for planning will be provided by TEK Foundation upon the formal request by IRFD. IRFD intends to start the planning process by January, 2004. At the conclusion of the planning process, the specific implementation project will be submitted to TEK Foundation for its consideration for funding. In addition, other sources of funding are possible under the "Trio Strategic Partnership."

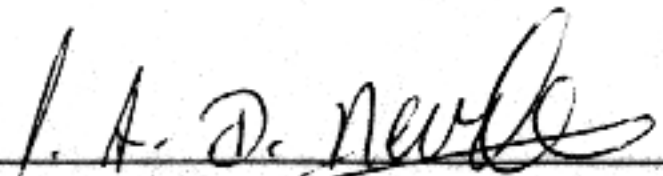
This "Trio Strategic Partnership" will be formally established, without infringement of each other's institutional autonomy—IRFD, TEK, and CIER— to carry out the commonly agreed upon plans, projects, and proposals in order to realize the ultimate goal of "Closing the Gap in the Digital Divide," connecting every person on the planet.

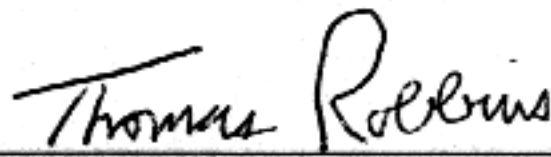
Therefore, IRFD, TEK Foundation, and CIER enter into this Memorandum of Understanding and agree to work in the spirit of cooperation with each other to provide assistance, analysis, research, referrals, suggestions, and development proposals, to be placed under consideration for funding by TEK Foundation, as it relates to their Missions and Objectives. This association is formally established, via this Memorandum of Understanding, with the overall objective to create projects that will lead to the closure of the gap that exists in the digital divide between developed and emerging nations, and in accordance with the Mission and Objectives of the United Nations and its affiliates, UNESCO ("Education For All Commitment"), and UNDP (ICT for Development)—who are sponsoring and developing ICT related projects.

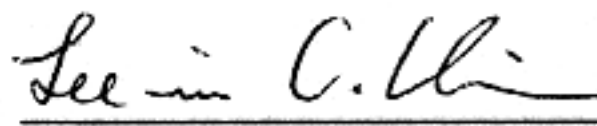
Signed for and on behalf of:
IRFD

Signed for and on behalf of:
TEK Foundation

Signed for and on behalf of:
CIER


Dr. Neville S. Arachchige Don,
President/CEO


Dr. Thomas Robbins,
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Dr. Lee-in Chen Chiu
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