

The Digital Cities Project aims to improve relations between Israeli Jews and Arabs in addition to promoting tourism, healthcare, education, and civil services, and educating the public in the use of sophisticated Internet technologies.

A Tale of Two Cities

For years, the adjoining Galilean cities of Nazareth and Upper Nazareth have experienced an ever-widening opportunity gap in areas including infrastructure, education, income, medicine, and public services.

The predominately-Jewish city of Upper Nazareth is situated along the eastern boundaries of old Nazareth, and many of its 44,000 residents are immigrants. Upper Nazareth has been developing rapidly; emulating the prosperous urban areas of

central Israel to provide valuable municipal services, career opportunities, and educational resources to its citizens. However, the standard of living in Upper Nazareth is still far below that of the central cities in Israel.

The neighboring Arab portion of Nazareth is often regarded as “the cradle of Christianity” and is described in biblical traditions as the site of the Annunciation and childhood home of Jesus. In modern times, this perception of Nazareth has transformed it into a commercial, cultural, and center.



The city's colorful history, oriental ambiance, and numerous convents, churches, and mosques all contribute to a unique charm, which disguises the imparity and discrimination endured by the locals.

Internet as a Catalyst for Change

A basic method for assessing social inequality is by comparing the number of PCs connected to the Internet. Children in households without computers or Internet access are more likely to experience a future of low social class affiliation and limited

economic opportunities in a world where PCs and the Internet have become indispensable tools for social advancement.

A comparative study of Internet use in Israeli households indicates that the Arab population has the lowest household use of PCs and online services. The Arab population also has the lowest levels of student proficiency in mathematics and science, as well as command of the English language. The gap between those who benefit from the advantages of connectivity and those without access will continue to widen as the Internet becomes an increasingly resourceful tool.

In his former position as Vice Prime Minister, the newly-elected President of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres, and the Ministry for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee approached Cisco to request assistance in minimizing the digital disparity in Israel and promoting equal opportunities through Internet access. Cisco, the worldwide leader in networking that transforms how people connect, communicate and collaborate, engages in numerous socioeconomic development projects globally and agreed to invest in a multimillion dollar Digital Cities Project to help transform Nazareth and Upper Nazareth into "twin digital cities."

The Digital Cities Project aims to use advanced Internet technologies to improve relations between Jews and Arabs, in addition to promoting tourism, healthcare, education, and civil services, as well as educating the public in the use of sophisticated Internet tools. Community knowledge centers will





also be established to provide Internet access, ICT training for women and youth, educational resources, and municipal services such as tax preparation.

Education

Another component of the project involves establishing Internet connectivity at local schools to enhance learning experiences and enable citizens from both communities to attend the same classes and collaborate on educational projects. This aims to improve the quality of education in both cities while encouraging relationship-building among Arab and Jewish students.

Health

There are currently three hospitals in Nazareth that specialize in different fields. The Digital Cities project will enable these hospitals to communicate with each other, with hospitals in central Israel, and with European hospitals using online video conferencing tools to provide more effective and efficient care to patients. Doctors at participating hospitals will be able to use conferencing capabilities to attend online seminars with their colleagues in Israel and abroad, and interns will be able to complete professional-development courses online.

Citizens of both cities will benefit from the increased knowledge capital and conferencing abilities available at local hospitals and computerized patient records will allow hospitals to quickly access and share up-to-date information regarding patients' medical histories.

Tourism

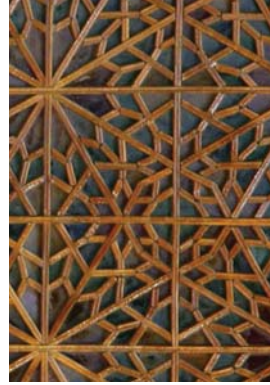
In the area of tourism, the Digital Cities Project will establish information stands at historical sites, and Internet cameras near holy places to host real-time videos of religious events on municipality websites. By providing engaging and informative resources that capture the religious significance of Nazareth, the project intends to emphasize the historical value of Nazareth and attract a greater number of tourists.

Citizenship

A website providing information and municipal services will be available to citizens of both cities. On the website, citizens will be able to pay their taxes, register their kids for school, and learn about new online services as they become available. Citizens from both cities will also be able to use this website to offer their own knowledge and services to others in the community.

Social Benefits of Corporate Citizenship

Over the years, Cisco Israel has participated in numerous projects that demonstrate how technological education and strategic investments in the community can result in significant progress and social gains. Dozens of educational programs sponsored by Cisco Israel reach numerous communities in peripheral towns such as Nazareth and Upper Nazareth to help reduce social and economic disparities.



One of Cisco Israel's leading initiatives, Net@, is designed to encourage teenagers to achieve excellence and leadership in the technology field, while cultivating values such as awareness and tolerance. Over the past five years, more than two thousand Jewish and Arab students have benefited from this project. The students acquire advanced technical skills that will support them in becoming economically-independent and socially-responsible citizens.

The Women Empowerment Project has been developed by Cisco Israel to support the inclusion of women in the ICT industry by giving them access to technological training and career-development tools. This project was launched in 2006 with two pilots; one for Jewish women in Netanya and the other for Arab women in Baqa el Garbya, for a total of 150 participants. One-hundred percent of the women in the Netanya pilot completed the training, and 60 percent have already found ICT-related jobs. The Baqa el Garbya pilot is expected to produce similar results.

Cisco Israel has also launched a project that allows students in Nazareth and Upper Nazareth to operate an online call center and provide voluntary computer repair services to the local population. The center includes a public Internet café that hosts free community events to teach valuable technology skills to citizens from both cities.

These projects help demonstrate the progress that corporations can achieve through strategic citizenship efforts. Ideally, corporations should strive to develop socially-responsible projects that leverage their main areas of expertise and deliver lasting socioeconomic benefits, while supporting their long-term business goals.



For more information: www.cisco.co.il Tel. 972 9 892 7001

