

Question 10-1/2: Communications for rural and remote areas

1 Statement of situation

It is clear that the issue of “communications for rural and remote areas” is critical to the ITU membership, particularly to developing and least developed countries, and that there is a great need within the membership for information and examination of means to address the challenge of providing communications in rural and remote areas. Decisions that may drive examination of or choice of particular methods/projects for provision of communications may be influenced, but not limited to the following:

- Rapidly changing and progressing technologies that provide increased technological solutions and capabilities are being made available at progressively lower costs.
- Experience in implementing major Rural Telecommunications Programmes is expanding quickly as more developing countries respond to particular situations and demand in-country. "Best practices" develop as projects are developed, re-fined and assessed.
- Demands for telecommunication services from residents of rural and remote areas of developing and least developed countries differs from country to country and lead to creative methods for provisioning communications.
- Human resource development/management issues.

Question or issue proposed for study

There are a variety of issues that members will be interested in addressing within the four years of the Study Question. It is suggested that the Rapporteur's Group work with the full Study Group 2 membership and with BDT experts to decide upon a topic for study for each year and develop a work-plan. Below are suggestions for topics of study with particular consideration for gender issues:

Topics for four annual work-plans to be updated on a yearly basis, if necessary:

- Development of Multi-purpose Community Telecentres (MCT), Public Call Offices (PCO) and Community Access Centres (CAC)/Assessment of existing MCT's, PCO's and CAC's.
- Develop plans and programmes to provide telecommunication services to rural and remote areas designed to assess the overall status and development of communications in a country. Possible issues to consider in such analyses: demographics, gender, geographic and economic factors; legal and regulatory structures; market structures for delivery of key services; demand and coverage; penetration, service quality and service accessibility; human resources/management factors.
- Examine sound and television broadcasting and communication for rural and remote areas and linkages to MCT's, PCO's, or CAC's.
- Assess the initial and ongoing impact of the provision of ICT in rural and remote areas, and in previously unserved or underserved urban and semi-urban areas, to measure the impact of the availability of ICT in furthering the economic, social and cultural development of the area that meets the needs of both women and man in the community.

Suggestions/parameters for annual output to be updated on a yearly basis, if necessary:

- Development of sustainable models for the provision of a broad range of information about communication services, as well as the necessary user training and support, at affordable costs.
- Develop "best practice guidelines and recommendations".
- Develop a forum for electronic exchange of information (e.g., input, guidelines, case-studies, reports).

- Develop guidelines, based on best-practice guidelines, for network planning and provisioning of sound and television broadcasting throughout rural and remote areas, including appropriate technical and economic detail.
- Assess a variety of methods and techniques for selecting appropriate technology for rural and remote areas.
- Study a variety of methods of planning, implementing and sustaining rural telecommunication development programmes.

3 Description of the expected output

It is suggested that work be progressed in the next study period in the following manner: (1) the Rapporteur's Group for Q10/2 (working with the BDT and the full Study Group 2 membership) would create a work-plan and work during Year 1 on a specific topic for study, relying on input from participants and the membership. The group would analyse their work at the end of Year 1 to create an output for Year 1, and to determine a new course of study for Year 2 (2) using the work-plan decided upon at the end of Year 1, the Group would analyse inputs, create an output and decide upon a course of work for Year 3 (3) using the work-plan decided upon at the end of Year 2 the Group would analyse inputs, create an output and decide upon a course of work for Year 4 (4) using the work-plan decided upon at the end of Year 3, the Group would analyse inputs, create an output (5) at the end of year 4 the Group would combine their efforts from years 1-4 in one Report that links the work done over the four year period and submit this composite report to the Study Group for submission to the next World Telecom Development Conference (WTDC).

Work-plans for each year could take into consideration current studies and information, and input from the membership and BDT.

The output will provide helpful guidance at senior and middle management levels, to those responsible for selecting the most appropriate technology solutions, and individuals planning and implementing rural telecommunications programmes.

4 Required timing of the expected output

Output will be generated on a yearly basis. The output from each year will be analysed and assessed in order to define the work-plan for the following year.

5 "Proposers/Sponsors" - Those who requested study of the Question or issue

Continuation of this Question is recommended by the Rapporteur's Group (1998-2002) and endorsed by Study Group 2.

6 Sources of input required, in carrying out the study

Contributions are required from Member States and Sector Members as well as inputs from relevant BDT programmes, particularly those that have successfully implemented telecommunication programmes in rural and remote areas. These contributions will enable those responsible for work on the Question to develop the most appropriate conclusions, recommendations and output.

7 Target audience for the output

- **Indicate expected types of target audience, by noting all relevant points on the matrix which follows:**

	Developed countries	Developing countries	LDCs
Telecom policy makers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Telecom regulators	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service providers (operators)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manufacturers	Yes	Yes	Yes

b) Target audience - Who specifically will use the output?

The output will be useful to participants from Member States and Sector Members responsible for establishing strategies and plans for the delivery of sustainable telecommunication services throughout rural and remote areas of developing countries and LDCs.

c) Proposed methods for the implementation of the results

The annual output should be distributed to all Member States and Sector Members at no direct cost (e.g., paper-copies, Web-site content, CD-ROMs).

8 Proposed method of handling this Question or issue

a) How? Indicate the suggested handling of the proposed Question or issue

1) Within a study group

- Question (over a multi-year study period) Yes
- Focus Group (12 months duration maximum) *
- Programmes Yes
- Projects Possible
- Expert consultants *

b) Why? Explain why you selected the alternative under a) above

The study of this Question involves the review, analysis, and assessment of the experience of many Member States, Sector Members and organizations involved in the delivery of telecommunication services to the rural and remote areas. A variety of outputs are envisioned (e.g., "best practice" models, guidelines, project-models, reports, workshops).

9 Coordination requirements of the study

Close coordination is required with the appropriate programme activities in the BDT responsible for telecentre work, work in rural, remote and underserved areas, and those working on HRD/HRM issues. Coordination also is required with regional telecommunications organizations that are involved in work/projects providing telecommunication services to rural and remote areas as appropriate. The Group should coordinate with other UN Agencies, including UNDP and UNESCO, and others as appropriate. Outside experts/consultants could be consulted on a case-by-case basis as deemed appropriate. The Rapporteur's Group and Study Group, however, must be able to monitor, guide and manage the work done by any outside experts/consultants.

10 Other relevant information

To be decided year by year for inclusion in work-plans as necessary.
