

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Indicators

1. Introduction

Eritrea has a land area of 124,000 square kilometers and a population of 4,465,651. It is bordered by Ethiopia in the South, by Sudan in the West and North and Red Sea and Djibouti in the East.

Eritrea is predominantly an agricultural economy. While the sector contributes 25 percent of the GDP, it is estimated that 80 percent of the population depends on it. Its lowland and escarpment have great potential for agricultural development which with proper conservation and utilization of water can be exploited for intensive and extensive cultivation of variety of staple and cash crops. Eritrea has also high quality of livestock.

Fishing and salt panning are also major activities in Eritrea. The high salt content of the seawater and the hot climate in the region provide a combination of cheaper production of salt. Salt is exported to Europe and the Far East.

2. Policy and Regulatory Framework

2.1 Policy

The Government of the State of Eritrea has been seized in developing the ICT policy framework since 2001 and is expected to be finalized in the near future. There is a telecommunication policy which states that every citizen has the right to communication service be it fixed, mobile or Internet service at a fair and affordable price provided Eritrea Telecommunication Service Corporation (EriTel) has available lines where the person or organization needs the service. The services are provided on first come first serve basis leaving room for emergency.

The policy development is the responsibility of the Communication Department, Ministry of Transport & Communications. The Ministry of the National Development is also involved in the development of ICT policy. Therefore, the Ministry of Transport & Communications coordinates closely with the Ministry of National Development as well as the Ministry of Information.

There are broadcasting policies within the national policy. The main objectives of the policy are:

- Develop free, responsible and credible mass media, promote democracy and strengthen national unity
- Raise public awareness, spread national educational programmes
- Promotion of regional peace and national cooperation with neighbouring countries.

2.2 Regulation

The regulations are handled by the Communication Department which is empowered by the 1998 Proclamation. The main functions of the Department are as follows:

- The responsibility for economic and technical ICT regulations as well as providing advice and assistance to the ICT industry.
- Promotion of competition in the ICT sector and facilitate entrance into the ICT market.

- To establish and manage the Rural Telecommunication Fund and protect the public interest.
- To monitor the conduct of the ICT service providers, resolve disputes among operator, receive and investigate their complaints
- The protection of consumers from unfair practice
- Develop policies and determine the best management practices and ensure an efficient and transparent issuance of the regulations
- Provide guidelines on tariffs for ICT services and maintain a register of operators, suppliers, and installers.

3. ICT Industry

The fixed and mobile communications services are operated by the Eritrea Telecommunication Services Corporation. EriTel is also involved in policy development. The Internet Service is open to limited competition. The fixed and mobile communications are owned by the Government of the State of Eritrea.

3.1 Fixed Telephone Service

EriTel's fixed telephone network consists of 45,000 exchange lines out of which 40,000 are connected subscribers. The telephone density is 0.86% and the annual growth rate is 7.4 for the year 2004. The services provided by EriTel are voice, fax, and lease line services. The fixed network details are shown in the following table.

Item Description	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Number of subscribers	25726	28271	29480	32808	37234	40000
Subscribers per 100 population	0.64	0.68	0.69	0.74	0.82	0.86
Number of pay phones	417	430	441	463	478	480

3.2 Mobile Communication Service

The Mobile communication service has been launched in March 2004 and is still progressing well. Already most of the big towns and the main roads between them are covered. The technology used is GSM 900. The capacity of the MSC is 100,000 ports. Since the launch 12,000 mobile subscribers are connected to the system and are enjoying the service. This service is expected to alleviate the huge waiting list of approximately 100,000 applicants.

3.3 Internet Service

The Internet service in Eritrea was launched in November 2000. Since then the Internet gateway bandwidth was upgraded three times which shows its demand in the business and government organizations.

There are 5 competing Internet Service Providers which provide dialup, wireless and lease line services to the public. Within such limited time there are:

- 42 Internet cafes
- 3000 subscribers using dialup, wireless and lease line
- 50,000 Internet users.

There are also some challenges encountered in the Internet service such as:

- bandwidth connectivity
- computer illiteracy
- shortage of telephone lines
- capacity building
- awareness of ICT services.

The tariff is 100 Nakfa for 10 hours which is around \$7 US.

3.4 Broadcasting

3.4.1 Radio broadcasting

There are three radio stations out of which two have national coverage while the third covers the whole nation, Africa, Europe, Middle East, Canada, and the United States of America.

3.4.2 Television Broadcasting

In Eritrea there are one main and four relay television stations that cover 80% of the population. The main broadcasting station ERITV covers Europe, the Middle East, Canada and the United States of America.