Universal Access to Information & Communication Technology in the Asia Pacific Region

The Asia and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Telecommunication Development Conference
Bali, Indonesia, 25 to 27 April 2001
Topics

- Asia Pacific Digital Divide
  - Measurement
  - Reasons
- Initiatives to enhance access
  - National
  - Regional
  - International
Some definitions

- **Access to ICT**
  - Physical ownership / availability
  - Affordability
  - Skills

- “There will always be segments of any society that will not want to avail themselves of technology...”

- “In essence, the real difference between the info-poor and the info-rich is the inequality of physical and financial access to ICT and in the actual usage of sources of information in a particular society.”

Source: [www.nitc.org.my/resources/AccessEquity.pdf](http://www.nitc.org.my/resources/AccessEquity.pdf)
ICT Gap in the Asia-Pacific


- Telephones: 5.3 (developed) vs. 55.1 (developed), x10 difference
- Mobile: 1.8 (developed) vs. 43.0 (developed), x24 difference
- Internet: 0.8 (developed) vs. 22.5 (developed), x28 difference

Note: Developed refers to Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Hong Kong SAR, Korea (Rep.), Singapore and Taiwan-China; developing are all others. Source: ITU.
ICT Gap within countries

Internet penetration in Malaysian states, 2000

Source: ITU adapted from NITC.
Obstacles to bridging the Digital Divide

Source: Global Information Infrastructure Commission
Income barrier

\[ R^2 = 0.6884 \]
Tariff barrier

Thirty hours of Internet access, October 2000, US$

- Kiribati
- Maldives
- Cambodia
- New Caledonia
- Solomon
- Japan
- PNG
- ASIA-PACIFIC
- Indonesia
- Guam
- Lao P.D.R.
- Fiji
- Nepal
- New Zealand
- Malaysia
- Singapore

Source: ITU

Source: ITU
Socio-cultural barrier

Singapore. Never use Internet (by language).

Source: ITU adapted from CABSAT/NETWATCH.
National policies

- National ICT plans
- Liberalization
- PC ownership subsidies
- Universal access
- Skills development
- Digital legislation
- Local content
National ICT Plans

- Elevate ICT to top of agenda
- Specify policies and actions that are relevant to country
- Roadmap
Liberalization

- Open up infrastructure and services market
- Allow full service operators
- Liberalization of the VSAT market in Nepal has led to a sharp drop of Internet tariffs and consequent rise in users
Personal Computer (PC) Ownership

- Reduce or eliminate tariffs on PCs
- Provide incentives for purchasing PCs
  - Republic of Korea
  - Singapore
  - Malaysia
Universal access: Diversity of models
Skills development

- Most effective way of developing ICT skills is to ‘wire’ schools
- ICT human resource requirements
- Private sector
Digital legislation

- Acceptance of electronic forms
- Security, confidence
- Crime, copyright
- Convergence
Local content: Pondicherry, India

- Weather reports
- Fish stocks
- Entitlement, nutrition, job, women databases
- Agricultural info
- Entertainment

Knowledge Centre staff at Embalam village explaining use of RealAudio
Regional initiatives

- APT AII - Asia-Pacific Summit on the Information Society
- e-ASEAN
- e-APEC
Global Initiatives

- G-8 DOT Force
- UNDP Digital Opportunity Initiative
Next Steps

What should ITU Development Sector role be in reducing the Digital Divide?
What does Digital Divide Mean?

The graph shows the percentage of responses by region with different categories:

- Business Opportunity
- ICT Access
- Developed-Developing
- Urban-Rural

The regions compared are:

- Asia-Pacific
- Africa
- S. America
- Europe
- N. America

The percentage scale ranges from 0% to 40%.

Percentage of Responses by Region
Needed Public Policy

Percentage of Responses by Region

- Independent Regulator
- Privatization
- Deregulation
- Open Investment Policies
- Basic Education
- IT Skills Building
- Consumer Protection Rules
- Open Access Mandates

- N. America
- Europe
- S. America
- Africa
- Asia-Pacific
Digital Bridge Applications

Percentage of Responses by Region

- Electronic Commerce
- Distance Education
- Telemedicine
- E-Government
Who Should Bridge the Digital Divide?

Percentage of Responses by Region

- Private Sector
- Government
- Foreign Aid
- Development Organizations
- NGOs
- Civil Society
- Philanthropy

N. America  Europe  S. America  Africa  Asia-Pacific