



Question 10/2: Communications for rural and remote areas

## **STUDY GROUP 2**

**SOURCE:** PROPOSED RAPPORTEUR FOR QUESTION 10/2

**TITLE:** OVERVIEW OF THE STATUS AND INTENTIONS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS OF THIS QUESTION INCLUDING REPORT OF THE FIRST STUDY GROUP MEETING

### **1. Introduction**

This Question continues the work of Question 4/2, also titled "Communications for rural and remote areas", which was carried out in the previous Study Period. Question 4/2 comprised five Topics. Two of these are continued in the present Study Period, in Project 10a/2. The other six Projects which are included in this Question constitute new initiatives.

Worldwide, emphasis has been increasing on the importance of telecommunications in rural and remote areas and other underserved areas, highlighting the need to take positive action to provide Universal Access to telecommunication services to those who live in all areas, no matter how rural and remote.

It is now widely recognized that the provision of telecommunication services can best be accomplished on a commercial basis, and that it is generally possible for these services to be profitable, and thus for sustainability to be assured. This includes the rural and remote areas and other underserved areas.

### **2. Preamble**

This Question consists of seven individual Projects, of which one, 10a/2, continues the work of the previous Study Period. The other six comprise new areas of study. While the directions of investigation of the individual Projects are diverse, all are focused on communications for rural and remote areas and other underserved areas, and there are strong relationships between and among the Projects. Information generated in the pursuit of one Project will often also be useful to other Projects, and care must be taken to share and exchange information whenever appropriate.

### **3. Status and Intentions at the Individual Project Level**

#### **a) 10a/2. Communications for rural and remote areas.**

##### *i) Current Status*

This Project will address the following topics :

- a) the best methods and techniques for selecting appropriate technology options for rural telecommunications;
- b) the best methods of planning, implementing and sustaining rural telecommunication development programmes.

These topics were studied in detail during the previous Study Period, and Conclusions and Recommendations were developed. The pace of development and progress in technologies, in planning methods, and in all aspects of rural telecommunications programme management warrants continuation of these studies.

##### *ii) Project Leadership*

The Lead Associate Rapporteur of this Project is Mr. Gomes Zita (Mozambique). Mr. Zita is a Vice Chairman of Study Group 2.

##### *iii) Relationship with the Valletta Action Plan (VAP) Programmes*

The primary relationship of this Project is with *Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access*. The focus of the study of this Project relates very closely to the work which is planned under Programme 3. Close coordination and mutual sharing of information will be appropriate.

This Project also has secondary relationships with VAP Programmes, as follows. *Programme 2 : Technologies and global information infrastructure (GII) development and applications, including GMPCS and Internet*, addresses both network and infrastructure planning, and innovative technological applications. Both are relevant to this Project. *Programme 4 : Finance and economics, including WTO issues, tariffs, accounting rates, etc.*, specifically includes mechanisms for financing universal service and access. *Programme 5 : Development partnership with the private sector* will provide insights into commercial operations and entrepreneurial approaches. *Programme 6 : Capacity building through human resources development and management* will provide the vehicle for maximizing the effectiveness of the results of the Conclusions and Recommendations developed under this Project.

##### *iv) Relationship with the Other ITU-D Study Group Questions*

The primary relationship is with Question 7/1, "Universal access/service". There are secondary relationships with Question 9/1, "Impact of the introduction and utilization of new technologies on the regulatory environment of telecommunications", and Question 11/1, "Factors to create a climate favourable to investment".

##### *v) Proposed Work Plan*

The proposed Work Plan for this Project is as follows.

- i) Analyze the Question, and the specified expected outcome. Review the work carried out on these two Topics in the last study period under Question 4/2.
- ii) Determine the existing sources of information, knowledge, expertise and interest.

- iii) Establish a network of collaborators/active experts. Review step ii) with the newly-established network, and enhance as appropriate.
- iv) From the identified sources, and making use of the established network, determine what is known and relevant, and take steps to capture this information.
- v) Determine what is relevant and necessary to respond to the Question, and is not known. Develop an action plan to obtain or develop this information, and implement the action plan.
- vi) Aggregate all the relevant information, both already known and captured, and obtained through the action plan. Analyze and synthesize the information, in the context of the Question.
- vii) From this work, develop tentative Conclusions. From the tentative Conclusions, develop draft Recommendations. Through the established network, review and test the analysis and synthesis of the information, the tentative Conclusions, and the draft Recommendations. Update, enhance and adjust as appropriate. Note that more than one iteration is likely to be necessary.
- viii) Develop "draft final" Conclusions and Recommendations. Mature these Conclusions and Recommendations through an additional iterative process, including participation in Regional Telecommunication Development Conferences if appropriate, so that they become mature and well accepted Conclusions and Recommendations.

*vi) Report of the First Study Group Meeting*

The meeting endorsed the Question as shown in Document 2/019, approved the proposed Lead Associate Rapporteur, Mr. Gomes Zita of Mozambique, and agreed with the Proposed Work Plan.

The relationship of this Question and the need to work closely with Valletta Action Plan *Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access* was confirmed. It was agreed that this will require appropriate close liaison with the BDT staff who are responsible for Programme 3.

It was noted that the work on this Question may touch on policy and regulatory aspects of the provision of telecommunication services to rural and remote areas, and other underserved areas. In this regard, appropriate liaison with Study Group 1 will be required.

**b) 10b/2. Development of multi-purpose community telecentres**

*i) Current Status*

This is a new ITU-D Study Group Question that was brought forward by UNESCO to the Valletta Conference. The proposed work is very timely, since it is now well recognized that multi-purpose community telecentres (MCTs) should play a major role in the provision of Universal Access to telecommunication services in the rural and remote areas of developing countries. The ITU-D, under Buenos Aires Action Plan Programmes 9 - Integrated Rural Development and 12 - Development of Telematics and Computer Networks, has been instrumental in the establishment of MCTs on a Pilot Project basis in several countries around the world. This work will continue, under Valletta Action Plan (VAP) Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access. There are excellent opportunities for synergy between this Programme and the Question.

A revision to the wording of the Question is proposed (ref. Document 2/007) to describe the required work more specifically and to reinforce the relationship between the Question and VAP Programme 3.

**ii) Project Leadership**

Initially, the Lead Associate Rapporteur of this Project is Mr. David Barr (Canada). Mr. Barr is the Rapporteur for Question 10/2 overall, and a Vice Chairman of Study Group 2.

**iii) Relationship with the Valletta Action Plan Programmes**

The primary relationship of this Project is with *Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access*, which supports, develops and monitors the existing and pending MCT Pilot Projects. The work on this Project will link very closely to the work in progress under Programme 3, involving close coordination and mutual sharing of information.

The VAP Programmes with which this Project has a secondary relationship are *Programme 5 : Development partnership with the private sector* which provides insights into commercial operations and entrepreneurial approaches, and *Programme 6 : Capacity building through human resources development and management*, which will play a major role in making known the results and the relevant learning points of the work on the Project.

**iv) Relationship with the Other ITU-D Study Group Questions**

The primary relationship is with Question 7/1, "Universal access/service". Secondary relationships exist with Question 6/1, "Interconnection", Question 8/1, "Establishment of an independent regulatory body", Question 12/1, "Tariff policies, tariff models and methods of determining the cost of national telecommunication services", Question 13/1, "Promotion of infrastructure and use of the Internet in developing countries" and Question 14/2, "Fostering the application of telecommunications in health care".

**v) Proposed Work Plan**

- i) Analyze the Question, and the specified expected outcome.
- ii) Determine the existing sources of information, knowledge, expertise and interest. The most knowledgeable and experienced source is within the BDT.
- iii) Establish a network of collaborators/active experts. This should involve, as a minimum, the participation of every country where MCT Pilot Projects are located. Review step ii) with the now-established network, and enhance as appropriate.
- iv) From the identified sources, and making use of the established network, determine what is known and relevant, and take all appropriate steps to capture it.
- v) Determine what is relevant and necessary to respond to the Question, and is not known. Develop an action plan to obtain or develop this information, and implement the action plan. It is expected that this action plan will relate closely with the work in progress under VAP Programme 3.
- vi) Aggregate all the relevant information, both already known and captured, and obtained through the action plan. Analyze and synthesize the information, in the context of the Question.
- vii) From this work, develop tentative Conclusions. From the tentative Conclusions, develop draft Recommendations. Through the established network, review and test the analysis and synthesis of the information, the tentative Conclusions, and the draft Recommendations. Update, enhance and adjust as appropriate. Note that more than one iteration is likely to be necessary.
- viii) Develop "draft final" Conclusions and Recommendations. Mature these Conclusions and Recommendations through an additional iterative process, including participation in Regional Telecommunication Development Conferences if appropriate, so that they become mature and well accepted Conclusions and Recommendations.

***vi) Report of the First Study Group Meeting***

A substantial revision of the Question was proposed (ref. Document 2/007) which refocused the Question quite tightly on the area of the provision of telecommunication services through multi-purpose community telecentres (MCTs), with relatively little attention to the socio-economic aspects that had been included in the Question as originally written. The meeting approved the revised text, but also considered that due attention should be given, as the work on the Question is carried out, to socio-economic aspects associated with the provision of telecommunication services through MCTs. It was also noted that Question 10f/2 is very much targeted to address the socio-economic area.

The meeting approved Mr. David Barr (Canada) as Lead Associate Rapporteur, noting that an alternate candidate for this role would be welcome. The meeting agreed with the Proposed Work Plan.

The planned area of study will inevitably involve matters that involve National Telecommunications Policy and Telecommunications Regulation. Since these matters are the responsibility of Study Group 1, the involvement of Study Group 1 in this work will be appropriate. A suitable liaison arrangement will be required. Preliminary discussion with the Chairman of Study Group 1 has confirmed the feasibility of this. In this relationship, Study Group 2 will fill the role of Lead Study Group.

**c) 10c/2. Penetration and service targets for rural telecommunications**

***i) Current Status***

This Project addresses the very important intersection between Business Development, Network Planning and Network Engineering. In order to provide good levels, in both quantity and quality, of telecommunication services on a Universal Access basis, and to develop the most favourable business case in order to ensure profitability and hence the sustainability of the service, it is necessary to provide enough communication capacity to fully meet the needs of the rural population which is served, and yet to ensure that there is a satisfactory volume of traffic, and hence of revenue, on every line which is provided.

Existing experience will be a very important factor in addressing this Project. The service delivery and financial experience of the MCTs which are in service within the BDT's Pilot Projects will be the starting point, in capturing relevant and useful quantification.

***ii) Project Leadership***

Initially, the Lead Associate Rapporteur of this Project is Mr. David Barr (Canada). Mr. Barr is the Rapporteur for Question 10/2 overall, and a Vice-Chairman of Study Group 2.

***iii) Relationship with the Valletta Action Plan Programmes***

The significant relationship of this Project is with *Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access*, which supports, develops and monitors the existing and pending MCT Pilot Projects. This Project will examine the experience under Programme 3 and its predecessor Programmes, in the crucial relationship of service level, both planned and delivered, and financial experience.

***iv) Relationship with the Other ITU-D Study Group Questions***

The primary relationship is with Question 7/1, "Universal access/service". A secondary relationship exists with Question 12/1, "Tariff policies, tariff models and methods of determining the cost of national telecommunication services".

***v) Proposed Work Plan***

- i) Analyze the Question, and the specified expected outcome.
- ii) Determine the existing sources of information, knowledge, expertise and interest.
- iii) Establish a network of collaborators/active experts. This network should include at least one person from each country where an ITU-D supported MCT Pilot Project is active and/or planned. Also make every effort to involve all other countries where MCTs are active. Review step ii) with the now-established network, and enhance as appropriate.
- iv) From the identified sources, and making use of the established network, determine what is known and relevant, and take steps to capture this information.
- v) Determine what is relevant and necessary to respond to the Question, and is not known. Develop an action plan to obtain or develop this information, and implement the action plan.
- vi) Aggregate all the relevant information, both that which is already known and captured, and that which is obtained through the action plan. Analyze and synthesize the information, in the context of the Question.
- vii) From this work, develop tentative Conclusions. From the tentative Conclusions, develop draft Recommendations. Through the established network, review and test the analysis and synthesis of the information, the tentative Conclusions, and the draft Recommendations. Update, enhance and adjust as appropriate. Note that more than one iteration of this work is likely to be necessary.
- viii) Develop "draft final" Conclusions and Recommendations. Mature these Conclusions and Recommendations through an additional iterative process, including participation in Regional Telecommunication Development Conferences if appropriate, so that they become mature and well accepted Conclusions and Recommendations.

***vi) Report of the First Study Group Meeting***

The meeting endorsed the Question as shown in Document 2/019, approved Mr. David Barr (Canada) as Lead Associate Rapporteur, noting that an alternate candidate for this role would be welcome, and agreed with the Proposed Work Plan.

It was noted that this Question intends to develop planning guidelines for use in preparing network development plans to provide telecommunication services to rural and remote areas, and other underserved areas. Several of those present noted that such guidelines would be of great help in their current work.

**d) 10d/2. Definition of a set of indicators describing the state of development of a country's rural telecommunications network and services**

***i) Current Status***

Assessments of the sort indicated by the Question are in fact being made, every time potential investment decisions in the service provider role in developing countries are considered. A good starting point will be to establish contacts with those who are currently active in making such decisions, and understand in as much detail as possible how these decisions are being made today.

***ii) Project Leadership***

Efforts are being made to involve as Lead Associate Rapporteur a person who is currently active in making investment decisions of this nature. The selection of an appropriate Lead Associate Rapporteur continued to be pending after the first Study Group meeting.

***iii) Relationship with the Valletta Action Plan Programmes***

The primary relationship is with *VAP Programme 5 : Development partnership with the private sector*. Progress made by this Project will be very helpful to Programme 5 in providing an assessment tool to be used in considering opportunities for joint ventures and partnerships in developing countries with private sector organizations, in the context of Programme 5.

There is also a possible secondary relationship with *VAP Programme 4: Finance and economics, including WTO issues, tariffs, accounting rates, etc.* The form and content of this relationship will depend on the progress and direction of work on this Project and on Programme 4.

***iv) Relationship with the Other ITU-D Study Group Questions***

The primary relationship is with Question 11/1, "Factors to create a climate favourable to investment". A secondary relationship exists with Question 12/1, "Tariff policies, tariff models and methods of determining the cost of national telecommunication services".

***v) Proposed Work Plan***

- i) Analyze the Question, and the specified expected outcome.
- ii) Determine the existing sources of information, knowledge, expertise and interest. In many cases, these will be private sector organizations that are currently active in investing in telecom service providing organizations in developing countries.
- iii) Establish a network of collaborators/active experts. Review step ii) with this network, and enhance as appropriate.
- iv) From the identified sources, and making use of the established network, determine what is known and relevant, and take steps to capture this information.
- v) Determine what is relevant and necessary to respond to the Question, and is not known. Develop an action plan to obtain or develop this information, and implement the action plan.
- vi) Aggregate all the relevant information, both already known and captured, and obtained through the action plan. Analyze and synthesize the information, in the context of the Question.
- vii) From this work, develop tentative Conclusions. From the tentative Conclusions, develop draft Recommendations. Through the established network, review and test the analysis and synthesis of the information, the tentative Conclusions, and the draft Recommendations. Update, enhance and adjust as appropriate. Note that more than one iteration is likely to be necessary.

viii) Develop "draft final" Conclusions and Recommendations. Mature these Conclusions and Recommendations through an additional iterative process, including participation in Regional Telecommunication Development Conferences if appropriate, so that they become mature and well accepted Conclusions and Recommendations.

**vi) *Report of the First Study Group Meeting***

The meeting endorsed the Question as shown in Document 2/019. No candidate has yet been identified to fill the role of Lead Associate Rapporteur. The meeting agreed that the Lead Associate Rapporteur should preferably have experience in the area of the evaluation of potential financial investment opportunities which involve the ROAs of developing countries.

The meeting endorsed the Proposed Work Plan, noting of course that the Lead Associate Rapporteur, when selected, will of course be expected to adjust the Work Plan as he/she considers to be appropriate.

**e) 10e/2. Sound and television broadcasting and communication for rural and remote areas**

**i) *Current Status***

Work which is relevant to this Question was carried out under Question 8/2 - "Public service broadcasting infrastructure in developing countries" in the previous Study Period. Under this previous Question, a survey of public service broadcasters was carried out. The results of this survey will provide a solid foundation and springboard for the work of the current Question.

**ii) *Project Leadership***

Efforts are being made to involve as Lead Associate Rapporteur a person from a developing country who is experienced in sound and television broadcasting. The selection of an appropriate Lead Associate Rapporteur continued to be pending after the first Study Group meeting.

**iii) *Relationship with the Valletta Action Plan Programmes***

The primary relationship of this Project is with *Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access*. This Programme specifically includes broadcasting within the areas which it will address. Appropriately close coordination and mutual sharing of information with Programme 3 will be appropriate.

**iv) *Relationship with the Other ITU-D Study Group Questions***

The primary relationship is with Question 13/2, "Methods to enhance the viability of public service broadcasting, particularly focussing on developing countries." There is also a secondary relationship with Question 11/2, "Examine digital broadcasting technologies and systems, including cost/benefit analyses, assessment of demands on human resources, interoperability of digital systems with existing analogue networks, and methods of migration from analogue to digital technique."

**v) *Proposed Work Plan***

i) Analyze the Question, and the specified expected outcome.

ii) Determine the existing sources of information, knowledge, expertise and interest. In particular, examine the work carried out under Question 8/2 in the previous study period.

iii) Establish a network of collaborators/active experts. Review step ii) with the network of experts, and enhance as appropriate.

- iv) From the identified sources, and making use of the established network, determine what is known and relevant, and take steps to capture the appropriate information.
- v) Determine what is relevant and necessary to respond to the Question, and is not known. Develop an action plan to obtain or develop this information, and implement the action plan.
- vi) Aggregate all the relevant information, both already known and captured, and obtained through the action plan. Analyze and synthesize the information, in the context of the Question.
- vii) From this work, develop tentative Conclusions. From the tentative Conclusions, develop draft Recommendations. Through the established network, review and test the analysis and synthesis of the information, the tentative Conclusions, and the draft Recommendations. Update, enhance and adjust as appropriate. Note that more than one iteration is likely to be necessary.
- viii) Develop "draft final" Conclusions and Recommendations. Mature these Conclusions and Recommendations through an additional iterative process, including participation in Regional Telecommunication Development Conferences if appropriate, so that they become mature and well accepted Conclusions and Recommendations.

*vi) Report of the First Study Group Meeting*

The meeting endorsed the Question as shown in Document 2/019. No candidate has yet been identified to fill the role of Lead Associate Rapporteur. Discussion is in progress with the hope of selecting an individual as Lead Associate Rapporteur who has extensive experience in the area of sound and television broadcasting in developing countries. The meeting agreed that this would be appropriate.

The meeting endorsed the Proposed Work Plan, noting of course that the Lead Associate Rapporteur, when selected, will of course be expected to adjust the Work Plan as he/she considers to be appropriate.

**f) 10f/2. Measurement of the impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in rural and remote areas**

*i) Current Status*

It is widely accepted, at least among development-oriented ICT professionals, that the advent of ICT in rural and remote areas has a significant positive impact on the lives of those who live in these areas. However, this is largely a leap of faith. To the extent that measurement studies have been carried out, they have generally been of availability and usage of various aspects of the provided ICT, not measurements of fundamental impact on the lives of the local population.

Under this Question, the intention is to seek to relate the impact of the availability and usage of ICT with more fundamental measures of human well-being, in areas such as literacy, health, nutrition, and basic measures of economic, social, cultural and political development. A hoped-for outcome is the ability to establish and quantify, with reasonable accuracy and well accepted authenticity, the benefits of bringing ICT to rural and remote areas. This ability will then be used to support more aggressive initiatives to promote "Integrated Rural Development" programs at the national level.

There is much potentially relevant information available. As noted in the Definition of the Question, organizations that may be useful sources of relevant information include other UN agencies, IFIs, development agencies (e.g., *inter alia*, CIDA, IDRC, SIDA, USAID), NGOs and others. *A side benefit of work on the Question may well be better coordination among these organizations.*

The issue of granularity must be considered. Again as noted in the Definition of the Question, the intention is to develop the ability to measure the impact of ICT on entities as small as a village, and as large as a sovereign nation. This issue will require careful attention, and different indicators may be required, depending on the size, and perhaps other characteristics, of the entity being addressed.

**ii) *Project Leadership***

Noting the intention to focus on measurements which are currently used outside the telecommunications industry, it would seem desirable that the Lead Associate Rapporteur should come from an organization that is a leader in the use of these sorts of measurements. This possibility is being explored, but it may not be a practical arrangement. The selection of an appropriate Lead Associate Rapporteur continued to be pending after the first Study Group meeting.

**iii) *Relationship with the Valletta Action Plan Programmes***

The primary relationship of this Project is with *Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access*. Programme 3 will be specifically focussing on ICT in rural and remote areas, largely in cooperation with initiatives that are already in place, including, inter alia, the Partnership on Information and Communications for Africa (PICTA) and Africa's Information Society Initiative (AIS). Close coordination and mutual sharing of information between this Project and Programme 3 will be appropriate.

**iv) *Relationship with the Other ITU-D Study Group Questions***

There does not appear to be a primary relationship with any other Study Group Question. There are secondary relationships, that warrant ongoing liaison, with Question 10/1, "Regulatory impact of the phenomenon of convergence within the telecommunications, broadcasting, information technology and content sectors", Question 13/1, "Promotion of infrastructure and use of the Internet in developing countries" and Question 14/2, "Fostering the application of telecommunications in health care".

**v) *Proposed Work Plan***

- i) Analyze the Question, and the specified expected outcome.
- ii) Determine the existing sources of information, knowledge, expertise and interest. As noted above, this will largely involve organizations which are not in the telecommunications industry.
- iii) Establish a network of collaborators/active experts. Seek to include representation from all organizations that are major practitioners of this type of work. Review step ii) with the network, and enhance as appropriate.
- iv) From the identified sources, and making use of the established network, determine what is known and relevant, and take steps to capture it.
- v) Determine what is relevant and necessary to respond to the Question, and is not known. Develop an action plan to obtain or develop this information, and implement the action plan.
- vi) Aggregate all the relevant information, both already known and captured, and obtained through the action plan. Analyze and synthesize the information, in the context of the Question.
- vii) From this work, develop tentative Conclusions. From the tentative Conclusions, develop draft Recommendations. Through the established network, review and test the analysis and synthesis of the information, the tentative Conclusions, and the draft Recommendations. Update, enhance and adjust as appropriate. Note that more than one iteration is likely to be necessary.
- viii) Carry out several "Pilot Project" impact measurement studies, applying the indicators and measurement techniques that have been selected/developed to specific rural and remote areas where

Integrated Rural Development Programs have been implemented. Document and review the degree of relationship discovered. If there is found to be a reasonable level of relationship, continuing and increased use of the indicators and measurements should be encouraged, in advance of their formal approval.

ix) Develop "draft final" Conclusions and Recommendations. Mature these Conclusions and Recommendations through an additional iterative process, including participation in Regional Telecommunication Development Conferences if appropriate, so that they become mature and well accepted Conclusions and Recommendations.

*vi) Report of the First Study Group Meeting*

The meeting endorsed the Question as shown in Document 2/019. No candidate has yet been identified to fill the role of Lead Associate Rapporteur. It is hoped that an individual can be found who will act as Lead Associate Rapporteur, who has extensive experience in the area of fundamental measures and indicators of "the human condition", and/or "human and societal wellness", with particular emphasis on developing countries. It may well be that the appropriate person is associated or experienced with another agency within the UN System. The meeting agreed that a person with such experience would be suitable for this role.

The meeting endorsed the Proposed Work Plan, noting of course that the Lead Associate Rapporteur, when selected, will of course be expected to adjust the Work Plan as he/she considers to be appropriate.

**g) 10g/2. Enhancing the capacity of NGOs to achieve development aims, through the use of telecommunications**

*i) Current Status*

This Question represents a new initiative for the ITU-D, specifically addressing NGOs in considering telecommunications needs and opportunities. The initiative is timely and appropriate, noting that NGOs work extensively in developing countries, largely in the rural and remote areas, and that telecommunications can significantly assist and support their work.

*ii) Project Leadership*

The Lead Associate Rapporteur is Mr. Seán O'Siochru, who represents the Platform for Cooperation in Communication and Democratization. The Platform is an association of some 17 NGOs, most of which have agreed to participate in the work on the Question.

*iii) Relationship with the Valletta Action Plan Programmes*

The primary relationship of this Project is with *Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access*. By its nature, the work which is planned under Programme 3 will involve rural and remote areas where there will be active NGOs. Within its mandate, Programme 3 will be exploring telecommunications needs and opportunities, which will include those that involve the NGOs. Coordination and sharing of information will be appropriate.

**iv) Relationship with the Other ITU-D Study Group Questions**

The primary relationship is with Question 7/1, "Universal access/service". There are secondary relationships warranting ongoing liaison with Question 10/1, "Regulatory impact of the phenomenon of convergence within the telecommunications, broadcasting, information technology and content sectors", Question 13/1, "Promotion of infrastructure and use of the Internet in developing countries" and Question 14/2, "Fostering the application of telecommunications in health care".

**v) Proposed Work Plan**

The proposed Work Plan for this Question appears in the revised Definition of the Question, Section 8, "Method of Handling this Question or Issue".

As the work on this Project approaches maturity, participation in Regional Telecommunication Development Conferences may be appropriate, to provide a vehicle to share the progress with a wider audience and establish the relevance and value of the work.

**vi) Report of the First Study Group Meeting**

A modest revision of the Question was proposed (ref. Document 2/003) which was mainly editorial in nature, the substantive change being the proposal that the Question be handled by a Focus Group. The meeting agreed that this would be appropriate, and approved this change. Mr. Sean O Siochru (Ireland) was approved as Lead Associate Rapporteur. The meeting was in general agreement with the proposed method of handling the Question, noting, of course, that the Focus Group activity would be carried out separately from the work of the Study Group. The proposed Schedule indicates that the outcome of the Focus Group work is expected to be available for the Study Group meeting in September, 1999.

The formation of the Focus Group will involve participation from Study Group 1 and from the BDT. It will be helpful if the BDT person who takes part in the Focus Group is involved in VAP *Programme 3 : Rural development and universal service/access*. The Study Group will maintain appropriate liaison with the Focus Group as its work progresses.

#### **4. Regional Liaison**

In all Regions of the world, there is a need to provide telecommunication services to populations which live in rural and remote areas and other underserved areas. All Regions have experience and knowledge to contribute, as to how best this can be carried out, and all Regions will benefit from the experience and knowledge that can be provided by others. This is true for Question 10/2, "Communications for rural and remote areas", and also for the other Questions being addressed by both ITU-D Study Groups.

Noting that not all countries are able to send representatives to meetings of the ITU-D Study Groups in Geneva, there would be advantages, where it is practical, in addressing some or all of the Questions of the ITU-D Study Groups on a Regional basis, with an appropriate linkage to the Study Group meetings in Geneva. It is thought that this arrangement could considerably increase the number of countries which are involved in the work on the ITU-D Study Group Questions.

In principle, under this arrangement, experience and knowledge would be brought by representatives of individual countries to the Regional meetings, their input would be reviewed, evaluated and aggregated at these meetings, and selected representatives from the Region would

bring the results to Geneva as Contributions to ITU-D Study Group meetings. The results of the Geneva meetings would flow back to the Regional bodies and to the individual countries through the same route in the reverse direction.

With this possibility in mind, the World Telecom Development Conference decided to appoint five Vice Chairmen for each of the two Study Groups of the ITU-D, selected on a Regional basis.

For this Question 10/2, "Communications for rural and remote areas", it is hoped to address the establishment of arrangements for Regional liaison, for those Regions in which this is practical along the lines described above, at the first meeting of Study Group 2.

## **5. Selection of Associate Rapporteurs for Work on the Individual "Lettered" Questions of Question 10/2**

Many of those present at the meeting indicated a willingness to be involved in one or several of the individual "lettered Questions" which comprise Question 10/2. The current Table of Associate Rapporteurs is attached. The list remains open, and additional participation as Associate Rapporteurs is encouraged.

## **6. Progress of the Work on the Question**

It is expected that the Work on the Question will be progressed by electronic means, to the extent that this is practical. While the use of E-mail is recommended where this is feasible, a good alternative is the transmission of documents by facsimile.

The next meeting of the Study Group is scheduled for September, 1999. In preparation for this meeting, which will be held in Geneva, it is planned that each of group of Associate Rapporteurs which is addressing a "lettered Question" of Question 10/2 will meet face-to-face in the month of June, 1999. Exact timing of these meetings, and the planned venue(s), are for further study.

## **7. In Conclusion**

The work of the last Study Period made much progress in understanding how best to provide telecommunication services in rural and remote areas. There is now a solid understanding of the basic arrangements which work best in rural and remote areas. These are documented in the Recommendations developed by Question 4/2 and approved by the Valletta Conference.

In this Study Period, under Question 10/2, we will build on that work, and move to address more widely varied aspects. Much remains to be done, to be pursued in this Study Period under the seven specific Projects of Question 10/2.

Telecommunication services are by their nature connected and integrated. So also, the many aspects of work on Question 10/2 must be connected and integrated, among the seven specific Projects, with the VAP Programmes, with the other Questions of the ITU-D Study Groups, and of course with the experience and knowledge in the home countries and Regions of those who are participating in the work.

In the traditional spirit of cooperation of the International Telecommunication Union, we have the opportunity to make much progress.

---