

Question 10-2/2: Telecommunications for rural and remote areas

1 Statement of the situation

The ITU membership, particularly the developing and least developed countries, is in great need of information on and examination of means to address the challenge of providing access to telecommunication services in rural and remote areas.

The Geneva Declaration of Principles stressed that "infrastructure is an essential foundation for an inclusive information society" (see Principle 2), and also "connect villages with ICTs and establish community access points" is the first item of the Geneva Plan of Action. In this respect, the deployment of shared access infrastructure, including multipurpose community telecentres (MCT), public call offices (PCO) and community access centres (CAC) is often the first step along the path leading to the goal of provision of individual telecommunication access.

Decisions that may drive first the examination and then the choice of particular techniques and solutions for the provision of telecommunication services may be influenced by, *inter alia*, the following:

- a) Increasing availability of technologies that provide enhanced capabilities at progressively lower costs.
- b) Experience gained in many parts of the world in developing, implementing and refining major rural telecommunications programmes, as more countries respond to particular situations and in-country demand using "best practices" as outlined in the work of ITU-D.
- c) The influence of cultural, social and other factors in producing differing and often creative responses to meeting the demand for telecommunication services from residents of rural and remote areas of developing and least developed countries.
- d) Progress being steadily made on human resource development/management issues which are fundamental to establishing sustainable telecommunication infrastructure.

2 Question for study

There are a variety of issues that members will be interested in addressing within the four years of the Question. It is proposed that the key issue for study is the range and scope of techniques and solutions that are expected to play a significant role in the provision of telecommunications for rural and remote areas. It is further proposed that the study should progress in stages to cover a four-year cycle in the following manner:

- Step 1 – Identification of the full range of potential techniques and solutions that can significantly impact on the provision of telecommunication services in rural and remote areas, with emphasis on those that employ the latest technology designed to lower infrastructure capital and operating costs.
- Step 2 – Investigate and report on how the techniques identified above can be used to best deliver the range of services and applications required by rural and remote communities and adapted to the needs of users.
- Step 3 – Make an assessment of the likely commercial viability or sustainability of the techniques and solutions identified in the above steps.
- Step 4 – Report on a range of case studies that clearly demonstrate how a range of techniques, based on new technology aimed at providing reduced capital and operating cost solutions and enhancing community participation, can maximize the benefits of telecommunication infrastructure in rural and remote areas.

In dealing with the above studies, the work under way in response to other Questions being dealt with in ITU-D, and close coordination with relevant activities of the Questions, in particular Questions 18-1/2, 20-2/2 and also Questions 7-2/2 and 18-1/1 (Study Group 1), are highly relevant. In the same way, the studies shall take into account cases related to indigenous communities, isolated and poorly served areas and small islands, and highlight their particular needs and other particular situations which need to be considered in developing communications for these areas.

3 Expected output

The output will be a report on the results of the work conducted for each step above, together with one or more recommendations at appropriate times, either during the course of or at the conclusion of the cycle.

4 Timing

Output will be generated on a yearly basis. The output from the first year will be analysed and assessed in order to update the work plan for the next year, and so on.

5 Proposers

The Question was originally approved by WTDC-94, revised by WTDC-98, WTDC-02 and WTDC-06.

6 Sources of input

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

Target audience	Developed countries	Developing countries	Least developed countries (LDCs)
Telecom policy-makers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Telecom regulators	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service providers/operators	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manufacturers	Yes	Yes	Yes

a) Target audience

Depending on the nature of the output, upper- to middle-level managers among operators and regulators in developing and least developed countries are the predominant users of the output.

b) Proposed methods for the implementation of the results

To be decided during the study period.

8 Proposed methods of handling the Question

Within Study Group 2.

9 Coordination

The ITU-D study group dealing with this Question will need to coordinate with:

- Relevant focal points in BDT.
- Coordinators of relevant project activities in BDT.
- Regional and scientific organizations with mandates covering the subject matter of the Question.

10 Other relevant information

As may become apparent within the life of this Question.
