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Building Digital Bridges Edition 2005



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This report looks at efforts by stakeholders at the local, national and international level to bridge the digital divide. It reviews the role of new technologies, multi-stakeholder partnerships and ICT indices in reducing the gap, taking an in-depth look at the cases of Australia, Hong Kong, India, Korea (Rep. of) and Malaysia. The report also proposes a methodology for the development of a composite Digital Opportunity Index (DOI).

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Building Digital Bridges

Edition 2005

This report presents an extended summary and a selection of background papers and case studies prepared for two conferences that were held in 2004 and 2005 in the Republic of Korea as part of the Digital Bridges Initiative: The *ITU – KADO Digital Bridges Symposium* and the *WSIS Thematic Meeting on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Bridging the Digital Divide*. The Digital Bridges initiative was launched in 2004 as an ongoing project of the partnership of the Ministry of Information and Communication of the Republic of Korea (MIC) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to promote the achievement of the goals adopted during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), particularly those dealing with measuring and bridging the digital divide.

The ever-evolving nature of the digital divide highlights several key issues that need to be addressed: first, the need to measure the magnitude of the divide; second, the type of instruments available to measure it; and third, the different approaches available for bridging the divide. This report covers these three issues, examining the efforts that have been made to measure the digital divide at the national and international levels, studying in depth the cases of the Republic of Korea, Australia and Hong Kong, China. The report also considers the use of composite indices to measure the digital divide and discusses the proposed methodology for the Digital Opportunity Index, which has been applied to 40 leading economies.

Finally, *Building Digital Bridges* looks at promising approaches to improve access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in developing countries, in particular through the use of multi-stakeholder partnerships and emerging wireless technologies. The case studies of India and Malaysia illustrate the potential of wireless technologies, such as WiMAX and Wi-Fi, to promote access in rural and isolated communities in developing countries by linking them to the edges of existing backbone infrastructure. By sharing scarce resources and drawing on the core competencies of different stakeholders, partnerships between governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations improve efficiency and contribute to the creation of a more inclusive Information Society.

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