

International Telecommunication Union

SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Integrating LDCs into the World Information Society

Telecommunication Development Bureau



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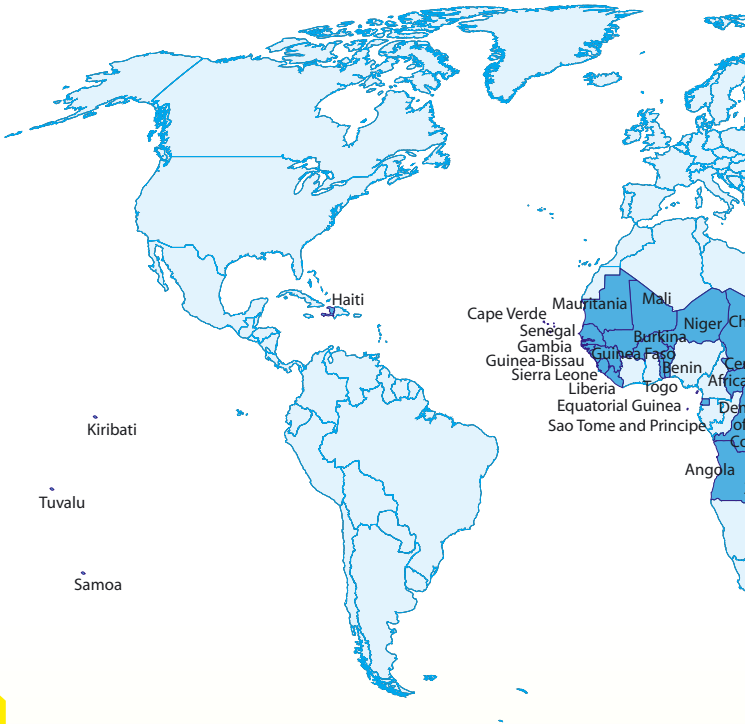
WELCOME TO OUR PROGRAMME FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES: INITIATIVE WITH A GLOBAL REACH

If we are to be honest with ourselves, Marshall McLuhan's seminal concept of a "global village", otherwise referred to in today's parlance as the "global information society", is still "pie in the sky" to come in the "sweet bye and bye". A group of 49 countries from diverse geographical locations remain – with the majority of their people, who are basically rural based – unconnected. Yet we hear all the time about the ongoing globalization of the world.

It is not all gloom and doom, however, because a lot of giant strides have been made since the first resolution on the need to assist the least developed countries was introduced at the first session of UNCTAD in 1964 and eventually adopted at UNCTAD II in 1968. Within the International Telecommunication Union, the oldest specialized agency of the United Nations family, efforts have been ongoing to provide catalytic help to this special group of countries, resulting in the establishment of a dedicated Unit to oversee the delivery of ICT services and applications that are of high quality, appropriate, and relevant to the needs of these countries. The objective is to respond to the call for assistance in a timely way, and to deliver that assistance in an efficient and effective manner.

In so doing, our motto remains: Forward ever, backward never! Yes, there will be constraints. Yes, there will be setbacks. Yes, resources will always be scarce considering the scale and magnitude of the challenges before us. However, we believe that this task is not ours alone, but a shared task with all other stakeholders that share our commitment to help develop ICTs in the least developed countries so that they may one day enjoy Universal Access. This is important because a truly global information society is one that has representation from all communities, all societies and all countries.

WHO ARE THE LDCs?



In 1971, the international community recognized the existence of this category of countries whose distinctness lies in the profound poverty of their people and in the weakness of their economic, institutional and human resources, often compounded by geophysical handicaps. Currently, there are 49 countries identified

The LDCs are defined as low-income countries that are suffering from long-term handicaps to growth, in particular low levels of human resources development and/or severe structural weaknesses.



as least developed countries. These countries are particularly ill-equipped to develop their domestic economies which are so vulnerable to external shocks or natural disasters. Thus, the group represents the weakest segment of humanity and presents a major challenge to its development partners.

INTEGRATING THE LDCs THROUGH INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

ITU has a focused and highly differentiated programme designed to hasten the integration of the least developed countries into the world economy through information and communication technologies. The programme seeks to increase the average telephone density to 5 main lines (ML) per 100 inhabitants and the number of Internet connections to 10 users per 100 inhabitants by 2010 (year of the fourth United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries). In delivering assistance, ITU is guided by five key priority areas, outlined below, that were adopted at the last World Telecommunication Development Conference held in 2002 in Istanbul, Turkey.

a. Development of rural telecommunications:

This priority area is designed to bring about easy access to telecommunication services in the rural areas where a majority of the population in LDCs lives. It should also stimulate rural industries, improve education delivery, usher in a host of social benefits and stem population migration to cities. Ultimately, it should bring about universal access to telecommunication services.

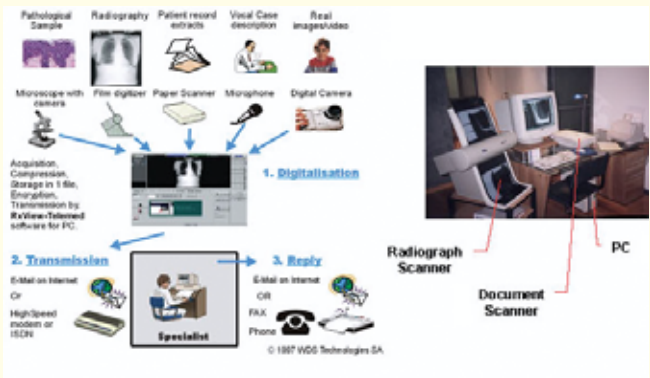


First rural payphone in use at Gaire Village, Papua New Guinea
Source: P & T Corp.

b. Development of infrastructure and introduction of new technologies and services:

It is intended to continue assisting LDCs in technological choice. The introduction of new technologies and techniques requires caution, so as to avoid prematurely withdrawing old equipment from service and incurring undue interworking

penalties. Assistance will mainly be extended to cover telecommunications and information and communication technologies as well as associated services including the Internet and its applications and wireless access systems (both fixed and mobile).



c. Sector restructuring:

The priority here is designed to continue the process of sector restructuring, to bring about liberalization and competition and, possibly, privatization as applicable. All these should induce faster network growth and better management of the sector such that countries derive higher benefits from it. Assistance will be extended to the new regulatory bodies in various areas ranging from measures to implement universal access strategies to the creation of various tools required by the regulator. Assistance may also be extended to the new fledgling companies on a cost-recovery basis.

d. Human resources development/management:

This is an important all-encompassing area which must be maintained virtually ad infinitum because human resources are the most valuable asset of an entity. It will embrace the traditional



Computer literacy
Source: PhotoDisc.

HRD/HRM activities involving training and retraining of personnel in areas such as modern management techniques and management of telecommunication networks, including their maintenance.

e. **Financing and partnerships:**

Partnerships are essential for the implementation of the Special Programme for LDCs. These partnerships should be aimed at pooling resources and directing the aggregated resources to LDCs so as to avoid duplication of effort and wastage of resources as well as to avoid spreading the meagre resources thinly, resulting in no or little impact being made in beneficiary countries. For this reason, annual partnership round tables will be held for a group of countries benefiting from BDT's concentrated assistance. Tangible projects will be presented to development partners and clarification sought by development partners from country representatives.



Forging partnerships
Source: ITU/Cosmas Zavazava.

A THOUSAND-MILE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH THAT FIRST STEP

Programming of assistance to LDCs began in earnest in 2000. Since then, the programme has been refined and fine-tuned with the main aim of “getting results”. The table below shows the different countries from all the world’s regions that have benefited from our concentrated assistance. Although the idea is to ensure that all the LDCs receive intensive “feeding” in the shortest possible time, we have refrained from random delivery of that assistance and have preferred to select a small group of countries each year, consult them on what their priorities are, develop unique plans for delivering assistance, then deliver this assistance over a period of two years in part, using the second year for monitoring and evaluating the absorption of the given assistance.

Year	Beneficiary countries
2000	Cambodia, Chad, Comoros, Ethiopia, Haiti, Sudan, Tanzania
2001	Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Yemen
2002	Bhutan, Central African Rep., Djibouti, Haiti, Kiribati, Malawi, Mali, Zambia
2003	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Central African Rep., Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Djibouti, Lao P.D.R., Malawi, Mali, Somalia, Uganda, Zambia
2004	Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Guinea, Lao P.D.R., Mauritania, Myanmar, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda
2005	Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Chad, Guinea, Madagascar, Mauritania, Myanmar, Rwanda, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sudan
To benefit in 2006	Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Comoros, Kiribati, Lesotho, Madagascar, Nepal, Niger, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Sudan

It is envisaged that, by year 2010 (year of the 4th United Nations Conference for the LDCs), all the least developed countries will have benefited from ITU’s Programme for the Least Developed Countries.

Making a Difference

We believe that, through our activities over the past few years, we have made a huge difference in these countries. There was a positive impact on assistance to LDCs as evident from current statistics. For instance, by end of 2001, out of the 49 LDCs, 36 had a combined (fixed and mobile) teledensity above one (1). By end of 2003, 14 LDCs had above five (5) total telephone subscribers (fixed and mobile) per 100 inhabitants, while 31 countries had above two (2) telephone lines (fixed and mobile) per 100 inhabitants and only 7 remain with teledensities that are still below one (1). In 2004, 19 LDCs achieved the targets for information and communication technologies (ICTs) set by the Brussels Plan of Action of an average teledensity of five (5) main lines (ML) per 100 inhabitants and 10 Internet users per 100 inhabitants by the year 2010. Remarkably, teledensity and Internet penetration have almost doubled in the majority of the least developed countries since 2001. Whilst our assistance has had a positive causal impact on connectivity, access, and knowhow, we believe that today's achievements are a result of the work of all the players who are active in trying to deliver digital opportunities to the many people in the LDCs. For that reason, we live by our commitment to building strong partnerships that have a shared vision with us.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)

Partnerships are essential for the implementation of the Special Programme for LDCs. Multilateral organizations and in particular the private sector can help make a difference by accelerating the pace of telecommunication development in LDCs. With the forces of sector reform and globalization opening up the telecommunication sector to liberalization and privatization, and to possible strategic alliances, mergers and acquisitions, the environment is ripe for any permutation of partnerships. BDT prides itself on having a policy of positive engagement with the private sector and neutrality in building partnerships. This was evident at the very successful Partnership Round Tables held for the benefit of these countries over the past few years. The first one was held in Geneva in 2000, followed by a very successful one held in Johannesburg (South Africa) in 2001, with another in Arusha (Tanzania) in 2002. In 2003, three such events were held – in Coventry (United Kingdom), Lebanon (Beirut) and Mexico City (Mexico). In 2004, ITU held the “Global ICT Forum for Least Developed Countries” aimed at bringing all partners (governments, private sector, development banks, telecom operators, regulatory authorities, etc.) under one roof to draw up strategies for fast-tracking the entry of these countries into the information society.

The importance of partnerships was once again demonstrated at the 2003 Geneva first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, where numerous partnership agreements were signed. These partnerships were forged between certain LDC governments, the private sector and ITU, thus paving the way for the implementation of the Plan of Action adopted by the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.

SELECTED SUCCESS STORIES

The third United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries, held in Brussels from 14 to 20 May 2001, gathered the world's 49 lowest income countries. At this conference, a Programme of Action (POA) was adopted based on international development targets aimed at accelerating growth and sustainable development, and thereby integrating the LDCs into the Global Information Society.



View of the Plenary of the third United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries
Source: PhotoDisc.

Of significant importance is the incorporation of the objectives of ITU's Special Programme for LDCs into the Brussels POA. The POA sets, as targets for telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for LDCs, an average teledensity of five (5) main lines (ML) per 100 inhabitants and 10 Internet users per 100 inhabitants by the year 2010.

Hereafter is a list of LDC countries that have reached this target, thus becoming success stories.

Total telephone subscribers per 100 inhabitants

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004
Cape Verde	21.62	25.11	27.26	29.49
Equatorial Guinea	4.66	8.08	9.41	
Gambia	6.98	10.42		
Haiti	2.07	3.25	5.52	6.40
Kiribati	4.67	5.68		
Lesotho	3.63	5.79	6.28	10.90
Maldives	16.76	25.11	33.65	44.13
Mauritania	5.18	10.39	14.14	
Samoa	6.81	8.03	13.05	
Sao Tome and Principe	3.63	5.44	7.76	
Senegal	5.50	6.75	7.77	
Solomon Islands	1.22	1.37	2.50	5.83
Sudan	1.73	2.63	4.40	6.02
Togo	3.02	4.54	5.61	
Tuvalu	6.84			
Vanuatu	3.61	5.69	6.90	7.96
Yemen	3.05	4.89	6.87	9.02

Internet users per 100 inhabitants

Country	2001	2003	2004
Sao Tome and Principe	6.00	9.87	12.20
Tuvalu	10.53	18.75	30.00

While much progress has been registered with respect to teledensities, a lot remains to be accomplished in bringing Internet connections and its related applications and services to the peoples of the least developed countries.

COUNTRIES IN SPECIAL NEED

Currently, there are twelve countries categorized by ITU as “Countries in Special Need”. These are least developed countries that may have suffered from natural disasters, or gone through periods of armed conflict, civil strife or war, and have all seen considerable damage to their telecommunication infrastructure. ITU provides “seed money” for the reconstruction of the damaged networks and is continuously seeking partners willing to co-finance projects in these countries.



Manjil earthquake in Iran's Zanzan province
Source: Eslami Rad.

Projects are primarily in four key areas:

- Development of infrastructure and introduction of new technologies
- Reconstruction of telecommunication infrastructure
- Development of rural telecommunications
- Sector restructuring
- Human resources development/management

Below is a complete list of countries falling into this category:

- Afghanistan
- Burundi
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Liberia
- Rwanda
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- Timor-Leste

Sustained assistance to countries in special need supports Action Plans adopted by ITU World Telecommunication Development Conferences, relevant Declarations of the United Nations Conferences for LDCs as well as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Summary of some of ITU's projects in countries in special need:

- Assistance for the establishment of sector governance in telecommunications for Timor-Leste
- The establishment of a multipurpose community telecentres network for refugees from Rwanda and Burundi in Tanzania
- Rebuilding of the rural telecommunication infrastructures of Burundi and Rwanda
- ICT Training Centre for Returnees in Liberia
- Restoring of the telecommunication and broadcasting infrastructures of Afghanistan
- Deployment of frequency management equipment and provision of training to government personnel in Sierra Leone
- Training of Somali engineers under a South-South arrangement

A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED: EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Within the framework of its overall mandate, through the Special Programme for the Least Developed Countries, the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union has worked assiduously to put in place a practical way of assisting countries – especially the most vulnerable, i.e. the LDCs and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – in disaster mitigation and relief. Consequently, a partnership agreement that has resulted in the procurement of Inmarsat GAN satellite terminals was signed between ITU and Inmarsat Limited. It is envisaged that, when a country is struck by a disaster that has either crippled the telecommunication network or is in an area where there is no communications infrastructure, these satellite terminals can be deployed in a relatively short time for use by a requesting Member State.



Example of satellite radiotelephony used in the case of a natural disaster

Source: INMARSAT.

Once order has been restored, the terminals are returned back to ITU for safe-keeping until another misfortune strikes elsewhere. This initiative is important as it is in keeping with relevant ITU-D



Floods

Source: American Red Cross.

World Telecommunication Development Conference resolutions and recommendations, and echoed by relevant ITU Plenipotentiary Conference ones.



Aftermath of the South East Asia Tsunami disaster of Sunday 26 December 2004

Source: ITU/Cosmas Zavazava .

Country	GDP per capita (USD)		Internet users per 100 inhabitants		
	2001	2003	2002	2003	2004
Afghanistan	-	-	-	0.10	0.10
Angola	660.56	-	0.29	0.59	1.22
Bangladesh	346.33	382.44	0.15	0.18	0.20
Benin	360.20	-	0.74	1.00	1.45
Bhutan	-	-	1.45	2.04	2.56
Burkina Faso	199.57	345.35	0.21	0.39	0.40
Burundi	96.55	84.56	0.11	0.20	0.35
Cambodia	253.77	292.84	0.22	0.25	0.28
Cape Verde	1274.86	-	3.55	4.36	5.30
Central African Rép.	265.48	-	0.13	0.14	0.23
Chad	211.62	329.47	0.19	0.37	0.68
Comoros	302.74	-	0.42	0.63	1.01
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	143.39	-	0.09	-	-
Djibouti	894.08	-	0.69	0.97	1.32
Equatorial Guinea	3788.94	4777.69	0.36	0.55	0.99
Eritrea	183.34	-	0.23	0.23	1.16
Ethiopia	95.86	-	0.07	0.11	0.16
Gambia	302.32	-	1.88	2.57	3.35
Guinea	380.69	-	0.46	0.52	5.75
Guinea-Bissau	162.21	-	1.12	1.48	1.99
Haiti	422.92	339.07	0.96	1.80	5.93
Kiribati	463.88	-	2.28	2.25	2.35
Lao P.D.R.	324.48	338.35	0.27	0.33	0.36
Lesotho	376.87	524.34	0.97	1.38	2.39
Liberia	172.00	-	-	-	-
Madagascar	292.38	66.80	0.35	0.43	0.50
Malawi	164.14	-	0.26	0.34	0.37
Maldives	2257.85	-	5.34	5.93	5.79
Mali	289.08	-	0.24	0.32	0.45
Mauritania	359.58	-	0.37	0.44	0.47
Mozambique	204.29	-	0.28	0.45	0.73
Myanmar	163.05	193.33	0.05	0.05	0.12
Nepal	240.71	247.48	0.34	0.42	0.68
Niger	155.30	193.67	0.13	0.15	0.19
Rwanda	209.18	210.39	0.31	0.37	0.45
Samoa	1427.77	-	2.22	2.74	3.33
Sao Tome and Principe	317.42	-	7.28	9.87	12.20
Senegal	470.31	-	1.04	2.17	4.66
Sierra Leone	196.86	215.83	0.16	0.18	0.19
Solomon Islands	610.73	-	0.50	0.52	0.61
Somalia	-	-	0.87	0.75	1.67
Sudan	394.28	-	0.91	2.81	3.30
Tanzania	281.37	-	0.23	0.71	0.88
Timor-Leste*	-	-	-	-	-
Togo	259.51	-	4.10	4.20	4.41
Tuvalu	-	-	13.07	18.75	3-
Uganda	245.77	251.40	0.40	0.49	0.75
Vanuatu	1112.52	-	3.46	3.61	3.46
Yemen	492.79	563.19	0.51	0.60	0.87
Zambia	343.94	-	0.48	0.98	2.11

*Not an ITU Member State.

Total telephone subscribers per 100 inhabitants			Population	
2002	2003	2004	2001	2004
0.25	1.18	2.61	22'474'000	24'926'000
1.54	2.99	-	13'528'000	14'078'000
1.26	1.56	3.44	131'175'000	149'665'000
4.14	4.31	-	6'583'782	6'918'000
2.84	4.52	6.08	673'987	735.000
1.46	2.39	3.58	11'667'771	13'393'000
1.06	1.23	-	6'860'000	7'068'000
3.01	3.78	-	13'440'000	14'482'000
25.11	27.26	29.49	442'452	472'000
0.55	1.20	1.79	3'782'000	3'912'000
0.58	0.96	1.54	7'664'827	8'854'000
1.35	1.91	-	727'000	790'000
1.08	-	-	52'522'000	54'417'000
3.83	4.97	-	644'000	680'000
8.08	9.41	-	470'000	507'000
0.90	0.92	1.38	3'816'000	4'296'000
0.60	0.77	-	65'390'000	72'420'000
10.42	-	-	1'291'900	1'462'000
1.52	1.78	-	7'579'660	8'000'000
0.89	0.92	-	1'227'000	1'308'000
3.25	5.52	6.40	8'270'000	8'437'000
5.68	-	-	86'118	85'000
2.12	3.21	4.82	5'393'000	5'787'000
5.79	6.28	10.90	2'160'000	1'800'000
-	-	-	3'108'000	3'487'000
1.40	2.10	-	15'492'295	17'901'000
1.52	2.10	2.55	10'385'849	12'337'000
25.11	33.65	44.13	275'300	328'000
1.03	2.82	4.28	10'400'000	11'101'000
10.39	14.14	-	2'614'409	2'980'000
1.87	2.77	-	17'653'239	18'961'503
0.75	0.81	0.96	51'137'000	54'000'000
1.51	1.78	2.25	22'736'934	25'724'000
0.33	0.81	1.39	11'227'000	12'415'000
1.32	1.86	1.91	7'949'000	8'481'000
8.03	13.05	-	178'600	180'000
5.44	7.76	-	150'000	164'000
6.75	7.77	-	9'802'775	10'339'000
1.84	-	-	4'932'000	5'169'000
1.71	1.62	-	432'269	491'000
1.37	2.50	5.83	9'823'000	12'000'000
2.63	4.40	6.02	31'957'000	34'512'000
2.68	3.37	-	33'596'000	37'671'000
-	-	-	750'000	820'000
4.54	5.61	-	4'750'000	5'017'000
-	-	-	9'500	10'000
1.81	3.27	4.63	23'833'000	26'699'000
5.69	6.90	7.96	196'900	217'000
4.89	6.87	9.02	18'862'999	20'732'000
2.08	2.94	-	10'580'000	10'924'000

OUR VISION



The Special Programme for the least developed countries (LDCs) will be valued for its quality and timely service aimed at integrating LDCs into the world economy through telecommunication development and its ability to positively impact the delivery of assistance to LDCs. In this effort, BDT will work with other like-minded actors to promote partnerships and sustainable development in LDCs.