

SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Integrating LDCs into the World Information Society

Telecommunication Development Bureau



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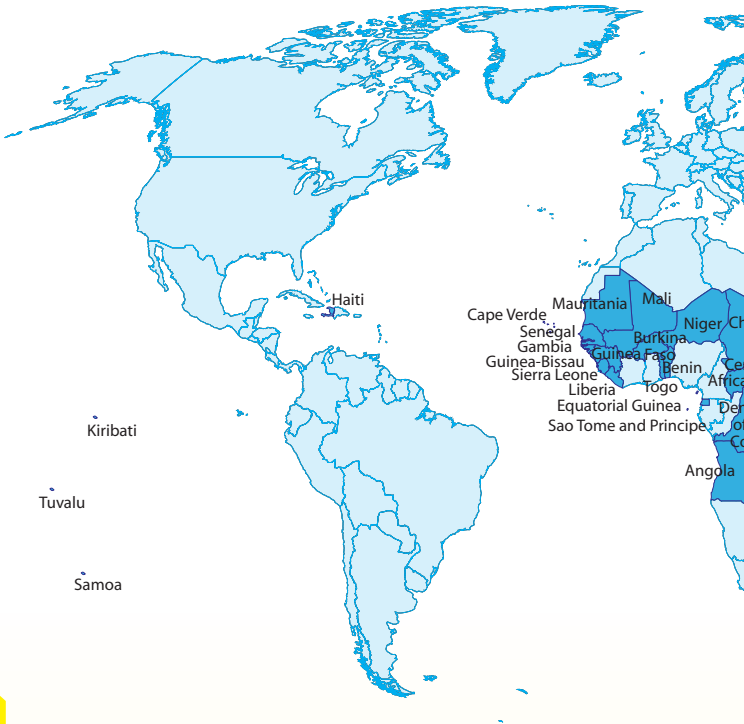
WELCOME TO OUR PROGRAMME FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES: INITIATIVE WITH A GLOBAL REACH

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. But, 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 these countries so that they may one day enjoy Universal Access. This is important because a truly global information society is one that has members of the least developed countries in it.

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 resource 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,

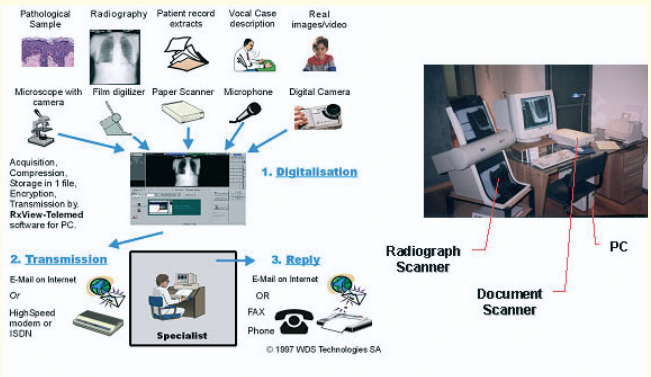


improve education delivery, usher in a host of social benefits and stem population migration to cities. Ultimately, it should bring about universal access to telecommunication services.

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 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.



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	Bhutan, Bangladesh, Lao P.D.R., Somalia, Djibouti, Mali, Central African Rep., Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia
2004	Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Guinea, Lao P.D.R., Mauritania, Myanmar, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda

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, 26 had a combined (fixed and mobile) teledensity above one (1). By end of 2003, 13 LDCs had above five (5) telephone lines per 100 inhabitants, while 23 countries had above two (2) telephone lines per 100 inhabitants and only 11 remain with teledensities that are still below one (1). Whilst our assistance has had a positive causal impact on connectivity, access, and know-how, 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).

The importance of partnerships was best demonstrated at the recently concluded first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in December 2003.



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.



Of significant importance is the incorporation into the POA of the objectives of ITU's Special Programme for LDCs. 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
Cape Verde	21.62	25.11	27.26
Gambia	6.98	10.42	
Equatorial Guinea	4.66	8.08	9.41
Kiribati	4.79	5.73	
Lesotho	3.63	5.79	
Maldives	16.76	25.11	
Mauritania	5.18	10.39	
Senegal	5.50	6.75	7.77
Sao Tome and Principe	3.63	5.44	7.76
Togo	3.02	5.00	5.61
Tuvalu	6.84		
Vanuatu	3.61	5.69	6.90
Samoa	6.81	8.03	

Internet users per 100 inhabitants

Country	2001	2003
Tuvalu	10.53	18.75

COUNTRIES IN SPECIAL NEED

Currently, there are 12 countries categorized by ITU as “Countries in Special Need”. These are countries that have gone through periods of armed conflict, civil strife or war and have 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.



Projects are primarily in four key areas:

- Development of infrastructure and introduction of new technologies
- 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
- East Timor
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Guinea
- Guinea Bissau
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Rwanda
- Sierra Leone



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 – in disaster mitigation and relief. Consequently, a partnership agreement that has resulted in the procurement of 15 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.



Once order has been restored, the terminals are returned back to ITU for safe-keeping until another misfortune has struck elsewhere. This is an important development as it is in keeping with the spirit of Resolution 34 and Recommendation 12 passed by the World Telecommunication Development Conference of 2002, and echoed by Resolution 36 of the Marrakesh Plenipotentiary Conference in 2002.



Country	Population		GDP per capita (USD)	
	2001	2003	2001	2002
Afghanistan	22'474'000	20'055'983	919.28	
Angola	13'528'000	14'358'000	0.00	714.63
Bangladesh	131'175'000	135'118'200	346.33	352.17
Benin	6'583'782	7'025'000	360.20	413.27
Bhutan	673'987	708'100		
Burkina Faso	11'667'771	12'258'000	199.57	219.92
Burundi	6'860'000	7'117'600	96.55	89.26
Cambodia	13'440'000	14'138'900	253.77	
Cape Verde	442'452	458'748	1238.66	
Central African Rep.	3'782'000	4'140'000	265.48	
Chad	7'664'827	8'084'000	211.62	
Comoros	727'000	799'000	302.74	
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	52'522'000	52'771'000	143.39	
Djibouti	644'000	668'000	894.08	
Equatorial Guinea	470'000	543'000	3788.94	4289.45
Eritrea	3'816'000	4'151'000		146.23
Ethiopia	65'390'000	69'363'000	95.86	
Gambia	1'291'900	1'364'507		
Guinea	7'579'660	7'751'000	380.69	
Guinea-Bissau	1'227'000	1'280'000	162.21	172.79
Haiti	8'270'000	8'326'000	422.92	379.72
Kiribati	86'118	89'046	463.88	
Lao P.D.R.	5'393'000	5'678'700	324.48	328.10
Lesotho	2'160'000	2'174'000	376.87	330.20
Liberia	3'108'000	3'372'000		
Madagascar	15'492'295	16'340'000	292.38	276.52
Malawi	10'385'849	10'488'000		
Maldives	275'300	286'800	2257.85	
Mali	10'400'000	10'863'000	289.08	318.47
Mauritania	2'614'409	2'752'000	359.58	364.67
Mozambique	17'656'000	18'831'000	204.29	214.98
Myanmar	48'363'000	49'615'000		
Nepal	22'736'934	23'678'600	240.71	236.87
Niger	11'227'000	12'291'000	155.30	165.48
Rwanda	7'949'000	8'399'000	207.61	
Sao Tome and Principe	150'000	152'000		331.13
Samoa	178'600	182'207	1427.77	
Senegal	9'802'775	10'359'000	470.31	505.68
Sierra Leone	4'932'000	4'971'000	151.89	
Solomon Islands	432'269	477'000	610.73	
Somalia	9'823'000	9'891'000		
Sudan	31'957'000	33'286'000	396.11	
Tanzania	33'596'000	35'313'000	271.43	
Togo	4'750'000	5'000'000	259.51	300.73
Tuvalu	9'500	9'600		
Uganda	23'833'000	25'599'000	245.77	243.33
Vanuatu	196'900	207'700	1112.52	
Yemen	18'862'999	20'148'200	492.79	512.92
Zambia	10'580'000	11'195'000		

Total telephone subscribers per 100 inhabitants			Internet users per 100 inhabitants		
2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
0.13	0.25	1.18		0.00	0.10
1.23	1.54		0.15	0.29	
0.83	1.26	1.56	0.14	0.15	0.18
2.80	4.14	4.31	0.38	0.74	1.00
2.60	2.84	4.69	0.74	1.45	2.12
1.15	1.46	2.39	0.16	0.21	0.39
0.75	1.06	1.23	0.10	0.11	0.20
1.91	3.01		0.07	0.22	
21.62	25.11	27.26	2.71	3.55	4.44
0.53	0.55		0.08	0.13	
0.43	0.58		0.05	0.19	
1.22	1.35	1.91	0.34	0.42	0.63
0.30	1.08		0.01	0.09	
2.01	3.83	4.86	0.51	0.69	0.97
4.66	8.08	9.41	0.19	0.36	
0.82	0.90	0.92	0.16	0.23	0.23
0.48	0.60	0.77	0.04	0.07	0.11
6.98	10.42		1.39	1.88	
1.07	1.52	1.78	0.20	0.46	0.52
0.81	0.89	0.92	0.33	1.12	1.48
2.07	3.25		0.36	0.96	
4.79	5.73		2.32	2.28	
1.52	2.12		0.19	0.27	
3.63	5.79		0.23	0.97	
0.28			0.03		
1.33	1.40	2.08	0.23	0.35	0.43
1.06	1.52	2.10	0.19	0.26	0.34
16.76	25.11		3.63	5.34	
0.93	1.03		0.19	0.24	
5.18	10.39		0.27	0.37	
1.37	1.87		0.17	0.28	
0.66	0.79	0.85	0.02	0.05	0.06
1.39	1.51	1.78	0.26	0.34	
0.21	0.33		0.11	0.13	
1.09	1.64		0.25	0.31	
3.63	5.44	7.76	6.00	7.28	9.87
6.81	8.03		1.68	2.22	
5.50	6.75	7.77	1.02	1.04	2.17
1.01	1.84		0.14	0.16	
1.93	1.71		0.46	0.50	0.52
	1.37		0.01	0.90	
1.74	2.63	4.66	0.18	0.26	0.90
1.71	2.68	2.95	0.18	0.23	0.71
3.02	4.54	5.61	3.16	4.10	4.20
6.84			10.53	13.07	18.75
1.43	1.81	3.27	0.25	0.40	0.49
3.61	5.69	6.90	2.79	3.46	3.61
3.05	4.89		0.09	0.51	
1.96	2.08	2.94	0.24	0.48	0.61

