Question 7-3/1 – Implementation of universal access to broadband services

1   Statement of the situation

At the last meeting of ITU-D Study Group 1, held in Geneva in September 2009, it was agreed by all that the issue of universal service was of considerable importance for all countries, particularly developing countries, and that it should be investigated further under a revised Question during the 2010-2014 study period.

During the fourth ITU-D study period (2006-2010), the Rapporteur's Group on Question 7-2/1 ("Regulatory policies on universal access to broadband services") achieved its designated objectives and completed the report on regulatory policies on universal access to broadband services, with the help of experts from Study Groups 1 and 2.

As the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) have highlighted, the challenge facing policy-makers and regulators lies in the increasing development of broadband technologies and services, particularly in order to expand access to telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) in unserved communities, especially in landlocked or rural areas.

New applications using broadband access or voice over IP have brought down the real cost of supplying voice or data services, thus allowing many countries, particularly developing countries, to give previously unserved communities access to telecommunications/ICTs at market prices. In this new environment, there is a need to carry out a comprehensive analysis on the applicability of regulatory policies promoting universal access to such services. A revised Question for the next ITU-D study period will therefore be proposed at WTDC-10.

At its meeting in September 2009 in Geneva, the Rapporteur's Group drafted the revised Question, entitled "Implementation of universal access to broadband services". It was proposed that the draft Question be introduced to all ITU-D members at the Study Group 1 meeting.

2   Question for study

2.1   In many countries, unprecedented technological advances are being made in the telecommunication sector, with the development of wired and wireless broadband systems that can provide voice, video and data communication services.

2.2   On account of these changes, regulatory policy for broadband constitutes a roadmap for more effective development of this technology and its applications.

2.3   The regulatory implications relate mainly to the following issues:

•   Synergies among telecommunications/ICT stakeholders.

•   Financing and allocation of funds for universal service.

•   Capacity building in rural and/or underprivileged communities.

•   Development of local content, including services and applications.

3   Expected output

During the next ITU-D study period (2010-2014), the Rapporteur's Group on universal access/service will examine various issues concerning the implementation of universal access to broadband services.

To this end, a comprehensive analysis needs to be made in order to fuel reflection on the applicability and implementation of universal access policies in member countries. The following points will have to be analysed:

•   Optimum coordination among stakeholders in the development of universal service for broadband (policy-makers, regulators, operators and other stakeholders).

•   Diversification of means of financing universal access.

•   Optimizing funds and allocating them more effectively for universal access to broadband services.

•   Capacity building in rural and/or underprivileged communities.

•   Development of local content, including services and implications.

4   Timing

4.1   After two years, the draft report on the subject should be submitted to Study Group 1.

4.2   The draft final report and any proposed draft Recommendation(s) are to be submitted to Study Group 1 within four years.

4.3   The Rapporteur's Group will work in collaboration with BDT, and particularly with the Centres of Excellence programme, to implement on the ground, through training seminars, the lessons learned from study of the Question. The Rapporteur's Group will take the results into consideration, including the projects stemming from the second phase of WSIS.

4.4   The activities of the Rapporteur's Group will come to an end within four years.

5   Proposers

Developed countries, developing countries and LDCs.

6   Sources of input

Firstly, documentary research into the issue being studied will be carried out, as required, within and outside ITU. This approach will generate an inventory of sources of information and documents relevant to the study. Reports from international and regional organizations, studies by consulting firms and research bodies will thus be consulted.

Secondly, the Rapporteur's Group will complete its analysis with empirical research. Here, the experience of member countries of the Rapporteur's Group and projects stemming from WSIS will be the main sources of information used to analyse reasons for success or failure. This work will be done by means of electronic exchanges. There will also be milestone meetings to discuss the content of the sources of input and of the draft outline for the final report.

7   Target audience

Target audience	Developed countries	Developing countries[1]
Telecommunication policy-makers	Interested.	Highly interested because of lack of experience.
Telecommunication regulators	Interested and have experience with different models.	Highly interested. Some countries have immediate need for information.
Service providers/operators	New entrants, regardless of size, extremely interested.	New entrants, regardless of size, extremely interested.
Manufacturers	Highly interested, as study will promote development of infrastructure.	Highly interested as study will promote development of infrastructure.
Consumer associations	Interested.	Study will promote development of services adapted to the needs of communities.

a)   **Target audience**

The foregoing evaluation matrix shows that telecommunication policy-makers, regulators and service providers from least developed countries (LDCs) and developing countries will all be highly interested in the results of the study of this Question. Policy-makers and regulators from developed countries will also be interested. Manufacturers and consumer associations too will show a keen interest in this Question, given that the adoption of appropriate regulatory measures will facilitate development of infrastructure and of services adapted to the needs of communities.

b)   **Proposed methods for the implementation of the results**

The outputs of the study (report and guidelines) will be distributed as widely as possible in accordance with ITU-D working methods. However, given the importance of this issue, BDT could also conduct regional meetings/seminars, perhaps in conjunction with regional telecommunication organizations, to disseminate the results of the study of the Question. These results should be passed on to the annual ITU-D Global Symposium for Regulators whenever its themes include universal access, convergence or broadband services, and should be published by ITU for wider distribution.

8   Proposed methods of handling the Question

Within the framework of Study Group 1.

9   Coordination

Given that the issue of universal access is related to other issues currently being studied or programmes being managed by ITU, coordination will be required:

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[1] This includes least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and countries with economies in transition.

–   with ITU-D's routine activities;

–   with the other Questions being studied by the study groups;

–   with the work being done in the other ITU Sectors.

10   Other relevant information

Any other information that may become available during the period of validity of this Question.

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