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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau |
| ITU-D Projects |
|  |
| **Summary:**The International Telecommunication Union has a dual responsibility as a United Nations specialized agency and as an executing agency. The Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) in fulfilling the Union's dual responsibility, has the key function of implementing projects under the United Nations development system or other funding arrangements so as to facilitate and enhance telecommunication development by offering, organizing and coordinating technical cooperation and assistance activities.This document presents an overview of the work undertaken by the Telecommunication Development Bureau in project development and implementation in the six ITU-D regions: Africa, Americas, Arab States, Asia-Pacific, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Europe, as well as multi-regionally.**Action required:**TDAG is invited to note this document and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.**Reference:**Resolutions 17 and 52 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) and Resolution 157 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference. |

# Introduction

In accordance with Resolutions 17 and 52 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) and Resolution 157 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) holds the responsibility of fulfilling ITU´s mandate of implementing projects under the United Nations development system or other funding arrangements so as to facilitate and enhance telecommunication/information and communication technology development by offering, organizing and coordinating technical cooperation and assistance activities. This report presents an overview of the status of the ITU project portfolio for the period from March to September 2021.[[1]](#footnote-2)

# ITU project portfolio: On-going projects

## Overview and regional distribution

As of 15 September 2021, the ITU project portfolio stood at 77 ongoing projects, valued at CHF 93.9 million, with a balance of CHF 25.9 million yet to be committed. Figure 1 presents the overall distribution of this portfolio by region, and the overview of funds allocated to these projects.

**Figure 1 – Overview of on-going ITU projects by region
(figures in k CHF)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Region** | **Number of Projects** | **Cash external** | **Cash** | **Cash** | **Total** | **Balance of funds as of 15/09/21** | **% Balance** |
|  | **ICT-DF** | **OP** | **Cash** |
| AFR  | 14 | 9,896.8 | 956.8 | 434.3 | 11,883.9 | 6,432.4 | 54% |
| AMS  | 11 | 41,230.9 | 114.8 | 612.2 | 41,957.9 | 5,438.3 | 13% |
| ARB  | 9 | 5,045.3 | 690.0 | 189.0 | 5,924.3 | 1,663.0 | 28% |
| ASP | 7 | 4,213.9 |  | 229.3 | 4,652.2 | 3,464.3 | 74% |
| CIS  | 3 | 242.5 |  | 242.5 | 485.0 | 108.1 | 22% |
| EUR | 2 | 3,460.4 |  | 216.3 | 3,676.7 | 710.0 | 19% |
| MUL | 31 | 16,188.6 | 3,759.2 | 2,585.0 | 25,312.6 | 8,131.3 | 32% |
| **Total** | **77** | **80,278.3** | **5,520.9** | **4,508.5** | **93,892.5** | **25,947.5** |  |

## Projects signed during the second and third quarters of 2021

During the second and third quarters of 2021 BDT signed 8 new projects valued at around CHF 5.0 million. These new projects are multi-regional, regional, and national in nature and involve traditional ITU partners, such as UNICEF or the European Commission, ITU Member States, e.g., Australia, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago and Sierra Leone, as well as ITU Sector Members, e.g., the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) and Microsoft.

In addition, conversations are on-going for 13 more projects that are expected to be signed during the remaining months of 2021 for a value of CHF 4.9 million. The projects signed in this period include the following:

* The “Smart Seas Toolkit (SST) for Disaster Resilience”, a project signed with the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) and the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU);
* The project “Enhancing the Development of Standards and Frameworks for Critical Technologies in Southeast Asia”, a new initiative signed with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia;
* The project “Benchmarking des TIC en Afrique Centrale”, a new initiative funded by the European Union and ITU through the ICT Development Fund;
* The project “Cost Modelling and Pricing Framework for Sierra Leone”, signed with the National Telecommunications Commission of Sierra Leone (NATCOM);
* The project “Desarrollo de los estudios económicos y técnicos que le permitan a la ANE formular recomendaciones al MinTIC para la definición y adopción de la política nacional sobre el servicio de radiodifusión” signed with the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications of Colombia;
* The second phase of the “GIGA project”, signed with UNICEF;
* The project “Accelerating Africa’s Digital Transformation Through Connectivity”, signed with Microsoft;
* The project “Promoting enabling policy and regulation for LDCs”, signed with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom (FCDO).

These and other ITU projects show that by working through partnerships, ITU can have a greater impact and support ITU Membership in advancing digital development. The list of related agreements can be found in [Document INF/2](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-TDAG29-INF-0002/).

# Funding sources for ongoing ITU projects

ITU projects are funded mostly through extrabudgetary resources. BDT projects mainly have four types of funding sources: Funds in Trust (FIT), ICT Development Fund (ICT-DF)[[2]](#footnote-3), voluntary contributions, and the ITU regular budget (OP)[[3]](#footnote-4). Based on the ongoing budget for the implementation of projects as of 15 September 2021, the funding for on-going ITU projects corresponds to approximately 90 per cent, Funds in Trust, 6 per cent ICT-DF and 5 per cent from BDT regular budget (operational plan) (see figure 2).

**Figure 2 – Funding sources for ITU Projects (on-going projects)**

## Council allocated funds for the implementation of WTDC-17 Regional Initiatives

BDT has continued to negotiate with partners for the co-financing of projects using the funds allocated by Council for the implementation of the WTDC-17 Regional Initiatives[[4]](#footnote-5). At the date of preparation of this report, a total of 26 projects had been signed with funding from these external partners valued at CHF 10.9 million (including the in-kind contributions made by external partners), and an ITU cash contribution of CHF 3.6 million. The last batch of 9 projects to be funded from the remaining Council approved funds are expected to be signed before the end of 2021, for a total value of CHF 3.4 million (including the in-kind contribution made by external partners) and an ITU cash contribution of CHF 1.4 million.

# Efforts being made to establish robust project management practices in the BDT

BDT has continued to strengthen project management practices across all ITU projects, through the organization of a broad range of activities aimed at reinforcing the governance of BDT projects, building capacity of BDT project managers, standardizing project management practices across BDT and reinforcing the monitoring and evaluation of projects. The following list summarizes the activities conducted during the second and third quarters of 2021:

* ***Operation of the BDT Projects Board****:* The BDT Projects Board continued to meet on a monthly basis. The Board met to assess and evaluate project proposals’ viability and relevance before they evolved into projects, reviewed and approved projects before they were agreed on with partners and provided oversight on project implementation and closure where issues arose. The decisions from the Board were followed up by the Project Support team and reported back to the Projects Board.
* ***Strengthening of Project Management Practices:*** BDT has continued to strengthen project management practices across the Bureau. Actions implemented on this front include the operation of the “Community of Practice of BDT Project Managers”, an online platform with 84 active staff members, as well as the organization of project management clinics and information sessions for project managers. This work has complemented the Project Management Certification training programme conducted in 2019 and 2020.
* ***Closure of projects:*** BDT has revised the process and steps involved in the closure of projects to reduce the time required to close a project to a maximum of 9 months from the date of completion of all activities. This work has been done in line with the new ITU Project Management Manual, introduced in July 2020, and in close coordination with ITU´s Financial Resources Management Department (FRMD), Procurement Service, and Human Resources Management Department (HRMD), and Legal Department. A total of 15 projects have been closed following this new approach during the period covered by this report.
* ***Monitoring of ITU Projects****:*AllITU projects continue to be monitored on a day-by-day basis and reporting at the end of each quarter. The result of this work is made available to the BDT Management and Project Managers via Quarterly Assessment reports. The last quarterly assessment for 2Q 2021 showed that the majority of BDT projects are on track, despite the implementation challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Summary of the achievements in 2021

A total of 18 new projects were developed and signed in 2021, with a value of CHF 9.8 million (see figure 3). All these projects were financed in partnership with other organizations, such as national government agencies, bilateral cooperation entities, not-for-profit institutions, private sector, and agencies from the UN-wide system. These achievements are a result of synergy arising from coordination among the Projects Support, Resource Mobilization and Partnership, and the Membership and Private Sector teams within the Partnerships for Digital Development Department of the BDT.[[5]](#footnote-6)

**Figure 3 – New projects signed 2011-2021**

# Conclusions

Both the field and headquarters project managers are benefitting and contributing to the ongoing work by the Partnerships for Digital Development Department with respect to steady growth in industry and private sector members, partnerships and resource mobilization, and adoption as well as efficient implementation of impactful projects.

For more information on projects implemented by BDT, visit:
<http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Projects/>

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1. An overview of the ITU project portfolio is available at [www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Projects/](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Projects/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Further information about the ICTDF is available at document C21/034 available at <https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-C-0034/en> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. OP resources include the funds allocated by Council for the implementation of WTDC-17 regional initiatives (CH5000’000) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The 2018 session of the ITU Council allocated CHF 5 million for set up of projects related with the implementation of WTDC-17 Regional Initiatives. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. More information about ITU-D partnerships and resource mobilization is available at to documents TDAG-21/2/7-E and Document INF/2, and TDAG-21/2/8-E on ITU-D Sector Members, Associates, and Academia. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)