



# Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and Pacific for WTDC-25 (RPM-ASP)

Bangkok, Thailand, 20-21 March 2025



Document RPM-ASP25/INF/4-E  
20 March 2025  
English only

**Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau**

Presentation of State of digital development and trends in the Asia and the Pacific:  
Challenges and opportunities

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Contact:	Name/Organization/Entity:	Mr Thierry Geiger, ITU/BDT/DKS/IDA
	Phone number:	+41 22 730 5094
	E-mail:	<a href="mailto:thierry.geiger@itu.int">thierry.geiger@itu.int</a>

# ITUWDC

## BAKU2025

### REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING ASIA-PACIFIC

20-21 March 2025

Bangkok, Thailand



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# State of digital development and trends in the ASP region: Challenges and opportunities

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## Document 3

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## Informing the WTDC-25 preparatory process

- The “State of Digital Development and Trends” RPM documents and reports inform participants and stakeholders as they discuss regional digital agendas in the lead up of WTDC-25.
- The reports consist of two parts: the first provides an overview of the state of digital connectivity in the region, and the second showcases case studies.





## **Universal and meaningful connectivity: a policy imperative**

- Universal and meaningful connectivity (UMC) is a policy imperative to fully leverage the potential of connectivity. It is a requirement for enabling digital transformation.
- UMC enables everyone to enjoy a safe, enriching, and productive online experience at an affordable cost.
- UMC does not mean everyone must be connected all the time but describes a situation where everyone can access the Internet optimally and affordably whenever and wherever needed.



## Asia and the Pacific: Overview

- Internet use has grown steadily, reaching 66% in 2024, up from just 30% in 2010.
- 4G coverage now reaches 96% of the population, helping bridge connectivity gaps, but some remote areas remain unserved.
- 5G networks expanded from 3% to 62% coverage between 2020 and 2024, outpacing global growth
- The region's mobile broadband subscriptions (97 per 100 inhabitants) now exceed the global average, driving digital transformation.



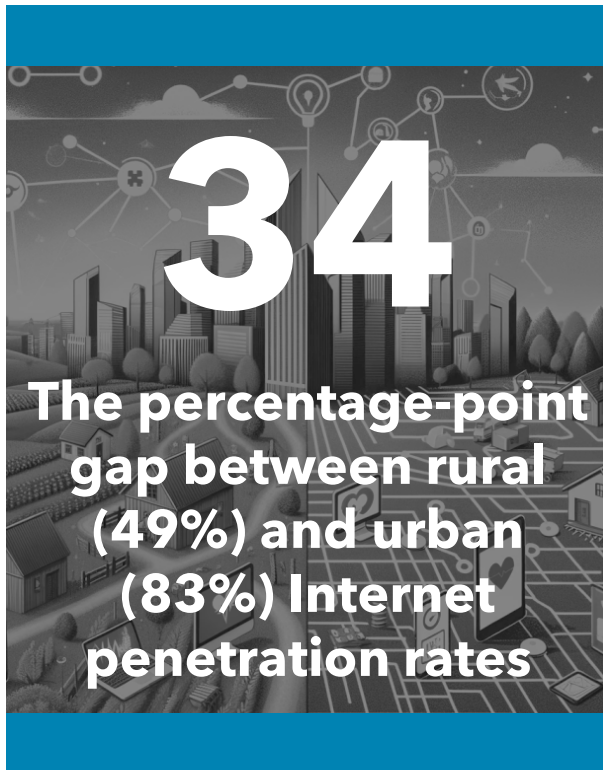
## A region of digital contrasts

- 5G is widespread in high-income countries but remains unavailable in 23 out of 41 economies.
- Fixed broadband is widely available in wealthier nations, but in some lower-income economies, less than 5% of households have a fixed Internet connection.
- International bandwidth per Internet user varies greatly, with top economies having 100 times more bandwidth than the lowest-ranked countries.
- Affordability: Cost of a basic mobile data plan ranges from 0.1% of GNI to 11.8% of GNI, a ratio of 130!
- The Pacific Islands, all of them are SIDS, face unique connectivity challenges, including high infrastructure costs, geographic isolation, and climate-related risks.

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## Divides within countries



- Urban Internet use (83%) far exceeds rural usage (49%), highlighting persistent gaps in rural connectivity
- The gender divide in Internet use is narrowing quickly, with 64% of women online compared with 68% among men, similar to the global situation.
- Youth are far more connected—people aged 15-24 are *twice as likely* to use the Internet compared to those over 65.



# ICT regulation: Where it all begins

- One-quarter of Asia-Pacific countries are in the most advanced stage of ICT regulation ('G4'), while two-thirds remain at G2 or G3.
- Legal instruments for digital markets are underdeveloped, with the region scoring just 39%, and LDCs and SIDS achieving only 20%, undermining digital readiness.
- Regional and international cooperation is weak, scoring 29%—below the global average (38%), limiting the region's ability to scale digital innovation.
- Several initiatives are driving regulatory progress, including ASEAN DIFAP, ITU-ASEAN Digital Government Framework, APEC Digital Economy Work Program, and the Pacific Islands Forum Digital Agenda



# Cybersecurity, e-waste, and sustainability



- Asia-Pacific cybersecurity readiness score in 2024 was 61 out of 100, still below the global average of 66.
- The region generated 27 billion kg of e-waste in 2022, accounting for 44% of global e-waste, but recycling rates remain low (11%), half the global rate.
- Sustainable ICT policies are essential to mitigate environmental impact and boost cybersecurity resilience.

## BDT4Impact: Featured case studies (1)

- **Papua New Guinea:** Some 1,260 farmers gained digital skills for e-commerce, helping them sell products like vanilla and fish internationally, boosting rural incomes.
- **Mongolia:** A regional workshop tackled digital infrastructure challenges for landlocked nations, emphasizing satellite and space services to enhance connectivity and resilience.
- **India:** The ITU Innovation Centre in New Delhi fosters collaboration between government, industry, and academia, accelerating digital transformation across key sectors like health and agriculture.

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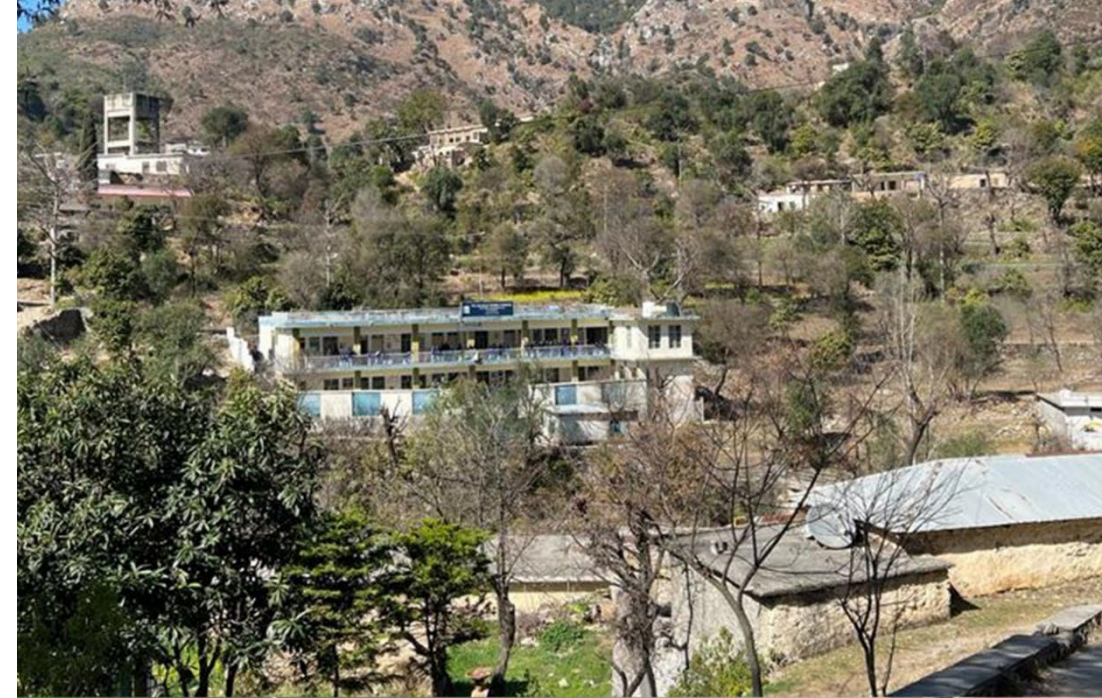




## BDT4Impact: Featured case studies (2)

- **ASEAN:** Digital Ministers endorsed a framework for interoperable government services, fostering cross-border digital cooperation.
- **Pakistan:** Gokina became the country's first smart village, using digital services to improve education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship, particularly benefiting women and rural communities.
- **Thailand:** A digital inclusion session highlighted the role of ICT in healthy aging, promoting digital skills among older citizens to enhance social participation.

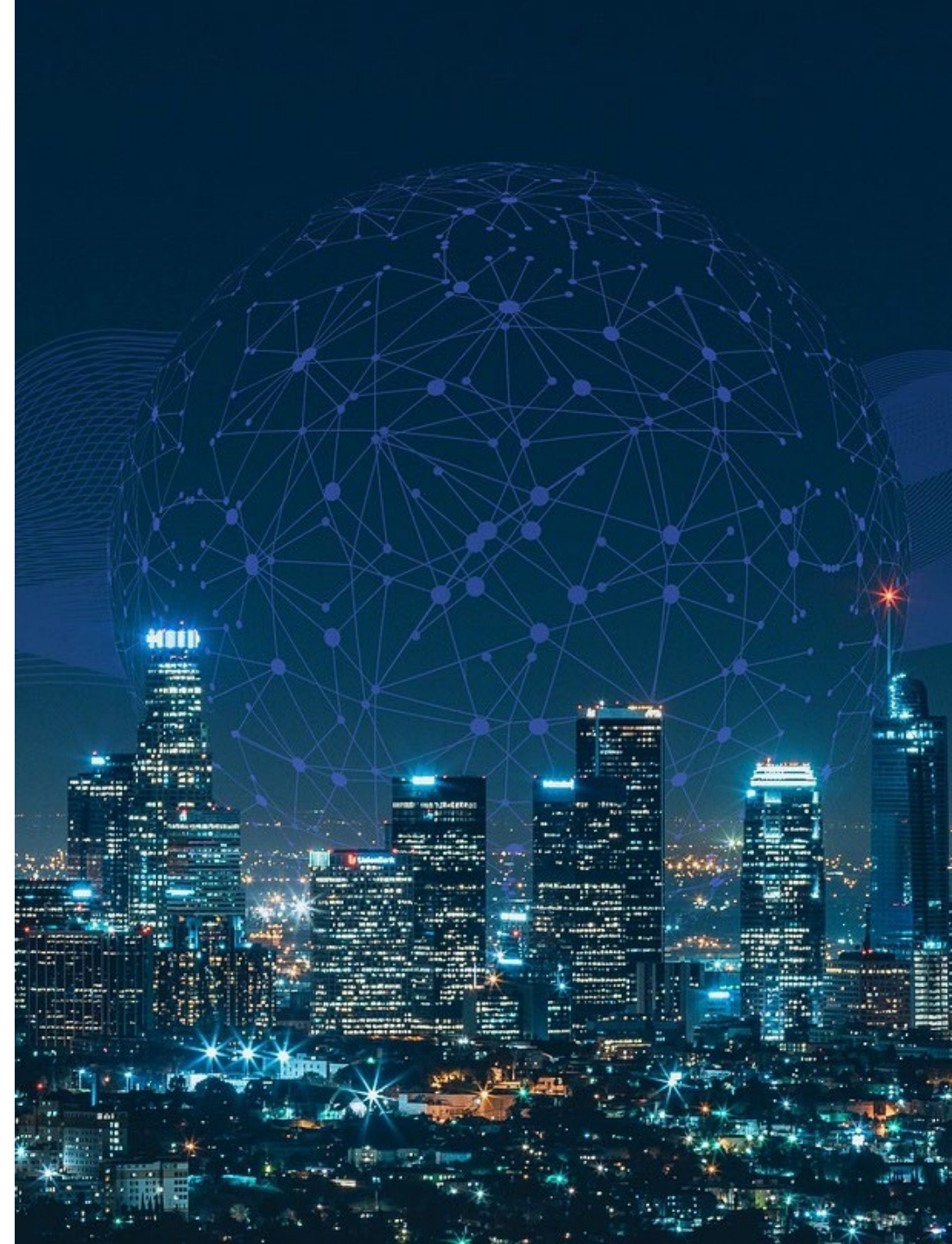
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# The future of digital transformation in Asia-Pacific

- Infrastructure gaps in low-income countries and remote Pacific islands hinder progress.
- Affordability and digital literacy needed for meaningful connectivity.
- Cybersecurity threats, misinformation, and privacy concerns demand urgent action.
- E-waste and rising energy consumption require sustainable ICT policies.



# Thank you!

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More information:

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