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| **Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG)**  **30th Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 19-23 June 2023** | A close up of a sign  Description automatically generated |
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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau | |
| ITU-D Projects | |
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| **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.  **References:**  Resolutions 17 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) and 52 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) and Resolution 157 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference. | |

# Introduction

In accordance with Resolutions 17 (Rev. Kigali, 2022) and 52 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) and Resolution 157 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) 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 portfolio of on-going ITU projects [[1]](#footnote-1) during 2022.[[2]](#footnote-2)

# Funding sources for ongoing ITU projects

ITU is not a funding institution. This means that ITU projects are funded mostly through extrabudgetary resources mobilized by ITU in support of ITU Member States (Funds in Trust and voluntary contributions). On some circumstances, and as defined by internal ITU rules and regulations, ITU can also use funds from the ICT Development Fund (ICT-DF)[[3]](#footnote-3), managed by ITU, as well as funds allocated by ITU Council in support of projects. This means that the funds implemented by ITU depends on the availability of funding partners at the national, regional and global level.

Based on the ongoing budget for the implementation of projects, the funding for on-going ITU projects corresponds to 88 per cent to Funds in Trust, while six per cent correspond to funds from ICT-DF and 5 per cent from the funds allocated by Council 2018 for the implementation of Regional Initiatives (see figure 1).

**Figure 1 – Funding sources for ITU Projects (on-going projects)**

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

During 2022 ITU completed the utilization of the CHF 5.0 million allocated by Council for the implementation of the WTDC-17 Regional Initiatives[[4]](#footnote-4). These funds have enabled the signature of a total of 37 projects valued at CHF 13.5 million (considering only the cash contributions made by partners). 18 of these projects (48%) have already completed their activities, while the remaining 19 projects (52%) will be completed within 2023 (see Figure 2)[[5]](#footnote-5).

**Figure 2 – Current status of the projects that received funding from the funds approved by Council for the implementation of WTDC-17 Regional Initiatives (figures in k CHF)**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Status** | **Projects** | **ITU Council Funds** | **External Funds** | **Total funds** |
| 1. On-going projects | 19 | 2,485.2 | 6,395.2 | **8,898.3** |
| 2. Projects implemented | 18 | 2,489.9 | 2,184.0 | **4,673.9** |
| **Total** | **37** | **4,975.1** | **8,579.2** | **13,572.1** |

# ITU project portfolio: On-going projects

## Overview and regional distribution

During 2022 ITU implemented activities in a total of 80 projects, valued at CHF 95.7 million. Figure 3 presents the overall distribution of this portfolio by region and the overview of (1) the funds mobilized by ITU to support the implementation of these projects, (2) the funds allocated to these projects from the ICT Development Fund (ICT-DF), managed by ITU, and (3) the funds allocated by ITU from the funding approved by Council to support the implementation of WTDC-17 Regional Initiatives. As highlighted in section 2, the distribution of funding linked to projects is directly related with the availability of funding partners ready to provide financial support to ITU projects.

**Figure 3 – Overview of on-going ITU projects by region (figures in k CHF)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Region** | **Number of Projects** | **Funding from partners** | **ITU funds (ICT-DF)** | **ITU funds (OP)** | **Total project funding** |
| AFR | 12 | 9,921.5 | 967.8 | 374.0 | **11,845.6** |
| AMS | 12 | 40,282.9 | 112.2 | 779.7 | **41,174.8** |
| ARB | 8 | 4,355.8 | 674.2 | 134.4 | **5,164.5** |
| ASP | 11 | 6,504.3 |  | 627.2 | **7,309.8** |
| CIS | 3 | 280.6 |  | 446.0 | **726.6** |
| EUR | 4 | 6,919.4 |  | 245.5 | **7,164.9** |
| MUL | 30 | 16,376.6 | 3,739.8 | 1,847.8 | **22,393.0** |
| **Total** | **80** | **84,641.1** | **5,494.0** | **4,454.6** | **95,779.2** |

## Projects signed during the reporting period

In 2022 BDT signed eight new projects valued at CHF 5.3 million. These new projects are multi-regional, regional, and national in nature. The projects signed during 2022 include the following projects:

* The project “Smart Islands in the Pacific”, implemented in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank.
* The project “Accelerating SDG achievement through digital transformation to strengthen community resilience in Micronesia”, funded by the UN SDG fund, and implemented in collaboration with FAO, ILO, UNOPS, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNODC.
* The project “Advancing the SDGs by Improving livelihoods, social protection, human rights and resilience of vulnerable communities via decent work and digital transformation”, funded by the UN SDG fund, and implemented in collaboration with UNESCO, UNODC, UNOPS, OHCHR and other National Coordinating Authorities in South Pacific (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Tuvalu).
* The project “Smart Villages Pakistan”, funded by Huawei, with additional funding from the Regional Initiatives funds.
* The project “Digital Accelerator for Women Entrepreneurs”, funded by the Mary Kay Foundation, with additional funding from the ICT-DF.
* The project “Asistencia Técnica Especializada para la valoración de bandas de frecuencias para Sistemas Móviles Avanzados en el Ecuador”, funded by Arcotel Ecuador.
* The Project “2022 Contribution from the Government of Australia (DITRDC) for supporting the WTDC-22”, funded by DIRTDCA Australia.
* The project “Implementation of Phase 2 of ITU Disaster Connectivity Maps (DCM)”, funded by the Ministry of Science and ICT (MSIT) of the Republic of Korea.

## Projects signed during 2023

For the period of January to May 2023 BDT has already signed seven new projects valued at CHF 7.2 million. In addition, conversations are on-going for 8 more projects that are expected to be signed during 2023 for a value of CHF 12.9 million. The projects signed during these first month of the year include the following:

* The project “Horn of Africa initiative”, funded by GIZ Germany.
* The project “Soporte institucional al INDOTEL”, funded by INDOTEL, Dominican Republic.
* The project “Universal and meaningful connectivity”, funded by the European Union.
* The project “Partnership for Strengthening Cybersecurity”, funded by GIZ Germany.
* The project “Giga infrastructure support”, funded by UNICEF.
* The project “Laying the foundation for VaMoz Digital”, funded by the European Union.
* The project “Developing and Implementing E-waste Policy and Regulation for a Circular Economy”, funded by the Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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 is available in Document INF/2.

# Reinforcing 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 2022, and which were implemented in close collaboration with other relevant ITU support functions (in particular FRMD, PROC and HRMD) to address the main challenges identified in the implementation of ITU projects:

* ***Operation of the BDT Projects Board****:* The BDT Projects Board has continued to meet regularly to assess and evaluate project proposals’ viability and relevance before they evolve into projects, review, and approve projects before they are agreed on with partners and provide oversight on project implementation and closure where issues arise. The decisions from the Board are regularly followed up by the Project Support Division and reported back to the Projects Board.
* ***Establishment of a new group of “Projects under special oversight”.*** Building on the lessons learned from 2021 and 2022, the BDT Projects Board decided at its first meeting of 2023 to introduce a new mechanism to provide an additional level of oversight to the projects facing long-standing challenges in implementation. The projects included in this group are monitored on a weekly basis, with a weekly report presented to BDT Director for consideration and additional guidance. Projects are kept under special oversight until their level of implementation gets back on track.
* ***Project management certification.*** During 2022BDT continued the project management certification programme, expanding its reach to include also staff from other Bureaux, as well as from the General Secretariat. After the last round, organized between October and November 2023, the programme has succeeded in certifying a group of over 100 BDT staff in project management.
* ***Monitoring of ITU Projects****:*AllITU projects continue to be monitored on a day-by-day basis and reported at the end of each quarter. The result of this work is made available to BDT Management and Project Managers via Quarterly Assessment reports, as well as through the use of internal management dashboards which enable data-driven decision making in relation to projects.
* ***Strengthening project execution.*** Starting from 2023 all project documents developed by ITU include the identification of a focal point from the beneficiary country(ies) to strengthen project execution and ensure the ownership and long-term sustainability of projects.
* ***Finalizing project closure.*** Following the feedback received from funding partners and beneficiaries, BDT has been shortening the period needed to formalize project closures, with the goal of closing all projects within 6 to 9 months after the completion of the project workplan. This process includes verifying that all services linked to the project have been rendered, that payments linked to the project have been processed and that lessons learned in the project have been properly documented.

# Conclusions

The BDT projects portfolio continues to deliver impact on the ground, providing a key mechanism for the Bureau to provide technical assistant to ITU Member States, engage ITU-D Sector Members, as well as deliver new products and services in the area of digital development.

During 2022 and 2023 BDT has continued to sign new projects for a value of 5.3 and 7.2 million, respectively (see figure 4). It is important to note that these projects have been funded greatly by funding partners and that they are being implemented 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.

**Figure 4 – New projects signed by ITU (2013-2023)**

These achievements are a result of the 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.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In conclusion, the allocation of seed money by Council 2018 for the implementation of Regional Initiatives adopted by WTDC-17, made it possible to mobilize CHF 8.7 million from external funding, which made it possible for the BDT to co-finance 37 impactful projects for a total project funding of CHF 13.5 million.

The success in the use of the funds allocated by Council proves the importance for ITU to have access to additional sources of funds that can be used to mobilize funds from partners and donors in support of ITU Member States.

TDAG is invited to support the allocation of new seed funds for the implementation of WTDC-22 adopted Regional Initiatives, similar to the allocation made by Council 2018 so as to finance the Regional Initiatives adopted by WTDC-22 for 2023-2027 to facilitate the implementation of related projects under each of the Regional Initiatives in all the regions.

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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-1)
2. *The figures provided in the report correspond to the financial balance at the 2022 closure of accounts (balance as of 31 December 2022).* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *For further information about the ICTDF, please refer to document C22/034, available at* [*https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CL-C-0034/en*](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CL-C-0034/en) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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-4)
5. *For further information on the use of the funds approved by Council in support of WTDC-17 Regional Initiatives, please refer to Annex 1 of document TDAG-23/25-E* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *More information about ITU-D partnerships and resource mobilization is available at to documents TDAG-23/4-E and Document INF/1, and TDAG-23/8-E on ITU-D Sector Members, Associates, and Academia.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)