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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau | |
| ITU-D Special Initiatives | |
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| **Summary:**  The Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D)’s Special Initiatives portfolio consisting of four initiatives/projects namely Giga, FCDO, Connect2Recover and Partner2Connect. They were launched during the period of 2019-2022 and they cut across multiple thematic priorities. Collectively, they fulfil Resolutions 16 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), 18, 25, 37 (Rev. Kigali, 2022), 60 (Hyderabad, 2010), 87 and 88 (Kigali, 2022) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) and Resolution 215 (Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, as well as align with ITU-D priorities under the Kigali Action Plan.  This document presents an overview of the work undertaken within the framework of the four initiatives/projects and their contribution to the implementation of WTDC 2022 resolutions and other outcomes.  **Action required:**  TDAG is invited to note this document and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.  **References:**  Resolutions 16 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), 18, 25, 37 (Rev. Kigali, 2022), 60 (Hyderabad, 2010), 87 and 88 (Kigali, 2022) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) and Resolution 215 (Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference. | |

# Introduction

Special Initiatives comprises the following four BDT initiatives/projects that cut across ITU-D’s priorities:

* Giga
* The ITU/UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) project
* Connect2Recover
* Partner2Connect

Collectively, they fulfil Resolutions 16 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017), 18, 25, 37 (Rev. Kigali, 2022), 60 (Hyderabad, 2010), 87 and 88 (Kigali, 2022) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) and Resolution 215 (Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, as well as align with the Buenos Aires Action Plan and Kigali Action Plan. The special initiatives all demonstrate the impact of effective resource mobilisation and international cooperation on achieving ITU-D objectives and priorities.

Detailed information on the impact of partnership and resource mobilisation of the four Special Initiatives was shared during the ITU-D Study Group 1 Workshop on Meaningful Connectivity (details [here](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Study-Groups/2022-2025/Pages/meetings/workshop-sustainability-may23.aspx)).

# Giga

**Background**

Giga, a joint ITU-UNICEF project, was launched at the 2019 UN General Assembly, with the objective to connect every school to the Internet and every young person to information, opportunity, and choice by 2030. 19 countries actively participate in Giga and there are 14 partners contributing to Giga.

Under the Giga initiative, ITU in partnership with UNICEF seeks to achieve objectives set out in [WTDC Resolution 87](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic), which focuses, amongst others, on working to connect schools and young persons to ICT services, setting standards and global targets on school connectivity towards 2030, evaluation of models for affordable and sustainable financing approaches for young persons to ICT services, and assistance in the development of policy, regulatory and financial frameworks for connecting schools to the Internet.

**Giga Resource mobilisation and international cooperation**

* In the period since May 2022, the Giga initiative has attracted the following funding and partners:
  + The Government of Switzerland contributes a maximum amount of CHF2.1 million over a three-year period to establish the global Secretariat of Giga in Geneva; and
  + The Government of Spain (at three levels – Spain, Catalonia and Barcelona) to contribute a maximum of 17.5 million Euros for three-year period to host Giga Technological Centre.
* In total, since its launch in 2019, more than USD 47.6 million has been raised and 14 partners have actively contributed to Giga - Ericsson, Dubai Cares, Musk Foundation, Softbank, BCG, NIC.Br, Actual, FCDO, Dell, Jumia, Liquid Technologies, Mapbox, GSMA, and IHS Towers, demonstrating impact to achieving school connectivity by 2030.

**Giga Countries**

Currently, 19 countries are actively participating in Giga - Kenya, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, El Salvador, Honduras, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines. They include least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states in accordance with WTDC Resolution 16.

**Giga Implementation**

Under the Giga initiative, ITU and UNICEF have worked in the following areas:

* Work to connect schools and young persons to ICT services:
* As at April 2023, at least 2.12 million schools were mapped across 50 countries, 2.13 million students were connected, and at least 5600 prototype schools were connected by Giga partners in 19 countries.
* From January 2023 to April 2023, with support from FCDO, interactive infrastructure maps were developed for Kenya as well as self-paced training offered by ITU Academy. In Sierra Leone, the same activities were conducted with support from ICTDF. There were also interactive infrastructure maps developed for Benin.
* From January 2023 =to April 2023, with support from ICTDF, research was conducted into the actual use and quality of connectivity in schools and local network infrastructure resiliency in connected schools in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.
* Set standards and global targets on school connectivity towards 2030:
* As at April 2023, 72.5 thousand schools in 17 countries are reporting real-time connectivity status providing data to strengthen targets for school connectivity.
* Evaluation of models for affordable and sustainable financing approaches:
* From May 2022 to December 2022, with support from FCDO, there was development of universal service financing toolkit. In Kenya, a study of sustainable internet connectivity operating models as well as workshop on co-creating sustainable operating models for connected schools were conducted.
* Development of policy, regulatory and financial frameworks for connecting schools to the Internet:
* From May 2022 to December 2022, with support from FCDO, in Kenya, policy and regulatory research, including collaborative regulatory case study was carried out.
* From May 2022 to December 2022, an analysis of competition conditions in the Honduran Internet market was carried out to assist the policymakers in facilitating effective competition for the benefit of citizens.
* From January to April 2023, Giga participated in WSIS Forum, “[Defining and Financing Meaningful School Connectivity](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2023/Agenda/Session/407)”, [UNESCO’s Global Small Island Developing States (SIDS) dialogues series](https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/transformation-education-digital-age-second-edition-unescos-global-small-island-developing-states), [Transform Africa Summit](https://transformafricasummit.org/), among others.

# FCDO

**Background**

Since March 2021, ITU has been working in partnership with the UK FCDO Digital Access Programme (DAP) in Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa to promote effective regulation, greater investment and innovative models for school connectivity in underserved communities and for broader digital inclusion. The project focuses on 4 technical areas: regulatory analysis, framework and tool development, promoting sustainable models, promoting a more conducive environment for investment, and advancing digital skills (mainly in Africa).

**Measures taken in alignment with Buenos Aires Action Plan (May to December 2022)**

The FCDO partnership focuses on sustainable connectivity, with a focus on schools, and digital skills in 5 DAP countries (Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa). It seeks to effect positive change and support innovation in regulation and relevant institutional capacity, inclusive technology and business models, connectivity financing options, digital skills, and capacity development approaches. Examples of the work undertaken to support this include:

* Policy and regulatory research in Kenya, Indonesia, Brazil and Nigeria, including collaborative regulatory case studies for Kenya and Nigeria.
* Digital skills assessment in Nigeria in conjunction with ILO, through the *Decent Skills for Jobs campaign*.
* The development of [Universal Service Financing Efficiency Toolkit](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/regulatory-market/usf-financial-efficiency-toolkit/) to provide policy-makers, regulators and universal service fund administrators a set of tools and checklists that they can use to help answer common questions and challenges encountered when using public funds to sustainably finance connectivity.
* In tandem with the toolkit, a self-paced training course was developed to help users understand how to navigate and use the toolkit for maximum effect (available [here](https://academy.itu.int/training-courses/full-catalogue/universal-service-financing-efficiency-toolkit-0))
* Interactive infrastructure maps were developed for Kenya, Indonesia, Brazil and Nigeria to inform and support governments when designing and assessing the most efficient and effective technologies to connect schools.
* Several workshops were held to share research findings and lessons learnt with stakeholders:
  + *Kenya Digital Access Programme Partners’ Open Day* (details [here](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Africa/Pages/EVENTS/2022/DAP-partners-roundtable-kenya.aspx))
  + *Indonesia School Connectivity Supply and Demand Side Workshops on 29-30 June in Jakarta*
  + *Indonesia High-level Roundtable* (details [here](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Pages/Events/2022/FCDO/ITU-FCDO-High-Level-Roundtable.aspx))
  + *Nigeria Roundtable and Technical Workshop on building capabilities for sustainable and inclusive digital transformation in Nigeria* (details [here](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Africa/Pages/EVENTS/2022/roundtable-nigeria.aspx))
  + *Training to Communications Authority of Kenya staff on “Grant management and the ITU USF efficiency toolkit" held on 27-28 October in Nakuru, Kenya*
  + *Brazil meetings and presentations to stakeholders held on 9-11 November in Brasilia*

**Measures taken in alignment with Kigali Action Plan (January to April 2023)**

*Affordable connectivity*

The following activities were undertaken to identify challenges and opportunities for affordable connectivity:

* Workshop on Co-Creating Sustainable Operating Models for Connected Schools in Kenya (details [here](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Africa/Pages/EVENTS/2023/expert-workshop-kenya.aspx)) was conducted.
* Study of sustainable internet connectivity operating models in Kenya.
* Study of telecommunication infrastructure and connectivity operational costs in Nigeria.

*Digital transformation*

* Development of interactive infrastructure maps for South Africa and Sierra Leone to inform and support governments when designing and assessing the most efficient and effective technologies to connect schools.
* In support of the interactive infrastructure maps, a self-paced training course has been developed for the ITU Academy (available [here](https://academy.itu.int/training-courses/full-catalogue/introduction-broadband-mapping)).
* Research on assessing last mile connectivity projects in Kenya
* Research into the actual use and quality of connectivity in schools and local network infrastructure resiliency in connected schools in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.
* WSIS Session: The UK support to digital development in developing and emerging countries (recording available [here](https://play.itu.int/event/wsis-forum-2023-the-uk-support-to-digital-development-in-developing-and-emerging-countries/))

*Enabling policy and regulatory environment*

In addition to continued support and advice which is being provided to the regulators and key stakeholders in the supported countries, the following activities are being undertaken:

* Policy and regulatory research is underway in South Africa and Sierra Leone, including Collaborative regulatory case studies.
* In tandem with the USF Efficiency toolkit, a self-paced training course continues to be available on ITU Academy (available [here](https://academy.itu.int/training-courses/full-catalogue/universal-service-financing-efficiency-toolkit-0)). This will soon also be available in Portuguese and Indonesian.
* Support on grant management framework development

*Inclusive and secure telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development*

Keeping children safe online once connectivity is available is a key concern. To support the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) roadmap to prevent cyber violence, cyber addiction, and cyber bullying, the ITU’s Child Online Protection Guidelines were translated into Indonesian (available [here](https://ituint.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/EXT-GIGA-GIGAITU/Shared%20Documents/GIGA%20ITU/FCDO/Indonesia/Reports/COP%20Guidelines%20in%20Indonesian?csf=1&web=1&e=XYZcep))

# Connect2Recover

**Background**

In September 2020, with the support of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan and the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, ITU launched Connect2Recover initiative. Subsequently, Connect2Recover is supported by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA), Australia; Ministry of Transport and Communications, Lithuania; and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of the Czech Republic. In addition, Sector Members such as Huawei and Vodafone have also supported the initiative.

This initiative helps countries reinforce their digital infrastructure and ecosystems in the wake of COVID-19 and natural hazards ([Plenipotentiary Resolution 215](https://www.itu.int/pub/S-CONF-ACTF-2022)), with priority to least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS) ([WTDC Resolution 16](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic)), to bridge the digital divide ([WTDC Resolution 37](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic)) as well as to assist countries with special needs.

**Steering Committee**

The Connect2Recover Steering committee is chaired by the Director of the BDT and includes representatives from Australia, Czech Republic, Japan, Lithuania and Saudi Arabia. In the period from May 2022 to April 2023, the Steering Committee met 3 times.

**Measures taken in alignment with the Buenos Aires Action Plan (May to December 2022)**

*Resource mobilisation and international cooperation:*

* With strong partnership from 5 Member States and 2 Sector Members, total contribution of USD2.8 million with impact in 43 countries, this shows the impact of resource mobilisation and partnerships for accelerating telecommunications/ICT development.

*Technical assistance to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (*[[*WTDC Resolution 16*](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic)](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic)*):*

* In [Armenia](http://chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https:/www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Documents/connect2recover/Reports/Armenia-Digital-Data-Resilience-and-Policy-Assessment.pdf), Kazakhstan, Mauritania, and Zimbabwe: resilience assessments were carried out to strengthen telecommunications/ICT infrastructure in these countries for economic recovery and development. The work in Mauritania and Zimbabwe is ongoing.
* Eswatini, Uganda, Ethiopia, Botswana, Zambia, Rwanda, Dominica, Zimbabwe and other countries benefited from the [15 research competition reports](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/sites/connect2recover/research-reports/?lang=en) and [Build back better with broadband](https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-tnd-08-2022/) that focused on digital connectivity and bridging the digital divide ([WTDC Resolution 37](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic)).
* Technical assistance to Moldova to strengthen national emergency telecommunications plan and cell broadcast is planned.

*Measures to assist countries with special needs:*

* In Haiti, in the aftermath of the earthquake, an assessment of damage and resilience was commissioned to assist Haiti to rebuild their telecommunications infrastructure and sector that are more resilient to natural hazards in accordance with [WTDC Resolution 60](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic).
* In the State of Palestine, the development of numbering plan framework would facilitate the growth of telecommunications/ICT sector that spurs economic growth and development in accordance with [WTDC Resolution 18](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic).
* In Rwanda, implementation of pilot with Giga provides evidence to scale school connectivity in the country for long-term growth and development in accordance with [WTDC Resolution 25](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic).

*Enabling policy and regulatory environment:*

* Through developing [Connect2Recover methodology](https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-tnd-04-2021/) and Harmonising Broadband Data Collection Across ITU Connectivity Initiatives to empower regulators to conduct resilience assessment and data collection.
* The feasibility study on establishing a Single Caribbean Regional Telecommunications Regulator for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) provides evidence for regulatory decision-making for the development of the economy.
* The updated broadband transmission map provides regulators in the Arab region with evidence of gaps and bottlenecks to make decisions on the utilization of broadband networks and digital technologies.
* Conducting [webinar](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Pages/Connect2recover-webinar.aspx), [C2R webinar](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Pages/events/connect2recover/building-back-better-with-broadband/default.aspx), [high-level dialogue](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2020/Agenda/Session/369), [session](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/ET/2021/Pages/Programme.aspx), [information sharing](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Pages/events/connect2recover/infosessions-research-competition-papers-focusing-on-Africa/default.aspx) and [IGF event](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Africa/Pages/EVENTS/2022/C2R_Addis.aspx) to empower policymakers and regulators on the importance of strong national digital infrastructure ecosystems and digital inclusion.

*Affordable connectivity:*

* [Broadband Commission Working Group Report on Smartphone Access](https://www.broadbandcommission.org/working-groups/smartphone-access/) provides Member States an action plan to address affordability and ownership of smart devices.

**Measures taken in alignment with the Kigali Action Plan (January to April 2023)**

*Resource mobilisation and international cooperation:*

* With strong partnership from 5 Member States and 2 Sector Members, an additional contribution of about 300,000 was received to strengthen the impact of accelerating telecommunications/ICT development.

*Technical assistance to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (*[*WTDC Resolution 16*](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic)*):*

* In Mauritania and Zimbabwe: resilience assessments were carried out to strengthen telecommunications/ICT infrastructure in these countries for economic recovery and development. In addition, the resilience assessment in Grenada is being planned.
* Technical assistance to Moldova to strengthen national emergency telecommunications plan and cell broadcast is ongoing.

*Measures to assist countries with special needs:*

* In the State of Palestine, the development of numbering plan framework would facilitate the growth of telecommunications/ICT sector that spurs economic growth and development in accordance with [WTDC Resolution 18](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic).

*Enabling policy and regulatory environment:*

* The telecommunications/ICT market review in Syria will provide the policymakers with evidence to enhance competitiveness of services for the development of the country.
* Sharing the best practices through [information session on resilient digital infrastructure](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/sites/connect2recover/2023/04/06/information-session-on-resilient-digital-infrastructure-for-meaningful-connectivity-connect2recover-initiative/).

# Partner2Connect

**Background**

P2C was Launched in 2021 by ITU in close cooperation with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology and the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands Developing States (UNOHRLLS). WTDC-22 established via the newly adopted [Resolution 88](https://www.itu.int/en/publications/ITU-D/pages/publications.aspx?parent=D-TDC-WTDC-2022&media=electronic) a clear mandate for BDT and ITU to continue working on the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition with a focus on the implementation and scaling of pledges, the mobilization of new resources/partnerships, and the reporting and sharing of experiences ultimately contributing towards the running of the P2C programme.

**Partner2Connect activities and outcomes from May 2022 to December 2022:**

During the period since the last report (submitted as part of WTDC-22 Document 2) P2C has delivered the following achievements:

* Launch of the P2C Action Framework, and the online pledging platform in March 2022 paved the way to the first Digital Development Roundtable held in June 2022 at ITU’s WTDC.
* P2C's first Digital Development Roundtable was held and Resolution 88 on P2C was adopted at WTDC-22 Kigali, institutionalizing the work of the Coalition into the work of BDT.
* Milestone of 500 P2C pledges was reached in October 2022.
* Monitoring and self-reporting progress on pledge implementation also became a major milestone in 2022 together with the first P2C Annual Meeting held in December 2022 at the ITU Headquarters in Geneva.

**Partner2Connect activities and outcomes from January 2023 to April 2023:**

* As of April2023, P2C has received 621 pledges, worth nearly $30 USD billion, made by 297 entities including government, private sector, UN agencies and other international or regional organizations (including multilateral development banks), civil society, academia, and youth groups.
* Of the 297 entities participating in the Coalition, 102 are ITU Member States.
* The private sector represents about 25% of the entities participating in the Coalition.
* 14 UN Agencies are currently involved with the Coalition.
* During the year 2023:
  + Each region will organize and hold a Regional Development Forum (RDF). Within each RDF, a special Partner2Connect Regional Roundtable will be held and will focus on matchmaking of Member States’ needs, and partners’ pledges.
* Partner2Connect will organize National Roundtables in Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Madagascar and Mauritania with the objective of leveraging on P2C pledges for the digital transformation of each country.

# Conclusions

The four Special Initiatives are financed through resource mobilisation and international cooperation efforts and are complementary to implementation of the Buenos Aires Action Plan and Kigali Action Plan.

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