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| **Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG)**  **31st Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 20-23 May 2024** | A close up of a sign  Description automatically generated |
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|  | **Document** **TDAG-2****4/7(Rev.1)-E** |
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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.  **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. Resolution 1418 of the ITU Council. | |

# 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 during 2023.[[1]](#footnote-2)

# ITU project portfolio: On-going projects

# Overview and regional distribution

During 2023, BDT was implementing 87 projects, valued at CHF 106.4 million. Figure 1 presents the overall distribution of this portfolio by region and the overview of (1) the funds mobilized to support the implementation of these projects, (2) the seed funding allocated by ITU from either the ICT Development Fund (ICT-DF), or other ITU Funds to support the implementation of WTDC-17 and WTDC-22 Regional Initiatives (RIs).

**Figure 1 – 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 (RIs)** | **Total project funding** |
| AFR | 13 | 11,732.4 | 938.7 | 670.0 | **13,913.1** |
| AMS | 15 | 40,112.6 | 158.6 | 667.5 | **41,008.4** |
| ARB | 7 | 4,311.1 | 662.2 | 88.0 | **5,061.3** |
| ASP | 14 | 6,948.8 | 345.4 | 440.0 | **7,909.2** |
| CIS | 3 | 253.7 |  | 443.8 | **697.5** |
| EUR | 2 | 3,642.5 |  | 47.5 | **3,690.1** |
| MUL (\*) | 33 | 27,794.1 | 4,394.6 | 1,551.8 | **34,122.8** |
| **Total** | **87** | **94,795.3** | **6,499.5** | **3,908.7** | **106,402.4** |

(\*) Multi-regional projects benefiting all regions

# Projects signed during the reporting period

In 2023 ITU signed a total of 23 new projects valued at CHF 20.9 million[[2]](#footnote-3). These figures confirm the positive trend experimented since 2017 in the increase of funds mobilized by BDT in support of projects (see figure 2). The list of related agreements is available in Document INF/2.

**Figure 2 – New projects signed by ITU (2013-2023)**

These new projects are multi-regional, regional, and national in nature. With regards to source of funds, 93% of the funding from these new projects comes from the extrabudgetary funds mobilized by BDT from third parties, while the remaining 7% result from the allocation of seed funding from ITU. Figure provides a graph showing percentages of extra-budgetary funds and ITU funds contributing to project budgets.

**Figure 3 – Funding sources for ITU Projects (new projects signed in 2023)**

# Status update on the allocation of funding in support of the WTDC-22 Regional Initiatives

At the 2023 Session of the ITU Council, ITU membership approved the transfer of CHF 3 million from the Exhibition Working Capital Fund (EWCF) to the Capital Account of the Information and Communication Technologies Development Fund (ICT-DF) for the purpose of providing seed money for the financing of Regional Initiatives[[3]](#footnote-4).

These funds have already enabled the signature of a total of 7 projects valued at CHF 4.3 million (considering only the cash contributions made by partners), utilizing CHF 1.0 million from the funds allocated by Council (see Figure 4). The details of these projects are available at ITU’s projects portal[[4]](#footnote-5).

**Figure 4 – Projects that received funding during 2023 from the funds approved by Council   
for the implementation of WTDC-22 Regional Initiatives (figures in CHF)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project ID** | **Project Title** | **Region** | **Regional Initiative** | **External Funds** | **ITU Funds** | **Total funds** | **Partner** |
| 7RAS24075 | Creating a Circular Economy for Electronics and Electricals in Thailand and Mongolia | ASP | ASP2 - Digital economy and inclusive digital societies | 225,280 | 52,800 | 278,080 | DITRDCA Australia |
| 7RAS23073 | Pathways to Cybersecurity in Pacific | ASP | ASP5 - Secure and resilient ICTs | 132,000 | 33,000 | 165,000 | MIC Japan |
| 7RAS24074 | Enhancing Resilient ICT Infrastructure in Asia and the Pacific (second phase) | ASP | ASP5 - Secure and resilient ICTs | 132,000 | 33,000 | 165,000 | MIC Japan |
| 7RAS24076 | Feasibility study: Addressing the special telecommunications/ICT needs of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) | ASP | ASP1 - Special needs LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs | 501,526 | 166,320 | 667,846 | DITRDCA Australia |
| 7RAS23072 | Accelerating Digital Transformation in Asia-Pacific | ASP | ASP2 - Digital economy and inclusive digital societies | 337,500 | 67,500 | 405,000 | DITRDCA Australia |
| 7GLO23132 | Generation Connect Young Leadership Programme | MULTI | MULTI | 1,104,976 | 440,000 | 1,544,976 | Huawei |
| 7GLO23133 | Boosting digital skills through Digital Transformation Centres (DTCs) - Phase 2 | MULTI | MULTI | 832,000 | 268,000 | 1,100,000 | NORAD Norway |
|  | **Total** |  |  | **3,265,282** | **1,060,620** | **4,325,902** |  |

Note: All funds converted to CHF

Further progress is expected during 2024 to complete the allocation of the remaining funds to eligible projects, benefitting all ITU regions. It is important to note that since ITU is not a funding institution, the feasibility of signing new projects depends greatly on the availability of funding partners willing to support ITU’s work.

# Reinforcing project management practices in the BDT

BDT has continued during 2023 to strengthen project management practices across all ITU projects. The following list summarizes the activities conducted during the year, and which were implemented in close collaboration with other relevant ITU support functions:

* ***Operation of the BDT Projects Board****:* The BDT Projects Board has continued to meet on a monthly basis during 2023 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”.*** In 2023 the BDT Projects Board introduced a new mechanism to strengthen the oversight of projects facing long-standing challenges in implementation. This new mechanism, which includes the organization of weekly meetings with the project teams and the submission of more regular internal reporting, has proved beneficial to bring projects back on track when issues arise.
* ***Series of trainings for project managers.*** During 2023BDT introduced a new series of regular training sessions and information exchange sessions for project managers. These sessions have been aimed at harmonizing project practices across BDT, reinforce the community of project managers and further develop the skills from project managers on areas related with ITU’s work. This programme will continue throughout 2024.
* ***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 reporting to partners*.** At the end of 2023, BDT introduced a new policy that requires that for all our projects, donors should receive reports on the projects they fund without having to ask for such reports. These reports would be sent out half-yearly. The first batch was sent out in December 2023 and the next one will be in June 2024. The reports will include details on the status of the projects they fund, financial status, progress on the implementation of the projects as planned in the project documents. If there are challenges encountered during the implementation, these would be communicated. This measure was introduced. The decision was made to ensure that partners and donors would be well informed and briefed. This would also contribute to transparency and accountability.
* ***New project dashboard for ITU Member States.*** Following the feedback received from TDAG, ITU has introduced a new interactive project dashboard, which provides additional information to ITU Membership on the status of the ITU-D Project portfolio. The new dashboard is available for holders of ITU user accounts with TIES access in the BDT Projects Portal[[5]](#footnote-6).

# Conclusions

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

2023 represented a significant year for the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources in BDT, with the signing of over CHF 23 million of funds in support of ITU-D’s work on the ground, confirming the positive trend experimented since 2017. This achievement is 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-7)

Even though 90% of the project funding come from extrabudgetary funds, it is important to highlight that the new allocation of funds decided by the 2023 Session of ITU Council is proving to be instrumental to support the signing of new projects across all regions, since ITU funds are being used as matching funds -which is a prerequisite for some funding institutions.

ITU continues to strengthen its project management practices, to ensure the successful implementation of all projects signed. In 2023 the ITU project portfolio also increased the level of funds implemented during the year, which contributed to the successful completion of 30 projects that reached the end of their activities within the year.

TDAG is invited to continue providing guidance and advice on how to continue strengthening project practices in the BDT, as well as identifying actions to be taken to ensure successful engagement with funding institutions, donors and other development partners.

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1. *The figures provided in this document correspond to the financial balance at the 2023 closure of accounts (balance as of 31 December 2023).* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *Note that this figure does not include other partnership agreements such as sponsorship agreements or voluntary contributions agreements, which are reported in document TDAG-24/4-E.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. *For further information see Resolution 1418, available at* [*https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0116/*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-C-0116/) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. *Available at* [*https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Projects*](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Projects) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. *Available at* [*https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Projects*](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Projects) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. *More information about ITU-D partnerships and resource mobilization is available in documents TDAG-24/4-E and Document INF/1, and TDAG-24/8-E on ITU-D Sector Members, Associates, and Academia.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)