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| PLENARY MEETING | **Document WTDC-25/15-E** |
|  | **10 October 2025** |
|  | **Original: English** |
| Director, Telecommunication Develpoment Bureau |
| Report on BDT work on Digital Inclusion |
| **Priority area:** - Action Plan, Regional Initiatives and ITU-D Study Group Questions - ITU-D Resolutions and Recommendations**Summary:**This document provides an overview of the work accomplished by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) in Digital Inclusion since WTDC-22 to the present.It highlights the activities, initiatives, and events undertaken to strengthen the capacity of ITU Members to develop strategies, policies, and practices for digital inclusion and equity, supporting an inclusive digital transformation in their countries and regions — one in which no one is left behind and everyone, regardless of age, gender, ability, or geographical location, is included in the digital society.The BDT’s work on digital inclusion has also included projects and events aimed at empowering people, particularly end users in vulnerable situations, including women and girls, youth, persons with disabilities, individuals from rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, older persons, and those with specific needs or from low-income households.**Expected results:**WTDC is invited to note this document. **References:**[WTDC RESOLUTION 55 (Rev. Kigali, 2022)](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/tdc/D-TDC-WTDC-2022-PDF-E.pdf#page=358) - Mainstreaming a gender perspective in ITU to enhance women's empowerment through telecommunications/ICTs [WTDC RESOLUTION 76 (Rev. Kigali, 2022)](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/tdc/D-TDC-WTDC-2022-PDF-E.pdf#page=436) - Promoting in formation and communication technologies among young women and men for social and economic empowerment[WTDC RESOLUTION 46 (Rev. Kigali, 2022)](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/tdc/D-TDC-WTDC-2022-PDF-E.pdf#page=330) - Assistance to indigenous peoples and communities through information and communication technology[WTDC RESOLUTION 58 (Rev. Kigali, 2022)](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/tdc/D-TDC-WTDC-2022-PDF-E.pdf#page=369) - Telecommunication/information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs (older persons) |

**Introduction**

This document provides an overview of the work accomplished by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) in Digital Inclusion since WTDC-22 to the present.

**Summary of achievements**

Between 2023 and 2025, ITU-D Enabler 3: Diversity and Inclusion has played a pivotal role in promoting global digital inclusion towards building an inclusive digital society for all people with a particular focus on persons in vulnerable situation from among youth, women and girls, persons from rural, remote and indigenous communities, persons with disabilities and older persons.

ITU-D’s work on digital inclusion is guided by a holistic and intersectional approach that addresses the diverse needs of people across age, ability, gender, educational background, socio-economic status, and geographical location. We call for digital accessibility to be integrated from the outset in all digital policies, products, and services to ensure everyone has barrier-free access and can fully participate in the digital society, economy, and ecosystem (see [ITU Development Digital Inclusion](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/sites/digital-inclusion/)).



BDT’s digital inclusion efforts included:

* Awareness-raising, provision of expert support, tailored training, and project implementation to support development and deployment of inclusive ICT products and services and their use by all people, including those in vulnerable situations;
* Development of tools and resources, and facilitation of collaborative platforms involving governments, private sector, civil society, and academia to strengthen knowledge, share good practices and facilitate partnership to advance digital inclusion implementation at national and regional level;
* Support for both policymakers and persons in vulnerable situations with the aim of developing inclusive national policies and strategies and enabling the latter to be active participants in the digital society and ecosystem.

To achieve this, BDT fostered both top-down and bottom-up engagement, resulting in strengthened capacity, shared good practices, and expanded networks. These efforts empowered women and girls, persons with disabilities, older persons, youth, and communities in rural, remote, and Indigenous areas and enabled them to be active participants in the digital society.

Key achievements include:

* **Strengthen capacity on digital inclusion topics to over 14,000 ITU members, stakeholders and policymakers** from 120+ countries to support designing and implementation of national digital inclusion policies and strategies;
* **Tailored and localised digital inclusion trainings to 13,000+ end-users** in 40+ countries, including blind users in Pakistan, youth in Africa, and Indigenous communities in Latin America;
* **Targeted support to 12 LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS**.

**In particular, the BDT work on digital inclusion brought tangible impact in the following areas:**

1. **Expert advice & Strengthen Capacity to Develop Digital Inclusion Policies & Strategies**

BDT strengthened capacity on digital inclusion policies through expert support and tailored interventions, equipping more than 10,500 policymakers, decision-makers, and stakeholders from over 120 countries across Africa, Asia-Pacific, CIS, Arab States, the Americas, and Europe. This capacity-building enabled them to design, develop, and implement strategies, policies, and practices that advance digital inclusion and equity, ensuring that all people—including women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, and people from remote and Indigenous communities—can equitably use ICT products and services to communicate, participate, and thrive in the digital space.

This extensive knowledge transfer was achieved through tailored face-to-face executive trainings, workshops, and participation in regional, global, and UN platforms addressing inclusive digital policies, gender mainstreaming, ICT/digital accessibility, ageing, and youth engagement.

In addition, to above effort over 3,500 ITU Members and stakeholders strengthened their capacity on digital inclusion topics by engaging through online self-paced training made available through platforms such as ITU Academy. These trainings are free of charge, delivered in digitally accessible formats (can be also used by blind and deaf persons), and in multiple languages (such as English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Portuguese) with localized content, ensuring inclusivity and broader reach.

* 1. **National Strategy on Digital Inclusion – an evolving model**

Subject matter expertise to support development of National Strategic Plans on Digital Inclusion—designed from a holistic and intersectional perspective to ensure that the needs and requirements of all citizens to use technology, communicate, and participate in the digital society are addressed—was also promoted and facilitated. A pilot plan was implemented in Burundi, with the intention of replicating and further developing this approach in other countries and regions. In addition, gender policy reports were developed for [Burundi](https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-phcb-equal-02-2023), [Ethiopia](https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-phcb-equal-03-2023), Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Libya.

* 1. **Generation Connect Youth Envoys**

Between 2023 and 2025, BDT significantly advanced youth engagement through the Generation Connect initiative, positioning young people as active contributors to ITU’s digital development agenda. In partnership with Member States, ITU appointed 184 [Generation Connect Youth Envoys (GCYE)](https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/generation-connect-youth-envoys/) from 64 countries—achieving near gender parity and strong representation from LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS—following a competitive global selection process. These Envoys, aged 18–24, have actively participated in ITU’s national, regional, and global activities, contributing youth perspectives to key ICT policy discussions and helping shape a more inclusive digital future.

To build their capacity and amplify their voices, ITU delivered a Knowledge Development and Mentoring Programme and convened Regional Youth Consultations, allowing Envoys to co-identify priorities and propose solutions. Their recommendations were presented directly to ITU Members through platforms like the [Informal Coordination Group on the Global Youth Summit](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/TDAG/Pages/2024/TDAG_ICG_GYS.aspx), ensuring meaningful intergenerational dialogue. Youth Envoys also played active roles in flagship ITU events—including Regional Development Forums, Girls in ICT Day, and ITU-D Study Groups—cementing their role as valued partners in advancing inclusive and equitable digital transformation.



* 1. **Network of Women in ITU-D (NoW in ITU-D)**

The [NoW in ITU-D](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Women-and-Girls/NoW/Pages/default.aspx) has strengthened its efforts to prepare women delegates for active participation in ITU-D processes and the upcoming WTDC-25. Through the “Building a Network of Women Leaders” project, supported by the Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST) of Saudi Arabia, NoW in ITU-D has delivered impactful mentorship and capacity-building activities benefiting over 400 women from all regions.

Key initiatives include the [Empowering Women Leaders Mentorship Programme](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Women-and-Girls/NoW/Pages/mentorship/2024/Empowering-Women-Leaders-Mentorship-Programme.aspx) that engaged over 150 participants across all six regions. For the very first time, 30% of the mentors were men, which marks an important milestone in fostering the empowerment of women delegates through the active support of their male peers. A “Confidence Booster Masterclass” on the eve of the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR-25) in Saudi Arabia, held on the last day of August 2025 brought together over 60 participants from 40 countries, helping them to strengthen their confidence in public speaking, improve communication techniques, and gain practical tips for effective presentations and interventions.

NoW in ITU-D has also hosted networking sessions during TDAG meetings, and dedicated panels during the Regional Development Forums (RDFs) fostering collaboration among women delegates and creating a stronger sense of community across regions, advancing the topics and agenda of the digital development sector.

1. **Empowerment & Capacity Development of End-Users at Community Level**

At community level, through Digital Inclusion projects and initiatives more than 13,000 end-users from over 40 countries benefited directly from training, mentoring, and local-driven digital initiatives. These included persons in vulnerable situations from among women and girls, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and persons from remote and indigenous communities.

* 1. **Enhancing skills in rural, remote and indigenous communities**

Since 2023, ITU’s digital inclusion work for rural, remote, and Indigenous communities has expanded significantly. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the 4th generation of the Blended Training Programme graduated 28 network managers from 9 countries (2023/2024), while a new short course on *Designing Community Connectivity Strategies* certified 50 participants from 10 countries in 2024. The ongoing 5th generation (2025) has already engaged 69 participants from 12 countries. In parallel, the programme was launched in Africa for the first time in 2025, with 65 participants from 18 countries currently enrolled. These efforts are strengthening local capacity and empowering communities to lead their own digital development.

* 1. **EQUALS Her Digital Skills**

The [EQUALS Her Digital Skills](https://www.equalsintech.org/her-digital-skills) initiative equips girls and young women around the world with digital skills to increase their opportunities to access formal employment and entrepreneurship. The project offer participants access, free of charge, to a high-quality, universally recognized digital skills training and certification program, through online training and offline hands-on STEM workshops to reach girls and women in underserved areas, with a dual objective: (1) to encourage girls’ and women’s further pursuit of tech studies and careers and (2) facilitate girls’ and women’ access to formal employment and entrepreneurship, including in tech sectors. Contributions to the initiative include Qualcomm that supports the implementation of the Her Digital Skills in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria, and the Women’s World Wide Web, GSMA and EY that supported the development of content and delivery of the initiative in the Philippines, Kenya, Caribbean, Nepal, Uganda, South Africa reaching +23 countries and impacting around 5600 young women.

* 1. **Generation Connect Young Leadership Programme (GCYLP)**

The [GCYLP Fellows](https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/empower/generation-connect-young-leadership-programme-in-partnership-with-huawei/itu-generation-connect-young-leadership-programme-cohort-2025/) are young individuals aged 18 to 28 who are passionate about driving meaningful change in their communities through digital development. Two global cohorts for a total of 60 young innovators from 40 countries, selected from +10000 applicants, strengthen their leadership, innovation, and project management skills through the GCYLP Development Weeks in June 2024 and August 2025. In partnership with Huawei, each fellow received a 5,000 USD grant to implement digital projects in their communities and continues to benefit from monthly virtual mentoring and reporting sessions and exercises. Five fellows secured additional funding totalling 750,000 USD from other organisations, enhancing project sustainability. Thanks to the project support, they have expanded their influence and networks by participating as speakers at major global events including ITU Digital Skills Forum in Bahrain, ITU Global Innovation Forum in Malta, the ITU-D Study Groups 1 meeting, COP29 in Azerbaijan, Girls in ICTs Celebrations and the World Internet Conference (WIC) in China, among others.

* 1. **AI Skills Accelerator for Girls**

The [AI Skills Accelerator for Girls](https://www.itu.int/women-and-girls/women-in-ict/ai-skills-accelerator-for-girls/) program was born out of a need to address the underrepresentation of women in AI and leadership roles in tech. The ITU Development Bureau and EY teamed up on this in 2024, with the goal to empower at least 1000 young women from underserved communities with the skills they need to succeed in AI and digital fields. The program aims to give young women, especially those between 18 and 25, the practical, ethical, and leadership skills to thrive in the AI space. The program is hands-on and will have two cohorts of young women benefiting of the activities. The first cohort started in October 2024 with in-person workshops running across 6 countries (one per each ITU region: Paraguay, Malta, Kenya, India, Kazakhstan, Jordan) and in August 2025 other countries would benefit under the second cohort (Uzbekistan, Guatemala, Egypt). More than 820 young women have benefited from the program.

1. **Knowledge Tools & Resources to Support Implementation**

A series of new tools and training materials and thematic reports in topics of digital inclusion, were developed to support ITU Members’s efforts in digital inclusion implementation efforts.

In response to the evolving agenda of digital inclusion in partnership with WHO, ITU launched a [Toolkit for Accessible Telehealth Services](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Documents/2025/itu-who-toolkit/ITU-WHO-Implementation-toolkit-for-accessible-telehealth-services.pdf), which providesthe necessary practical guidance and a stepwise approach to support Member States, industry, health service providers, and civil society in promoting and implementing digitally accessible and inclusive digital health service.

An additional comprehensive resource on Strategic Mainstreaming on ICT Accessibility for an Inclusive Digital Transformation was also developed and soon to be released.

Eight (8) training course on topics such as: Legal and Regulatory Frameworks related to digital inclusion, Inclusive Digital Government, Inclusive Digital Economies, Digital Skills and Literacy for All, AI Impact in the Development of Accessibility Features, Multi-Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination, Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptive Implementation were also developed to be tailored and support ITU Members in their in country efforts to advance digital inclusion agenda.

New tools include, the [ITU-ILO Guidebook and on-line self-paced training on Accessible Online Job Applications](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/itu-ilo/default.aspx). All Digital Inclusion on-line self-paced trainings and video tutorials are freely available, in digitally accessible formats (can be used also by blind or deaf people) in multiple UN languages to support mainstreaming of ICT accessibility to ensure an inclusive digital transformation.

In 2024, the [Handbook on mainstreaming gender in digital policies](https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-hdb-gender-2023-01/) offered Member States good practices on how to mainstream gender into current and future digital policies. Developed from a wide range of country experiences, the toolkit presents step-by-step guidance for mainstreaming gender and inclusion into ICT design and regulation. Training sessions and peer exchanges reinforced their uptake, enabling governments to move beyond *ad hoc* measures and adopt systematic approaches to inclusive policymaking.

The [Her Digital Skills: Towards a Gender Transformative Approach](https://www.equalsintech.org/_files/ugd/04bfff_cc8e6f166c2e41beabc88cbb3226f66f.pdf) released in 2024, is a framework and practitioners' guide that recommends gender-transformative approaches to the design of digital skills education programmes, inside and outside the classroom. The framework outlines an inclusive, contextualised, competency-based approach to learning strategies, curricula, and content, and underscores the importance of integrating gender norm change theory and practice. The report also recommends how different stakeholders can intervene in the wider ecosystem to bridge the gender digital divide.

Currently, [ITU-D offers more than 75 tools and resources](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/resources-on-ICT-accessibility/default.aspx)—including thematic reports, guidelines, toolkits, and trainings—to support Member States in implementing digital inclusion agendas at national, regional, and global levels. See more [Resources on ICT/digital accessibility](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/resources-on-ICT-accessibility/default.aspx)

Overall, ITU-D resources reached more than 3,000 users annually, based on web analytics.

1. **Advocacy, global and working platforms to share experience, increase collaboration and support implementation**
	1. **Study Group Question 7/1**

The work in Digital inclusion it is strongly guided by the [ITU-D Study Groups Question 7/1 on Telecommunication/ICT accessibility to enable inclusive communication](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Study-Groups/2022-2025/Pages/reference/SG1/questions/Question-7-1.aspx), that facilitate sharing experience, good practice to enriched thematic national and regional activities related to the inclusive communication in the digital space and advancing global implementation. This work also resulted into a set of guidelines reflected in the SG Q7/1 Report 2023-2025 <https://www.itu.int/md/D22-SG01-C-0490/en>.

* 1. **Accessible ICTs for ALL and related key convening platforms**

BDT has been instrumental in empowering ITU Members to strengthen knowledge, exchange experiences, and design actionable policies strategies to advance digital accessibility at global, regional, and national levels. Through flagship regional events such as *Accessible ICTs for All* (held in Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Spain, Belgium, Morocco, and Jordan), with participation of over 80% of countries from each region and an average of 200 participants in every event, jointly with major Digital Inclusion and Accessibility platforms including the Conferences of States Parties to the CRPD, Regional Digital Inclusion Forums (e.g. ASP), the Global Forum on Ageing (Japan), and the Digital Accessibility Forum (UAE), BDT has created dynamic spaces for exchanging good practices, to advance implementation. These platforms have been catalysts for action—fostering expertise, strengthening partnerships, and advocating for technologies that are inclusive by design and accessible to all, especially persons with disabilities, older adults, migrants, people with low literacy, and those in rural, remote, or Indigenous communities.

By convening governments, private sector leaders, academia, NGOs, and end-user organizations, BDT has shared technical expertise, promoted practical tools and resources, and firmly positioned ITU-D as a global leader in advancing digital inclusion. These collective efforts are translating into tangible progress, driving policies and innovations that ensure no one is left behind in the digital transformation.

* 1. **International Girls in ICTs**

The yearly celebration of [International Girls in ICT Day](https://www.itu.int/women-and-girls/girls-in-ict/) continued to scale as a global mobilization for skills, leadership, and inclusion. The 2023–2025 themes moved from “Digital Skills for Life” to “Leadership” and then to “Girls in ICT for inclusive digital transformation” reflecting a progression from foundational skills to representation in decision-making and finally to shaping fair, people-centred digital futures. Flagship observances were hosted on different continents (Africa – Zimbabwe, Asia – Philippines, and CIS – Kyrgyzstan and Arab States – Mauritania), with hybrid formats that combined high-level dialogues, mentoring sessions, and practical workshops. The initiative’s cumulative reach from 2023 to 2025 had surpassed 76,000 girls and young women through 472 events in all six ITU regions.

* 1. **Global Youth Summit**

The 2025 edition of the [ITU Global Youth Summit](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/meetings/global-youth-summit-25/) (GYS-25) was held in Varadero, Cuba from 11 to 13 March 2025 under the theme “Amplifying youth voices in ICT for an inclusive and connected future”. GYS-25 was the 17th youth event organized by International Telecommunication Union (ITU), continuing a journey that began with the first-ever youth forum, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2001. Around 400 participants from 31 countries attended the event from all ITU regions, with young people from across the globe attending, with gender balance, and representation from Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, among other. Governments, international and regional organizations, private sector, and academia also took part, along with representatives of other UN agencies and Youth Envoys for ITU's Generation Connect programme.

Organized by the ITU and hosted by the Ministry of Communications of the Government of Cuba, the GYS-25 set out to amplify youth voices on the tech-driven future. Young participants from around the world identified their priorities to ensure that information and communication technologies are safe, affordable, and accessible. At the summit, young people discussed key tech issues such as connectivity, digital inclusion, online safety, ethical AI, the future of work, and digital participation for global youth empowerment. Through networking, intergenerational dialogues, project pitches, and other activities they exchanged ideas with experts and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of digital inclusion and skills to drive youth entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable development.

* 1. **Partnerships for Digital Inclusion**

Digital Inclusion work was also involving Intersectoral coordination, inputs, and collaboration with UN partners, including ESCWA, ESCAP, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UN-OHCHR, WHO in advancing digital accessibility and fostering a world of digital inclusion where no one is left behind. Partnerships with organizations such as, UNITAR, ITC, ILO, UNICEF, Qualcomm, Verizon, Women World Wide Web (W4), EY, GSMA, KAIST, Huawei, APC, Rhizomatica, REDES A.C., AFRALTI, Intersputnik, ZTI-China other UN agencies and new Academia member further amplified outreach and implementation of digital inclusion agenda.

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