

RECOMMENDATION ITU-D 20

Policy and regulatory initiatives for developing telecommunications/ICTs/broadband in rural and remote areas

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Dubai, 2014),

considering

a) that the significant role of telecommunications/ICTs/broadband in providing services, particularly e-applications, in rural and remote areas of developed countries, countries with economies in transition, developing and least developed countries (LDCs) for the empowerment of their people, promotion of culture, improvement of the quality of life of the rural community, development of the economy, etc.;

b) that ITU-D Study Groups 1 and 2 have continued their study activities to address the challenges faced by the rural and remote areas of the world in general, and LDCs and developing countries in particular, on various issues including, but not limited to, the range of techniques and solutions to provide services and e-applications, based on the inputs by the membership;

c) that Recommendation ITU-D 19 (Hyderabad, 2010) compiled the past Recommendations and consolidated them into a Recommendation based on the results of the studies on techniques and solutions for the development of telecommunications/ICTs/broadband for rural and remote areas since the establishment of the dedicated study Question during WTDC-94 (Buenos Aires),

recognizing

a) that the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), under the activities of ITU-D Study Group 2 Question 10-3/2, conducted a survey to gather detailed information on policy and regulatory measures that have been taken by the governments around the world and economic and business models for telecommunication/ICT/broadband growth in rural and remote areas;

b) that the survey also sought to collect information on the possible impact and analysis of such interventions and initiatives;

c) that the inputs received through the survey were useful for the study of ITU-D Study Group 1 and 2 Questions for the 2010-2014 study period to assist countries in strengthening the capacity to address challenges for the development of telecommunications/ICTs/broadband in rural and remote areas,

taking into account

- a) the results of analysis of the survey submitted by BDT to ITU-D Study Group 2;
- b) the analysis of case studies submitted to ITU-D Study Group 2 during the 2010-2014 study period;
- c) the final report of ITU-D Study Group 2 Question 10-3/2, on telecommunications/ICTs for rural and remote areas (2014);
- d) the report of Broadband Commission for Digital development (2012) submitted to ITU-D Study Group 2;
- e) the ITU Report on measuring the information society (2012);
- f) the fact that, in contrast to the large percentage of the global population that subscribe to basic mobile phone services, Internet connectivity in developing countries and LDCs is still limited, in particular in their rural and remote areas;
- g) that many governments have initiated the development of a specific national broadband network plan that would also cater for the needs of their rural and remote areas;
- h) that active and passive infrastructure sharing, along with the sharing of spectrum resources, are already included by some countries in their national telecommunication/ICT policy;
- i) that new licensees, with the support of the universal service fund and the sharing of active and passive network elements based on reference offers, as well as spectrum resources, can service rural and remote areas with incremental addition of their own network infrastructure elements, billing systems and customer services and independent tariff plans,

noting

a) that the following major interventions/initiatives are observed in the analysis of survey input:

- i) the definition of "rural and remote areas" is based on sparse population and harsh geographical conditions, and some countries have licence obligations to cover a certain percentage of the population in such areas;
- ii) the majority of the countries that responded to the survey have specific government policies in place for the development of telecommunications/ICTs/broadband in rural and remote areas, including the corresponding instruments, such as universal service provisions, universal access funds, licence obligations and targets for broadband coverage, penetration rate and data speed, defined in their telecommunication law and regulation;
- iii) funds are collected by the government ministry or telecommunication regulator of the country as a percentage of annual gross revenue or other scheme in proportion with income/annual net revenue/turnover and also managed and disbursed by the relevant ministry or regulator;
- iv) the development and adoption of an appropriate economic model and business model is critical for the development and sustainability of telecommunication/ICT/broadband networks and service provisioning in rural and remote areas, and it has been found that various kinds of economic and business models have been adopted by Member States based on specific country situations and requirements;
- v) sharing of backbone network infrastructure in rural and remote areas among operators, rather than building network infrastructure using a specific government budget and through a universal service obligation (USO) fund, is one possible option;
- vi) special policy, legal and/or regulatory frameworks for infrastructure sharing in rural and remote areas, for example by using optical fibre cables and base transceiver stations (BTS)/microwave towers and related support infrastructures, is an option worth considering in developing countries and LDCs,

convinced

- a) that the development of telecommunication/ICT/broadband services is essential for overall socio-economic and cultural development as well as for the promotion of other sectors;
- b) that the development of ICT infrastructure is an important measure to prevent the migration of population to urban areas;
- c) that telecommunication/ICT infrastructure is an important tool for measuring factors related to the protection of the environment,

recommends

- 1 that governments and regulators around the world in general and in the developing countries and LDCs in particular should take regulatory and policy measures to accelerate the development of telecommunications/ICTs/broadband in their rural and remote areas through specific policy and regulatory interventions/initiatives, and include them in their national development plans;
- 2 that operators and service providers should implement universal telecommunication/ICT service in rural and remote areas;
- 3 that Sector Members, Associates and Academia should take actions to increase studies on economic, energy-efficient and clean equipment suitable for ICT infrastructure development in rural and remote areas;
- 4 that the state-of-the-art cost-effective techniques and technologies for broadband infrastructure development most suited for the geographical and economic conditions of rural and remote areas be put in place to enable these areas to access various e-applications, especially those which integrate them into national streams like e-governance, e-health, e-education, e-agriculture, etc. for vitalizing rural community through policy and regulatory interventions/initiatives;
- 5 that country/area-specific poverty indices published by the United Nations/World Bank may be taken into due consideration in the implementation of universal telecommunication/ICT service in rural and remote areas,

invites the Director of BDT

to continue organizing symposiums, seminars, workshops and related activities on the subject.