ICTs & SDGs

In September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was agreed upon at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit.

The Agenda sets out a comprehensive framework for international cooperation between 2015 and 2030 in support of sustainable development, covering its economic, social and environmental dimensions through 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets.

ICTs & SDGs

The role of ICTs in development has been under discussion since at least 1984 and the WSIS Outcomes called for 'a people-centred, inclusive and development oriented Information Society, … enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life.'

ICTs & SDGs

The decade since WSIS has also seen remarkable developments in the capabilities and reach of ICTs within developing countries, including the spread of broadband networks and the emergence of mobile Internet, smartphones and tablets, social media and cloud computing, all of which are widely recognized as enablers of sustainable development.

ICTs & SDGs

The World Bank[1] noted that 'the effect of technology on global productivity, expansion of opportunity for the poor and the middle class, and the spread of accountable governance has so far been less than expected,' and that, to date, 'the better educated, well connected, and more capable have received most of the benefits.' It emphasized the need for focusing on 'a favorable business climate, strong human capital, and good governance.'

[1] World Development Report on Digital Dividends

ICTs & SDGs

SDG 9 aims to 'build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation,' and includes eight targets.

Target 9.c seeks to 'significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.'

How to increase access

Mobile-cellular services have witnessed unprecedented growth over the last 15 years, and have taken a prominent place among the world's most ubiquitous technologies: in some countries, more people have access to mobile-cellular services than to a bank account, electricity or clean water (World Bank, 2012).

Internet

Over the past decade, the Internet has spread rapidly and, by the end of 2016, 3.5 billion people – or close to 50% of the world's population – are using the Internet, driven by the expansion of mobile networks and falling prices.

Internet

An increasingly ubiquitous, open, fast and content-rich Internet has changed the way many people live, communicate, and do business, delivering great benefits for people, governments, organizations and the private sector.

Internet

Many people no longer *go* online, they *are* online. The Internet has opened up new communication channels, provided access to information and services, increased productivity and fostered innovation. It has also created an Internet economy, and a number of new leading businesses whose clients are exclusively online.

Internet – Open & Equal?

Nevertheless, the Internet and its benefits have spread unequally and many people have not been able to benefit from the potential of the Internet.

Internet – Open & Equal?

The offline population – 3.9 billion people globally – is disproportionally female and elderly, less educated, has lower incomes and lives in rural areas. While Internet infrastructure, access and quality of service remain important barriers to uptake, more people have access to Internet services than actually use them.

Internet – Open & Equal?

Broader socioeconomic factors that are not ICT-related need to be addressed to bring more people online.
Education levels in particular, and accompanying income levels, are strong determinants of whether or not people use the Internet.

How to increase usage

Mobile phone usage has changed not only the way people communicate, but also the way they plan their daily lives, organize themselves socially, and access educational, health, business and employment opportunities (Castells et al., 2007).

How to increase usage

As the international community moves on from the MDG timeframe to that of the sustainable development goals (SDGs, 2015-2030), the question remains as to whether universal mobile phone usage has been achieved as a means of fulfilling the pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that "No one must be left behind".

Mobile Subscriptons
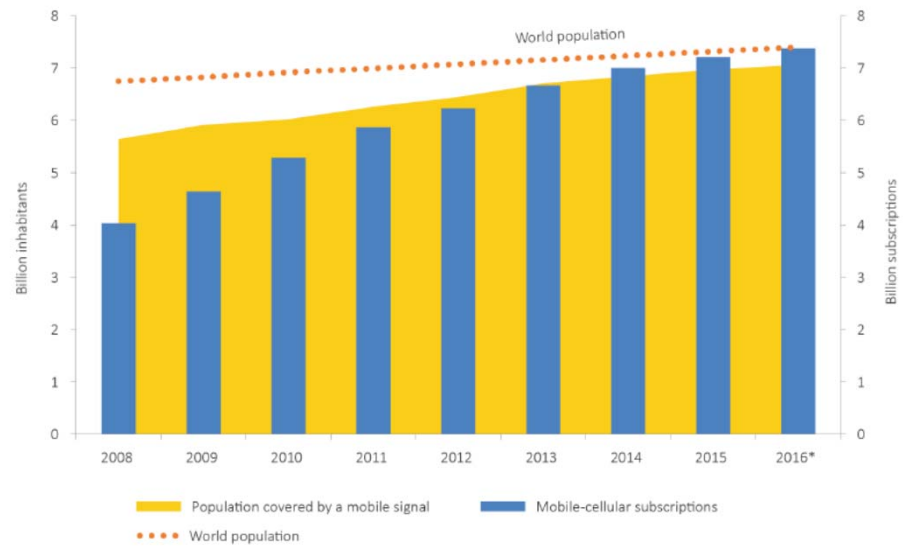
Ownership & Usage

The importance of mobile-phone ownership as an empowerment tool has been recognized in the SDGs.

- In half of the economies with available data, more than 75 per cent of the population owns a mobile phone.
- A significant part of the population in developing countries may be using a mobile phone without owning it.

Why do people not own or use mobile phones?

- **Affordability** is the main barrier to mobile uptake.

- The **lack of perceived benefits** of mobilephone ownership among some segments of the population is one of the reasons most cited for not owning a mobile phone.

- Despite the high mobile-network coverage, including in the developing world, **poor network quality** as a barrier to mobile uptake.

- **Lack of ICT skills** is a barrier for some individuals who do not own a mobile phone.

- **Phone theft** or broken devices are consistently cited as a barrier to use of the service.

- **Trust in the operator** or agent is also sometimes cited as an issue, particularly among rural, less-educated segments of the population who are not yet mobile-phone owners.

Conclusions

- The objectives of the Public Policies for the next 15 years should be focused in reaching the SDGs.
- ICTs are an important drive for this implementation.
- Public Policies should work on including people in ICTs, specially in mobile and broadband.
- Consumer relations should be aligned with this major objective. If we can reach these goals, automatically we are reaching user satisfaction and better consumer relations.