Joint EGTI/EGH subgroup on the ICT Development Index (IDI)

Report of activities for the 2024 work period

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ITU

- Review the conceptual framework ("Universal and meaningful connectivity") of the current methodology of the IDI.

- Review indicators of the IDI and identify indicators for potential inclusion in the IDI, based on relevance, availability, and quality, and recommend a list of potential indicators for a revised IDI methodology.

- In collaboration with relevant stakeholders (e.g., ITU-D Study Groups), identify aspects of ICT development for which new indicators should be defined and recommend those as possible topics for future work of EGTI and EGH.

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METHODS OF WORK

● Dedicated Microsoft Teams channel to all participants that asked to join the subgroup and provided a valid email address.

● A submission template, used by proponents of new indicators/criteria/themes for the IDI.

● A log of submissions, updated by the co-leads between meetings of the subgroup.

● An interactive dashboard reporting the availability for ITU indicators.

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● Five online meetings held between April and July of 2024.

● Total of 88 individuals from approximately 32 countries joined the subgroup. Affiliations included statistics office, national telecommunication regulators, ministries, research organizations, and ITU sector members.

● Themes not yet discussed during previous IDI methodology revision were prioritized.

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For IDI 2023, many indicators considered for inclusion were not retained due to a lack of data availability, the majority from household surveys.

The prioritization and supply of data is possibly influenced by the demand from policymakers. In this context, tools like the IDI may stimulate the demand for and—indirectly—improve the supply of data.

If data is collected only for those indicators included in the IDI, the availability and quality of other indicators will not improve, and these indicators can never be considered for inclusion.
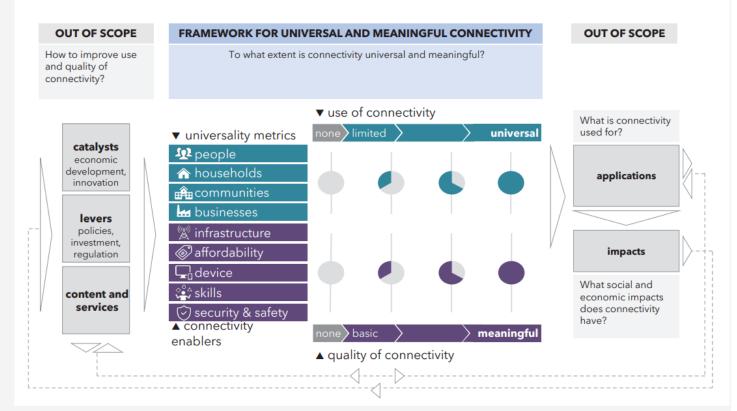
A candidate indicator is an indicator that could be recommended for inclusion during an eventual revision of the IDI methodology, depending on its availability at the moment of the revision.

For an indicator to be designated as Candidate Indicator, it should satisfy most, if not all of the following criteria: relevance, availability, reliability, and source. In addition, they should receive very broad support from the subgroup.

Figure 1: Universal and meaningful connectivity framework

The subgroup validated the conceptual framework of Universal and Meaningful Connectivity as the basis for the index.

The pillars and its sub themes were considered to provide a good direction for the design and selection of the future indicators to be considered for review.

In its past version, IDI included a proxy indicator for skills, but during the development of the current IDI in 2023, there was no agreement on the use of proxy indicators for ICT skills.

The indicators that reflect level of skills come from several different items to be included in household surveys, which are not sufficiently reported by countries.

Currently, there are two main barriers for the inclusion of an ICT skills:

- data availability

- definition on indicators

Cybersecurity is a relevant dimension included in the framework of universal and meaningful connectivity.

Global Cybersecurity Index, published by ITU in September 2024 with an updated methodology (GCIv5), was mentioned.

Some concerns were raised regarding the effect of including one composite indicator within the other.

Need to define an adequate indicator so this dimension can be included in a future version of the IDI.

Members suggest the IDI should be published earlier in the year to increase its relevance, with reference year N-1.

ITU secretariat explained their efforts in minimizing the lag between the reference period used in the IDI and its release.

Publishing the IDI with the preceding year as the reference year is not feasible, as it result in assessments based on less accurate data and an increased share of estimated data points due to the higher incidence of missing data.

Discussion on difference between Purchase Power Parity (PPP) and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.

Suggestion for substitution of data-only mobile broadband basket instead of basket that includes both data and voice services.

Consensus that the IDI should include a measure of fixed broadband penetration, but the ITU does not have the mandate to collect and/or estimate the official number of households by country.

A subgroup in 2023 was established to examine possible alternative denominator, such as overall population or population aged 18 or older, but consensus was not reached.

Indicator was not included in IDI 2023 structure despite its availability and adherence to the conceptual framework.

ITU Secretariat has provided the subgroup with an update on how different UN agencies are collaborating to fix this lack of official information. There is some progress, but no clear timeline was provided.

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IDI 2023 includes indicator on percentage of individuals owning a mobile phone. This indicator comes from household surveys, has a medium level of availability and a good capacity to be estimated by the ITU.

Submission for inclusion of the proportion of households with a computer, an indicator also originating from household surveys. Conceptually, it would be reasonable to reflect both types of devices in the Index because of its relationship with activities and skills.

The main barrier for its inclusion is the low level of available data and difficulty to be estimated.

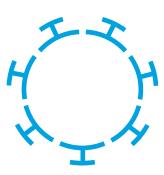Proposals on availability of higher speed tiers

- share of high-speed tiers in the total number of fixed broadband subscriptions

- private (crowd-sourced) data sources of speed tests such as Ookla/Speedtest

Proposals on Network

- Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) subscriptions as a percentage of total broadband subscriptions

- International bandwidth per Internet user

- Percentage of population covered by a 5G mobile network

Continue to use universal and meaningful connectivity as the underpinning conceptual framework of the IDI

Adopt the Candidate Indicators framework

Extend the subgroup's mandate for another year

Thank you