8th Meeting of the ITU Expert Group on ICT Household Indicators (EGH)

17-18 September 2020

SUMMARY

1. The 8th Meeting of the ITU Expert Group on ICT Household Indicators (EGH) took place in fully virtual format on 17-18 September 2020, back-to-back with the 11th Meeting of the ITU Expert Group on Telecommunication / ICT Indicators (EGTI) which was held on 15-16 September 2020. Joint sessions with EGTI were held on 14 and 18 September.

2. There were 378 participants attending the meeting, including experts from regulators, telecommunication operators, ministries and national statistical offices from 99 countries, as well as ITU-D Sector Members, other UN agencies and regional organizations. Experts from the three sectors of ITU also attended the meeting, as did from ITU-D Regional Offices. The meeting was chaired by the EGH Chair, Mr. Juan Daniel Oviedo of the National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia (DANE).

3. The meeting discussed the contributions received in the EGH online forum on these items. Background documents on key topics of the agenda had been prepared and disseminated to all EGH members in advance of the meeting. The background documents aimed to provide relevant information to be used by EGH members and to support the debate and decisions to be taken during the meeting. The documents were prepared to advance these topics and make proposals to the whole EGH.

4. The discussions focused on ways forward in advancing the measurement and data collection on different topics and included items related with the measurement of ICT skills and better measuring Internet users, as well as presenting an ICT survey country experience from the Philippines, and exposing information on the revised Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals. The meeting further discussed the future work of EGH, including the identification of topics that required further review and discussion related to indicators derived from household surveys of ICT access and use. During the whole meeting, topics were enriched by the discussions and interventions from participants.

5. The progress made by the different subgroups shows the importance of ICT indicators in decision-making in particular situations such as COVID-19, where addressing connectivity issues is required to guarantee the social and economic dynamics.

6. The first substantive agenda item concerned information about the launch of the revised Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals. The 2020 edition of the manual was prepared by ITU staff and consultants, and is a revision to the earlier 2014 edition, with the revision

incorporating decisions made by the EGH to change the definitions of some household ICT indicators, and to create new ones.

7. The draft version of the revised manual had been presented to the 7th EGH meeting, which was followed by a discussion at that meeting of the Manual's revision, and an online consultation of draft parts of the Manual on the EGH online Forum. This resulted in a number of contributions being provided for material to enrich the Manual, which were gratefully received.

8. The 2020 edition of the Manual was launched on 25th August 2020 in English, with translations into other official languages underway at the time of the 8th EGH Meeting.

9. As well as incorporating material such as new statistical classifications, country examples and recent initiatives of members of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, the revised Manual also includes an updated version of the model questionnaire, and the following amendments to the core list of indicators:
   a. HH1-HH16 remain unchanged except that:
      i. Sub-indicators on smartphones are added to HH3 and HH10;
      ii. Changes to the device used were made to HH9 and HH15;
      iii. Changes to the categories for HH8 (location types), and for HH9 (activity types) and HH15 (skills);
      iv. The replacement of one of the categories for HH14 (barriers to household Internet access); and
      v. The expenditure categories for HH16 have been changed to reflect the 2018 version of the COICOP classification.
   b. HH17 to HH19 (which were added to the core list in 2014/15 after the recommendations of the EGH and the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS)) are included in the manual, and are unchanged, except:
      i. An extra category for smartphones is added to HH18.
   c. HH20 to HH23 (which were added to the core list in 2018 after recommendation from the EGH and WTIS) are included in the manual.

10. EGH participants expressed a lot of interest in the 2020 edition of the Manual, underlining its importance as a reference for producing internationally comparable household indicators on ICT access and use, as well as a basis for ITU's training materials and activities.

11. The next agenda item addressed improving the measurement of ICT skills. The 5th EGH meeting had agreed in 2017 to create a sub-group to work on ICT skills measurements based on ICT household data. This subgroup subsequently reported to the 6th EGH meeting in 2018, which reached agreement, *inter alia*, on amendments to the response categories of HH15, to reduce redundancy and fill data gaps in the skills that are currently measured.

12. The 6th EGH meeting further decided that this subgroup would continue its work to consider the aggregation of categories into one skills index or score, as well as the development of additional indicators to provide measures of the following items:
    a. Ability to evaluate the reliability of content that is found online (e.g. fake news).
    b. Awareness of the use of devices and/or the Internet as they relate to personal well-being (e.g. cyberbullying, addiction and social exclusion).
    c. Ability to recognize skills gaps and an individual's need for upskilling in the digital domain.

13. This subgroup made proposals and reported on progress to the 7th EGH meeting in 2019 (with reference to the background document called *EGH Subgroup on skills 2019 - proposal for EGH final*). The ensuing discussions concluded that the topic is of high interest to policy makers and concluded that an extra response category "Verifying the reliability of information found online" should be added to the indicator HH15 to cover the skill of critical literacy.

14. The 7th EGH further agreed that this subgroup would continue to work on the developing modules on critical literacy, well-being and upskilling in the digital domain; and explore the possibility of developing an aggregate skills score or index. The subgroup subsequently formulated proposals for questionnaire modules to measure these topics, and to develop an overall skills indicator, that combined multiple skill types into a single indicator. These proposals are summarized in the background document *EGH 2020 ICT skills subgroup proposal* on the EGH forum, which was presented to the 8th EGH Meeting in 2020 by Mark Uhrbach and Peter Shi Jiao, of Digital Economy Metrics at Statistics Canada.

15. The subgroup's proposals on the additional modules, and the overall skills indicator, were approved by the EGH, and the subgroup was closed. Any countries wishing to pilot these modules, could report the outcomes of these pilots to the EGH.

16. The item on ICT skills measurement was followed by an item featuring a presentation by the Philippines on their experiences in the implementation of their first ever national ICT household survey. This presentation shared important results, lessons, and interesting insights on the way that that survey was approached, implemented, and used. It also generated a lot of interest and questions from participants, demonstrating the importance of experience sharing at EGH.

17. The next agenda item addressed the work of the subgroup on improving the measurement of Internet users. The 6th EGH meeting agreed to create this subgroup after some of the challenges to the measurement of Internet use were raised at that meeting. There are various reasons why a survey may underestimate the true number of Internet users, for example people using certain smartphone apps without realising when this implies Internet use.

18. This subgroup formulated some suggestions for possible ways of dealing with this issue, which were outlined in the background document *Subgroup on Internet use - Summary and Proposals final version*, and presented to the 7th EGH Meeting. The 7th EGH concluded that the subgroup should

continue work on this topic, and that the online Forum should be used as a repository for sharing questionnaires.

19. The 7th EGH also noted that:
   - The ordering of survey questions could help to address this issue, and potential sources of difference in responses between countries, which is also relevant to the model questionnaire;
   - Zero-rating of certain Internet-dependent applications/services is another potential source of differences. The EGTI was requested to provide support to help contextualise the problem, though it is a complicated matter; and
   - Different types of users can be defined, depending on their intensity of use.

20. Further work was subsequently undertaken by this subgroup, which developed proposals for the measurement of Internet use, which were presented to the 8th EGH Meeting by Mr. Winston Oyadomari, Senior Survey Analyst, at the Brazilian Network Information Center. These proposals are detailed in the background document ***Subgroup on Internet Use - Proposal 1.3*** on the Forum, which outline how survey questions on individuals' Internet use could be asked so as to take into consideration those Internet users who are unaware that they are using the Internet. In the ensuing discussions, there was discussion of the problem of zero-rated services, which may be bundled with smartphone packages and utilize part of the Internet without giving users the ability to access other parts of the Internet. While these services are excluded from the general definition of the Internet, the proposal was to include these as part of indicator HH7.

21. The EGH adopted the proposals, recognizing the need to adapt the questions to country-specific circumstances by providing examples of packages or offers available in the country, as well as the prevalence of different Internet activities. The discussion and interventions on the measurement of Internet users show that there are conceptual challenges for countries to improve the reporting of the Internet use indicator. Addressing this is critical to have comparable data across countries. The subgroup was closed.

22. Item 6 of the agenda addressed future work of the EGH. The Chair and Vice-Chair reviewed the discussion topics that have been on the online Forum during the past year, including comments received in the Forum. There followed a discussion about the EGH work programme for the coming year.

23. The EGH agreed to close the existing discussion topics on the Internet of Things (IoT) and on community connectivity indicators, as well as the topics on measurement of ICT skills and better measuring Internet use, given that the work of these subgroups has been completed.

24. The discussions of the EGH identified the following topics for the future work of the EGH:
   - E-waste indicators in household surveys *(as a subgroup)*
   - Child online protection *(to continue as a forum topic)*

- Regular and COVID-19 related barriers to conducting household surveys: experience sharing *(as a new forum topic)*
- Mobile money *(as a subgroup)*
- Inclusiveness of ICT access and use *(as a new forum topic)*
- Micro and macro edits for ICT household statistics: experience sharing *(as a new forum topic)*

25. Due to time limitations, it was decided to undertake consultation with EGH members on the online Forum regarding whether to form subgroups for some of these items, or just to provide sharing of experiences in the Forum. The level of interest from EGH members in leading or contributing to the work of subgroups, will determine whether to form subgroups beyond those on e-waste and mobile money. Experts have until the 2nd of October to comment on the proposals.

26. The joint session of EGTI and EGH on 18th September provided an overview of the current situation that the national statistical systems are facing due to hampered field data collection and operations. The presentation from the UNSD highlighted the role of national statistical offices in providing reliable information, but many NSOs are struggling to produce basic statistics, due to the pandemic and the lack of readiness and resources needed to modernize operations and infrastructures. The presentation from Statistics Netherlands provided an overview of the application of big data (in particular, mobile phone signaling data) in different areas of statistics, and how that can be used to complement traditional data sources, with taking due considerations for ensuring privacy. The joint session of the EGH and EGTI related to the ICT Development Index is covered in a separate meeting summary of its own.

27. Collaboration between EGH and the ITU-D Study Groups (SG) 1 and 2 was further enhanced during the 8th meeting of EGH both thanks to the Liaison Statements from the Study Groups that were posted in the online forums identified areas of common interest, as well as their avid participation throughout the discussions of EGH. The Chair of the EGH encouraged the SG representatives to contribute actively to discussions in the online Forum. The SG representatives will inform the upcoming meetings of the Study Groups on the outcomes of the 8th EGH meeting.

28. The outcomes of the EGH meeting will be presented for endorsement at WTIS-20, on 1-3 December 2020, which will take place in virtual format.

29. The EGH Chair thanked all the speakers and presenters and presented the draft conclusions and recommendations of the 8th EGH meeting, before closing the meeting.