

## **Q. 7/1 Universal Access/Service**

### **1 Statement of Problem**

One of the greatest challenges for all countries is ensuring that an ever larger proportion of their population has access to affordable telecommunications, which is often called universal access/service. Whether the specific goal is to provide telecommunication access to a particular portion of the population, to achieve certain levels of telecommunication penetration, or to ensure that specific services are provided to a particular group, all telecommunication policy makers must address the universal access/service needs of their countries. For further information see the annex.

### **2 Question or Issue Proposed for Study**

The Study Group should establish a set of best practice guidelines for developing countries to take into consideration when developing policies, legislation, and/or regulations to address the critically important issues involving universal access/service. To efficiently and effectively study the issue of universal access/service, the Study Group should build on the work already done by ITU and in particular work already done for Questions 2/1, 3/1, 4/2, and 6/2 for the 1994-1998 study period of the ITU-D and other available materials, e.g., the 1998 World Telecommunication Development Report. To establish the best practice guidelines, the Study Group shall:

- 1) Identify the goals, impacts and expected benefits of existing different universal access/service policies, explaining the rationale for making these determinations.
- 2) Describe the use and the regulatory implications of new technologies and services in order to maximize the benefits that these technologies can provide for the expansion and improvement of telecommunication services.
- 3) Identify the most common, as well as the most innovative, approaches to achieving universal access/service goals when the private sector is responsible for implementing the telecommunication development initiatives, describing the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.
- 4) Identify guiding principles for raising, allocating, and administering universal access/service programmes, such as transparency, equitable distribution and access, competitively and technologically neutral allocation, and targeted to users.
- 5) Describe the legislative and regulatory frameworks that would be needed to implement universal access/service programmes or initiatives.
- 6) Identify and analyse the relationship that universal access/service policies have on other key telecommunication issues that arise as countries transition to increased competition, such as access charges, interconnection frameworks and agreements, accounting rates, and tariff rebalancing.

### **3 Description of Expected Output**

The output produced during the study of this question should be divided into two stages. The first stage would be mainly descriptive and would provide a review of currently existing universal access/service mechanisms described in tasks 1-4 above. This information would be suitable for providing the necessary background and information on alternatives for universal access/service mechanisms for government officials and telecommunication service providers. This part of the output would focus on casting a framework that could be used to develop detailed procedures to implement a universal access/service programme. The information contained in the first stage of the output could serve as a stimulus for legislative sectors of government to address the issues associated with providing universal access/service.

The second stage would focus on practical information that would be directly applicable to regulators, administrators, and telecommunication service personnel at the working level in order to implement and operate universal access/service programmes. The information obtained during the first stage of the output would be used during the second stage to establish best practice

guidelines and recommendations for regulators, administrators, and telecommunication service providers for implementing universal access/service programmes.

#### **4 Required Timing of Expected Output**

Because the information gathered for the study question will be useful for countries introducing or reassessing their universal access/service programmes, it should be disseminated as early as possible and without waiting for a final work product of the question. By the end of the first third of the study period, the first stage of the output should be produced. The second stage should be released as soon as practicable after the first stage but not later than the last meeting of the Study Group during the 1998-2002 study period.

#### **5 Proposers/Sponsors of the Question**

This Question is a direct result of the study of Questions 2/1 and 4/2 during the study period 1994-1998. There was consensus that the issue of universal access/service is of tremendous importance to many countries, particularly developing countries, and that study should continue on those particular aspects of Questions 2/1 and 4/2, as well as other related Questions such as 3/1 and 6/2. The Rapporteurs for Question 2/1 and 4/2 proposed the specific question, in addition many Member States and Sector Members have also expressed great support for the continued study of this issue.

#### **6 Sources of Input Required for Carrying Out the Study**

An important source of input will be the experiences of those countries that have made the greatest gains in establishing universal access/service concepts, including the use of new technologies, programmes and funds. In addition contributions from Members and Sector Members will be essential to the successful study of this issue. Interviews, existing reports, ITU materials including previous work of Study Group questions, Colloquia, and surveys should also be used to gather data and information for distillation into a comprehensive set of best practice guidelines for administering universal access/service programmes. Materials from regional telecommunication organizations should also be utilized to avoid duplication of work.

#### **7 Target Audience for the Output**

a) **Indicate expected types of target audience, by noting all relevant points on the matrix which follows**

	<b>Developed Countries</b>	<b>Developing Countries</b>	<b>LDC's</b>
Telecom Policy Makers	Interested	Highly interested because of unmet needs	Highly interested because of critical and unmet needs
Telecom Regulators	Interested and experienced with different models	Highly interested and some countries have implemented innovative approaches	High interest but often no legal framework to implement policies
Service Providers (Operators)	Small operators interested Large operators cautious and usually beneficiary of status quo	Private sector, particularly new technologies, highly interested but government monopolies less so	Government monopolies relatively unsuccessful
Manufacturers	Moderate interest	Moderate interest	Significant Interest

**b) Target Audience - Who specifically will use the output**

Based on the foregoing evaluation matrix, a broad range of telecom policy makers, regulators, and service providers from LDC's and developing countries will all be highly interested in the results of this question. Policy makers and regulators from developed countries may be interested in the compendium of approaches. Manufacturers will be interested in potential equipment and system sales, as well as in technology transfer opportunities, involving the manufacture of equipment and systems in developing countries under mutually beneficial partnership and joint venture arrangements.

**c) Proposed methods for implementing the results**

The results should be distributed in the traditional manner at the ITU-D Study Group meetings. However, given the importance of this issue, the BDT could also conduct regional seminars and meetings, perhaps in conjunction with regional telecommunication organizations, to disseminate the results of the question. The results could be published by the ITU for wider distribution.

**8 Proposed method for handling this Question**

**a & b) How and Why**

Because the issue of universal access/service is of such great importance to all countries, the study of this question should be within a Study Group over a multi-year study period with interim results as indicated above.

**9 Coordination Requirements of the Study**

Because the issue of universal access/service is closely related to other issues being studied by the ITU, a great amount of coordination will be required within the ITU-D Study Groups as well as the Study Groups from other ITU sectors. Close coordination will also be required between the BDT and those responsible for this question. Regional organizations such as CITELE and APEC are also currently considering issues regarding universal access/service. Thus, coordination with those organizations should be undertaken to reduce duplication of efforts.