



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

**TELECOMMUNICATION
DEVELOPMENT BUREAU**
ITU-D STUDY GROUPS

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SECOND MEETING OF STUDY GROUP 1: GENEVA, 30 AUGUST - 3 SEPTEMBER 1999
SECOND MEETING OF STUDY GROUP 2: GENEVA, 6 - 10 SEPTEMBER 1999

FOR INFORMATION

Question 10/2: Communications for rural and remote areas

STUDY GROUP 2

SOURCE: TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

TITLE: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF ITU-D FOCUS GROUP 7

Abstract:

The attached Terms of Reference of Focus Group 7 contain also the work methods and a proposed work schedule of the Group. These were approved by the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) during its meeting in Geneva, 8-9 April 1999.

The Focus Group met on 16 June 1999 in order to agree on the workplan and the work methods, as well as the database design. The report of that meeting will be distributed separately.

PROPOSED AIMS AND WORK METHODS OF ITU-D SG 2 FOCUS GROUP ON TOPIC 7:

Study various mechanisms by which to promote the development of new telecommunication technologies for rural applications

1 Introduction

The second World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) at Valletta, Malta in 1998, agreed on a list of questions for the study period 1998-2002 to be considered by ITU-D Study Group 2, including topics for seven focus groups. Based on a Japanese contribution to WTDC, Topic 7 was defined as "Study various mechanisms by which to promote the development of new telecommunication technologies for rural applications". At the first meeting of Study Group 2 on 7-9 September 1998, it was agreed that this topic should be handled by the BDT Secretariat as part of its operational plan.

In order for Focus Group (Topic 7) to start its work in an effective manner, we believe TDAG should establish guidelines for the Focus Group's work. In those guidelines, Japan proposes that the aims and working methods of Focus Group (Topic 7) should be defined as follows.

2 Aims of Focus Group (Topic 7)

Compared with those in developed countries, telecommunication markets in developing countries are small and the physical conditions in those countries are often harsh. So it is likely that the efforts of private manufacturers to develop suitable technology for such markets will be limited without specific and active encouragement and support from the public sector. To assist an essential purpose of ITU-D to provide such encouragement, Focus Group (Topic 7) should gather information on projects to develop technology for rural applications, and identify and recommend priorities for new measures that need to be taken by ITU-D to help achieve such development. In addition, it should aim to raise public awareness of problems and solutions in developing technology for rural applications, and provide means through which information on these topics can be exchanged.

3 Work methods of Focus Group (Topic 7)

The aims of Focus Group (Topic 7) expressed above could be achieved through such actions as:

3.1 Collection and dissemination of information

Establishment of an Internet homepage to gather and exchange information on the development of telecommunication technologies that truly meet the needs of developing countries. The homepage, funded through ITU Members' voluntary contributions, would be a means of input for not only the ITU membership, but also other organizations and individuals connected with developing rural areas through telecommunications. Through such input, information on efforts in this field could be concentrated into a database, which should be easily accessible to ITU Members and the public. In addition, provision of a "virtual conference room" would allow direct contact with the authors of input. Three types of information for the database should be:

- a) ongoing projects using technologies specially designed for rural areas of developing countries, including Multipurpose Community Telecentre, Telemedicine and Tele-education;

- b) planned projects that make new combinations of technologies to meet the needs of rural areas, such as satellite communications linked with WLL networks;
- c) examples of how equipment has been adapted for use in particular, harsh climatic or other conditions of remote and rural areas, such as solar-powered telephones.

3.2 Identification of priorities for ITU support and ITU-D measures

Based on the data gathered through the homepage, and taking account of the work of SG 2, Focus Group members should:

- a) select those types of project or system that have social or economic importance but limited commercial profitability, so that the ITU can focus special support upon such projects in helping to develop technology for rural applications;
- b) list new measures to be taken by ITU-D to encourage manufacturers and relevant organizations to create technology tailored to developing countries;
- c) among those measures, recommend priorities that ITU-D should follow to help achieve the development of technology for rural applications.

3.3 Holding of a symposium

Once input is being successfully gathered for the database, the Focus Group might consider proposing that BDT hold a symposium at an early stage, involving not only ITU-D and the Focus Group, but also academics, manufacturers and other relevant participants such as NGOs. The purpose of the symposium would be to:

- a) encourage input into the work of Focus Group (Topic 7) and further expand its database;
- b) enable information and experience to be shared on developing technology for rural applications;
- c) discuss the selection of types of project or system that are most suitable to receive special ITU support for the development of technology fitted to the needs of rural areas in developing countries;
- d) discuss what new measures should be undertaken by ITU-D to promote effectively the development of technology for rural applications.

4 Proposed work schedule of Focus Group (Topic 7)

To achieve the goals described in the previous sections, a possible preliminary schedule for the work of Focus Group (Topic 7) might be as follows:

April 1999: (TDAG meeting)	Guideline established on aims and working methods of Focus Group (Topic 7), and participation invited
May 1999:	First meeting of Focus Group (Topic 7); schedule of group's activities and format for database decided
June 1999:	Start data collection for database and open virtual conference room
September 1999:	Interim report to SG 2 on work of Focus Group (Topic 7)
Feb./March 2000:	Focus Group (Topic 7) to report to TDAG
September 2000:	Final report to SG 2 on work of Focus Group (Topic 7)