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| Question 20-1/1: Access to telecommunication services and information and communication technologies (ICTs) by persons with disabilities |
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| Action required: | Participants are invited to consider this contribution in the framework of the work of Question 20-1/1. |

Abstract:

This document is an input from BDT on Special Initiatives activities related to persons with disabilities.

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1. BACKGROUND

The Special Initiatives Division has provided several reports on its activities to Question 20-1/1, included in Documents RGQ 20-1/1/003 (3March 2011), [1/010](http://www.itu.int/md/D10-SG01-C-0010/en) (6 September 2010), [RGQ 20/1/023](http://www.itu.int/md/D06-RGQ20.1-C-0023/) (12 February 2009), Document [RGQ20/1/016](http://www.itu.int/md/D06-RGQ20.1-C-0016/) (23 January 2008) and Document [1/203](http://www.itu.int/md/D06-SG01-C-0203/en), dated 1 September 2008. Most of the activities undertaken during the period from the last report to the September 2010 Study Group meeting focused on publication of a condensed print version of the ITU[-G3ict e-Accessibility Toolkit for Policy Makers for Persons with Disabilities](http://www.e-accessibilitytoolkit.org/), regional forums, workshops and other meetings to raise awareness on accessibility issues, development of the Connect a School, Connect a Community initiative and country projects for multi-purpose community telecentres (MCTs) for persons with disabilities and the development of a text-to-speech engine in Mongolian.

1. THE TOOLKIT PROJECT FOR POLICY MAKERS

As reported earlier, BDT, together with its partner, G3ict (the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs), has developed an [online toolkit](http://www.e-accessibilitytoolkit.org/) for sharing best practices with policy makers, regulators and other stakeholders on e-accessibility and service needs for persons with disabilities (the “Toolkit” can be found at [www.e-accessibilitytoolkit.org](http://www.e-accessibilitytoolkit.org/)). Since its release, ITU and G3ict partnered with the Centre for Internet & Society to produce an abridged, print version of the toolkit, known as the “Handbook.” The Handbook is available online in [PDF](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/Documents/e-Accessibility__Final_.pdf), [Braille](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/Documents/e-Accessibility_Handbook_Braille_format.brf) and [Daisy formats](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/Documents/AMIS.zip) at: [www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/). The partners have also shared the Handbook with [BookShare.org](http://www.BookShare.org), which provides accessible print media free of charge to persons with disabilities.

The Toolkit is designed to support ITU members in understanding the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006 was signed by 149 countries and ratified by 101 by end June March 2011. In other words, the majority of ITU Member States have signed the CRPD, with over one half of our Member States having ratified it.

Accessibility to ICT is defined in Article 9 of the Convention and concerns all ICT products and ICT-based applications and services, with a far-reaching implication for industry, governments and civil society. The toolkit and handbook are designed to assist ITU members in promoting accessible ICTs and removing any ICT barriers in their countries in line with the CRPD.

[ITU and G3ict are developing two studies on mobile phone accessibility](http://www.itu.int/md/D10-RGQ20.1.1-C-0008/en) and [making TV accessible](http://www.itu.int/md/D10-RGQ20.1.1-C-0007/en) . Presentations on the draft reports were made to the Rapporteur’s Group meeting in May 2011.

1. REGIONAL FORUMS, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES

As reported previously, ITU has organized a series of global and regional events to share experiences, best practice and raise awareness on key issues to be addressed by Member States and other stakeholders to meet the ICT needs of persons with disabilities in accordance with the CRPD. The latest event was the [Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Digital Inclusion for All](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/asp/CMS/Events/2011/DigitalInclusion/index.asp) held from 21-23 June in Singapore in addition to events in 2010 in [Uganda](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/Seminars/Uganda/index.html), [India](http://edict2010.in/) and [Ukraine](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/Seminars/Ukraine/Odessa_workshop.html). Links to all events can be found at: [www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/PwDs/).

BDT also launched the Flagship Initiative [Connect a School, Connect a Community](http://www.connectaschool.org/) in 2009 to promote the use of schools as community ICT centers. Schools, which serve children and youth, can also be used to house community ICT centres designed for women, indigenous peoples, people in rural and underserved areas and persons with disabilities. The Connect a School, Connect a Community initiative has developed an online toolkit to share best practices on school connectivity as well as advise ITU Members on developing national school connectivity plans. [A Connect a School toolkit module on using ICTs to promote education and job training for persons with disabilities is available online](http://connectaschool.org/itu-module/15/331/en/persons/w/disabilities/connectivity/introduction/).

BDT has also supported other events raising awareness on the need for accessible policies, including during the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in 2010.

1. ICT PROJECTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

BDT has a number of ICT projects planned or being implemented to provide equipment such as Braille printers and other assistive devices to persons with disabilities in special schools, MCTs and villages in developing countries, for example in Armenia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali and Sri Lanka. The inaguaration of an ITU-sponsored cybercafé for persons with disabilities in Burkina Faso took place in March 2011. ITU has developed a text-to-speech engine in Mongolian. A presentation on this project was made in the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Digital Inclusion for All at <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/asp/CMS/Events/2011/DigitalInclusion/S6_WisitAtipayakoon.pdf>.

1. CONCLUSION

The need to support countries to meet their CRPD obligations is growing, especially since the number of countries that have signed and ratified the CRPD continues to grow. The ITU-G3ict e-accessibility toolkit and related handbook contain a wealth of information on policies and regulations around the world designed to promote accessible communications for persons with disabilities. This information is freely available to the Study Group. Likewise, the module on persons with disabilities for the Connect a School, Connect a Community toolkit can further inform the study group in examining issues such as using assistive technologies to ensure children with disabilities receive an education and that adult persons with disabilities receive job training leading to their economic independence. Given the number of people in developing countries that use mobile phones, the rise in broadband wireless technologies and the transition from analogue to digital television, the Study Group may wish to examine issues such as mobile phone and web accessibility as well as accessible broadcasting. BDT is developing studies on mobile phone and making tv accessibility in 2011, which it will be pleased to share with the Study Group once they are finalized.

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