

Report of the ITU Joint Workshop on ICT Statistics for CIS and Arab Regions *Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, 12-14 February 2019*

The ITU Joint Workshop on ICT Statistics for CIS and Arab Regions was held in collaboration with the Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the city of Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, from 12 to 14 February 2019.

The workshop was attended by over **80 participants** representing **20 countries** (Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Oman, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Korea, Sudan, Syria, Uzbekistan and Yemen), as well as ITU, UNESCO, the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Executive Committee of the Regional Commonwealth in the field of Communication (RCC).



The objective of the workshop, which was organized upon the request of the CIS and Arab countries and in accordance with the 2019 ITU Operational Plan, was to strengthen the capacity of countries in the regions to produce national statistics and indicators on telecommunications and ICTs according to international standards, with a focus on the indicators needed for calculating the ICT Development Index (IDI). The workshop was attended by representatives of communication administrations, regulators, national statistical offices and other interested stakeholders of the countries of the CIS and Arab regions and South Korea, who are responsible for collecting and producing ICT statistics.

At the opening ceremony, the workshop participants were welcomed on behalf of the Republic of Uzbekistan by **Mr. Olimjon Umarov**, First Deputy Minister for Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan; on behalf of ITU, by Mr. **Farid Nakhli**, Programme Officer, ITU Regional Office for CIS and Mr. **Karim Abdelghani**, Programme Coordinator, ITU Arab Regional Office; and on behalf of RCC, by Mr. **Nurudin Mukhitdinov**, Director General, RCC Executive Committee. The welcome speeches were greeted with applause. During the three days of the workshop, the participants, who listened to **19 presentations**, had the opportunity to discuss and share experiences on the main telecommunication/ICT indicators,

the methodology of ICT statistics collection, international ICT measurements, ICT indicators dissemination, and harmonization at the international level.



Mr. **Karim Abdelghani**, Programme Coordinator, ITU Arab Regional Office, Mr. **Farid Nakhli**, Programme Officer at the ITU Regional Office for CIS, Mr. **Martin Schaaper**, Senior ICT Analyst at the ITU/BDT ICT Data and Statistics Division, and Mr. **Iñigo Herguera**, Associate Professor of Economics, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain, Consultant to ITU were the ITU speakers delivering the technical presentations of the workshop. They reviewed the ITU role in the collection, harmonization and dissemination of ICT data at the international level; presented to participants in detail the ICT indicators required for monitoring international targets, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); presented the ITU data collection and indicators from telecommunication operators; and discussed ICT household surveys and the main indicators on access to, and use of, ICT by households and individuals.

Mr. **Arseny Plossky**, TDAG Vice-Chair, Deputy Head of Laboratory, Radio Research and Development Institute from the Russian Federation presented the region's perspective on the Implementation of revised PP Resolution 131 and country engagement with ITU.

Ms. **Natalia Amelina**, Senior National Project Officer in Education, Chief of Unit, UNESCO IITE delivered a presentation on ICT potential in education: assessment, monitoring, statistics and on UNESCO IITE activities, including joint projects with the ITU.

An important focus of the workshop were the new indicators required for the ITU ICT Development Index. Data availability for the new indicators in CIS and Arab countries was presented and the data gaps and methodological issues were discussed in detail.



Country experiences were presented by:

- Mr. **Timur Mashanpin**, Head of Department of Perspective Development of Telecommunication Networks, Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
- Mr. **Jahongir Yuldashev**, Head, Department of Living Standards and Social Statistics, State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics.
- Mr. **Hamed Al Shukeili**, Senior Executive Statistics, Information Technology Authority, Oman.
- Mr. **Yauheni Salauyou**, Head of Department, OJSC "Giprosvjaz", Ministry of Communication and Informatization of the Republic of Belarus.
- Ms. **Kunduz Tashmatova**, Head of Market Analysis Division, State Communication Agency under the State Committee of Information Technologies and Communications of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Day 2 of the workshop included a **country roundtable on supply side indicators**.

The country roundtable was organized so that each participant had the opportunity to present the main characteristics of their supply-side data collection. Each country was asked to share information on the following points: focal point for supply side data provision and possible coordination problems, main features of its data collection (formats, periodicity, length), main difficulties with collection and validation stage of ITU indicators, special problems with specific indicators and needs vis-à-vis ITU in data collection.

Practically all delegations presented a summary of their situation. It was a highly interesting experience sharing among all participants.

Formats used

A high number of countries do send monthly, as well as quarterly and annual questionnaires to its operators (at least to the most representative ones). The formats of the questionnaires most widely used in the data collection stage from operators the majority of countries declared using excel based sheets. Some countries saw the need to update their questionnaires since still some

indicators included in the ITU questionnaires have not been included. A significant number of delegates declared the need to upgrade their own (domestic) questionnaires.

It was suggested that countries use the Long/ short questionnaires as a premise to include as well indicators needed for each country own ICT policy objectives. The aim is not only to have a coherent and comparable collection of indicators across the world, but to push in each country for the development of ICT/telecom networks and services across the society, for which measurements on each service and use of ICT are essential.

Focal points

In relation to the focal point all countries declared one (single) focal point, though it is mostly the case that this focal point (Ministry or regulatory authority) is not the only source of information to be provided to ITU. One problem stated was that when the focal point needs specific information/ indicators from another domestic institution, the focal point only acts as an "intermediary" and translates the ITU demand, but takes no role in the validation or in providing feedback from ITU and back to the institution that provided the data originally when problems or questions arise.

Definitions

All ITU demanded indicators have definitions attached. This is highly important and welcomed, as many countries expressed. Often the focal point faces the situation that operators use different definitions or criteria to measure the extent and usage of final services when reporting data. In particular for the "active subscriptions" indicators some countries referred to problems when operators use different activity criteria when considering active subscriptions.

The latest version of the Handbook of ITU supply side indicators dates back to 2011. Some changes (new indicators and explanations on existing ones) have been made as well thereafter (all are posted in the web site of ITU and definitions are always provided in the Long/Short Questionnaires). Some delegations wanted the Handbook to be updated so that all changes and extensions are integrated in one single version of the Handbook. Some delegations asked ITU as well to provide examples along each indicator relevant on "how- to" construct and/or report an indicator starting from the stage of individual data provision by each operator to the aggregate formulation of the indicator, with explanations on possible problems to be encountered in making the indicator. Especially for the composite or complex indicators (price baskets, tariffs collection, broadband subscriptions by speeds/ total, IDI....) many participants wanted to have examples and more guidance.

As for **specific indicators** where the delegation expressed problems:

- **Fixed Network coverage:** some delegations still had problems in obtaining from the traditional incumbent operator the coverage over households/ population of the old copper based network.

- **Bundling:** some countries do not collect information on bundles, even if this is becoming a very significant commercial practice by operators, both for mobile services (voice and data) and for fixed and mobile services (fixed and mobile voice and broadband in one single offer) in a significant number of countries. Two indicators being collected already by ITU (1- fixed voice and broadband, and 2- fixed voice and broadband together with pay TV) were presented, together with the work currently being done by EGTI on possible "convergent" indicators- combining fixed and mobile services in one single contract. Evidence on the convergence of services and its

commercial offers was presented to illustrate the relevance of these convergent bundles, at least in some parts of the world.

- **Population:** some indicators use the population aggregate as denominator (scaling factor). Some countries face significant migrant flows (in/out) declared having difficulties in having a realistic population figure on a yearly basis (population census usually are run every decade). Some delegates mentioned upgrades on a yearly basis using other sources of information (when not being developed by the relevant NSO) so that updates can be provided.

- **Fixed broadband traffic:** several delegations expressed concerns on this indicator. The operators at home offer usually unlimited fixed BB service to the final user and due to this, some operators claim, they do not measure BB traffic. Other sources of information are available (akamai, Cisco and other institutions) that can be used as a check for operators' declared traffic data. Since this indicator is included in the IDI, the importance of its collection was stressed.

Day 2 of the workshop included a **country roundtable on household ICT indicators**.

During the country roundtable on household indicators countries reported on the agency responsible for household surveys, coordination at the national level, surveys conducted and problems encountered.

It became clear that various models are possible. In some cases, the NSO conducts ICT household surveys by itself. This is often the case in the countries of the CIS region. In other cases, the Ministry or the regulator has taken responsibility for the conduct of these surveys, to ensure the data for the IDI are collected. This often, but not always done in collaboration with the NSO. This is a model that is followed in many of the Arab States. The advantage of this model is that the regulator or Ministry can provide the funding that the NSO lacks, while the NSO can provide the experience and registers needed for stratified random sampling.

Countries face a number of challenges faced including:

- Insufficient funding to conduct annual surveys.
- Lack of technical skills to process survey data.
- Sample sizes too small to extrapolate survey data to population totals.
- Questionnaires too large, e.g. too many activities in ITU indicator HH9.

The workshop was webcasted, archived webcast can be accessed at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2BxBiaokVmEyy2TrkoiXrtVTzObZh_kY

Delegates expressed gratitude to ITU for organizing this regional workshop which helps each country in clarifying practices, definitions and have a comprehensive picture of the data to be collected and objectives. Some delegates appreciated the support provided by ITU when collecting the indicators and problems arise. Some even declared a desire to have more intense interaction and feedback between the national focal point and ITU when the collection and the real specific problems kick in.

The workshop participants noted the significance of the issues covered by the workshop, the substantial and balanced programme, the good working atmosphere of the event and thanked ITU and the Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan for organizing this fruitful workshop.