

Telecommunications in Action

**THE
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in association with



INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

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Gordon House, 6 Lissenden Gardens
London NW5 1LX, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 171 284 4858
Fax: +44 171 267 5505
E-mail: info@regency.org.uk
Website: http://www.regency.org.uk

Authors

Lynne Gallagher, *Telecom/Telematique Inc.*
George Turnbull, *Consultant*

Specialist Contributors

Raymond Akule, *George Mason University*
Leonid Androuchko, *International Telecommunication Union*
Steve Anselo, *Education Development Center*
David Barr, *Consultant*
Lester Brown, *Worldwatch Institute*
Yoram Chisik, *Consultant*
Eduardo Contreras-Budge, *Academy for Educational Development*
Steven Dorsey, *Academy for Educational Development*
Johan Ernberg, *International Telecommunication Union*
Richard Fuchs, *FutureWorks Inc.*
Linda Garcia, *National Rural Foundation*
David Gray, *World Bank*
Bruno Lanvin, *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*
David Mallen, *Telecom/Telematique Inc.*
Sara Moola, *Environmental Systems Research Institute*
Molly O'Meara, *Worldwatch Institute*
Jon Peha, *Carnegie Mellon University*
Michael Potashnik, *World Bank*
Don Richardson, *University of Guelph*
John Rose, *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*
Lane Smith, *United States Agency for International Development*
Ben Stephansky, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Retired)*
John Wille, *World Bank/Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency*
David Wright, *Inmarsat*
Willem Zijp, *World Bank (Rural Development and Agriculture)*

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Corporate Affairs Jane Gee, Judith Gerrard, Gabbie Gitterman, Catherine Guignard, Brian Parrish, Brian Rollason, Trevor Russel, Richard Verden

Conference Projects Cristina Paiva, Susie Westwood (Africa), Laryssa Nyrvana (Asia), Sylvia Martakis (Central/Eastern Europe), Edward Martin (Latin America), Nathan Bredenkamp (Middle East)

Technical Support Terry Brown, Victor Mower

Editing and Design Banson, 3 Turville Street, London E2 7HR, UK

Editors Jane Lyons, Christine Hawkins, Kate Fowler

French and Spanish editions Anna Sánchez, Helen de Mattos

Translations

French: Brigitte Guérin, Hélène Robineau, Pierre Chapelain
Spanish: Daniel Nogués Durán, Carmen Riveiro, Eduardo Varela

Designers Raúl López Cabello, Verónica Sosa

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impressum

preface



ON THE EVE OF THE 21ST CENTURY, the predictions of such visionaries as Marshall McLuhan and his “global village” or George Gilder and his “telecosm” for certain peoples of the world appear to be within reach, while the gap between them and their less fortunate cousins continues to grow. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has a fundamental commitment and has made great efforts to reduce the gap between the “information haves” and “have nots” by providing help, information, training and direct aid in the developing world. Indeed much has been accomplished. But the fact is that to bring those countries where telecommunication infrastructures are still rudimentary into the information age will require continued and ever-increasing effort. Regardless of how big the problems are, this effort is indispensable for the good of all inhabitants of our planet. The problems associated with inadequate development represent a very serious threat to world stability and need to be tackled from as many angles as possible.

Until recently, in line with its charter, ITU development work has largely concentrated on activities in the telecommunication sector in the understanding that telecommunication development is a catalyst for growth in many other economic fields. But this development truism is still not sufficiently known outside telecommunication circles and further efforts must be made to reach other sectors of the economy and convince them that telecommunications can be a key to development in their own domains. In fact, the ITU is currently working directly with a number of developing countries, is collaborating with other United Nations bodies and multilateral agencies, and is providing direct aid for field trials and pilot projects in the areas of education, health and environment with encouraging preliminary results.

For countries struggling to put in place the means to connect their populations to basic telecommunication services, the benefits of privatization, liberalization and competition in telecommunications may not be immediately apparent. And yet there is strong evidence that adoption of such processes, which can free governments from the weight of poorly functioning systems and lack of investment capital to improve them, have allowed those who “dared” to see great progress in many fields where good telecommunications can stimulate and act as a catalyst to development. This does not mean selling the national public telecommunication operator to the first buyer to come along; the matter demands mature reflection. The important thing is to find as much information on these topics as possible ahead of time and to study the matter in sufficient depth to be able intelligently to take the necessary decisions at the highest level and construct the framework which will reassure and encourage foreign investment.

I therefore believe that the publication of *Telecommunications in Action* represents a further important step in the right direction, because this book conveys the story of how the provision of telecommunications can supply the momentum to get development under way in many important fields such as education, health, agriculture and commerce. The ITU and Regency have collaborated in the production of this book and hope to reach a broad “non-telecommunication” audience, especially in developing countries, and to spread the word on the development potential of telecommunication infrastructures by distributing the book as widely as possible. For development to occur, all possible means should be explored and, where possible, the synergy of partnerships should be exploited. The ITU firmly believes in the “partnership” approach to development and will continue to work to encourage collaboration among the many development partners and stakeholders in both national and regional projects.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Yoshio Utsumi'.

Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary General
International Telecommunication Union

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introduction



TELECOMMUNICATIONS are an essential component of political, economic, social and cultural development in every country of the world. They are a driving force in society and the world economy, rapidly transforming our lives and promoting better understanding between peoples. They also play an important role in protecting the environment and mitigating natural and other disasters.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) encourages among other things the development, expansion and operation of telecommunication networks and services, particularly in developing countries, by strengthening their capacity to implement new services and new technologies, including the Internet, mobile and other wireless technologies, human resources development and management, planning, management, mobilization of resources, and research and development.

New technologies have a major impact on the expansion of telecommunications and can contribute to closing the gap not just between developing and industrialized countries but also between urban and rural areas in one and the same country.

Moreover, the convergence of telecommunications, information technology and broadcasting and the emergence of multimedia applications are opening up new prospects for the sector by creating possibilities for tele-education, tele-medicine, environmental protection and many other applications which are of great benefit to social and economic development.

Under its mandate, the ITU has a special role to play in helping decision makers to make appropriate choices in adapting policies and regulatory structures to their country's needs. It cooperates with regional telecommunication organizations, with international, regional and national development and finance institutions, and with the private sector in undertaking to reform the sector expediently.

I am therefore particularly happy to introduce *Telecommunications in Action*, prepared in association with Regency. The purpose of this publication is to bring home the benefits to be reaped from telecommunications, particularly to those who do not normally receive information on telecommunications and their many applications. In so doing, it aims to encourage greater communication between ministries, regional and municipal authorities, non-governmental organizations and representative groups. In short, it is addressed to all telecommunication users.

Written in non-technical language and presented in a clear and user-friendly format, the book highlights the role, importance and advantages of telecommunication applications in various fields such as agriculture, education, environment, health, natural resources, tourism, trade, industry, transport, town planning and rural development. It deals in detail with costing and financing issues and the impact on human resources, and includes a list of examples of best practices in the above-mentioned fields in both industrialized and developing countries.

My hope is that this book may contribute to the speedy development of telecommunications worldwide and help to improve access for those still deprived of a basic human right, recognized as such by the United Nations: the right to communicate and to seek and receive information. The ITU and particularly its Telecommunication Development Bureau will do everything in their power to advance towards that.

Hamadoun Touré, Director
Telecommunication Development Bureau



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