

First Session of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee, 1-2 November 2017, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

**DRAFT SUBMISSION OF [CROP ICT Working Group]
PROJECTS/ACTIVITIES/STUDIES**

[Date]

Objective: This form is sent to the representative of each organization in order to prioritise activities and better align broadband connectivity gaps with solutions. All organization submissions will be consolidated as per AP-IS Pillar and subregion to develop an implementation plan for 2018 and will be presented by the Secretariat during the First Session of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Steering Committee, 1-2 November 2017, Dhaka, Bangladesh. A similar template is sent to ESCAP member countries to identify their planned activities.

Please complete this form and submit to ESCAP (escap-ids@un.org) by **no later than 25 October 2017**.

(a). Background Information

(i). Organization: CROP ICT Working Group (The University of the South Pacific is the Chair)

(ii). Organization's Focus: The Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) has a series of Sectoral Working Groups. These Working Groups are responsible for collaboratively working on various regional projects and policy initiatives. The primary objective of having Working Groups is to enhance sectoral coordination and development initiatives to strengthen integration, encourage synergy, and collaboration for the purposes of advancing sustainable development.

(b). Challenges and Opportunities on promoting broadband connectivity:

Within the scope of the AP-IS four pillars

(1). Connectivity;

The connectivity landscape in the Pacific has changed quite rapidly.

Good progress has been made in recent years with new submarine cables and new, cheaper satellite solutions and more initiatives are planned in the near future, however the speed of passing on the benefits of the better and cheaper connectivity are slow to eventuate.

Currently there are eleven Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) connected to submarine cables and seven have the new O3B cheaper satellite service. The challenge in the next few years will be improving connectivity to the Small Island States (SIS) and there is good work being done by key donors to connect seven new PICTs to submarine cable.

PICTs connected to submarine cable

1. Fiji
2. Tonga
3. Vanuatu
4. Marshall
5. Guam
6. PNG
7. FSM
8. Tahiti (France Polynesia)
9. New Caledonia
10. American Samoa
11. Samoa

Proposed New Submarine Cable

1. Samoa
2. Niue
3. Cooks
4. Solomon
5. Kiribati
6. Futuna/Uvea
7. Nauru
8. Palau

(2). Internet Traffic & Network Management;

As in the rest of the developing world the internet penetration within the SIDS of the Pacific has increased over the last ten years. This is due to both the demand and supply factors. Expansion of internet infrastructure increased coverage and quality of internet services. Demand growth fuelled by a decreased trend in the cost of internet service aided by increased interest in internet for social networking, internet based entertainment and communication. As a result, the percentage of people using internet has increased very sharply.

(3). E-resilience; and

The Pacific leaders have endorsed a regional strategic framework to address the adverse impacts of natural hazards and climate change. These regional strategies include the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change, 2006–2015 and the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action, 2005–2015, which provide overarching policy guidance for disaster risk management and support for building climate resilient communities, however ICTs do not feature strongly in these documents. International agencies each have their own ICT enabled systems for early warning and recovery.

Some local ICT projects have been deployed, particularly in early warning systems and much work has been done on GIS Mapping, but much more can be done to reduce the impact and speed the recovery from the increasing intensity of “disaster events”. The use of social media is becoming pervasive and tapping into this source of local information should be factored into any solution. UN Agencies are taking the lead in Disaster Risk Reduction and ICT.

(4). Broadband for all,

Mobile is the main focus for local connectivity with good progress being made on coverage, however, mobile data is still seen as expensive and usually only available in the major centres. Several countries have benefitted from a consolidated Government approach (Gov Net), especially in driving connectivity in provincial and rural locations

ESCAP member countries and partners outlined seven strategic initiatives in the AP-IS Master Plan (http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/CICTSTI1_2E_rev1.pdf) to be implemented between 2016-2018 (please refer to attached chart of AP-IS 4 Pillars and AP-IS Strategic Initiatives).

The AP-IS seven strategic initiatives are as follows:

1. Identification, coordination, deployment, expansion and integration of the regional backbone networks at the cross-border intra- and interregional levels, in collaboration with member countries and subregional organizations;

The CROP ICT Working Group works quite well in the Pacific. Members has been extended to donors (ADB, World Bank, etc). They have also established various Task Forces to look at different pillars.

2. Establish a sufficient number of Internet exchange points at the national and subregional levels and set out common principles on Internet traffic exchange to prevent Internet traffic tromboning, decrease transit costs and improve service quality.

Not in the Pacific. Fiji is aiming to have it but still in progress.

3. Regional social and economic studies;

In the Pacific, there are still lack of research and studies. USP is trying to enhance this area.

4. Enhancing ICT infrastructure resilience in the Asia-Pacific region;

There are various organisations of which they are working in this area.

5. Policy and regulations for leveraging existing infrastructure, technology and inclusive broadband initiatives;

With the rapidly changing ICT sector, a timely and effective way of gathering, monitoring and evaluating developments is critical, as is the effective regulation in this cross cutting sector. Good progress has been made on the regulatory side, mainly thanks to strong support from regional and international agencies such as Pacific Regional ICT Regulatory Development Project [USP project funded by World Bank], Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association (PITA), World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and ITU.

However, the gathering and evaluation of data is still very problematic and time consuming. The ICT Ministers have called for the CROP ICT WG to address this issue and a data gathering project is underway with USP/ Pacific Regional ICT Regulatory Development Project. The recent PRIF report on the Economic and Social impacts of ICT in the Pacific (2015)³ provides the most recent and sometimes surprising information.

6. Capacity-building; and

Capacity building in ICT is an ongoing process in the Pacific. USP has a mandate to improve capacity building in the Pacific especially in ICT.

7. Asia-Pacific information superhighway project funding mechanism based on public-private partnerships

(c). AP-IS 7 Strategic Initiatives Implementation Plan 2016-2018: priority challenges and proposed activities

In order to match your organization's current and planned activities with country's/sub-region's/region's priorities within the scope of the AP-IS seven strategic initiatives, please complete the matrix below accordingly. Please add a row as deemed necessary.

Activity/Project/Study	Description
Initiative 1: Identification, coordination, deployment, expansion and integration of the regional backbone networks at cross-border, intra- and inter-regional levels in collaboration with member countries and sub-regional organizations	(i) Plan workshop for all stakeholders in various sectors (ICT, Energy, education, donors, partners) to be held early next year (ii) Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, French Polynesians have signed an agreement with New Zealand Government to have a submarine cable connecting these countries (Polynesian Cable) (iii) Kiribati, Nauru are working with ADB hoping to have a submarine cable that link up those two countries to Australia
Initiative 2: Establishing a sufficient number of Internet exchange points at national and sub-regional levels and setting common principles on Internet traffic	(iv) Fiji is working toward establishing an Internet exchange point (v) The other countries are yet to consider that (perhaps since most countries have one or two Internet Services)

<p>exchange to prevent Internet traffic tromboning, to decrease the transit cost and improve service quality</p>	
<p>Initiative 3: Regional social and economic studies</p>	<p>(vi) There are few case studies (UN) in Vanuatu</p>
<p>Initiative 4: Enhancing ICT infrastructure resilience in the Asia - Pacific region</p>	<p>(vii) Some countries have done quite well (eg.Tonga) (viii) Others are still trying to implement</p>
<p>Initiative 5: Policy and regulations for leveraging existing infrastructure, technology and inclusive broadband initiatives</p>	<p>(ix) World Bank has a project to address the Policy and regulations in the Pacific. Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu have establish a separate entity as their Regulator while others are still part of the Government</p>
<p>Initiative 6: Capacity Building</p>	<p>(x) USP mandate is to build capacity building in the Pacific Region.</p>
<p>(iv). Any other suggestions/issues:</p> <p>(i) [List any suggestions]</p>	

