COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)

Twenty-second session
Geneva, 13 to 17 May 2019

Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2018 to implement the outcome of the WSIS

Submission by

World Food Programme

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 22nd session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

Annual Report on Implementation Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

Executive Summary

The following represents a summary of WFP activities towards the WSIS targets in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

WFP executes a number of School Feeding, Nutrition, and Cash Transfer programmes that directly contribute to the WSIS targets or produce the enabling environment to facilitate these goals.

In addition, WFP leads the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) that works with its partners to provide services for communities such as connectivity, to ensure affected populations have access to information. In 2018, ETC has responded to the ICT needs of disaster affected communities in Bangladesh and Iraq. In disaster prone countries, such as Pacific Islands, ETC leads preparedness activities to enable governments and other local stakeholders to have access to sustainable ICT services at the time of disaster. ETC remains a strong advocate of communication as aid.

The strict regulations on data and voice connectivity for refugees and internally displaced persons remains as one of the main challenges. Regulations imposed on refugees and IDPs not only create an imbalance of power between the affected communities and host communities, but also increase the vulnerability of affected communities in the long term, depriving them of basic access to information and communication technologies. In addition, poverty and language barriers affect digital literacy and remain the major challenges to access to reliable and relevant information through ICT support.

Target 2: to connect all secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs.

WFP has planned activities to provide attendance tracking terminals to schools as part of school feeding programmes. WFP intends to make adjustments to its beneficiary and transfer management solution (which will track all transfers to our beneficiaries within the next few years) in order to support school feeding transfers. This will require equipping all schools with attendance tracking technology, an activity which is in its earliest stages and has not yet begun.

In addition, ETC is collaborating with university of Sana'a in Yemen to provide ICT infrastructure and restore ICT services for students.

Target 5: to connect all health centres and hospitals with ICTs.

As part of WFP's nutrition programmes, the organization carried out activities to provide terminals to health clinics (e.g. in Malawi) that allow them to track redemption activities and to capture anthropometric measurements. Since 2014, several hundred health centres and hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries in Malawi have been equipped with technology to track their attendance at nutritional education classes. In 2019, WFP will extend the practice of monitoring attendance at clinics electronically, as well as take and store anthropometric measurements electronically.

Target 8: To ensure that all of the world's population has access to television and radio services

ETC is increasing the coverage of the community radio in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh so communities, including host communities and the Rohingya population, can access radio services in the local language.

As part of its cash transfers programme, WFP provides mobile phones or SIM cards for mobile money-enabled cash distributions. WFP currently provides food assistance to more than 80 million beneficiaries annually. More than 35% of that assistance is already in the form of cash-based transfers, and an increasing share of those transfers are through mobile money. We expect the number of mobile money beneficiaries to keep growing at very rapid rates. Mobile money requires recipients to interact with technology, and by equipping beneficiaries with SIM cards or mobile phones, WFP not only supports financial inclusion but also increases the uptake of ICTs in the poorest parts of the world.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster has been connecting disaster affected population with ICT in the form of audio-visual information. ETC in Iraq is equipping Community Response Centres with ICT infrastructure so that populations returning to Fallujah and Mosul can access ICT services. In Cox's Bazar, ETC supported information hubs to provide ICT access to Rohingya populations. In protracted emergencies, ETC's ICT support to humanitarian initiatives has contributed to building resilience among affected people.

Trends and Obstacles in Implementation

Considering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, WFP notes the following trends and obstacles in the implementation of its activities in support of the WSIS targets:

Obstacles to connecting both schools and health centres to technology include:

- WFP needs to reach in excess of 20 million school children every year in very small schools.
- Schools and clinics are also often remote and difficult to reach, to the extent that even local government has trouble accessing them as frequently as they should.
- Lack of reliable power supply and internet connectivity will require non-standard solutions, which tend to come at an additional cost.
- Lack of digital literacy will require at least basic training for most schools and clinics.
- Find new ways of designing programmes that facilitate gradual mainstreaming of this kind of technology.

The obstacles to equipping beneficiaries with SIM cards or mobile phones to enable their access to a number of digital services include:

- Lack of local legislation to enable mobile financial services.
- Lack of mobile network and mobile money agent coverage.
- Regulatory barriers, limiting access to ICT during emergencies, remains one of the main challenges. For example, in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh Rohingya refugees are not legally allowed to buy or use local SIM cards. Such regulatory frameworks deny the basic right to access to information among populations and creates a power imbalance between communities.
- Lack of knowledge and experience by mobile network operators of the economics of mobile money operations, which deviate substantially from their normal business model. This often presents an obstacle to reliable and orderly scale-up in situations where mobile money is still new and not widely used, which is in most contexts.
- Beneficiary digital literacy (ICT and otherwise).
- Lack of access to reliable power supply to charge phones.

- General indifference of commercial mobile network operators towards afflicted communities in times of emergency. In these circumstances commercial partners rarely reduce rates and plans to allow access to ICT to the population.

Programmes and projects undertaken, progress, and recommended future actions to be taken by all stakeholders

As part of its **School Feeding Programmes**, WFP has planned activities to provide attendance tracking terminals to schools. This initiative is actively under development with functional requirements and a roadmap now defined. WFP intends to make adjustments to its beneficiary and transfer management solution (slated to track all transfers to our beneficiaries all the way to the final beneficiary within the next few years) in order to support school feeding transfers and is currently defining priority actions to be able to do so. This will require equipping all schools with attendance tracking technology.

One of the core components of school feeding programme design tends to be a conditional transfer to the schoolchild's household (take-home ration), which typically is conditional upon a satisfactory attendance rate. Given that many schools don't have convenient and reliable means to record and report attendance, this form of conditionality is frequently not applied. By supplying schools with electronic devices to support attendance tracking, we are supporting the original programme design. We will use Android technology for the attendance tracking, which means the mobile devices we will use can also serve other purposes in the school (e.g. e-learning). We are thus supporting the diffusion of information technology and the internet to underserved areas.

To enable the success of connecting schools to ICTs, the following actions are recommended for all stakeholders:

- The intervention design and choice of solutions must be developed together with governments and reflect the need to hand them over within the short to medium term. It is important to make sure the solutions are sufficiently context-specific and do not crowd out suitable local solutions.
- The use of technology in schools should be supported by all relevant policies, regulations and guidance. This translates into a need for advocacy at all relevant levels and with all of the stakeholders.
- The proper incentives will need to be put in place for schools to actually make use of the technology once installed.

As part of WFP's **Nutrition Programmes**, the Organization is continuing to carry out activities to provide terminals to health clinics (e.g., in Malawi) that allow them to track redemption activities and to capture anthropometric measurements. Since 2014, several hundred health centres and hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries in Malawi have been equipped with technology to track their attendance at nutritional education classes. WFP is extending the practice of monitoring attendance at clinics electronically, as well as taking and storing anthropometric measurements digitally.

One of the pillars of the project design for this intervention at scale in Malawi is mass data capture and analysis in order to support "adaptive programming" – i.e. the ability to channel resources to clinics and populations that need more support to ensure attendance and take-up. This requires electronic beneficiary registration (hundreds of thousands of women and children) and equipping mothers with programme membership ID cards, as well as equipping all health centres with

technology to track which mothers attended health education sessions and collected nutritional supplements for their children.

The government of Malawi – as well as the INGO consortium in Malawi – has expressed interest in using WFP's SCOPE system in other programmes in the country, both to support similar interventions and to make use of its wider capabilities in electronic beneficiary and transfer management.

WFP has developed an IT solution to digitize **Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition** (CMAM) programmes. SCOPE Conditional On-Demand Assistance (CODA) is a digital system designed to register and track beneficiaries in CMAM programmes. While the system seeks to digitize CMAM programmes, it has the added potential to improve programming, from community outreach to case management to programme management and reporting. Managers from health clinics to implementing organizations to government counterparts can access data and reports. SCOPE CODA utilizes a mixture of offline and online functionality to meet the information needs of CMAM in low-tech environments.

SCOPE CODA has been piloted in South Sudan and Uganda; Tajikistan and Madagascar are planned next as part of gradually rolling it out to all WFP CMAM programmes.

By equipping the clinics with technology to support beneficiary tracking, we are:

- simplifying attendance tracking and health status monitoring work they are already doing by replacing the large counter books present in many of the clinics;
- making the data available quickly and universally across all participating clinics;
- raising digital literacy levels among clinic staff; and
- improving information systems by helping establish modern IT in the health sector in general.

To enable the success of connecting hospitals and health clinics, recommendations for action to be taken by all stakeholders include:

- Advocacy for and adoption of national targets and policies to support digitalisation of records and internet connectivity in health centres, clinics and hospitals.
- Support from NGOs, agencies and donors via activities to pilot and establish such technologies in a way that facilitates adaptation to local contexts and staff learning.
- The proper incentives will need to be put in place for health clinics to actually make use of the technology once installed.

To ensure the world's inhabitants have access to ICTs and make use of them, in particular mobile phones and SIM cards, recommendations for action to be taken by all stakeholders include:

- Support from governments/regulators and international actors in expanding the reach of a competitive mobile telecommunications sector.
- Support local telecommunication infrastructure to facilitate financial inclusion.
- Activities by national regulators to facilitate financial transactions and basic financial inclusion via mobile phones.
- Advocacy and support from international actors to bring about legislation to produce these outcomes.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster is partnering with a number of private sector companies to provide technological solutions that enables access to ICT during emergencies. ETC is a strong advocate of the "do no digital harm" agenda in furthering accessibility to ICT. Through its

work in the area of preparedness and resilience, ETC is ensuring that ICT services remain available to communities during disasters.

Partnerships with private sector entities is key to enabling access to ICT. While ETC has already established a number of successful partnerships with the private sector, there is huge potential to develop further partnerships. There is a clear need to develop partnerships across the private sector and to work to establish policies and guidelines that will better enable humanitarian and private sector collaboration. Work in this area is ongoing, and this is contributing to access to ICT in times of crisis.