

United Nations  
High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, July 2020  
Preparatory process

**Session: Sharing economic benefits**

**Introduction**

Economic activity provides livelihoods, jobs, incomes and the means to attain many other elements of a better life. However, in recent decades, economic growth has been accompanied by increasing or persistently high levels of inequality within countries – between the rich and poor, women and men, and different groups within society, such as between migrants and nationals. It has also been accompanied by growing environmental degradation. with current production and consumption systems threatening the well-being of present and future generations. Such trends seem set to continue and many have been brought to the fore with the differential impact of COVID-19 on different population groups, and national responses to it. A fundamental reconfiguration is needed in economic policymaking and the production and consumption of goods and services, in tandem with a diminished environmental footprint and greater distributional justice that prioritizes gender equality, access to decent jobs, and social protection for all. Achieving this in line with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development will require leadership from both the public and the private sector, shifts in social norms, and engagement with civil society and the science community.

**On COVID -19 and ICTS**

The world faces an unprecedented threat from coronavirus disease (Covid-19). With billions of people confined at home, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are a key ally in helping health services prevent, detect, and diagnose cases at a massive scale, while also keeping people safe, productive, and connected.

Covid-19 is the first pandemic in human history where ICTs and social media are being used on a massive scale, driving the global collective response to the disease and digital transformation across the world.

Covid-19 has highlighted the fundamental importance of ICTs to the economy and society. From teleworking and e-commerce to telemedicine and remote learning, digital technologies are supporting continued access to education, healthcare, and essential goods and services.

Never before have telecommunication networks been so vital to our health and safety, and to keep our economy and society working, as during the Covid-19 crisis we are living through today. ITU is committed to providing reliable and trustworthy digital services for all those around the world who rely on them to continue to work, study, care for others, and keep in touch with loved ones.

**Guiding questions**

Please consider the 5 questions below and submit written responses totaling **2000 words or less**. (Though the average should be 500 words per question, it is fine to use more words on one question and fewer on another, to total 2000.) Please draw from your field of expertise and experience and be as

concrete and tangible as possible. Please provide your responses in a Word document by **13 May** to [astra.bonini@un.org](mailto:astra.bonini@un.org).

- 1. Policies, actions and trade-offs:** What are some promising actions to support progress toward advancing sustainable, inclusive and just economies? What policy measures contribute to human-centred growth and to promote access to quality and productive employment for all? How could these actions be designed to generate synergies between SDG 8 and other Goals and Targets? What are some of the possible trade-offs from these actions and how can they be mitigated (see example below)? What are the most critical interventions that will be needed in economic systems over the next 2 years, 5 years, 10 years? For example, what key measures are necessary in both public and private sectors to promote decent work and social protection, eliminate wage gaps and the unequal burdens of unpaid carework between women and men, and support the transition to a sustainable production and consumption systems and 'green' jobs? What are some concrete policy examples that have illustrated success and could be shared for good practices?

The transformative power of digital technologies is empowering people, creating an environment that nurtures innovation and triggering positive change in business processes and in the global economy. ITU maintains and publishes several policy-regulatory interfaces, some of which are highlighted below.

The ICT Regulatory Tracker is an evidence-based tool to help policy-makers and regulators make sense of the rapid evolution of ICT regulation. The Tracker pinpoints the changes taking place in the ICT regulatory environment. It facilitates benchmarking and the identification of trends in ICT legal and regulatory frameworks. The Tracker does not measure the quality, the level of implementation or the performance of regulatory frameworks in place but records their existence and features. It helps track progress and identify gaps in regulatory frameworks, making the case for further regulatory reform towards achieving a vibrant and inclusive ICT sector. The Tracker covers between 190 and 193 countries and economies over the period 2007- 2018.

The Global ICT Regulatory Outlook (GIRO) series also lays out a broad canvas of how regulation and digital markets are interacting – and advocates for collaborative regulatory reform in delivering meaningful connectivity and inclusive digital markets. The report is both dense, offering deep-dive detail, and high-level – pointing up the headline trends, challenges and opportunities for regulators as ICT broadens out to touch all civic, professional and personal aspects of our lives within the phenomenon we call the digital global economy. In this year's 2020 edition, ITU shares unique, focused research and offers both evidence and practical advice to support regulators embarked on their journey to fifth generation collaborative regulation.

The Benchmark of Fifth Generation Collaborative Regulation (G5 Benchmark), based on GSR-19 Best Practice Guidelines together with the ICT Regulatory Tracker, serves as a compass for regulators on their journey of digital transformation, helping establish roadmaps towards regulatory excellence and a thriving digital economy.

ITU has entered the age of digital transformation, where ICTs are recognized as core to economic and social development. The ITU series of studies on the economic contribution of broadband, digitization and ICT regulation builds on years of robust and reliable data resources with a global scope to measure the impact of fixed and mobile broadband and digital transformation on the economy, digitization as a whole, as well as the impact of institutional and regulatory variables to the development of the digital ecosystem. The series quantifies the positive impact of broadband, digital transformation and the interplay of ICT regulation on national economies, based on new-generation, mature econometric modelling techniques. This study also brings additional granularity to the effects of broadband on countries at a different stage of development. It uses top-tier data metrics on the development of the digital ecosystem and the maturity of ICT regulatory frameworks, namely the Digital Ecosystem Development Index and the ICT Regulatory Tracker. These landmark studies provides evidence of the importance of the policy, regulatory and institutional variables in driving digital growth, and illustrates that digital technologies, on one hand, and effective ICT policy-regulation, on the other, can have positive impacts on the growth of national economies and prosperity contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Key selected recommendations:**

- Enabling policy and regulatory environments conducive to sustainable telecommunication/ICT development, in particular incentives and financing solutions to create environments that are conducive to investment in ICT infrastructure in underserved and rural areas;
- The development and use of accessible telecommunications/ICTs and applications to equally empower people and societies for sustainable development and promoting digital inclusion for all, in particular for empowering women and girls, persons with disabilities and other people with specific needs;
- Providing concentrated assistance to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Landlocked Developing Countries (LDCs) and countries with economies in transition;
- Building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs;
- Assisting Member States to enhance their capacities on and improve the use of telecommunication/ICTs in mitigating and adapting to climate change;
- Pressing need for governments to focus on measures to develop digital skills, particularly in the developing world.
- Developing and strengthening partnerships to mobilize resources to promote sustainable telecommunication/ICT development.

- 2. *Leaving no-one behind:*** Which groups are especially likely to miss out on economic benefits and decent work? To what extent are women missing out compared to men? Which groups risk being left behind even further as a result of COVID 19? How can economic and employment opportunities be improved for both women and men and specific groups at the low end of the income distribution? What is the role of labour market institutions, such as collective bargaining and minimum wages, versus other policies to ensure a fair sharing of the fruits of progress? How can social protection systems play a stronger role in reducing inequalities in opportunities and outcomes? What long-term policy measures need to be put in place or strengthened to promote

the economic resilience of the most marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants, rural populations, older persons and LGBTQ peoples?

Ensuring that no one is left behind” has a specific meaning in telecommunications – that of universal access and service (UAS) and leaving no one off-line. Access to accessible, affordable, reliable and secure telecommunication/ICT networks, including broadband, and to related services and applications, can facilitate economic, social and cultural development and implement digital inclusion through these means.

The digital divide has many faces. There are gaps in coverage, speed and affordability, gaps between developing and developed nations, between cities and villages, between the young and the older, and between men and women online.

The lack of adequate infrastructure and access to ICTs , as well as the lack of digital accessibility and knowledge of digital skills limits opportunities to access inclusive education and labour markets of those left unconnected.

In pursuance of its mission, ITU annually monitors the digital divide, including the gender digital divide, to assess and track who has access to telecommunication/ICT networks, and where. The 2019 edition of ITU’s Measuring digital development: Facts & figures 2019<sup>1</sup> shows Internet use continuing to grow worldwide – but also highlights some worrying trends, such as slowing growth in user numbers and a widening digital gender gap that is increasing the imbalance between men’s and women’s use of technology.

Although mobile cellular networks now cover most of the planet, with 97% of the global population within reach of a mobile signal, and at least 93% of the global population able to access 3G or higher mobile broadband services, only 4.1 billion people – or just over 53% of the global population – are actually online. A staggering 3.6 billion remain totally unconnected from the transformational power of the Internet.

Most alarmingly, in the world’s 47 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), where online services and applications could potentially have the greatest impact in accelerating development and improving people’s lives, more than 80% of the population is still offline. And even that dismaying figure often hides a much wider gap at the national level; ITU data show that in the most extreme case, a mere 2% of the population is using the Internet.

Of just as great concern this year is evidence that the digital gender gap is actually growing, despite concerted global efforts to redress this imbalance.

ITU’s figures indicate that women are lagging behind men in their ability to take advantage of the power of digital technologies in almost two thirds of countries worldwide. What’s more, that gap has been getting bigger in the world’s major developing regions – Africa, the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific – with the widest gaps found in the most disadvantaged nations.

- 3. Knowledge gaps:** What science, knowledge and data gaps need to be addressed for better understanding the interlinkages between SDG8 and SDG 1, 5, 10 and others in economic



systems? How can these be addressed? What are the information gaps that need to be addressed to respond in an efficient and equitable way to the COVID 19 Crisis? What steps are being taken to mainstream disaggregated data, including on gender, into research and data production to address multiple and intersecting inequalities, and to improve the quality and comparability of available data across countries and time?

Please see response above and below

**4. *Relevant means of implementation and the global partnership for development (SDG 17):***

Achieving the 2030 Agenda relies on applying the means of implementation to harness synergies and/or reduce trade-offs. Are there examples of how the various means of implementation, including finance, partnerships, capacity building, and science and technology (also see below), are being brought together to achieve these objectives at scale? How can existing UN system partnerships more effectively support these objectives? Can these be replicated or adjusted to fit other contexts? What are the most important partnerships that will be needed over the next 2 years, 5 years, 10 years? What kinds of safeguards can be put in place in partnerships, for example, gender, human rights and environmental impact assessments? What are steps that can be taken by existing and new partnerships to promote the sustained participation of civil society organizations including women's and girls' organizations, youth-led organizations and national human rights institutions?

**Connect 2030 Agenda for global telecommunication/information and communication technology, including broadband, for sustainable development**

The ITU 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-18), by Resolution 200 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) agreed to reaffirm a shared global vision for the development of the telecommunication/ICT sector, under the Connect 2030 Agenda envisaging an information society, empowered by the interconnected world, where telecommunications/ICTs enable and accelerate social, economic and environmentally sustainable growth and development for everyone. By adopting the Connect 2030 Agenda, ITU membership commits to:

- Growth – enable and foster access to and increased use of ICTs,
- Inclusiveness – bridge the digital divide and provide broadband for all,
- Sustainability – manage challenges resulting from ICT development,
- Innovation - enable innovation in telecommunications/ICT in support of the digital transformation of society,
- Partnership – strengthen cooperation among the ITU membership and all other stakeholders in support of all ITU strategic goals.

The Connect 2030 Agenda endorses the high-level strategic goals and targets set out in the ITU Strategic Plan (2020-2023)<sup>2</sup>, as well as the global broadband targets, inspiring and inviting all stakeholders and entities to work together to implement the Connect 2030 Agenda<sup>3</sup>, contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development 2025 Targets:** “Connecting the Other Half”, announced in January 2018 aim to: boost the importance of broadband on the international policy

agenda; expand broadband access in every country as key to accelerating progress towards national and international development targets to facilitate achieving of SDGs.

#### ITU- impact partnerships:

- **GIGA Connecting Every School to the Internet** – aims to connect every school to the internet, and every young person to information, choice and opportunity, in partnership with UNICEF.
- **Decent Jobs and Skills for Youth** – recognizes that investing in youth by developing their digital skills is a win-win strategy. In partnership with ILO, it addresses the skills gaps in the digital economy.
- **Digital Transformation Centres (DTCs)** – launched by ITU in partnership with Cisco, seeks to create a global network of centres, to develop digital skills and contribute towards building an inclusive digital society.
- **Be He@lthy Be Mobile** – together with WHO, harnesses the power and reach of mobile phones to address the noncommunicable disease (NCD) risk factors by educating people to make healthier lifestyle choices to help prevent and manage NCDs via their phones.
- **United for Smart Sustainable Cities** – launched with UN-Habitat and UNECE, with others, serves as a platform to advocate for public policy and encourage the use of ICTs to facilitate and ease the transition to smart sustainable cities.
- **E-Waste Coalition** – aims to increase collaboration, build partnerships and support countries in addressing the global e-waste challenge.
- **EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age** – a networked partnership that promotes gender balance in the technology sector by championing equality of access, skills development and career opportunities for women and men alike.
- **Girls Can Code Initiative (GCC)** – aims to expose young women to, and equip them with digital skills; coding, personal and entrepreneurial development skills.
- **Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development** – an international, multi-stakeholder initiative to improve the availability and quality of ICT data and indicators, particularly in developing countries.
- **Big Data for Measuring the Information Society** – is exploring ways of using big data from the ICT industry to improve and complement existing statistics and methodologies to measure the information society.
- **Financial Inclusion Global Initiative** – aims to support and accelerate the implementation of country-led reform actions to meet national and global financial inclusion goals and targets.
- **Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development** - engages in high-level advocacy to promote broadband in developing countries and underserved communities. One of the central roles of the Commission is to advocate for higher priority to be given to the development of broadband infrastructure and services, to ensure that the benefits of this technology is realized in all countries. Governments and industry need to work together, hand-in-hand, to devise strategies for driving the roll-out of these networks much more proactively.

#### ITU Key COVID Partnerships and Collaboration

- **The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development has adopted an Agenda for Action** outlining immediate measures that governments, industry, the international community, and civil society can take to shore-up digital networks, strengthen capacity at critical connectivity points like hospitals and transport hubs, and boost digital access and inclusion.
- **ITU joined the World Bank, GSMA and the World Economic Forum in setting in motion concrete and immediate actions** ranging from promoting network resilience **to ensuring access and affordability of digital services** in order to help governments, private sector and every citizen cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. **A Digital Development Joint Action Plan and Call for Action was launched to better leverage digital technologies and infrastructure during the pandemic.**
- **ITU and WHO, with support from UNICEF, are set to work with telecommunication companies to text people directly on their mobile phones with vital health messaging to help protect them from Covid-19. These text messages will reach billions of people that are not able to connect to the Internet for information.** This initiative builds on current efforts to disseminate health messages through the joint WHO-ITU BeHealthy BeMobile initiative.
- **ITU and WHO are committed to identifying and scaling best evidence-based digital health solutions** and to leveraging frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data to diagnose, contain and predict outbreaks better and faster.
- **ITU has joined the Covid-19 Global Education Coalition** led by UNESCO to ensure that learning continues for the more than 1.5 billion students and youth across the planet affected by school and university closures. Half of all students currently out of the classroom – or nearly 830 million learners globally – do not have access to a computer. Additionally, more than 40% have no Internet access at home.
- **Remote teaching.** Building on the Digital Transformation Centres Initiative, ITU, in collaboration with Cisco, will offer a free-of-charge programme providing trainers with tools and skills on how to conduct remote teaching.
- **ITU has launched in collaboration with the office of UN Undersecretary General and Special Advisor Fabrizio Hochschild a series of webinars on “Digital Cooperation during Covid-19 and beyond” that focuses on how to secure safe, stable, affordable and inclusive connectivity.** This series helps identify possible solutions and common approaches and strategies from different nations and stakeholders.

- In the face of the Covid-19 crisis, as in any other emergency, the speed and efficiency of our response is proportional to the level of preparedness. **ITU has launched new guidelines to assist countries develop national emergency telecommunication plans.**
- **ITU recognizes the value of the Amateur Radio Services for working with emergency services to provide essential communication links in times of crisis**, linking responders with those in need of humanitarian assistance or helping to keep supply chains open. In these days of social isolation, amateur radio offers a unique way for individuals and families to maintain social contacts while remaining physically separate from each other.

**5. Science, technology and innovation:** The ways we live and work are defined to various extents by science, technology and innovation, and achieving sustainability in these areas will require STI-based solutions.

- a. What types of gender-responsive STI solutions are needed to make economies more equitable and sustainable?

New data released by ITU Facts and figures 2019 reveal that in most countries worldwide women are still trailing men in benefiting from the transformational power of digital technologies. This focused action would be in line with efforts towards achieving SDG 5.B “Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women”.

**Girls in ICT Day:** Initiatives led by ITU include, the International Girls in ICT Day that takes place every fourth Thursday of April to encourage more girls and young women to take up ICT careers and studies. From its launch in 2011 through 2019, the campaign had reached 357,000 girls in 171 countries. The #GirlsInICT hashtag has reached over hundred million Twitter accounts while the ITU Girls in ICT Portal has received over 1 million page views, helping to raise visibility for the importance of attracting more women and girls to ICT studies and careers. The next International Girls in ICT Day is 23 April 2020. The day is now a UN observance.

**EQUALS: The Global Partnership to Bridge the Gender Digital Divide:** ITU has been leading EQUALS, the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age with the goal to establish a network of organizations working together to ensure that women are given access, are equipped with skills, and develop the leadership potential of girls and women to work in the ICT industry. The partnership has five co-founders: GSMA, ITC, ITU, UNU, and UN Women; 70 partners and 26 Research group members, all working together to address the digital gender divide. The global framework of action focuses on four complementary and cross-cutting areas of action: (1) Access, (2) Skills, (3) Leadership and (4) Research. Under this initiative, ITU contributes with the annual flagship event the EQUALS in Tech Awards (formerly GEM-TECH Awards). The latest edition was held on 27 November 2019 in Germany in the context of the Internet Governance Forum. More than 300 nominations were put forward this year from stakeholders across the globe. The Awards celebrated four winners in the categories of Access, Skills, Research and Leadership. The EQUALS in Tech Awards was made possible through partnership with the Swiss Federal Office of Communication (OFCOM), the Internet Society and support from Inmarsat.

**Girls Can Code Initiatives:** ITU and partners have launched initiatives at the regional level such as African Girls Can CODE Initiative and Americas Girls Can Code (AGCCI) aims to train and empower

girls and young women aged 17 to 20 years old to become computer programmers, creators and designers. The key objectives are to promote ICTs for girls and digital skills for young women and girls; encourage countries to mainstream ICT studies to provide girls and young women with more opportunities to learn digital skills; establish a network of women in

- b. What role can STI play in this transformation to sustainable and equitable economic systems? What are the most promising technology solutions? What are potential trade-offs and synergies to keep in mind in this context?

Digitization is increasingly and fundamentally changing societies and economies and disrupting many sectors in what has been termed the 4th Industrial Revolution. Being prepared for digital transformation and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), Machine to Machine communications (M2M), Big Data, Blockchain and 5G is fundamental. At the same time, there is a continuing need for trusted, secure and reliable ICT infrastructure, as well as for affordable access to and delivery of digital services.

Digital skills development (see above), particularly considering the career opportunities that exist for people with advanced digital skills.

Mainstreaming accessible ICTs and Universal design.

- c. How can STI help reduce inequality, with related improvements in sustainability, in both developing and developed countries? What strategies and investments are needed to close the digital divide between countries and the gender digital divide? What steps need to be taken to counter and risks and challenges that can emerge from the use of technologies?

### **Affordability of ICTs**

In 2018, the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development set as a target for 2025 that entry-level broadband services should be made affordable in developing countries, corresponding to less than 2 per cent of monthly Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. In 2019, in 61 countries, a fixed-broadband subscription including 5 GB of data costs less than 2 per cent of GNI per capita. A mobile-broadband subscription with a 1.5 GB data package costs less than 2 per cent of GNI per capita in 89 countries, including four LDCs.

Although considerable progress has been made in recent years, affordability remains a challenge in many countries, especially LDCs.

New technologies make it easier / possible to provide PwD accessibility features in devices with sufficient computational power, such as smart phones, and therefore help them overcome barriers. However, affordability is an additional barrier for PwD, who are therefore double challenged to equally access digital information products and services.

### **• Accessibility of ICTs**



Globally 1.1 billion people currently live with some form of disability (WHO Report). The number of older persons is expected to grow to more than 2.1 billion by 2050 (2017 UN. Report in Aging Population), the majority of which will live in less developed regions, while over 1 billion youth are in danger of hearing loss due to their unsafe listening habits (ITU-WHO Make Listening Safe Initiative). This means that in the next 30 years the number of persons affected by a form of disability could touch half of the world's population, all of whom will require accessible ICTs. Accessible ICTs provide equal access to digital information, communication and functionalities to all users and therefore position digital accessibility as essential to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital age.

The importance of ICT accessibility to persons with disabilities, as recognized by Article 9 of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Art. 18 of the Tunis Commitment, under the auspices of the World Summit on the Information Society (2005) which strives “to promote universal, ubiquitous, equitable and affordable access to ICTs, including universal design and assistive technologies, for all people, especially those with disabilities, everywhere, to ensure that the benefits are more evenly distributed between and within societies.” Countries that have adopted ICT accessibility policies and which use government purchasing power by requiring accessible ICTs in their calls for tender have shown the greatest progress in ensuring that accessible ICTs are available for persons with disabilities to ensure that persons with disabilities can live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

Inclusiveness is also one of ITU's 5 strategic goals, renewed by Member States at the last Plenipotentiary Conference in 2018 who also committed through target 2.9 of this goal to implement digital accessibility globally calling explicitly to “enabling accessible environments for all people, including for persons with disabilities in ALL countries by 2023”.

To support CRPD, SDG goal 10 and ITU target 2.9 implementation, ITU provides expert advice and makes resources available -including guidelines, toolkits, trainings- and establishes regional platforms (such as Accessible Americas, Accessible Europe, Accessible Arab States, etc.) to share good practices, challenges and leverage capacities in the topic. These resources are available to all ITU members and stakeholders. The aim of these resources is to enable adoption of appropriate digital accessibility policies and implementation of strategies to ensure that all people, including those with disabilities, can equally access digital information products and services and thus to contribute to the development of inclusive digital societies globally.

#### • **ICT Skills/Digital Literacy**

Actions in line with the call in the Political declaration adopted at the SDG Summit in September 2019, to “promote and support quality education and lifelong learning to ensure that all children, youth and adults are empowered with the relevant knowledge and skills to shape more resilient, inclusive and sustainable societies that are able to adapt to rapid technological change. We will foster international cooperation to support developing countries in addressing their constraints in access to technologies and education”.

Digital literacy frameworks, new methods of teaching and learning in view of digital developments, as well as new capacity building concepts and initiatives in the digital age have been emerging in line with the evolution digital economy.

Digital Transformation Centres Initiative(DTC) : A special ITU initiative on Digital Training Centres was launched in in September 2019. Initiative aims to deliver skills training at basic and intermediate levels through a network of digital training centres. This is designed to address the challenge of lack of digital skills as a barrier to effective participation in the digital economy mainly for people at the lower levels of the social pyramid. The initiative is attracting partners from the digital ecosystem involving private sector players like CISCO, development agencies, donor governments, and other training providers. Phase 1 of the initiative runs for 19 months from March 2020, with 11 DTCs selected globally.

- d. How can we make sure that STI solutions reach those most at risk of being excluded from sustainable economic progress? How can the public and private sectors promote women's and other underrepresented groups' participation in science and research, as well as in the design and development of technology? How could education, training and skills policies help make a difference?

See above responses to a) and c), in addition:

Digital Financial Services and Financial Inclusion Global Initiative (FIGI)

According to the World Bank Findex Study of 2017, some 1.7 billion people in developing countries still lack a viable alternative to the cash economy and informal financial services, but two thirds of them have access to a mobile phone. There is thus a huge opportunity to bridge the financial inclusion gap through digital financial services (DFS). Yet, the industry has found it challenging to scale services for the unbanked mostly due to regulatory frameworks being out of step. In recent years, ITU has been instrumental to developing technical standards, conducting research, publishing reports, and assisting countries in key areas that underpin the enabling policy and regulatory environment for Digital Financial Services and financial inclusion.

The Financial Inclusion Global Initiative (FIGI), Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR), Regional Initiatives, and various ITU Study Groups and ITU-T Focus Groups contribute to defining the standards and frameworks to enable new and more accessible, interoperable and affordable digital financial products that better respond to the needs of unbanked people in the world today, most notably rural and remote communities. FIGI is a joint project of the World Bank Group, Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructures of the Bank of International Settlements, and the ITU, and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Significant challenges remain to quickly and effectively leverage ICTs and emerging technologies to drive full financial inclusion, including amongst others development of technical standards and adopting a whole-of-government approach underpinned by collaborative regulatory approaches, in particular between the financial and ICT/telecommunications sectors.