Transformation in Action: Digital partnership to enhance technological leadership

Accelerating digital connectivity through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS)

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ESCAP 75
MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Outline:

1. Frontier Technologies, policy experimentations, and regulatory sandboxes in Asia and the Pacific - **Maldives and Bangladesh**

2. Digital trends in North and Central Asia

3. Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS)

(1). Frontier Technologies, Policy Experimentations, and Regulatory Sandboxes in Asia and the Pacific

- **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs**
Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government
-
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD)

Project Countries

Project Country	Bangladesh	Kazakhstan	Maldives
Focal Point	A2i, ICT Division + other national stakeholders	Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry +other national stakeholders	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Technology + other national stakeholders
Proposed Focus Areas	(1). Cottage Micro SME Hub for Digital Acceleration (2). Broadband equity	(1). Autonomous vehicles (2). Decentralization, digitalization & decarbonization in the Energy Sector	(1). Central Bank Digital Currency (2). Stable Coins

Project Activities: Bangladesh

Opportunities: Digital transformation, family planning, family healthcare, universal educational enrolment, women's empowerment, microfinance, innovation culture in the civil service, - "digital opportunity for all"
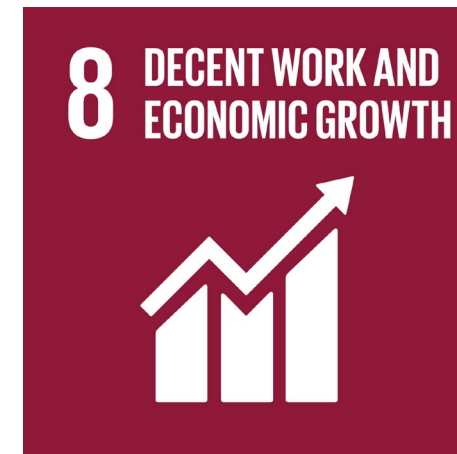
1. Digital acceleration of cottage and micro-SMEs – leaving no business behind (accessing business support e-services >>>regulatory sandbox)
2. Broadband connectivity – connecting all citizens for development

Activities in 2022:

(1). National studies

(2). Study tour

Linkages to the SDGs

- **SDG 3** - COVID-19 has accelerated the use of telehealth services up to 300%

- **SDG 4** - 65% of secondary and 80% of primary level students do not have affordable and reliable access to the Internet

- **SDG 8** - Bangladesh has more than 650,000 IT freelancers, the 2nd largest freelancing community (~16%) in the world, making more than $200m annually

- **SDG 9** - The e-commerce market is currently worth $2bn with 2,000 e-commerce sites

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Project Activities: Maldives

Opportunities – CBDC/Stable Coins: Easy transaction; more confidential; low transaction fee, potential to help the 'unbanked'; secured online transaction; facilitate currency exchange; contribute to reducing national debt; & cashless society.

Activities in 2022:

(a). Studies (April-June 2022):

(1). National study on development and eventual implementation of **central bank digital currency CBDC** and **stable coin**

(2). Prepare a national stakeholders survey of potential start-ups in the Maldives that could benefit from a regulatory sandbox initiative.

(b). National Workshop (June-July 2022):

To present the key findings of the studies to national participants & and validate studies

(c). Study Tour (November 2022) : Republic of Korea

Opportunities of digital currency for the Maldives

IN THE ECONOMY

Easy Transaction –no middleman

More Confidential –financial history privacy & identity protection

Low Transaction Fee –much lesser compared to traditional financial system

Potential to help the "unbanked" –opportunity for underprivileged people to establish credit

NATIONAL DIGITAL CURRENCY

Online Transaction –easier to track and set monetary policy; more transparent

Currency Exchange –ease of exchange

Appreciation of a Debt Solution –contribute to reducing the national debt

Cashless Society!

Source: HE Mohamed Shareef, Minister of State, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Technology, Maldives, Sensitization Workshop, 3 June 2021

Central Bank Digital Currency Projects in Asia and the Pacific

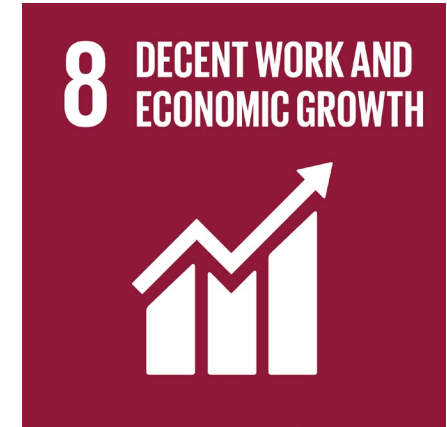| Country	Project status
Republic of Korea	Pilot
Singapore	Pilot
Thailand	Pilot
Cambodia	Development
Lao PDR	Research
India	Development
Bhutan	Research
Malaysia	Pilot
Indonesia	Research

Country	Project status
Philippines	Research
Kazakhstan	Research
Hong Kong, China	Pilot
Palau	Development
Australia	Development
New Zealand	Research
Pakistan	Research
Russian Federation	Pilot
China	Pilot

Source: Consolidated by UNESCAP based on data from Atlantic Council (2021). "Central Bank Digital Currency Tracker." Retrieved from: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/cbdctracker/ and other online sources.
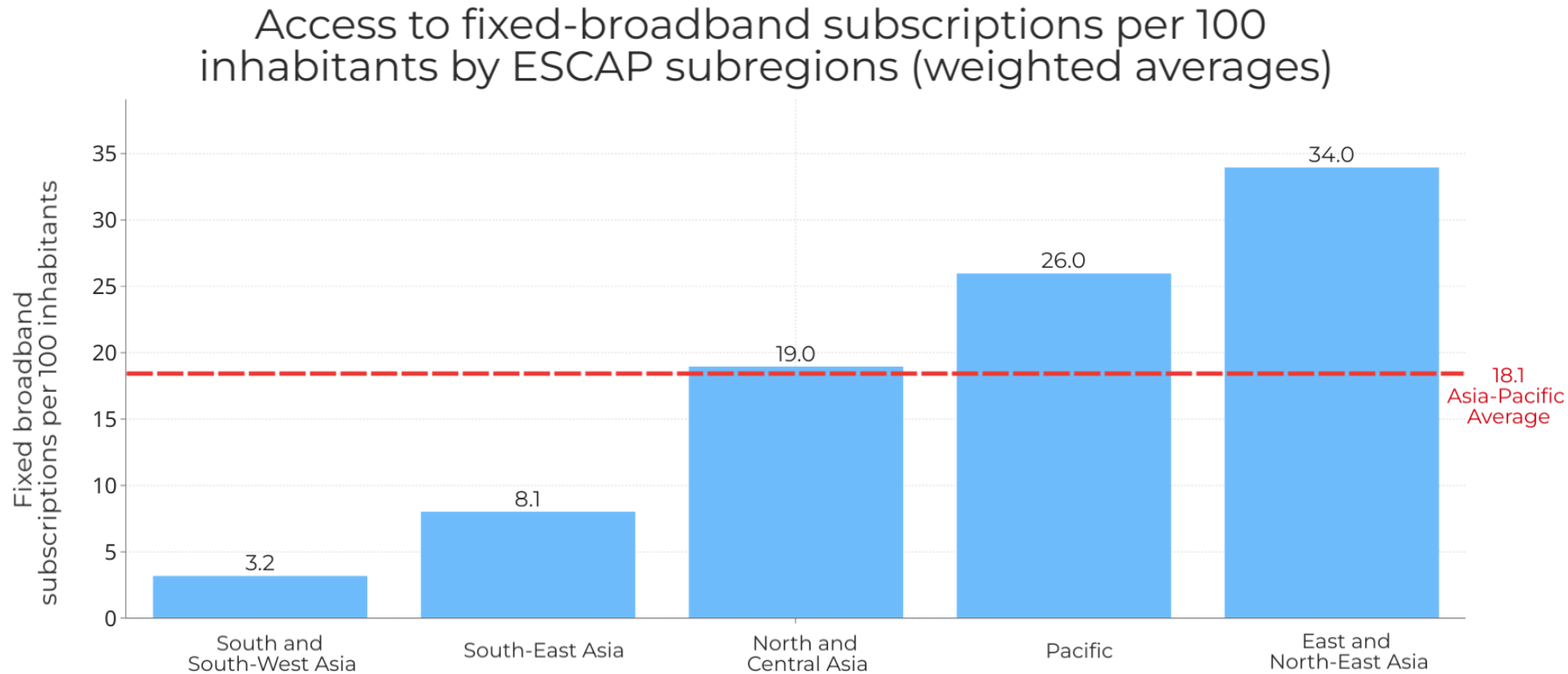
Digital currency linkages to the SDGs

■ **Financial inclusion**

The various financial use cases for digital currencies (cross-border payments, remittances, loans etc.) will boost financial inclusion, which is crucial for development and closely linked to eight of the seventeen SDGs.
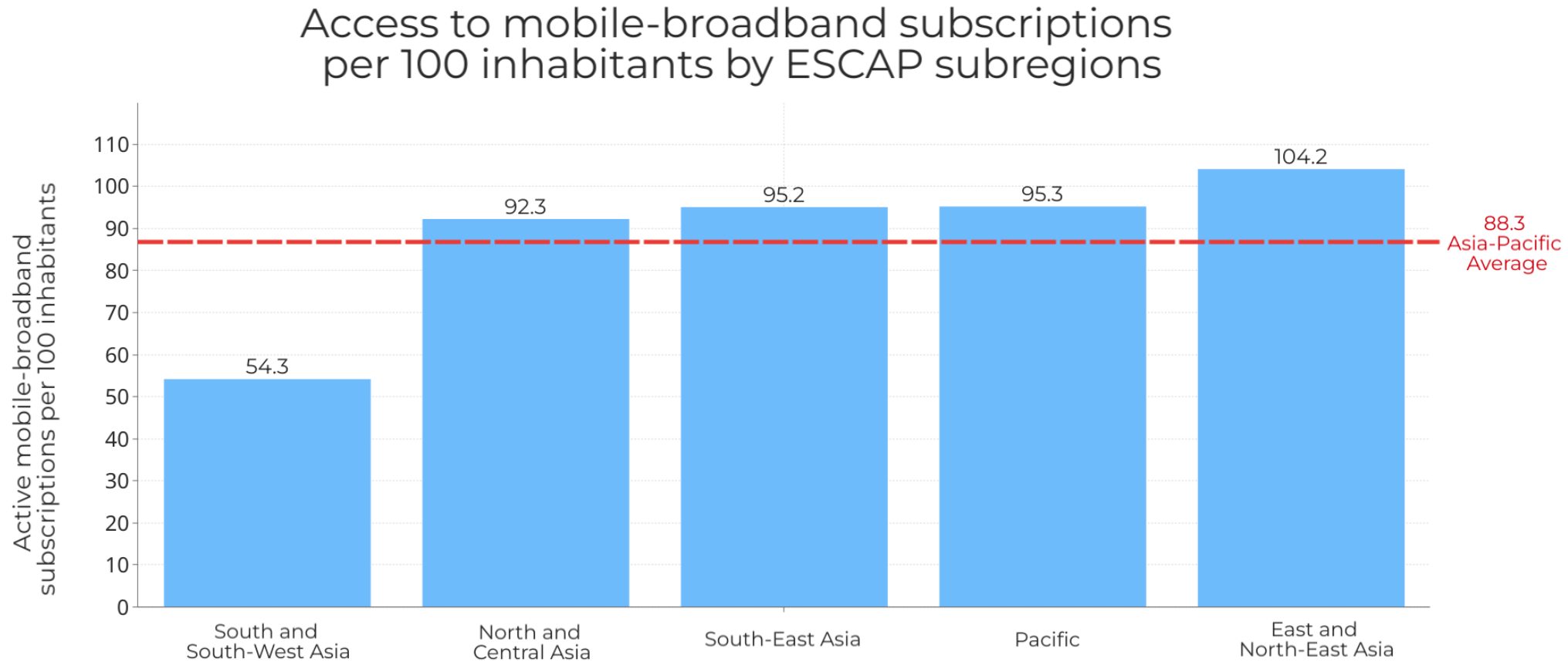
(1). Digital trends in North and Central Asia

Access to fixed-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants by ESCAP subregions (weighted averages)

Source: ITU, "World Telecommunications and ICT Indicators Database", 25th edition (December 2021), 2022. Available at: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/publications/wtid.aspx

Note - graph drawn from 2020 data or latest year with available data

(1). Digital trends in North and Central Asia
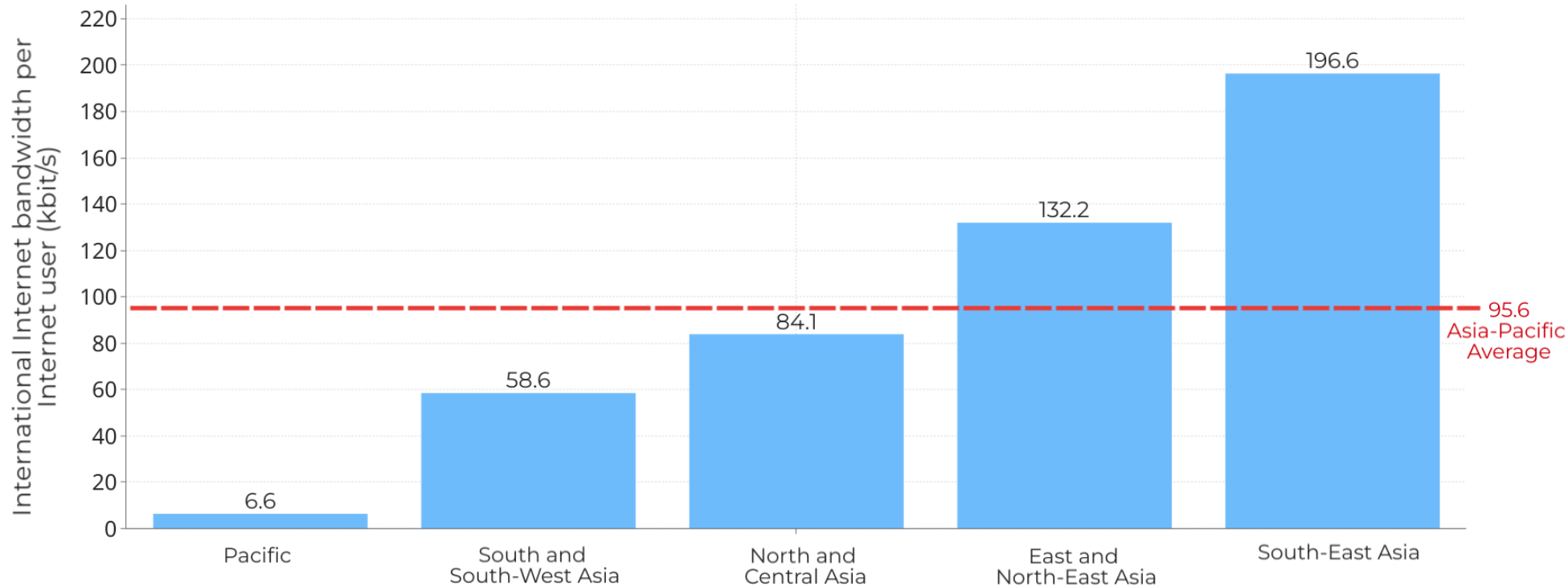

Access to mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants by ESCAP subregions

Source: ITU, "World Telecommunications and ICT Indicators Database", 25th edition (December 2021), 2022. Available at: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/publications/wtid.aspx

Note - graph drawn from 2020 data or latest year with available data

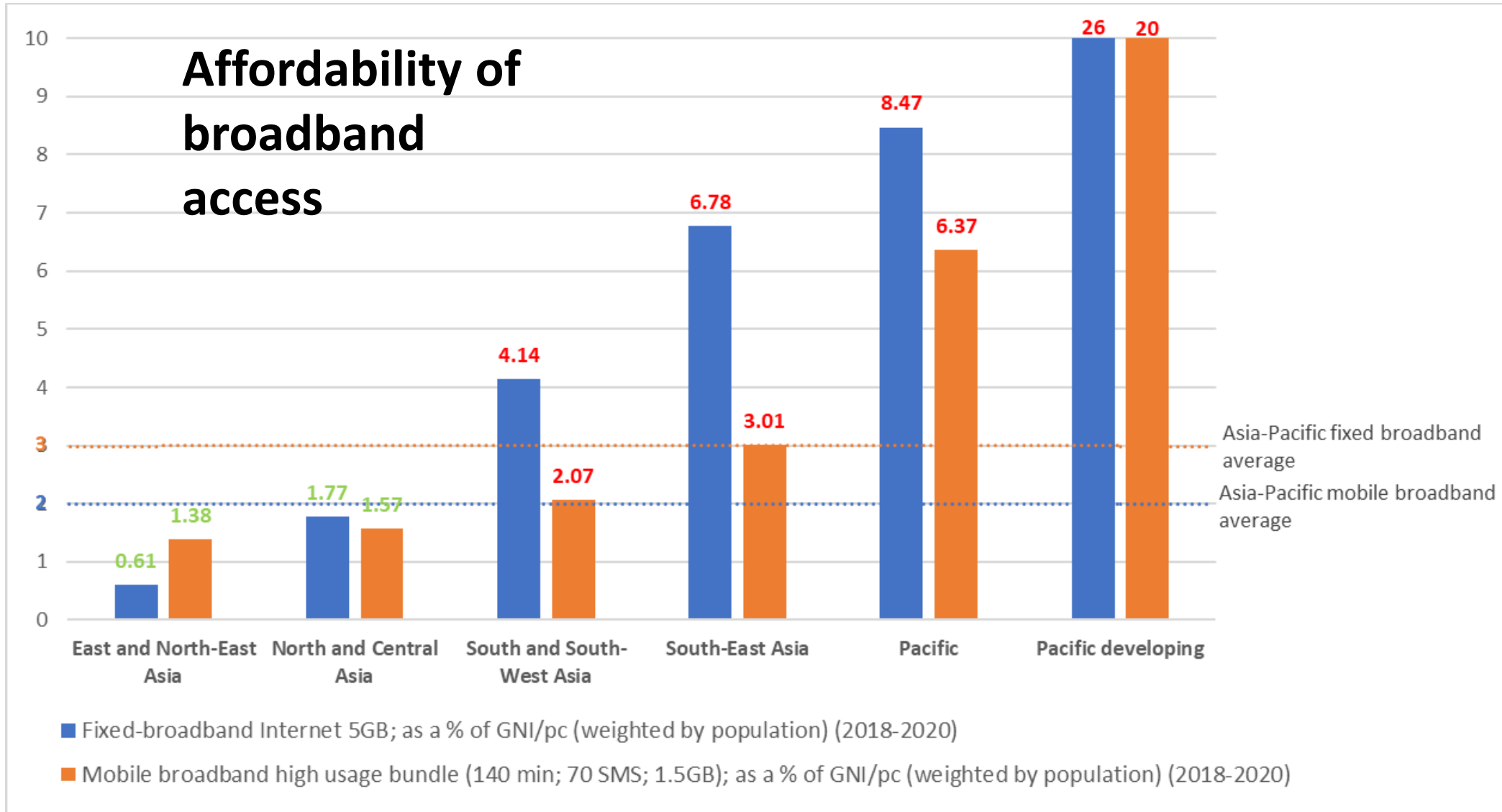# (1). Digital trends in North and Central Asia

International Internet bandwidth per Internet user by ESCAP subregions (weighted averages)

Source: ITU, "World Telecommunications and ICT Indicators Database", 25th edition (December 2021), 2022. Available at: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/publications/wtid.aspx

Note - graph drawn from 2020 data or latest year with available data

(1). Digital trends in North and Central Asia

Affordability of broadband access

Chart values:
- East and North-East Asia: Fixed-broadband 0.61, Mobile broadband 1.38
- North and Central Asia: Fixed-broadband 1.77, Mobile broadband 1.57
- South and South-West Asia: Fixed-broadband 4.14, Mobile broadband 2.07
- South-East Asia: Fixed-broadband 6.78, Mobile broadband 3.01
- Pacific: Fixed-broadband 8.47, Mobile broadband 6.37
- Pacific developing: Fixed-broadband 26, Mobile broadband 20

Asia-Pacific fixed broadband average (≈3)
Asia-Pacific mobile broadband average (≈2)

■ Fixed-broadband Internet 5GB; as a % of GNI/pc (weighted by population) (2018-2020)

■ Mobile broadband high usage bundle (140 min; 70 SMS; 1.5GB); as a % of GNI/pc (weighted by population) (2018-2020)

(1). Digital trends – Internet speed

Internet speed connectivity and speeds vary significantly between and within Asia-Pacific countries.

It has amplified social-economic gaps and further exacerbated by COVID-19.

Average download speed (mb/s)
- < 3
- 3 - 5
- 5 - 10
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 50
- 50 - 100
- 100 - 200
- > 200

United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Map. © Gispo Ltd / Topi Tjukanov 2021. Licensed under CC BY-ND 4.0.
Data: Speedtest by Ookla Global Fixed and Mobile Network Performance Map Tiles (https://github.com/teamookla/ookla-open-data)
Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

AP-IS contribution to global agendas

ESCAP secretariat as mandated by Committee on ICT & STI operates at regional level in support of ITU-D global activities:

a. Mandated by **GA Resolution 70/125** supports the regional review of the implementation of the World Summit on Information Society (**WSIS**)

   - In past years, organized it in parallel with the AP-IS Steering Committee sessions
   - A dedicated session on WSIS action lines in partnership with ITU)>>>**ESCAP resolution 72/10** on WSIS regional review.

b. ESCAP secretariat (and other UNRCs) contribute to the **United Nations Group on Information Society** (**UNGIS**), which is chaired by ITU and Vice Chairs (UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNDP and ECA as UNRC rep).

c. ESCAP secretariat reports regional ICT progress on a yearly basis to the Commission on Science and Development (**CSTD**) in Geneva on WSIS implementation (UNCTAD as secretariat, and ITU an active member).

d. ESCAP contributes to the **Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development** (UNCTAD as secretariat, and ITU an active member)

(2). AP-IS Action Plan (2022-2026)

- **Objective:** To bridge the digital divide and accelerate digital transformation by promoting connectivity, digital technology applications and data use.

- **3 Pillars and 25 Actions**
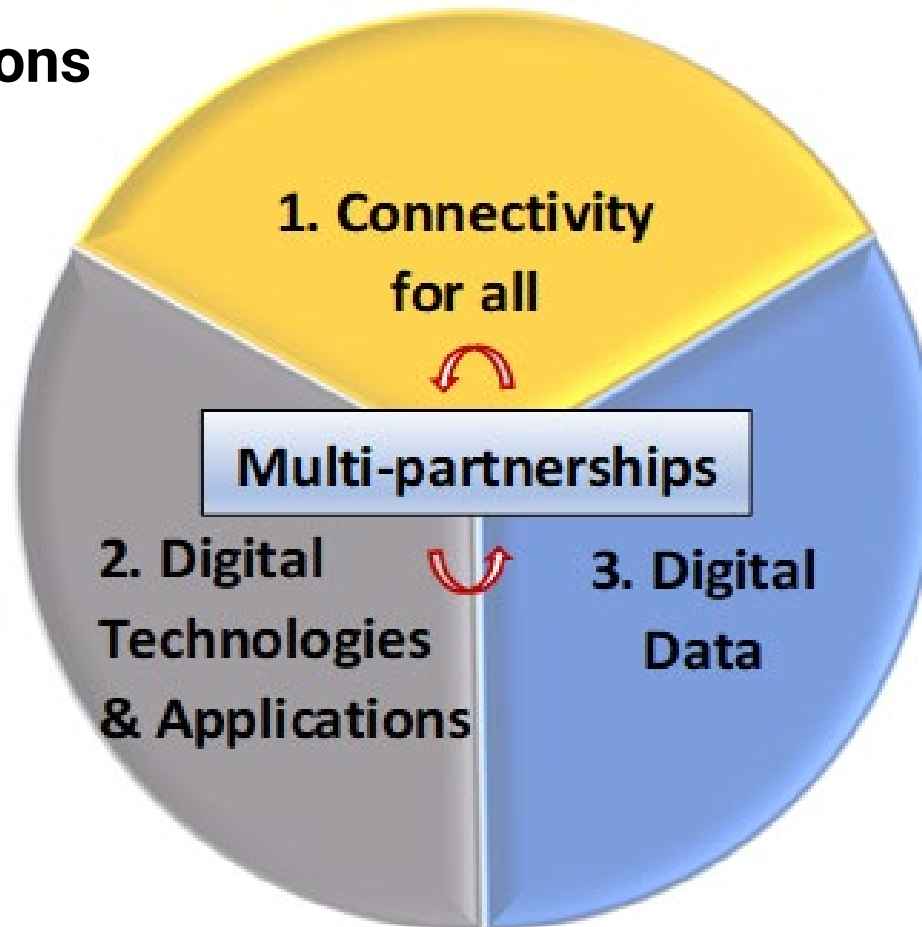
(2). AP-IS Action Plan (2022-2026)

| Summary of the 25 Action of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022-2026		
Pillar 1 – Connectivity for all	**Pillar 2 – Digital technologies and applications**	**Pillar 3 – Digital Data**
• Digital connectivity infrastructure • USAF • E-resilience • Codeployment of ICT infrastructure • Smart village (rural and urban connectivity) • IXPs • Digital economy etc • National and regional intelligent data resource management centre • Fiber-optic corridors	• Capacity building on infrastructure connectivity policies • Promote digital transformation • Promote inclusive digital connectivity • Strengthen digital connectivity using PPPs • Promote digital and frontier technologies • Promote digital financial services • ICT applications for disaster risk reduction • Digitalization in other sectors of the economy • Digital platforms for SMEs	• Promote integration of digital data for e-government services • Promote digital data sharing in government sector • Local content • Digital literacy • Data privacy • Regional cooperation of different stakeholders (government, private sectors, NGOs, Academia, etc)
Source: Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022-2026, available at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/AP-IS%20Action%20Plan%202022-2026_Final.pdf		

(2). AP-IS Action Plan (2022-2026)

Bureau of Working Groups (as of Dec 2021)

	Working Group 1 (Connectivity for All)	Working Group 2 (Digital Technologies and Applications)	Working Group 3 (Digital Data)
Chair	Armenia United States of America	India	Republic of Korea
Vice Chair	Kazakhstan Maldives Sri Lanka	Armenia Russian Federation	Armenia Sri Lanka

ESCAP support to Central Asia

Project on "Addressing the Transboundary Dimensions of the 2030 Agenda through Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific (RECI)", 2018-2021

- Research on co-deployment of ICT-Energy-Transport infrastructures

- Developing the interactive dashboard for e-resilience monitoring
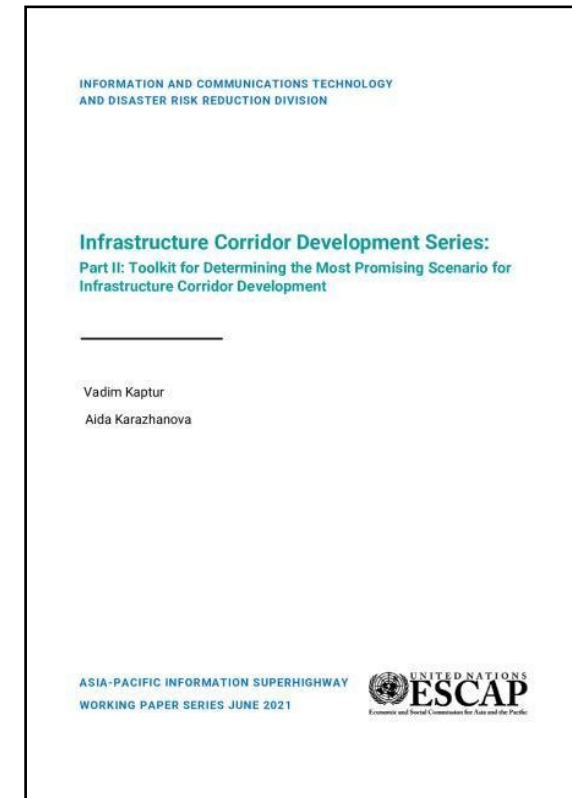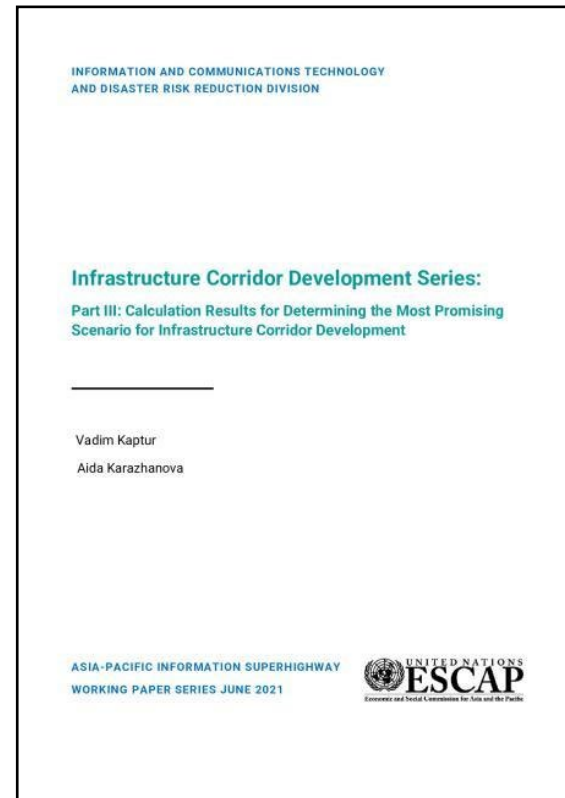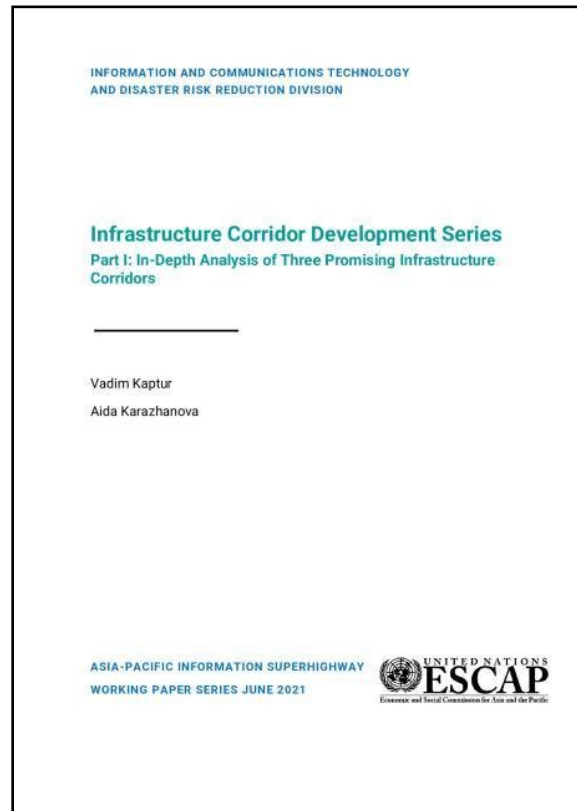
# Building Forward Together in North and Central Asia

- To adopt the action plan **of the next phase of implementation of the Master Plan for the AP-IS (2022-2026) at the Committee on ICT and STI in August 2022.**

- **Support and actively engage in the AP-IS Working Groups partnerships including work on digital transformation, e-resilience, digital literacy, etc**

- Accelerate research on the issue of **co-deployment of fiber-optic cables along passive infrastructure networks**

- Continue to study and promote the establishment of **carrier-neutral internet exchange points, with a focus on LDCs, LLDCs & SIDs**

- **Expand regional collaboration** including multi-stakeholder alliances to **scale up broadband internet capacities for inclusive innovation and SDG implementation**

THANK YOU

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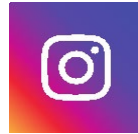
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