



## *ITU Backgrounders*

# ITU'S ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUTH

ITU is excited about the opportunities ICTs provide in helping young people everywhere make their voices heard.

Enthusiastically using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to innovate, create and participate in the world around them, young people are a growing force on the international stage.

Today's youth are the most connected and digitally literate generation that has ever lived. Under 25 year olds account for a little less than half of the world's population (42.8%), yet ITU estimated that they accounted for 45% of global internet users by early 2012. At the same time, 64% of under 25 year olds – a total of 1.73 billion – are not yet online, therefore lacking the equipment and skills to participate in the digital economy.

A growing population of young people were born into the digital age and are instinctive users of ICTs in their daily lives. These 'digital natives' – 15 - 24 year olds with five or more years of experience using the Internet – represent 30% of the world's youth.

With over 80% of 15-24 year olds in developed countries now classed as 'digital natives', the United Nations – and ITU, as its specialized agency for information and communication technology – recognizes young people as key contributors to bridging the digital divide and building an inclusive Information Society.

### **Our work**

ITU is excited about the opportunities ICTs provide in helping young people everywhere make their voices heard. We're actively engaged with young people on a range of initiatives covering three main areas: digital inclusion (connecting the unconnected), innovation (leveraging the creative energy of young people to contribute to ITU and the UN), and research and analysis.

Examples of ITU's work include:

#### **Events**

**BYND2015 Summit:** In September 2013, ITU and the Government of Costa Rica co-organized the BYND2015 Global Summit on Youth and ICT, gathering young people from around the world to discuss youth priorities for a sustainable development agenda in the post-2015 era. Over 3,500 young people participated both onsite and online through a specially curated crowdsourcing platform, to draft a multimedia statement which was subsequently presented to the United Nations 69<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in September 2013. The declaration calls on ITU's membership to continue lowering barriers to access for young people, who require information and knowledge sharing tools for their continued social, political and economic empowerment. More information about the event and the crowd-sourcing initiatives can be found [here](#).

**Girls in ICT Day** – Founded at the 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference in Guadalajara, Girls in ICT Day aims to raise awareness and empower girls and young women to pursue careers in the ICT sector. Almost 2,700 events in 121 countries have been held to date, ranging from career fairs, open days and mentoring programmes, empowering over 70,000 girls and young women.



ITU recognizes that ensuring the safety and security of children and young people online is vital in the digital age.

In the developing world, the proportion of 15-25 year olds using the internet is more than double that of other age brackets.

### *Digital Inclusion and Innovation*

**Child Online Protection (COP)** – ITU recognizes that ensuring the safety and security of children and young people online is vital in the digital age. Launched in 2008, this multi-stakeholder initiative highlights five key areas to promote child online safety: legal measures, technical and procedural measures, organizational structures, capacity building, and international cooperation. In cooperation with partners, ITU has developed practical [Guidelines](#) for children, educators, industry and policy-makers.

**Young Innovators Programme** – set up at the [ITU Telecom World](#) event in 2011, the programme works with innovative young people from all over the world who are using technology to transform their communities and their lives. Each year, the [Young Innovators Competition](#) invites talented, technologically-minded young people to compete for one of the prestigious places in the programme. Two winning start-ups are awarded up to USD 10,000 in seed funding.

**Connect a School, Connect a Community** – a public-private partnership launched by ITU-D to promote broadband Internet connectivity for schools in developing countries around the world, and to leverage school connectivity to provide online resources for the whole community.

### **Crowdsourcing youth priorities for the UN's Post-2015 development agenda**

– ITU joined forces with the UN Secretary-General's Envoy for Youth and other UN organizations, to crowdsource the views and opinions of young people towards the Post-2015 sustainable development goals. The output included the [Global Youth Call](#) policy document provided as input to the intergovernmental negotiations.

### *Research and Analysis*

ITU's 2013 '[Measuring the Information Society](#)' publication included the first in-depth analysis on young people's use of ICT, with a special focus on measuring the world's digital natives.

Key findings from the report include:

- In the developing world, the proportion of 15-25 year olds using the internet is more than double that of other age brackets.
- Numbers of digital natives in the developing world are expected to double by 2017.
- Overall, digital natives represent just 5.2% of the world population (approx. 363 million worldwide)

A 2014 ITU report entitled [Digital Opportunities: Innovative ICT Solutions for Youth Employment](#) casts a spotlight on digital jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities. The report highlights and differentiates the essential skills young graduates need to excel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, including computer literacy, digital literacy and web literacy.

### *UN Activities*

ITU actively participates in the UN Inter-agency Network for Youth Development (IANYD), which acts as a coordination and reporting mechanism for all UN agencies' youth related work. Members of the IANYD have contributed to the [UN System-wide Action Plan for Youth Development](#), which serves as the UN's strategic framework and includes commitments and measures to track progress. ITU co-chairs a sub-working group on young people and the Post-2015 agenda, which leverages online tools such as crowdsourcing to provide a young perspective to ongoing Member State negotiations.