

In Brief

Mobile Revenues to Exceed \$1 Trillion in 2013 and Handsets Total 5 Billion

It is forecast that annual revenues from the global mobile market will top \$1 trillion by 2013 when the number of subscribers rises to more than 5.3 billion, according to Informa Telecoms and Media. It has taken over 20 years to reach 3 billion subscribers but another 1.9 billion are forecast in just six years, with the total annual revenues derived from mobile operators will grow from \$769 billion in 2007 to 1.03 billion in 2013. More than 75% of global net growth is expected to come from BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) markets. Indonesia also is one of the five leading countries. Africa and Latin America also will sources of organic growth over the next five years, according to the company.

The high growth of developing markets, according to Informa, reflects the entrance of new operators as well as improvements in regional networks, roll-out and rising competition which is expected to lower the barrier for new subscribers. Reduced voice tariffs the option of very low-denomination prepaid top-ups and the greater availability of cheap 2 G and 2.5B handsets will open up to low income users.

Operators globally will be challenged to generate sustainable revenues as average revenue per user (ARPU) continues to drop. To keep annual revenues as high as possible, operators will need to promote usage of data services. Annual data revenues, unlike voice, will go from strength to strength, and will more than double from \$148 billion in 2007 to \$347 billion in 2013. As a result the proportion of total revenues generated by data services will increase from less than a fifth (19%) in 2007 to more than 33% in 2013.

Mobile Penetration Rising Rapidly

Since the turn of the century, the growth of mobile cellular subscribers has been impressive, ITU Secretary General Hamadoun Toure recently reported. Year-to-year growth is averaging 24%. In 2000 mobile penetration stood at only 12%, in early 2008 it surpassed the 50% mark. It is estimated to reach about 61% by the end of 2008.

While the data shows impressive growth, ITU stresses that the figures need to be carefully interpreted. Although in theory a 61% penetration rate suggests that at least every second person could be using a mobile phone, this is not necessarily the case. In fact, the statistics reflect the number of subscriptions, not persons. Double counting takes place when people have multiple subscriptions. Also, operators' methods for counting active prepaid subscribers vary and often inflate the actual number of people that use a mobile phone.

On the other hand, some subscribers, particularly in developing countries, share their mobile phones with others. This has often been cited as the success story of the Grameen Phone in rural Bangladesh. However, the most impressive growth is documented from BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) which together were expected to have 1.3 billion mobile subscribers at the end of 2008. China surpassed the 600 million mark in mid-2008 and it by far the world's largest market, with India second at 300 million.

Thirty Percent Chinese Internet Users Access Via Mobile Phones

According to a recent report by the Chinese Academy of Telecom Research, under the Ministry of Information Industry and Telecommunications (MIIT), currently about 85 million Chinese use their mobile phones to log on to the internet, which accounted for nearly 30% of the country's Internet users. It is estimated that number of Chinese Internet users rose to more than 275 million at the end of 2008 and 85% were broadband users. The total number of mobile phone subscribers in China is estimated to be more than 620 million, much larger than other subscribers in the ICT industries, including broadband, fixed-line, etc. Mobile Internet has attracted great attention from mobile carriers, with all of the three Chinese telecom carriers vowing to develop strategies to win this emerging market.

It has been reported that China Mobile is planning to set up a research and development center in Silicon Valley in 2009. China Mobile is focusing on designing a uniform mobile platform and must choose among several different types. Another reason is that by an R&D center in Silicon Valley, China Mobile would be able to gain more access to the U.S. mobile technology developers, especially Google, whose handset operating system Android is said to be attractive to China Mobile.

The Sustainable City and ICT

A new report prepared by the research organization IDATE in France, addresses issues that cities are currently facing and the role ICT can play in their continued development. The report: *The Sustainable City and ICT* (www.idate.org) raises a number of key questions, among them are: (1) clearly defining the sustainable city concept, (2) the sustainable digital concept, and (3) ICT's role in the sustainable city. A number of recommendations are advanced to better integrate ICT in a sustainable city project, what is the position of leading ICT players involved, and which ICT infras-

tructure and services can help achieve sustainable city goals?

The report identifies several Sustainable Cities in Europe, the Middle East and Asia (no major metropolitan areas) and examines a number of key digital services applied to Sustainable Cities. These include housing, urban mobility, home healthcare systems, public services, culture, leisure and tourism, social and community life, and governance.

Thailand Offers E-Visiting for Prisoners and Families

The Department of Corrections of Thailand, under the Ministry of Justice, has opened a new service, called E-Visiting, for relatives of the more than 158,000 inmates. This will make it possible to communicate remotely via a real-time video conference system. This service is being set up in 43 prisons across the country. This program is intended to reduce the travel – often a significant barrier – to prisons for families of prisoners. Department of Corrections Call Centers are to be expanded to new locations. For relatives of prisoners residing outside the country, Thai Embassies may offer this service.

Booking video appointments is required and can be made by telephone, fax, post, in person or via e-mail. The service is available to relatives of the inmates, parents, spouses, children or siblings of inmates. When an inmate has no such relatives and has put names of other people, such as lawyers and friends on the list, these people are also eligible to make use of the service. E-visiting is operated from 9 am to 3 pm daily. Fifteen minutes are allowed for each E-Visit. The service is provided for a small charge. A full 15 minute visit would cost about \$6. The website for the service is www.correct.go.th/eng/evisiting.

ITU Telecom World 2009 – Open Networks and Connected Minds

This global ITU world telecom event will take place in Geneva during October, 2009. It is to draw major ICT

stakeholders from around the world to address issues of “open networks” as the source for innovation and “connected minds” provides the focus for delivering the benefits of advanced telecommunications and ICTs to foster economic and social development across the world. The ITU is committed to realizing the potential of ICTs and encourages a large participation of officials and experts from around the world.

National Web Portals Promote Tourism, Investment, and Trade

More than 100 countries have established a central point of access via the Internet so as to more effectively provide information and services to foreign visitors, attract investment and increase exports, as well as better serve their citizens and enterprises. A national single window, entry point or gateway is the method governments have adopted – commonly referred to as the “national web portal.” A Google search reveals several thousand valuable sources on initiatives that have been taken by countries, reports prepared by the World Bank and other international organizations and analyses by experts.

The following are examples of national web portals of several countries:

Australia

The Australian Web Portal (www.australia.gov.au) provides extensive online resources for anyone seeking details about the country and its economy. Those planning a visit will find Facts and Figures, an online answer service website, details about Australian currently, climate and weather and exchange rates. Benefits, Payments & Services can be accessed at Centrelink that connects with 10 government departments for further customer links to online services, as families, housing, community services, disaster assistance, social security, and private health insurance. The portal also offers online access on law and justice matters and there is an IT and Communications Authority that provides information about broadcasting and telecommunications.

Singapore

The SINGOV national web portal (www.gov.sg) contains four main links: Government, Citizens & Residents, Businesses and Non-Residents. The Homepage presents news section, spotlights government developments as well as providing news releases and speeches by officials, information and policies, a Government Who’s Who. There is a Search feature that allows enquires about particular subjects of interest to users. The SINGOV portal is especially strong in its Enterprise One (www.business.gov.sg) providing extensive facts relating to business, investment, regulations, taxation and much more. Agencies providing Government Assistance are listed as well as Networking Opportunities that foreign companies and executives can use to interact with Singapore businesses.

New Zealand

The New Zealand web portal (www.newzealand.govt.nz) focuses on About New Zealand, presenting Life, Work and Study – what you need to know; Travel – how to plan a great trip, and New Zealand at a Glance, quick facts for travelers about the country. A Browse New Zealand Government section provides A-Z of Government Agencies, how to Participate and be Involved, and lists the main agencies of interest to visitors and citizens. A search for “e-Government” provides hundreds of sources, such as the New Zealand E-Government Interoperability Framework, Online e-Government Initiatives, e-Government in Rural New Zealand and an E-Identity Program.

Philippines

The Philippines web portal (www.gov.ph) presents extensive “headline news” about government activities, meetings of the President on its first page, as well as Information by Category (Agriculture, Defense, Education, Energy, Foreign Affairs, Defense, Transportation and Travel and Tourism) and a practical section for citizens “How do I . . . where citizens can access information on obtaining a passport, obtain tax information, get a scholarship, apply for medical assistance and get married in the Philippines?” and foreigners “How do I . . . apply for a Philippine visa, retire in the Philippines, apply for a drivers license, adopt a child in the Philippines, apply for a patent or copyright, and

register as a Filipino Musician?" Several are linked to online services. An extensive section of the website is directed to businesses and NGOs – some 100 categories of information are available. This is one of the most user-friendly national web portals.

Malaysia

The myGovernment, The Malaysian Government's Official Portal (www.gov.my) focuses on online services "provided as an added measure for you to interact with government agencies." Keywords may be entered for specific enquiries. A Guide to Online Services is provided (most in Malay and English) on government management, public sector data, applications forms for advertising licenses that connect to several specific government ministries. A section of the website provides Information and Policies of the Malaysian Government relating to agriculture, consumer affairs, culture and arts, defense and security, education, finance and economy, health, housing, ICT and media, manpower and employment, science and technology, foreign affairs, town and planning and energy. Citizen Information and Forms are available for Education, Employment, Security and Safety, Legal Matters, Public Amenities and Utilities and Health. A list of downloadable forms and online services also are provided.

India

The National Portal of India (www.India.gov.in) has a rather simple presentation, essentially providing practical links to search: government, know India and Sectors (agriculture, education, health, science and technology, transport) as well as information accessible for citizens, business and overseas (visitors, students, passport/Visas, embassies/consulates). The Government section of the portal contains links to the Constitution of India, Who's Who, Parliament, Rules & Regulations, Acts, Policies and Schemes. A www.business.gov.in section of the portal provides details on starting, growing and managing a business, as well as details on infrastructure, investment, the Indian economy, taxation, trade, industry and FAQs.

Canada

The Canadian Government has established Service Canada to provide Online Service Delivery Using the Web (www.canada.go.ca) The website lists several programs and services intended for access by Canadian citizens: social insurance and employment, aboriginal peoples, families and children, newcomers to Canada, people with disabilities, seniors, veterans, youth and students, employers and service delivery partners.

Service Canada has prepared a PowerPoint presentation describing the evolution of the Government of Canada (GOC) Web from 1995; the greater focus on citizens in the new millennium; overview of government websites, and assessment of where the program stands in 2007.

Designing ICT Programs to Reach Poor Women

The potential of ICT to break barriers to knowledge, political participation and economic opportunities are vast, so concludes the UN Development Program. (www.undp.org) "Examples of ICT's promise as a tool for positive change for poor women and men in developing countries are inspiring, according to a UNDP report. As examples: a group of women artisans from India sell their textiles direct to European consumers online; women's organizations use the Internet to share information and build a national coalition for change; real time e-mail exchanges between parliamentarians and their constituents spur accountability and transparency.

"These sorts of developing country examples are relatively few and harnessing the power of ICT for human development remains a monumental challenge. The speed of technological transformation has created a huge chasm – the so-called digital divide – between those with ICT capacity and access and those without. Poor women in the South suffer additional disadvantages – as citizens of low-income countries, as poor people within their own societies, and as women. Indeed, the UN ranks access to ICT as the third most important issue facing women globally after poverty and violence.

"Gender is a major factor in determining who has access to and who benefits from, information technology. Addressing ICT as a "gender neutral" technology can

entrench inequality and even enlarge the gender gap – making ICT a “gender negative” technology. Without strategic targeted actions, women will continue to be disproportionately represented among the information poor,” and the potential of ICT to promote women’s equality and empowerment will go unrealized.

“Given the many factors that conspire to exclude the poor from the network age, and the deeply imbedded male biases that pervade the world of ICT, a combination of gender analysis and affirmative action is urgently needed. Education is key, particularly the promotion of gender parity in secondary school. In tertiary education, ICT training should be offered in departments with high percentage of female enrolment.

“To reach poor women, increasing opportunities for training and access to non-formal settings is critical. Use of ICT can be incorporated into health programs, micro-enterprise initiatives targeted to women, and community development activities. Partnering with those who understand the social, cultural and economic circumstances of poor women is a useful approach, for instance, offering training and access through NGOs that have already developed outreach strategies and have the trust of local women. Targeting girls can open doors not just for them, but also for their mothers, with the youngsters acting as intermediaries to the often foreign world of technology. The content of training materials also needs to be geared to the skills and interests of women and girls.

“Telecenters are an important tool for giving women access to e-mail, the web, electronic networks, and distance learning – as well as older technologies like telephones, facsimile machines and photocopiers. In designing telecenters, it is important to look at how both women and men will use the space and resources. Telecenters should be located where women can easily, safely and comfortably get to them. Facilities should be separate spaces of times for women and men in cultures where sexes do not mingle.

For the truly transformative potential of ICT to be realized, women must participate in the policy-setting and planning processes for technology. And government leaders, educators, decision makers and those in the ICT field must put women’s needs on their agendas. UNDP can assist governments to identify gaps in opportunities and outcomes for girls and women and help them identify gender-specific measurable goals and objectives for the ICT sector. UNDP can also support institutional structures promoting national ICT development in a way that benefits women, and help bring representatives of women’s organizations and gender experts into the policy-formulation process.

Egypt Launches Public Awareness Campaign on e-Government Services

The Egyptian NGO Support Center, whose mission is to have an effective civil society in Egypt, is working with different NGOs in Egypt and training them to raise awareness on e-Government services in their areas, according to a report published by UNPAN in its Public Administration News, January 2009. “The idea of the project came about when we saw that governments worldwide use e-Government services for two main reasons: first, it is much easier and convenient for the citizen to do any government services online rather than going to the office and paying money on transportation and so on,” explained Mahmoud El Bably, project manager. “And second, to fight corruption in government bodies which exists in the form of bribes the citizen pays to get a free service done,” he said.

The Egyptian e-Government program ranks 28 worldwide, based on the United Nations 2008 report, however people in Egypt don’t know anything about it. “People worked really hard on this program and the citizens for whom it is made know nothing about it,” said El Bably.

After these findings, the center decided to go to a funding body, the American Development Association, who gave LE 170,000 for the project. “It’s not a lot because we are doing it as a pilot program and later on we can get a bigger fund working with the Ministry of Administrative Development,” he continued. The Egyptian NGO Support Center is collaborating with two other parties on this project. The Media Arts for Development, which is also responsible for doing the posters, brochures and the media campaign, and the Egyptian Humanitarian Relief and Rehabilitation Organization who are working on the training part of the project, organizing workshops to train the participating NGOs on using e-Government services.

With the limited budget, the center will only be able to focus on two governorates, Cair and Giza, for the time being. Since July 2008 the center has been training nearly 50 NGOs on e-Government programs, 30 of which receive funds for starting an awareness campaign in their area.

“The NGOs campaign will have two objectives, first to familiarize computer users with e-Government services and second for those who are not as technology-

savvy, to seek their help in providing these services, accordingly to El Bably.

The Ministry of Administrative Development's support to the project surpassed all expectations. The ministry wants to make the NGOs official providers of these all government services, giving them licenses to provide all government services from their offices after they are done with the workshops on e-Government programs. "This came from the notion that not a lot of people are computer literate so they won't be able to use e-Government services and this is where the NGO steps in. Any citizen who wants a service performed could go to the NGO in their area and tell them and they will do it electronically or if needed, they will send a representative to the government.

There has been a great demand from NGOs to participate in the program. According to El Bably, the project is attracting NGOs that will use their participation as fundraising channels, charging citizens for performing services. "An NGO's objective is to increase social welfare and make everything easier for the people. The center's future plans for the project is to give the NGOs greater funding so they would have computer training classes for the people in their areas, they also want to spread in other governates. "The Ministry is really supportive as their aim is to make the 26,000 NGOs around Egypt providers of government services," stated El Bably.

Brunei Developing Human Resource Capabilities Vital to Nation

Speakers at a conference held during November in Darussalam focused on "Brunei's e-Government Implementing the Strategic e-Government Master Plan explained the government's vision for the direction of ICT. The event was reported in www.e-government.gov.br. The Deputy Prime Minister emphasized that "any e-Government projects must not only be technically driven in the sense that considera-

tion must be given priority because whatever technology is adopted it must be utilized to the maximum benefit." "All stakeholders must seriously address the need to develop local expertise and competence in the ICT domain, such as Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), project management, application and web development, ICT infrastructure and architecture, cyber security, and such."

It was also pointed out that in order to sustain the growth of ICT, and reduce the country's reliance on foreign expertise and address the need to cultivate local specialties in these areas. Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) could be used to enhance the delivery of e-Government, which could expand the access to and delivery of public services to benefit citizens, businesses and employees. This would also create opportunities for businesses as well as enhancing the national ICT capacity and capability. This event provided an opportunity for government officials to meet informally with company representatives from various industries.

Another dimension of the event was clearly stressed: the Government is also looking at various strategies to enhance the development of several key areas including downstream oil and gas industries and ICT. The e-Government initiative is one of the key elements providing the way forward to increased efficiency by allowing better delivery of public services, improving access to information and increasing accountability of government to citizens, one speaker stressed. E-Government projects implemented earlier were largely infrastructural in nature, such as the provision of data centered and acquisition of the latest hardware and software. An example of strong success is the Treasury Accounting and Financial Information System or TAFIS. However, the lack of qualified manpower was cited as one of the key issues that required serious attention.

Another component involves civil service reform and innovation including changes in management programs including the important component of Government and Citizen Centric Services, that includes enhancing web-sites and Government Employees System (GEMS) as well as transactional services that will enable business to startup online and implementation of Public Key Infrastructure for the Government.