

Use of LIRNEasia research in Myanmar Universal Service Strategy public consultation document

The results of the nationally representative survey on ICT use and information needs conducted in 2016 were quoted extensively in Myanmar’s [Universal Service Strategy public consultation document](#) released by the Ministry of Transport and Communications in January 2018.

The research is used to address issues pertaining to

1. Affordability
2. Ownership of devices
3. Digital skills

Area	Research quoted	PTD’s use/interpretation of data and recommendations
<i>Affordability</i>		
Expenditure on devices	MMK 105,198 (USD 85) was spent on purchasing a mobile phone.	Most people prefer to save up until they can afford a smartphone. (See section on household/individual ownership for recommendations, as two used in tandem)
Expenditure on top-ups	Monthly income Average: MMK 265,620 (USD 221) Average urban: MMK 352,941(USD 292) Average rural: MMK 228,017 (USD 189) Median: MMK 200,000 (USD 165)	The median income was used to determine if less than 2% of an individual’s income could be spent on a 1GB of broadband data. Given that the cost of 2GB of data was MMK 3000 in 2017 (from an external source), it was determined that the 2% target developed by A4AI could be met, deeming broadband affordable.
<i>Ownership of devices</i>		
Household/individual mobile ownership	Household ownership of mobile phones stood at 83% in 2016 Mobile ownership increased from 39% in 2015 to 61% in 2016. Mobile ownership in rural areas increased from 26% to 53% within the year.	There is a trend of people wanting to own their personal phones, and a large proportion of the population owns mobile phones. No need make immediate steps regarding end user devices at large. However, steps may need to be taken to make services available to marginalized groups.
Gender gap in mobile/smartphone ownership	72% of men owned mobile phones vs. 52% of women (gender gap) Smartphone ownership amongst	The USF will monitor mobile ownership trends. If the gender gap is not closing, special additional measures shall be taken.

	mobile owners more equal: 78% amongst men and 77% amongst women.	
Ownership of computing devices	Only 6% of households own a computing device (desktop/laptop/tablet) ¹	The report states that public access to computing devices is important. It later states that it can allocate funds towards such end user devices in schools if needed, but states that this should primarily be the responsibility of the relevant Ministry or partners.
Digital Skills		
Digital skills: general	Ability of mobile owners aged 15-65 to conduct the following by themselves Search for information online: 22% Install an app: 21% Create login details: 18% Create/adjust settings on an app/service: 19% Post information online: 21%	Low digital skills by mobile owners have been identified using the LIRNEasia research. Several CSR and NGOs have also perceived this gap, and started successful programmes. They lack scale, however. Based on this, 2 programmes are being proposed. 1. ICT training in schools 2. Digital literacy training in various alternative learning centres and other community Institutions (more details in Annex 1)
Digital skills: gender	The main difference between men and women appears to be in regards to digital skills. Data shows that women's skills are consistently lower than those of men (from box on LIRNEasia research)	The USF will fund a range of digital literacy projects, targeting certain target groups including girls and women

The report with the full results of the survey "[Mobile phones, Internet, information and knowledge: Myanmar 2016](#)" can be accessed here.

¹ The 6% figure is simply the addition of the percentage of households that have a desktop, laptop and tablet (asked separately). Given the possibility that some households may own more than one computing device, the 6% stated here is likely an overestimation.

Annex 1: Excerpt from the document on digital skills

As outlined in more detail in Section 2.2.4², the large majority of current mobile (smart) phone owners do not know how to use the available online content, data services and Internet applications, and how to protect their data and privacy. Thus, the Universal Service Strategy will support digital literacy and ICT training projects. These can take place in the digital learning centers, but can also be offered by other organizations separately. This will not only benefit the users of ICT services, but the ICT sector as a whole, as these measures will also increase the demand and usage of all sorts of data products and services; it is thus a measure to also stimulate ICT demand.

The USF will fund a range of digital literacy projects, both as part of the digital learning centers and in other institutions as appropriate. These projects may have a range of target groups, such as:

- The general public, including a focus on people in rural and remote areas and/or poorer household segments, as well as ethnic minorities;
- Youth, especially to help with skills upgrade for employment; also a focus on digital skills for girls and women;
- Persons with disabilities; and
- Any otherwise disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

In terms of digital literacy training, this will focus on basic ICT skills that allow people to use mainstream Internet services, content and online applications, and to do so safely and securely. Digital literacy training also extends to awareness raising initiatives. Examples of potential digital literacy topics include:

- What is the Internet and how to search the Internet for relevant information
- How to ensure children surf the Internet protected
- How to use mobile money services safely
- How to identify fake news
- How to search for relevant applications, install and use them
- Online safety, data and privacy protection
- Options for posting own content, opinions, blogging, commenting etc.

² LIRNEasia research

Annex 2: Other areas of interest to LIRNEasia that have been included in the document.

1. ICTs accessibility for persons with disability

- The government will monitor gaps in ICT use in groups including those with disabilities
- The Universal Service Strategy also identifies measures that will help people with disability to use communication services.
- Special projects catering to persons with disabilities. Details on the project are given below

Improved access and usability of various ICT services for disabled people: the USF will work with notable representative disability groups to identify specific barriers and requirements from persons with disabilities in regards to using ICT services; initial indications are that there are already, for example, several helpful applications for both blind and deaf people but that they only exist in English and need to be converted into the Burmese language.

2. USF collections and disbursements

As can be seen from the international experience, a careful balance needs to be achieved between collecting sufficient funds for the needed USF programs, and not setting the USF levy too high. If USF levies are too high, they could affect affordability. Especially when collected funds are unused. Lastly, the USF is only there to fill in a gap that the market cannot fill; this is often a very small gap. Thus, for the USF to be successful and have true impact, this gap needs to be a) correctly identified, and b) targeted with the right and well-designed projects.

Based on the monitoring results, the MOTC may consider, as part of the review of the USF Strategy itself, to readjust the USF collection.