

UPU's contributions to the 2019 HLPF

(a) the identification of progress, gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges in achieving the SDGs; and, or in relation to the theme within the area under the purview of your organization;

As digitalization becomes ever more pervasive, some countries are struggling to keep up the pace, regardless of their potential. Indeed, indicators show that there are disparities both between and within regions, in addition to a growing divergence between postal revenues and GDP.

Yet, with a global network of over 677,000 post offices, 5.3 million staff and physical infrastructure covering 192 countries, the postal sector is a key contributor to national and international infrastructure. It plays an important role in national development and in the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Indeed, as shown in the Postal Development Report, using an innovative measurement framework, UPU research has revealed that the postal sector has a potentially high impact on Goals 8, 9, 11 and 17 of the SDGs. The postal sector contributes to the achievement of Goal 8 through the promotion of financial inclusion. For Goal 9, the impact is achieved through the promotion of more robust global value chains. For both of these goals, postal interconnectedness (reach) is the key underlying factor. When it comes to Goal 11, the contribution is expressed through the sector's greater resilience to natural disasters, when compared with other elements of the wider logistical infrastructure. For Goal 17, Posts work as promoters of greater Internet connectivity, leveraging all underlying dimensions (reliability, reach, relevance and resilience). The statistical findings that lead to these conclusions are all corroborated by studies and examples of projects in the field. The main takeaway from this report is that the postal sector continues to be a key vehicle of socio-economic development. This should encourage governments, regulators and any other players with a stake in the sector to step up investments and draft level-playing-field regulations and policies to boost this critical element of national infrastructure.

In terms of gaps, more efforts should be made to actually use the UN SDG indicators (over 240 indicators collected by UN Statistics for the 169 targets and 17 goals).

(b) valuable successful experiences and lessons learned on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality;

As highlighted in response to question (a), the UPU has conducted an assessment of postal sector contributions to the SDGs through both qualitative and quantitative parameters. The quantitative part consisted in comparing the performance of each country in the various UN SDG indicators to the achievements of the same countries in other benchmarks representing postal development, the quality of the logistical infrastructure and the regulatory environment. The qualitative part of the analysis consisted mainly in collecting and assessing case studies of SDG-relevant projects and initiatives in the postal sector, to the light of what had been found in the quantitative part of the analysis. The qualitative analysis is presented below in order to serve as examples of "valuable successful experiences and lessons learned on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".

Contributions to the achievement of Goal 8

Bangladesh has been a traditional role model for financial inclusion, first with the emergence of Grameen Bank in the late 1970s, and then with the subsequent proliferation and prominence of microfinance institutions, especially in rural areas. In this context, the Bangladesh Post Office has been contributing to the country's Vision 2021 to lift millions of Bangladeshis out of poverty. In particular, it has issued over 11 million mobile money orders, worth 7 million USD, and the Postal Cash Card has built a customer base of 52,000 cardholders, many of whom live in rural areas.

In India, we see a similar trend, with concrete examples of actions undertaken by the national operator towards SDG Goal 8. Indeed, India has the largest postal network in the world, with around 90% of post offices in rural areas. In addition to existing insurance, remittance and savings solutions, India Post established the India Post Payments Bank in 2016, which aims to have 650 unique branches to drive financial inclusion in 155,000 villages and to train 300,000 postal workers to take on the additional role of payment bank correspondents. India Post has been providing insurance services since 1884, and currently insures more than 23.5 million citizens in rural areas.

Indonesia's 245 million inhabitants are scattered on 17,000 islands, and the financial inclusion rate stands at 36% compared to the regional average of 69%. Yet, a number of steps have been taken by the national operator, PT Pos Indonesia, to boost contributions in this area. Indeed, although it has less than 5,000 self-operated post offices to serve the entire territory, it has built a large network of 30,000 agents to distribute its products and services. This allows it to have a much larger presence, throughout the country, at a lower cost than if it were operating its own network of post offices. In addition, this creates the conditions for shorter queues in agents' branches and more flexible opening hours than for regular post offices.

In Morocco, Al Barid Banque (ABB), which is fully owned by Poste Maroc, was officially launched as a bank in 2010. The primary mandate of this entity was to improve financial inclusion, particularly in rural areas. This has led to an increase in the percentage of Moroccan citizens with access to banking services from 34% in 2010 to around 70% in 2016. Starting from a base of some 4 million customers in 2010, ABB has opened around 500,000 new accounts per annum and now has more than 6.4 million accounts, meaning that around 18% of the population banks with ABB.

All these cases show that national Posts can directly contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. They also show that there is still considerable untapped potential in furthering financial inclusion in these countries.

Contributions to the achievement of Goal 9

In Botswana, the local designated operator has reported that the development of Internet access and the provision of various communication services in post offices through knowledge centres has increased the revenue of the connected post offices by an average of 25% and provided local communities with a full range of electronic services. In addition, the national operator provides a mobile application through which customers can pay commodity bills such as those for the use of electricity.

In Brazil, the postal sector, like all other components of the national infrastructure, is being leveraged towards the achievement of Goal 9. For instance, the implementation of an easy postal export programme enabled more than 10,000 MSMEs to internationalize their activities, thus promoting industrial diversification and value addition to commodities.

Japan is also outperforming in this area. Concrete examples of initiatives include the partnership between Japan Post Group, IBM and Apple. It was aimed at improving the quality of life of Japanese senior citizens by delivering iPads with IBM-developed apps and analytics to connect millions of senior citizens with services, healthcare, community and their families. Japan Post Group is expanding the service in stages with the objective of including four to five million customers in Japan by 2020.

Contributions to the achievement of Goal 11

In Chile, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake caused great devastation in 2010, affecting 80% of its population and taking 524 lives. Despite the extent of the world's fifth biggest earthquake in modern times, CorreosChile was able to resume 100% of its business operations just one week after the event. The Post played a key role in the recovery phase alongside other government entities, and in the awareness/preparedness phase for educating the population, with a campaign titled "Yo me preparo; Chile se prepara" (I am prepared; Chile is prepared).

In Cuba, Correos de Cuba is a part of the Cuban Civil Defence system against disasters. In 2017, it cooperated with other governmental councils to ensure restoration of vital systems after the passage of Hurricane Irma. It also took measures to ensure the provision of basic postal services to citizens. Furthermore, it prioritized the distribution of newspapers to remote territories in which the electric service was impaired (a situation that prevented access to other media, such as television or radio). For example, 700,000 copies of a national newspaper were circulated (200,000 more than its traditional circulation) as part of the effort to bring updated information to affected areas.

Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in late 2013, severely affecting 37 post offices as well as the islands of Samar and Leyte. Buildings were damaged or destroyed, and many postal vehicles were lost, as was much equipment. In order to overcome this major disaster, PHLPPost partnered with the national Department of Social Welfare and Development through Landbank of the Philippines to bring cash grants to about 18,000 beneficiaries of the United Nations World Food Programme in Leyte and Samar. PHLPPost also served those areas where Landbank automated teller machines were unavailable.

Japan has also shown its ability to leverage the postal infrastructure in a context of major disasters. The 9.0 magnitude earthquake that hit the country in 2011 is a case in point. Close to 16,000 lives were lost and 1.2 million properties were severely damaged. Sixty-two postal employees were among the dead; 583 post offices were forced to close temporarily. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, Japan Post ensured continuity in mail services (including setting up mobile and temporary post offices, alternative delivery points and temporary post office boxes for affected families). This highlighted the importance of establishing and maintaining collaboration with local and national entities during and after a disaster.

The United States of America also display outstanding performance in this area. A concrete example is the work of the United States Postal Service (USPS) in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which severely affected a very large area of the United States of America in 2005. The top priority was to account for all employees and determine the operating capability of the postal and local civil infrastructure. Steps were taken to ensure that the displaced population received their postal items through mobile post offices, arrangements with shelters and special change-of-address procedures processed for more than 520,000 households. Additionally, USPS participated in the overall response by delivering flyers from the civil protection agency to citizens and providing other support.

Contributions to the achievement of Goal 17

The national Post in Tanzania (United Rep.) has been identified as a potential contributor to Goal 17. The national operator has reported a number of local developments that could be conducive to the achievement of SDG indicator 17.8.1. For instance, Tanzania Post Corporation has 36 Internet cafés, a measure which may promote Internet connectivity. As part of the operator's service offering, it also has six post offices in which Community Information Centres are installed, as well as e-learning services.

(c) emerging issues likely to affect inclusiveness and equality at various levels;

More efforts should be made to actually use the UN SDG indicators (over 240 indicators collected by UN Statistics for the 169 targets and 17 goals).

(d) an assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global, regional and national levels;

The UN SDGs are the overarching goal of the UPU's strategy. The UN Shared Framework for Action on Leaving No One Behind is expressed in the UPU's strategic framework through its Vision 2020 statement, where the UPU aims to build a postal world where:

- Innovation is shared, promoted and driven – not as a luxury, but as a reality for all

- Full integration of networks at the national, regional and global levels is a reality; and
- The postal sector's unique ability to include populations, economic actors and territories is fully recognized and exploited by governments, development partners and international organizations.

In addition, programmes such as development cooperation and financial inclusion focus on gathering insights and promoting actions aimed at reducing inequalities in member countries.

(e) areas where political guidance by the high-level political forum is required;

General guidance on achieving the UN SDGs through partnerships within the UN system.