



The Digital Dividend in Asia Pacific

Asia Pacific is the world's largest mobile market. Since 2003, it has more than tripled in size and added over a billion connections. Over the next five years, an additional one billion connections are expected to be added, with the Asia Pacific market projected to exceed three billion connections in 2013.

The mobile ecosystem is a major contributor to the Asia Pacific economy, contributing nearly 3% of aggregate GDP, and directly and indirectly employing over 10 million people. Mobile voice communication is currently the only form of voice communication for many people in the region and it is likely that mobile will also be the primary form of data communications and rich internet access for the majority of people in Asia Pacific.

As the transition from terrestrial to digital TV looms on the horizon for developed markets in the region, such as Singapore and Australia, and some emerging markets such as Indonesia, an unprecedented amount of spectrum is expected to become available through the digital dividend. At the same time some countries in Asia, such as India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, which have previously used the UHF band for other purposes, are looking into allocating this spectrum to mobile. It is absolutely essential that sufficient harmonised UHF spectrum is re-allocated to mobile services so that the mobile industry can continue to deliver high-quality services, especially mobile broadband.



Status

Many Asia Pacific administrations are already progressing towards the development of regulation to allocate the digital dividend spectrum. The Wireless Forum of the Asia Pacific Telecommunity is developing a recommended band plan for use in the region, taking advantage of the benefits that having a long-standing allocation to mobile services – unique to the Asia Pacific region – can bring to the area.



Implementation issues

The Asia Pacific – ITU Region 3 – voted at the World Radiocommunication Conference in 2007 for slightly different band plans. This means governments must make decisions on which will best suit the interests of their citizens. Cross-border interference will need to be negotiated with neighbours bilaterally in each case.

GSMA position and advice

Many administrations in the Asia Pacific region have already started to move towards allocating the wider band at 698-806MHz rather than the Region 1 band at 790-862MHz.

The GSMA believes that spectral efficiency is best served by exploring the possibility of this and, where necessary, assessing whether digital TV can be amply served below the 698MHz boundary. Studies undertaken elsewhere – notably by the European Commission – have shown a significant economic and social benefit in allocating dividend spectrum below the 790MHz bar.

A pragmatic approach to planning would be to ensure that digital TV spectrum is allocated first at the bottom of the 470-862MHz band, and a detailed assessment carried out as to whether channels above 698MHz can be freed for use by mobile broadband.

The GSMA also supports the work being done by the APT Wireless Forum to examine band planning options for the UHF digital dividend bands. The GSMA believes that it is important to ensure that as many countries as possible can adopt compatible band plans for this spectrum. This will help ensure that Asian consumers and economies can derive the maximum benefits from economies of scale.

Avoiding a proliferation of different digital dividend plans in the Asia Pacific region is important to the development of the band for LTE mobile broadband.

Where to go for more information
www.gsmworld.com/digitaldividend