

#3 FINAL PROJECT STATUS REPORT

Developing a Sustainability Assessment Framework (SASF) for the global ICT industry

May 2016

Introduction and achievements

Launched in February 2015, the Sustainability Assessment Framework (SASF) project set itself the ambitious goal of developing a comprehensive assessment tool to evaluate the sustainability performance of ICT products and services.

The approach of creating a holistic assessment tool – including environmental, utility and human rights aspects – was very well received when it was first introduced as a concept in early 2015 to external ICT experts and

specialists. In the following months, the design of the framework was shaped through an interdisciplinary process which included workshops and webinars with GeSI members as well as external stakeholders. In late 2015 a pilot program was launched, in which a number of GeSI companies tested a draft version of the SASF for robustness and practicality within a business environment.

Since May 2016 the SASF has been exclusively available for GeSI members on www.GeSI.org

This report is the third project status report. For previous publications visit us on <http://gesi.org/portfolio/project/81>

Case studies: passing the endurance test

The case studies began in December 2015 and concluded in February 2016.

The main objective of the pilot phase was to pre-test the applicability of a first draft version of the SASF for the global ICT industry. The participating companies were Deutsche Telekom, Huawei, Orange, Swisscom, Telefónica, and TIM (formerly Telecom Italia). During the pilot phase, companies were encouraged to provide direct feedback in calls with the project team and via a feedback form. Specifically, the following SASF aspects needed to be tested during the pilot:

- Clarity of the terms used, as well as of the key elements of the SASF (including criteria, indicators, levels of achievement, evidence, scores and weighting).
- Understanding of major content-based challenges faced when applying the SASF (e.g. data requirements, temporal, financial and workforce-related constraints).
- Ensuring that the defined criteria are relevant to the ICT sector.

Results and adjustments

The participating companies confirmed that the SASF is a robust system. The pilot phase made clear that the framework

provides additional value to companies using the tool, as it gives new insights on the overall sustainability performance of specific ICT products and services. In addition, the SASF was found to be comprehensive.

The feedback also indicated that some adjustments were necessary in order to increase the overall system usability. These included:

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- A number of criteria and assessment framework indicators were rephrased and redefined in order to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations.
- The level of achievement for a few indicators was made more precise by adding thresholds and examples of possible metrics wherever possible.
- The predefined weighting system was adapted to highlight the importance and impact of various sustainability areas more clearly.
- The required evidence and proof of compliance for indicators was rephrased in a few cases.
- Some less relevant criteria and indicators were deleted, to avoid unnecessary complexity and to keep the framework streamlined.
- More detail was added to some explanatory notes for the 'Environment' topic area, to help practitioners during the sustainability assessment.
- In several cases, an exclusive metric or benchmark for indicators was not recommended as it would substantially reduce the flexibility of the SASF.

Migration to an online solution

The SASF aims to become established as a sector-wide assessment tool to evaluate the sustainability performance of ICT products and services. To be widely used and accepted by practitioners it is necessary to take a user-friendly approach. Additionally, the SASF will be used at different ICT companies and in different business environments. For these reasons, the project team decided to implement the SASF as an online tool and make it directly available on GeSI.org. The current system is powered by WeSustain. On registration, GeSI member companies can start working with the assessment tool right away.

Outlook and upcoming project phase

The initial project phase officially ended with the completion of the pilot phase and the implementation of the online solution. The results are remarkable. Within a year we established a system that enables companies to measure the performance of their products in terms of social and environmental sustainability. In the long run, the SASF will also allow companies to manage products and increase the overall sustainability performance of their portfolio. This will not only have a positive impact on the environment but also on the society, for instance through supporting human rights considerations in the supply chain management. Furthermore, the SASF highlights the potential of certain ICT products and

services in contributing to sustainable development.

With the integration of SASF into the GeSI.org platform we emphasize our aim to further push the uptake of the SASF. We want to develop actions to increase the commitment to the SASF within GeSI and to expand the circle of companies applying the tool. In addition, we will maintain an intensive dialogue with members as a basis for further potential developments. For 2016 we have set ourselves the following goals:

- Strengthen communication regarding the SASF;
- Increase the number of participating GeSI members;
- Continuing stakeholder engagement with the external experts already involved.

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