Understanding Community Networks

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TOTAL POPULATION: 7,395 BILLION
INTERNET USERS: 3,419 BILLION
ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USERS: 2,307 BILLION
UNIQUE MOBILE USERS: 3,790 BILLION
ACTIVE MOBILE SOCIAL USERS: 1,968 BILLION

URBANISATION: 54%
penetration: 46%
penetration: 31%
penetration: 51%
penetration: 27%

Figure represents total global population, including children.
Figure includes access via fixed and mobile connections.
Figure based on active user accounts, not unique individuals.
Figure represents unique mobile phone users.
Figure based on active user accounts, not unique individuals.

Access policies

- Factors that improve access
  - Interest of government to improve access
  - Liberalized Telecom environment
  - Relevant content
- Major concerns for Africa
  - Lack of local content
  - 2.75% web pages targeting the African population use indigenous African languages
Why Community Networks?

• Internet access is growing relatively rapidly in many African countries
• This is spurring all kind of applications (e-government, e-education, e-commerce, access to critical information)
• The consequence of not being online is increasing by the day
• The isolation of remote communities is increasing
• Operators are not rushing to give access to remote or poor and isolated communities
• Universal service funds have not brought solutions to bringing access
Community Networks are ways to provide access to the community, by the community, at their own calendar.
What is a community network?

- Deployed and operated by citizens
- Targeted to meet community’s needs
- A tool to improve community growth and development by contributing to a local ecosystem
Countries already developing CNs: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Georgia, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Kenya, US New York, US San Francisco

Preliminary interest: Costa Rica, Guatemala, CTU (Caribbean), Peru, Paraguay
Opportunities and challenges

- Opportunities
  - Way to connect the last billion
  - Communities to own their destinies

- Challenges
  - Technical skills
  - Isolated
  - Access to existing resources
  - Regulatory hurdles
  - Sustaining the networks
Recommendations

For Regulators

• Consider Community Networks as a legitimate alternative form of local connectivity.
• Recognize them as a sustainable means to connect people where many traditional networks do not reach
• Remove the regulatory hurdles (ex. Access to spectrum)
• Support them (ex. Universal Service Funds)
Recommendations ...

For Operator Community,

• Consider partnering with local community networks
• Support their development through equipment donations, training opportunities, or through back-haul provision to reach the global Internet
• They will help you
  • Fulfill your obligations
  • Fulfill your corporate responsibilities
Recommendations ...

For policy makers,

• Consider funding programs to support Community Networks
• Make sure that they are recognized as a solution to your ambitions to develop an inclusive information society
• They are a partner for your development ambitions.
Thank You