

Community networks newsletter: Challenging the digital divide around the world



By APCNews

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Do you remember that feeling when you went online for the first time ever? In the Routing for Communities podcast, Mamaila Community Network pioneer and South African researcher Kgopotso Magoro described her experience as if the entire world had opened before her eyes. But around 2.9 billion people – 37% of the world's population – have never used the internet.

It is precisely to challenge such digital divide that community networks have been established around the globe. How and why communities want to connect, the potential benefits of connecting, and concerns about the possible negative impacts of the internet on communities are part of this process. In this edition, we celebrate these networks' multiple achievements, discuss the challenges they face, and moot the kind of support they need in terms of policy, regulation and financing opportunities.

Welcome to the 60th monthly round-up of developments impacting your local access networks and community-based initiatives.

Routing for Communities podcast

- We launched two new episodes in July! Join us on a journey to meet Wiki Katat, the first Indigenous virtual operator providing internet and mobile phone services in Mexico. [Play](#).
- In the fourth episode you will get to know the Amadiba Community Network, a project that has been strengthening the community's fight to defend their land, the coast of their country and their people, through access to the internet. [Play](#).
- And this piece brings extras from the interview with Flor Lino, who is part of

Wiki Katat and also of a community Indigenous radio station in Mexico. [Read more](#).

- In the Routing for Communities podcast, you can listen to the life stories of those connecting themselves while defending the fundamental rights and well-being of their communities. Check out a recap of the first four episodes on this [Twitter thread](#). Two new episodes will be launched every month! So in August, they will take us on a journey to Argentina and Indonesia. [Join our Telegram channel](#) now to keep up to date with the new releases.

Community networks news and stories

- Seeding change: How Indigenous villages in Brazil built Nhandeflix, their own streaming platform, using the intranet within their community network. [Read more](#).
- From India, the Digital Empowerment Foundation points out how community networks are uniting Indigenous communities in Ziro Valley. [Read more](#).
- Two years after starting its activities in Brazil, the [Amazon Community Networks School](#) is now supporting participants in making change happen in their communities. The [Aldeia Solimões community just received materials](#) to build their community radio studio. And the master's thesis of one of the school's participants [highlighted the impact of this effort](#) on her community, the Aldeia Marajáí.
- In this podcast, Radio Ambulante tells the story of the SNet network, which became an alternative for those seeking new forms of information and communication in Cuba. [Read more](#).

Gendered experiences

- This inspiring video from Colnodo shows how the development of community networks can strengthen women-led entrepreneurship in rural areas of Colombia. [Watch here](#).
- Do you want to know more on how to make a feminist internet? In November 2022, APC's Women's Rights Programme brought together a diverse group of 50 participants around building resilient movements in the digital age. This podcast is all about their reflections. [Listen here](#).
- This article maps pioneering feminist infrastructure experiences to explore new horizons of political action. [Read more](#).

Enabling policy and regulation

- Member states of the Forum from the Communications Regulators' Association of Southern Africa met to discuss the importance of community networks for digital inclusion and the policy and regulation measures needed to support them. [Read more](#).
- The Universal Service Fund – created precisely to subsidise the promotion of universal access to telecommunications services – should include community-led models, as recommended by ITU on several occasions, and advancing in countries such as Argentina, Malawi and Kenya. [Read more](#).
- This article presents a reflection about the experience in Argentina with the

Roberto Arias and Barrios Populares programmes. [Read more.](#)

- Africa's potential is vast, but the untapped spectrum creates artificial scarcity. This article from KICTANet discusses the importance of affordable access to the digital spectrum, including access for community networks, to connect the next billion. [Read more.](#)
- From Colombia, Colnodo and representatives from community networks [participated in a dialogue](#) hosted by the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology. The meet discussed the successes of nine community-led initiatives in the country. [Learn more about them.](#)

Publications, research and toolkits

- The Dashboard for Universal and Meaningful Connectivity (UMC) tracks a country's progress towards a set of aspirational connectivity targets. [Read more.](#)
- The ITU Academy is offering a free course on broadband mapping combined with modern Geographic Information Systems (GIS). [Read more.](#)

Events

- This year, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) will take place in Kyoto, Japan, from 8 to 12 October. From now until then, various regional and national forums will be held, such as the Asia Pacific IGF from 29 to 31 August in Brisbane, Australia, and the Africa IGF from 19 to 21 September in Abuja, Nigeria. [Read more.](#)
- The EsLaRed Foundation is holding the 26th Workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean (WALC) focusing on technologies for internet networks from 13 to 17 November in the city of Guayaquil, Ecuador. [Read more.](#)
- In Indonesia, Common Room will host the Rural ICT camp in Polewali Mandar (West Sulawesi) from 28 September to 2 October 2023. Last year, the gathering focused on the community networks movement in the country and discussed the digital transformation needed to foster the inclusion of remote places. Follow their [website](#) for updates.

Funding opportunities

- The Internet Society Foundation announced a new round of grant funding to advance internet access and connectivity around the world through its BOLT programme. Applications are open till 18 August. [Read more.](#)
- The foundation also announced a third round of grant funding through its Resilience Programme, which aims to help communities build internet resiliency when faced with adverse events. Proposals can be sent until 15 September 2023. [Read more.](#)
- Mozilla Foundation launched its Data Futures Lab Infrastructure Fund to support the development of open-source software needed to foster a more fair and just data ecosystem. The deadline to submit letters of intent is 31 August. [Read more.](#)

Featured from the community networks learning repository

Did you know there is an online learning repository focused on materials made for and

by community networks? This is a collective space to store and exchange resources that can be useful in training processes.

Among many materials on different topics, this month we want to highlight Latin America in a Glimpse Amazonia, a research effort coordinated by Derechos Digitales that focuses on the internet access gaps in the Amazon region, as well as the desires and risks perceived by the communities that inhabit it.

[Find out more!](#)

This newsletter is part of the Local Networks (LocNet) initiative, an initiative led by APC in partnership with Rhizomatica that aims to directly support the work of community networks and to contribute to an enabling ecosystem for the emergence and growth of community networks and other community-based connectivity activities in developing countries. You can read more about the initiative [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Previous editions of this newsletter are available [here](#).

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One more thing! If you have comments about the newsletter or information relevant to the topic that you would like us to include in the next edition, please share it with us [here](#).