# Local Access: Can community networks help people to harness the power of digital tools?



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Imagine you are in the middle of the Amazon rainforest. There is no mobile coverage or internet access. The long distances and rugged landscapes make communication highly challenging. Isolated regions like these are also the ones where predatory mining, logging, deforestation and violence against traditional and Indigenous communities are rampant. These communities are precisely the ones Rhizomatica aims to support when building new technologies that connect people in areas where internet communication is scarce. Innovative community-centred connectivity models like this are cultivating sustainable approaches to communication technology while strengthening self-determination around the world.

Welcome to the 50th monthly round-up of developments impacting your local access networks and community-based initiatives.

Community networks news and stories

- Rhizomatica's high frequency radio showcases the power of communication in remote regions of the Amazon. Meet HERMES, a low-cost, self-run system that can provide critical communication possibilities to people in areas where broadband may not be possible. Find out more in these inspiring articles in English here and in Spanish here and here.

- In India, the Janatsu Collective is helping people to run a community network in villages where one needs to travel far to get coverage. In Nepal, a community-centred initiative served succour in a time of disaster. Read more.

- IBEBrasil celebrates the first fibre community network connecting people to the internet in Brazil. This is an encouraging example of collaboration between local communities, civil society organisations and small internet service providers to close the digital divide. Read more. [Available in Portuguese]

- Participants of the Amazon Community Networks School had their first face-to-face meeting. They shared their struggles and achievements during the 10th Pan-Amazonian Social Forum, held in Brazil. Read more. [Available in Portuguese]

- Meanwhile, in Nigeria, participants are getting ready for the second annual edition of the Nigerian School of Community Networks, a vehicle to help communities strengthen skills to design, deploy and manage local networks to meet local needs.

- Around 35 communities are joining the national community networks schools, the first of their kind, taking place in five countries: Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. Read more. [Available in English, Portuguese and Spanish]

Gendered experiences

- A case for community networks: Shafali Jain invites us to reflect on the existing approach to the digital divide based on a binary classification of internet use by only considering whether someone is or is not a user. We must rethink how networks are built, owned, operated and utilised, and empowering local communities is key. Read more.

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Enabling policy and regulation

- Community networks dominated the corridors of conversation on affordable access during the 2022 Africa Internet Governance Forum, which took place in Lilongwe, Malawi from 19 to 21 July. This piece from KICTANet explains why and brings recommendations for the future. Read more.

- While Malawi does not yet have a policy and regulatory framework for community networks, CYD in partnership with Mzuzu University has had several advocacy deliberations with the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA). Read more.

- In Latin America, AlterMundi has been assisting communities who want to seek support through the Roberto Arias Programme, which can finance the costs of a community network project. Find out more about their "Semillero de redes comunitarias" by checking the recording available here. [Available in Spanish]

Publications, research and toolkits

- Connect Humanity is running a survey on digital equity, aiming to map the digital divide from a civil society perspective and shape how resources to end it should flow. Read more.

- Rhizomatica's guide for facilitators in training processes on how to build a high frequency (HF) radio station powered by solar energy is available in three languages: English, Spanish and Portuguese.

- This wiki around solar energy systems provides good resources for community networks builders working with this alternative source of power. Read more.

Events

- On 29 August, the Community Network Xchange Asia Pacific will host the third of a series of five monthly online events. Read more.

- From 12 to 14 September, the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF) will take place in hybrid format, online and in Singapore, under the theme "People at the Centre: Envisioning a community-led internet that is inclusive, sustainable and trusted". Read more.

- The 15th edition of the Latin American and Caribbean Internet Governance Forum (LACIGF15) will be held online between 24 and 26 October. Read more. [Available in Spanish]

- The BattleMesh event is going live again for its 14th edition, back to an on-site event in Rome from 19 to 22 September. It aims to bring together people from across the world to test the performance of different routing protocols for networks. Read more.

Funding opportunities

- The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) will support a limited number of eligible candidates from developing countries to participate in the 17th annual meeting happening in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 28 November

until 2 December. Candidates can submit travel support requests until 31 August 2022. Read more.

- The Internet Society has announced its BOLT Grant Program, seeking to advance internet development, improve access and connectivity around the world and promote responsible innovation. Applications are open until 2 September for 12-month projects. Read more.

How can training activities on community networks be collectively built and locally contextualised?

Discover the learnings shared in the guide "Technological autonomy as a constellation of experiences". The guide proposes the collective design of training programmes for community networks with a meaningful metaphor: the possibility of looking at the stars and seeing the greatness of the Universe that surrounds us. When we turn our gaze to the starry sky, we can build relevant and contextualised training programmes based on diverse experiences and knowledge from communities around the world. The guide also proposes the Participatory Action Research approach and offers a deep dive into its five phases: scenario building, seeing, thinking, acting and evaluating. Find out more! [Available in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese]

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.