

Community networks and local access – Newsletter 52

October 2022

A report featuring 11 case studies across 10 countries brings evidence that community-led initiatives are needed to bridge the digital divide. In Mexico, an Indigenous cooperative became the country's first virtual, social and community mobile operator. In Kenya, women discuss equitable participation in the digital ecosystem, while in Indonesia, people participating in an ICT camp share information about digital transformation for and from remote villages and locations.

Far beyond connectivity solutions, the experiences of multiple community networks around the world are flourishing and proving that technologies and digital communications can be mobilised by people to defend their own needs and rights.

Welcome to the 52nd monthly round-up of developments impacting your local access networks and community-based initiatives.



Participants in the Amazon Community Networks School in Brazil. Photo: Débora Prado.

Community networks news and stories

Wiki Katat, the first virtual, social and community mobile operator in Mexico: the Indigenous cooperative Tosepan Titataniske launched a new mobile virtual network operator providing telephone and internet services from Puebla to the whole country. The initiative also offers content in native languages. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish]

A report featuring 11 case studies across 10 countries brings evidence that

community-led initiatives are needed to bridge the digital divide. Discover why in this piece about the report's launch and the inspiring experiences of two community networks, B4RN (UK) and Zenzeleni (South Africa). [Read more](#).

Collective and individual self-determination concerning internet access and infrastructure is essential to ensure sustainable connectivity and bridge the digital divide. This lesson came from three experiences highlighted by 48percent.org. Find out more about them: a [computer network in Kenya](#), [AlterMundi community network projects in Argentina](#) and a [network of Wi-Fi hotspots in South Africa](#).

In Brazil, the participants in the Amazon Community Networks School took a deep dive on solar power and high frequency radio technologies during a face-to-face workshop gathering representatives from seven communities from the region. [Read more](#) and explore beautiful images in photos and video. [Available in Portuguese]

In Colombia, within the framework of the implementation of the Poliniza Network in the city of La Macarena, various activities have been carried out to strengthen local and circular economies. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish]

AlterMundi reports that the network Molinos Comunitaria is now connected to ARSAT, the national fibre network in Argentina. This link provides access to fast connectivity to two community networks and should reach a third one soon. [Read more](#)

APC recently launched its annual report, featuring strategies and actions adopted to work towards an important goal: to create the conditions for people affected by exclusion, discrimination and inequality to be able to meaningfully use and shape the internet and digital technologies to meet their specific needs. [Read more](#).

Gendered experiences

Cultivating a Community Network in the Ribeirão Grande/Terra Seca Quilombo: watch this inspiring video about a community network in Brazil and discover how connectivity is supporting an organisation of women farmers in the marketing of their agro-ecological products. [Read more](#). More information about the project is also available [here](#) and [here](#).

In Kenya, KICTANet hosted a discussion on “Bridging the Gender Digital Divide at the Grassroots Through Last Mile Connectivity”, focusing on unpacking the multi-layered issues around equitable participation of women in the digital ecosystem and on how community networks can help to bridge this gap. [Read more](#).

Enabling policy and regulation

The 2021-2022 edition of Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) will be officially launching at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) next month, but several full-length reports are already available in a special Sneak Peek. The

theme of this year's edition is "Digital futures for a post-pandemic world", and it includes a thematic report about "Advocacy for community-led connectivity access in the global South", which is featured in the Sneak Peek. [Read more](#)

Publications, research and toolkits

Masts and towers are vital for the effective functioning of many community networks. Bamboo gives people the chance to use locally available resources to build this critical infrastructure. But how is it done? This was the focus of an online dialogue held on 25 October. [Read more](#).

This podcast discusses the Mapeo app, a peer-to-peer technology developed to support the efforts of Indigenous communities in their struggles for environmental and social justice. [Read more](#).

The textbook "Introduction to Development Engineering" demonstrates how to innovate for low-resource communities using case studies in key sectors. [Read more](#).

The book "Argentina en Internet" is made up of 35 chapters representing different views and analysis from the country. One of them is dedicated to the theme of community networks. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish]

Events

The 2022 edition of the Community Network Xchange (CNX) Asia Pacific will hold its fifth and final session on 29 October. Stories from four community-led initiatives in India will be in the spotlight. [Read more](#).

The 2022 IEEE Connecting the Unconnected Summit will happen from 1 to 3 November 2022. The event will be online and free, featuring discussions on the digital divide. The winners of the 2022 CTU Challenge will also be announced during the event. [Read more](#).

On 3 and 4 November, the workshop on "Community Networks and the Female Legal Practitioner" will focus on how to foster policy advocacy in support of community networks. The event is happening in Kenya. [Read more](#).

The 9th LatAm Spectrum Management Conference will take place in a hybrid format on 6-7 December 2022, online and in Bogotá, Colombia. Registration is now open. [Read more](#).

As part of the "Online Congress of Popular Education and Free Technologies", a session on 19 October gathered people from different countries to talk about the experiences of [National Community Networks Schools](#) and the Techio Comunitario. [See the recordings to learn more](#).

In Indonesia, from 21 to 25 October, the [Rural ICT Camp 2022](#) focused on the community networks movement in the country and discussed the digital transformation needed to foster the inclusion of remote places. [Common Room's YouTube channel](#) gathered the recordings [Available in Bahasa], including this session about community network developments in the global

South. [Read more](#). [Available in English]

Why community networks?

Community networks can have some advantages over traditional large-scale commercial networks, according to the report "Bottom-up Connectivity Strategies: Community-led small-scale telecommunication infrastructure networks in the global South". They include:

- More local control over how the network is used and the content that is provided over the network.
- Greater potential for attention to the needs of marginalised people and the specific populations of rural communities, including women and older people.
- Lower costs and retention of more funds within the community.
- Increased potential to foster a sense of agency and empowerment among users and those involved in the network.

This newsletter is part of the Local Networks (LocNet) initiative, a collective effort led by APC and Rhizomatica in partnership with people and organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, aiming to directly support community networks and to contribute to an enabling ecosystem for their emergence and growth. The newsletter was supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in 2017/2018 and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) from 2019 to 2022.

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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 at localaccess.newsletter@apc.org.

October 2022. Association for Progressive Communications (APC).