Community networks newsletter: What does "meaningful connectivity" mean from community-centred perspectives?

By APCNews -- 30 May 2024 | Updated 10 June 2024

Photo: Débora Prado

In this issue we highlight reports from the latest special edition of Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) focusing on the need of meaningful community-centred connectivity initiatives to bridge the digital divides. In it, we can find an important reflection: when unpacking the term "meaningful" within a community-centred perspective – going beyond technologies– it is important to look at several elements such as cultural practice and political relevance, community processes, gender empowerment, agency and livelihoods. It is through the collective contribution of communities that a community communication activity or digital pathway is designed for their future.

Welcome to the 69th monthly round-up of developments impacting your local access networks and community-based initiatives.

Routing for Communities podcast

- Around 12,000 villages in Indonesia don't have internet access – and more than half of them still don't have adequate source of electricity. In the sixth episode of the Routing for Communities podcast, we meet the Common Room Networks Foundation and its co-founder Gustaff Iskandar to find out more about the community network in Ciptagelar Traditional Village, in West Java. Listen now.

- In this podcast, we invite you on a journey to discover community-led experiences and listen to the life stories of those connecting themselves while defending the fundamental rights and well-being of their communities. The entire season is available on the podcast page, and also on Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

Community networks news and stories

- "Community network development for marginalised communities requires a long-term process." Find out more about Common Room's work in this field in Indonesia in a recent interview with its co-founder Gustaff Iskandar. Read more.

- Based in the Philippines, the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia (ISEA) is fostering community networks in the Asia region, which they consider an important segment of social enterprise. Read more.

- Weaving dreams, sharing voices and growing together: this article collates inspiring pictures and a sharp summary of Bootcamp 2024 — a training programme for management of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and networks by Indigenous and rural communities in Latin America. Read more. [Available in Spanish.]

- The Internet Society Foundation launched a series of audio episodes to showcase the impact of the internet on communities worldwide. Named BOLT Amplify, it brings the voices of grantees – such as Kenya Education Network (KENET), Instituto Nupef, Influx, and Media Justice, exploring their journeys and visions for a future where everyone is connected. Read more.

- Community networks and other community-led initiatives across Africa are playing an important role in connecting underserved rural areas. However, as highlighted in a recent panel discussion hosted by KICTANet, they still face many challenges that need to be addressed to truly promote digital inclusion. Read more.

- Exploring collective action and digital inclusion: in another piece, KICTANet comments on its participation at the APC Community Gathering in Thailand, bringing an important highlight: true digital inclusion goes beyond mere access to the internet. Read more.

Gendered experiences

- Bridging the digital gender gap: this article explores how digital divides have evolved beyond mere physical access to technology and now encompass layers of inequality, affecting women more intensely. Read more.

- In the article "Feminist Techjoy: A tale of empowerment and cyber solidarity", BOSCO Uganda unfolds a remarkable journey of women in the heart of Northern Uganda. Read more.

Enabling policy and regulation

- From Colombia, Colnodo organisation recently become an official member of the Inter-American Telecommunications Commission (CITEL). The organisation advocates a more affordable access to spectrum for the creation and development of community networks in the country. [Available in Spanish.]

- What is digital divide? Despite there being no single definition, there are effective ways to address it. One solution offered by the Internet Society is building community networks and fostering the conditions for them to thrive. Read more.

Publications, research and toolkits

- The new edition of GISWatch was launched in May, on the theme of "Global Information Society Watch 2024 special edition: WSIS+20: Reimagining horizons of dignity, equity and justice for our digital future". Read more.

- What does "meaningful connectivity" actually mean? Drawing on the work of the Local Networks (LocNet) initiative, this report reflects on some of the current definitions of "meaningful connectivity" or "meaningful access", advocating a community-centred perspective. Read more.

- Innovative financing mechanisms to bridge the digital divide. Given that traditional strategies are failing to close digital gaps in the global South, this report reflects on community-centred connectivity solutions that are

gaining traction to close these gaps. It also points out the critical role of new and innovative financing mechanisms in their support. Read more.

Events

- Call for proposals for the 13th edition of RightsCon, which takes place in February 2025, is open until 7 June 2024. Read more.

- On 29 and 30 April 2024, the NETmundial+10 meeting in Brazil became an important space to ensure that civil society's priorities and perspectives were represented in key internet policy and governance processes. Read its final statement: Strengthening internet governance and digital policy processes. You can also check out some highlights in this piece from KICTANet.

Funding opportunities

- The global 2024 IEEE Connecting the Unconnected Challenge is inviting submission of unique solutions to bridge the digital divide. Deadline is 5 June 2024. Read More.

- The Digital Infrastructure Insights Fund is a global multi-funder initiative for academics and practitioners to better understand how open digital infrastructure is built and deployed. This open call runs till 2 June 2024. Read more.

Community networks learning repository

This repository is a collective online space to store and exchange resources that can be useful in training processes focused on materials made for and by community networks.

In the repository, you can find out more about Techio Comunitario, a training programme for the management of ICT networks, aimed at people from Indigenous and rural communities in Latin America. In addition to providing technical knowledge for the installation, operation and maintenance of communication projects, it seeks to generate a network of people who support each other to strengthen the path towards technological autonomy in their territories.

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 Africa, Asia and

Latin America and the Caribbean. You can read more about the initiative *here, here,* *and* *here.*

Previous editions of this newsletter are available *here.*

Invite others to subscribe to this monthly newsletter here!

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***.*