

Local Access: How communities are weaving connectivity to defend the environment and their right



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To date, around 2.9 billion people – 37% of the world’s population – have never used the internet. The current economic and regulatory models have not been able to overcome barriers to digital inclusion, exacerbating inequalities. But a number of other models, based on a bottom-up approach, are showing that overcoming these barriers is not only possible, but capable of shaping connectivity and communications technologies in support of other missing fundamental rights.

This is the case in the Niger Delta, Nigeria’s main oil hub, where a groundbreaking project showcases how communities are using low-cost, free technologies to monitor air pollution and stand up to hold the responsible accountable, defending their environments and livelihoods. Welcome to the 51st monthly round-up of developments impacting your local access networks and community-based initiatives.

Community networks news and stories

- Seeding change: Communities mobilise open data to challenge oil industry pollution in Nigeria. [Read more.](#)
- Community Networks Schools and Mamaila Community Network won [this year’s Artful Integrators Award](#). The award is intended to recognise outstanding achievement in the area of participatory design of information and communications technologies. [Read more.](#) [Available in English and Spanish]
- The [national schools](#) are a collective capacity-building and strengthening effort for the creation, development and consolidation of community networks. Around 35 communities are engaged in the national community networks

schools, the first of their kind, taking place in five countries: Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. [Read more](#).

- In Brazil, the participants of the [Amazon Community Networks School](#) took a deep dive on community radio during a workshop held in the Solimões village. [Read more](#). You can also watch [this video](#) to get an overview of the school.
- In Nigeria, the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) just convened the second iteration of the Nigerian School of Community Networks. To find out more, check out the article “All You Need to Know About Nigerian School of Community Networks”. [Read more](#).
- From India, the article “Learning from COWs: Community Owned Wifi-Mesh” brings the author’s reflections about their practice of facilitating spaces with communities. [Read more](#).
- To learn more from community-led initiatives in Asia, look into the monthly sessions held by this year’s Community Network Xchange Asia Pacific. On 29 September, the [online event showcased three experiences](#) connecting rural farmers and indigenous communities from India, Pakistan and Malaysia. On 29 August, the [spotlight was on the Kapal Community Radio and Common Room Networks in Indonesia and the Suusamy Community Network](#) in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan. [Read more](#).

Gendered experiences

- How can reimagining server ownership and management through a feminist lens help break the existing monopoly? Find out the reflections gathered in the article “A ‘Feminist’ Server to Help People Own Their Own Data”. [Read more](#).
- Towards a new feminist principle of the internet on the environment: two publications, now available in English, present a diverse collection of thoughts and creativity about the politics of shared responsibility for people and the Earth. [Read more](#).

Enabling policy and regulation

- A growing number of community networks are connecting those who have historically been unserved or underserved by traditional internet service providers. The new "[Financing mechanisms for locally owned internet infrastructure](#)" report analyses the operating models and financing mechanisms that can support the success of community connectivity providers, featuring 11 cases studies from different countries and important recommendations. [Read more](#).
- On 21 September, the online event “Using Community Networks to Bridge the Access Gap in Francophone Africa” discussed what are these community-led solutions and why we need them to build a holistic approach to digital inclusion. Recordings are available [here](#). [Available in English and French]

Publications, research and toolkits

- New research from CGI.br and NIC.br outlines a profile of community networks in Brazil. The publication reveals that four out of five community networks interviewed are present in places occupied by traditional peoples such as

indigenous people. [Read more](#). [Available in Portuguese]

- The BattleMesh event just happened from 19 to 22 September in Rome, gathering people from across the world to test the performance of different routing protocols for networks. Their recordings are available for those interested in the topic. [Read more](#).
- Discover Terrastories, an open source tool for place-based storytelling. [Read more](#).

Events

- “[Situating Network Infrastructures with People, Practices, and Beyond: A Community Building Workshop](#)” aims to foster a global community of researchers and practitioners with technical and social science expertise in computer networks. To participate, it is necessary to [fill out this form](#) by 30 September. For participants who need financial support to attend the workshop, applications can be accessed [here](#).
- Registrations are open for the Online Congress of Popular Education and Free Technologies. The enrolment is free and open until 10 October. The congress will take place between 17 and 21 October 2022. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish]
- 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 25th edition of the Workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean (WALC) will take place from 7 to 11 November in a hybrid modality, with five face-to-face tracks and three online tracks. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish]

Funding opportunities

- The Open Firmware Fund is designed to promote open innovation in service of the public interest. This is achieved by way of microgrants for independent developers of free and open source hardware and software. Their next deadline is soon: 1 October. [Read more](#).

Why community networks?

Although there is no common definition, initiatives are usually called “community networks” because local communities are involved in some way in deploying, owning and operating the physical infrastructure that supports voice or internet connectivity. They have been operating in very different places and contexts – and they have developed ways of serving the community in terms of technology (infrastructure), pricing and people’s involvement in a way that works for the local conditions. To learn more about this field and discover concrete experiences on the ground, check out the article “Five Community-Led Internet Projects That Are Closing the Digital Divide” by Kira Allmann. [Read 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](#).