

Celebrating groundbreaking achievements led by communities

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By APCNews

While the future brings many concerns about human rights and the environmental impact of digital networks, we also celebrate noteworthy community-led initiatives. They show us how networks can be built recognising the protagonism and autonomy of the diverse people from communities and in support of a worthwhile future. This is the case of Wiki Katat, the first virtual mobile operator headed by an Indigenous community in Mexico, and the many community networks that continued flourishing in Argentina during the challenging times of the pandemic.

Welcome to the 55th monthly round-up of developments impacting your local access networks and community-based initiatives.

Community networks news and stories

- In Mexico, Wiki Katat became the first virtual mobile operator headed by a rural and Indigenous community. It provides both internet services and mobile telephony – not for profit, but as a path to strengthen linguistic autonomy and local content production. [Read more](#). [Also available in [Spanish](#).]
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Argentina saw many community networks flourishing and upholding the country to implement unprecedented policies. The key to this was the awareness of where the

- most valuable knowledge is: within the communities. Find out more through the journey of AlterMundi. [Read more](#). [Also available in [Spanish](#).]
- To find out more about the work of AlterMundi, also check out the inspiring pieces on their [website](#), such as the ones [here](#) and [here](#) documenting visits to the rural communities cultivating networks and gathering beautiful videos, photos and words. [Available in Spanish.]
 - In South Africa, 17 students from seven communities across the country have completed a year-long training with the first ever national School of Community Networks. Follow the [Zenzeleni School of Community Networks](#) on Twitter for updates and discover pictures.
 - The national schools are a collective capacity-building effort around community networks that took place in five countries: Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. This video from the Amazon Community Networks School in Brazil shares experiences and hopes. [Read more](#). [Available in Portuguese.]
 - Also in Brazil, Instituto Nupef started a project focusing on community networks and communications strategies with quilombola communities. Find out more on their [blog](#) and in this [video](#) about it. [Available in Portuguese.]
 - Community networks from the global South are exchanging knowledge and experiences. From Argentina, AlterMundi [documented a meeting](#) with African organisations to discuss enabling policy and regulation [available in Spanish], while from Brazil, Coolab [shared an overview](#) of a collaboration with Janatsu from India, on technical aspects [available in Portuguese].
 - Overcoming disability with connectivity: Fantsuam Foundation acted as the agent of social, economic and cultural inclusion for people with disabilities from northern Nigeria in a project supported by 48percent.org. [Read more](#).

Gendered experiences

- This article by Harira Abdulrahman Wakili from CITAD looks at the context of women working within community networks in Nigeria, which reflects localised situations with strong cultural influences on gender roles as well as societal bias around technology. [Read more](#).
- Why is it imperative to actively involve women in community network initiatives? Here is a reflection by Marceline Keya from Kenya. [Read more](#).
- From Asia, with the aim to technologically empower women and place them in leadership roles, DEF started the Women Wireless Engineers (WWE) initiative in 2022 in five locations of rural India. Read more [about the project](#) and discover pictures [here](#) and [here](#).

- From Latin America, on 9 and 10 February a women's meeting held in Córdoba, Argentina, hosted a discussion on community networks and the importance of empowering women. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish.]

Enabling policy and regulation

- Towards Efficient and Effective Universal Service and Access Funds in Africa: discover four topics that can make USAFs more efficient in Africa through this contribution by Josephine Miliza from KICTANet. [Read more](#).
- In Colombia, Colnodo celebrated the visit of national government representatives, including the country's president, to the [Jxa'h Wejxia Casil Community Network](#), an initiative that has been accompanied by the organisation since its inception. This is an important step towards the recognition of community networks' contributions to connectivity in remote rural areas. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish.]
- In November of last year, the Community Networks Forum was held in Colombia, which resulted in a set of recommendations for the Colombia Development Plan. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish.]

Publications, research and toolkits

- The final output report of the Internet Governance Forum 2022 Policy Network on Meaningful Access is now available, and includes numerous references to the contributions made by community networks. [Read more](#).
- ARTICLE 19 has produced a guide for those who are curious about engaging in the standardisation of internet infrastructure, but might not be sure about how, where and which issues are up for discussion. [Read more](#).
- The AU-EU D4D Hub launched an online platform aimed at facilitating exchanges of experiences and knowledge between African and European digital actors. Called D4D Access, the platform covers a wide range of topics and contains many useful resources. [Read more](#).

Events

- The Local Networks initiative, led by APC and Rhizomatica, will launch an online learning repository focused on community networks in March. The idea is to build a collective space to store and exchange resources that can be useful in training processes. The launch will happen in two events: one [hybrid event \[in Spanish\] in Mexico City on 1 March](#), which will be streamed by REDES A.C. [here](#), and an online dialogue on 23 March [in English and Portuguese]. More information coming soon on [APC's Twitter](#).
- The annual World Summit on the Information Society Forum is scheduled to be held from 13 to 17 March 2023 at the ITU Headquarters in Geneva, with the support of remote participation. [Read more](#).

- This video share the highlights from the “BootCamp Colombia 2022”, a training programme aimed at people who are part of communication and telecommunications projects in Indigenous communities in Latin America. [Read more](#). [Available in Spanish.]

Funding opportunities

- The Internet Society just announced two funding programmes to support communities around the world in gaining greater access to the internet and ensuring its security and resiliency: [Connecting the Unconnected](#) and [Sustainable Technical Communities](#). Applications to both programmes will be accepted on a rolling basis. [Read more](#).
- The Internet Freedom Fund is the Open Technology Fund's primary way to support projects and people working on open and accessible technology-focused projects that promote human rights, internet freedom and open societies. It accepts applications on a rolling basis. [Read more](#).

Why should different stakeholders support community networks?

The answer to the question is given by Anriette Esterhuysen in the preface of the publication "[Community Networks: Towards Sustainable Funding Models](#)":

"The first: growth of connectivity through traditional models, such as mobile networks, is slowing down, in spite of increased coverage. The second: community networks work! And they work well, achieving more than just providing access to the internet. They build skills, partnerships, leadership, and local ownership. They give people a sense of agency and control by approaching access to the internet and telephony in a way that responds to local needs and opportunities."

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](#).