Community networks newsletter: New podcast traces community connectivity around the world

By APCNews

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We are happy to announce the launch of the Routing for Communities podcast on 1 June. With 12 episodes, this podcast will be a journey to listen to the life stories of those connecting themselves while defending the fundamental rights and well-being of their communities in remote, rural and urban areas across the globe. In this edition, we invite you to listen to the podcast teaser and subscribe to get the first two episodes as soon as they are released.

Welcome to the 58th monthly round-up of developments impacting your local access networks and community-based initiatives.

Community networks news and stories

- Coming soon: The Routing for Communities podcast will be launched on 1 June. With two new episodes per month, it's 12-episode season will take us on a journey to meet community-led experiences overcoming challenges of digital inclusion in remote, rural and urban areas across the globe. Check out this teaser to find out more and subscribe now to access the episodes as soon as they are released.

- Drawing on the lessons and experiences from the Mamaila Community Network, traditional leaders, local entrepreneurs, community members and academics discussed the role of community-led connectivity as complementary solutions to commercial internet service providers in bridging the digital divide

in underserved areas such as Sekgosese, in South Africa. [Read more](#).

- What would it mean to be able to create, build and maintain technologies that listen to those that use them? Find out more in this thoughtful article from May First on autonomous technology. [Read more](#).

- Innovation is not for free: This reflection from The Engine Room brings key questions for those aiming to build a worthwhile future: How much will digital tech cost us in the long run, both in a financial and philosophical sense? What are the unintended environmental, social and political consequences of such systems going mainstream? How is this division entrenching historical inequalities? [Read more](#).

Gendered experiences

- Women, gender-diverse and queer people in community networks have been nurturing each other through a technology channelled through many years: the art of togetherness. By gathering in circles, they remind us that crafting relationships and challenging imbalances is as vital as crafting technologies. Find out more in this inspiring video made in a circle held by women involved with community networks from Latin America and the Caribbean. [Read more](#).

- And this inspiring video comes from the heart of rural São Paulo state in Brazil, where the women from the Portal Sem Porteiras community network hold spaces for community members to exchange knowledge and share affection. [Read more](#).

Enabling policy and regulation

- From Argentina, [AlterMundi celebrates](#) the first-ever community networks-focused Universal Service and Access Fund grants in the country. As part of the [Roberto Arias programme](#), the country's regulatory authority [ENACOM announced on 9 May](#) the approval of applications made by the José de la Quintana and Los Molinos community networks to improve and extend their initiatives. This unprecedented event could mark the beginning of a series of similar grants, as many other community networks bridging the digital divide in Argentina also made similar applications.

- AlterMundi has been supporting several communities in this process through their [Semillero or "Seedbed" project](#), an initiative to foster the exchange of knowledge and support the [community networks](#) to deal with state bureaucracy and apply to the Roberto Arias programme. Recently, the civil association Construyendo Dignidad presented its community network. [Read more](#).

- How can governments, international organisations, private companies and civil society groups work together to close the digital divide while improving access skills and meaningful connectivity, leaving no one behind? Check out the [APC network interventions](#) at the Global Digital Compact's deep dive session on digital inclusion and connectivity and this [interview with Julián Casasbuenas](#) from Colnodo (Colombia).

- Spectrum for mobile communications: This piece from KICTANet explains the importance of spectrum regulation and takes a deep dive into the perspectives

for underserved areas in Kenya. [Read more](#).

Publications, research and toolkits

- These five manuals are the result of communities of practice that brought together community network practitioners from diverse countries. They aim to support community networks on key issues such as solar energy, circular economies, bamboo infrastructure and more. [Read more](#).

- APC has launched a new series of interviews with members who contributed to their guide on the circular economy of digital devices, this time about their vision for the future of these economies. The first piece brings a conversation with CITAD, from Nigeria. [Read more](#).

Events

- This year's edition of RightsCon is happening soon in Costa Rica, from 5 to 8 June. The event's programme schedule is now available for those who have registered. [Read more](#). You can also find information about the APC network at RightsCon 2023 [here](#).

- The call for session proposals for the Youth Internet Governance Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean (YouthLACIGF) 2023 is now open and the deadline for submissions is 9 June. [Read more](#).

- A workshop set up by the ISOC Alumni Network on 28 May will delve into the fascinating world of community networks and their role in bridging the digital divide. [Read more](#).

- From 7 to 10 September, Brazil will host a new edition of CoolabCamp, this time in collaboration with [DWeb](#). The theme is "Decentralising is decolonising". [Read more](#).

- From 22 to 24 May, Indigenous leaders joined together to discuss alternatives for connecting their communities to fast, affordable and sustainable internet access, during the [Indigenous Connectivity Summit 2023](#). The recordings are available [here](#).

Funding opportunities

- The call for proposals for the Fund for Internet Strengthening in Latin America and the Caribbean (FRIDA) is open until 31 May. Submit your proposal on their focus areas: 1) internet stability and security, 2) access and connectivity and 3) open and free internet. [Read more](#).

- The 2023 Connecting the Unconnected Challenge has now been launched, and is accepting submissions until 3 July. This is a global competition that solicits solutions from start-ups, grassroots organisations, universities or anyone else that is working to bridge the digital divide in innovative ways. [Read more](#).

- The Internet Society Foundation announced a new round of grant funding to support digital inclusion through the Strengthening Communities, Improving Lives and Livelihoods (SCILLS) programme, which aims to promote economic inclusion and increase educational opportunities by supporting individuals and communities to more knowledgeably and skillfully use the internet. Currently operating in Bangladesh, Colombia and Senegal, the SCILLS programme is now

expanding to Brazil, Ghana and Indonesia. The deadline for applications is 31 May. [Read more](#).

- The Internet Society Foundation's research grant programme is also accepting proposals until 31 May. The programme supports global research collaborations that advance understanding of the internet and its value for all. [Read more](#).

Why should different stakeholders support community-led approaches to digital inclusion?

"When it comes to digital inclusion and connectivity, the how and why are fundamental. Including marginalised people in the digital sphere without the necessary skills and viable participation mechanisms would do more harm than good. The 'digital inclusion' of communities for the sole purpose of feeding into market logics exacerbates inequality, oppression and inequity, adding to the environmental crisis as consumption increases."

The statement above was made by Valeria Betancourt on behalf of APC recently, during the Global Digital Compact (GDC) deep-dive session on digital inclusion and connectivity. Without consideration of local realities and needs, simply "connecting everyone" may have adverse effects rather than positive ones oriented to ensure social, environmental and gender justice.

[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](#).