ITU Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)

**'Digital transformation for a sustainable and equitable digital future:
Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in Africa"**

organized by the International Telecommunication Union in collaboration with the
Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia

**3-5 October 2023
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Please note that submitted information will be presented during the RDF-AFR P2C Roundtables and
it will also be reflected on the pledging platform of the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition.

CONTRIBUTION FORM

Once completed please send to: itu-ro-africa@itu.int **by 15 September 2023**

ORGANIZATION: The Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

FOCAL POINT:

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TITLE: Enabling Meaningful Access through Complementary Access Networks

DESCRIPTION OF ACTION: [Provide a brief description up to 500 words]

Complementary access networks are a key solution to bridging the digital divide. In these networks communities themselves take charge of installing, operating, and managing the networks. Despite their potential, these networks face human capacity challenges, limited access to capital, and regulatory hurdles. Training and capacity-building programmes are needed to enable communities to acquire essential technical, organizational, and administrative skills. In addition, enabling policies and regulations are needed that will help them to flourish.

This submission supports WTDC-22 Resolution 37 (Rev. Kigali, 2022), which, among other things, instructs the Director of the BDT to support Member States, where requested, in developing policy and regulatory frameworks that promote complementary access networks as solutions to bridge the digital divide. The key components of this supportive framework are detailed in APC's submission to GSR-2021[1], encompassing licensing frameworks to facilitate complementary access networks and allocation of funds through Universal Service Funds (USFs) to facilitate the establishment of networks in underserved communities.

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[1] **Expanding the telecommunications operators ecosystem: Policy and regulatory guidelines to enable local operators**
https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/expanding-telecommunications-operators-ecosystem-policy-and-regulatory-guidelines-enable-local

Successful USF support for complementary access networks can be seen in Argentina where Universal Service Fund (USF) mechanisms not only provide financial support to assist in establishing connectivity providers in underserved communities[2] but also effectively establish an incentive framework for communities to apply for operator licenses to become recognised members of the regulatory ecosystem. Similarly, in Kenya, the national regulatory authority recently introduced a community network operator's license framework. As part of Kenya's USF strategy for 2022-2026, there is a focus on exploring financing mechanisms to support these networks and other types of complementary connectivity providers.[3]

This submission also supports WTDC Resolution 11 (Rev. Kigali, 2022), with a focus on digital services in rural, isolated, and underserved areas. Specifically, implementing "capacity-building programmes to support the expansion and maintenance of telecommunication networks in these areas". APC proposes the creation of a capacity-building programme to create and sustain locally-managed telecommunications projects in underserved and rural communities in Africa. APC and partners have extensive experience in the development of training programmes whose curricula and pedagogical design are anchored in community communications needs and ways of life. These initiatives were developed in Mexico using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodologies.[4] This later became the Programme for the Training of ICT Network Managers in Indigenous and Rural Communities in Latin America that is referred to in this document.

This methodology has been the basis for the National Schools of Community Networks (NSCNs) implemented by APC and partners since April 2020 in Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.[5] This initiative is part of the Local Access Networks initiative, coordinated by APC and Rhizomatica Communications and supported by the UK's Digital Access Programme (DAP) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. This programme will join the series of actions that are being developed for remote or low-income areas in the region, both by the ITU and civil society organizations and regulators. We propose that the program be promoted by the Africa Office and the Digital Inclusion Office of BDT of the ITU, in collaboration with governments and civil society organizations in the region.

COUNTRIES in FOCUS: [Name countries to be impacted by this action]

Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Malawi, DRC

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[2] https://enacom.gob.ar/multimedia/noticias/archivos/202106/archivo_20210625022117_4017.pdf
[3] https://www.ca.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Draft-USF-Strategic-Plan-2022-2026-.pdf
[4] https://techiocomunitario.org/en/

[5]

https://www.apc.org/en/blog/meet-national-schools-empowering-grassroots-communities-bridge-digital-divide

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YEARS of IMPLEMENTATION: [Tick the relevant boxes or delete the irrelevant items]

■ 2023

■ 2024

■ 2025

RELEVANT ITU REGIONAL INITIATIVE: [Tick the relevant boxes or delete the irrelevant items]

■ AFR1: Supporting digital transformation to usher in a rapid transition to a digital economy while accelerating innovation in Africa

■ AFR2: Implementation and expansion of broadband infrastructures, connectivity and emerging technologies

☐ AFR3: Building trust, safety and security in the use of telecommunications/ICTs and protection of personal data

☐ AFR4: Fostering emerging technologies and innovation ecosystems

Please find more information on the ITU Regional Initiatives 2023-2025, as defined by WTDC-22, here.

RELATED ITU-D PRIORITIES AS DEFINED BY THE ITU WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE 2022

■ Affordable connectivity

■ Digital transformation

■ Enabling policy and regulatory environment

☐ Resource mobilization and international cooperation

☐ Inclusive and secure telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development

Please find more information on the ITU-D Priorities, as defined by WTDC-22, here.

RELATED ITU PRIORITIES AS DEFINED BY ITU PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE 2022

☐ Spectrum use for space and terrestrial services

☐ International telecommunication numbering resources

■ Inclusive and secure telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and services

■ Digital applications

■ Enabling environment

Please find more information on the ITU Priorities, as defined by PP-22, here

RELATED WSIS ACTION LINE: [Tick the relevant boxes or delete the irrelevant items]

- ■ C1: The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development
- ■ C2: Information and communication infrastructure
- ■ C3: Access to information and knowledge
- ■ C4: Capacity building
- ☐ C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- ■ C6: Enabling environment
- ☐ C7: ICT applications
- ☐ C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- ☐ C9: Media
- ☐ C10: Ethical dimensions the Information Society
- ☐ C11: International and regional cooperation

RELATED SDG: [Tick the relevant boxes or delete the irrelevant items]

- ☐ SDG 1: No Poverty
- ☐ SDG 2: Zero Hunger
- ☐ SDG 3: Good Health and Well- being
- ☐ SDG 4: Quality Education
- ■ SDG 5: Gender Equality
- ☐ SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- ☐ SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- ■ SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- ■ SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- ■ SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- ☐ SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- ■ SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- ☐ SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- ☐ SDG 13: Climate Action
- ☐ SDG 14: Life Below Water
- ☐ SDG 15: Life on Land
- ☐ SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- ■ SDG 17: Partnerships for the SDGs