

## **IGF2021 Issue Team: Universal access and meaningful connectivity**

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Universal access has evolved over time: from the availability of a payphone in the city or district, the percentage of fixed lines, the availability of a cybercafé, the coverage of the mobile network, the availability of an adsl line, down to broadband considerations now. Evidence is clear that access to connectivity is not sufficient on its own. The IGF 2021 should reflect on connectivity in a more human-centric and holistic way that takes a broader digital equity perspective. Ensuring that all people everywhere have meaningful and sustainable access to the Internet is a priority in everyday life and Covid-19 exposes why access to the internet is a human right.

### **First, Understanding the user centric needs in terms of connectivity**

This would mean going beyond technical parameters and articulating a definition of connectivity that combines access (in terms of availability of affordable connectivity and devices), adoption and ability to use (digital skills and readiness) and uses driven by contents and applications (e.g. education, economic development, health, agriculture) and equity/diversity (e.g. gender, race, language, disability, geographic location). These factors all impact on whether access has the desired social and economic impacts to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, and to make felt differences in people's lives.

### **Second, Enabling environment to the development and sustainability of infrastructures**

There is a need to discuss and share creative approaches to policy, regulation, enabling financing solutions/options, infrastructures/content platforms, partnerships and business models that can help achieve this. Examples include community networks, use of universal service/access funds in financing access, decentralized approaches to infrastructure development, and use of emerging technologies and sustainable energy solutions.

### **Third, Promote the replicability of what works elsewhere ...**

The IGF should also examine at various levels why many of these policy solutions, which are already known and proven to be effective in some parts and countries, are not being widely replicated. It is also an important space for talking about partnerships and developing the capacity of regulators and different types of services

& contents providers to build universal and meaningful access and how different sectors and stakeholder groups can work together to create viable policy environments to advance ubiquitous and affordable Internet access while incentivizing the existence and extent of local language content, and locally relevant content.

## Topics covered by the issue and sample policy questions

As part of the call for workshop proposals, the MAG has identified the following topics inside the issue and illustrative policy questions. **Proposers are encouraged to formulate their own policy questions.** For guidance about how to formulate policy questions refer to the Manual for Workshop Proposers [[Link to be added](#)].

**Tags:** Universal access, meaningful connectivity, infrastructures, enabler of development, community-based networks, connect the unconnected, Digital inclusion, affordable and easy access, connectivity in rural areas and for marginalised communities and individuals, alternative business models to connect unconnected people, locally managed access provision, Building the capacity of regulators, Democratising internet access, Closing the gender gap, Content diversity and local content creation and diffusion, low-orbit communication satellites, economic inclusion, internet's benefits and risks in developing regions, digital economy, uptake of digital solutions, tools, and services, speeding up the global transition, Internet for all citizens, bridge digital divide, digital skills and competences, investment in human capital, reskilling and upskilling, Creating enabling policy environments, importance of robust digital ecosystems, Internet accessibility, investment in infrastructure, production of locally relevant content, next generation of communication standards, Cost-effective and transformative connectivity models, Equitable access to digital content, digital content access, national broadband strategies and using universal service funds (USAF), policy measures to support universal broadband access, broadband plans, digital agendas and strategies, Strengthening digital infrastructure, continental initiatives for the development and deployment of digital infrastructures (submarine cables, optical fiber, etc.), infrastructure-sharing, enabling the sharing of and dynamic access to underutilized spectrum.

## Samples policy questions

1. *What have been the obstacles to achieving affordable and meaningful access to the Internet in recent years, despite the significant expansion of mobile infrastructure deployed around the world, as well as other technologies such as satellite, fibre, wireless networks?*
2. *What factors should be considered when seeking to understand and tackle affordability issues, and how might improvements be made?*
3. *What principles, approaches, incentives and coordinated actions, as enabling environment, should be central to all actors involved in infrastructures development (Governments, local authorities, telco, providers, consumers associations, ...), in order to spur investment in and drive better affordability of Internet inclusive access and connectivity solutions in developing countries?*
4. *Are there particular business models in fixed and mobile broadband Internet services, that have been shown to be particularly effective at expanding affordable access to the Internet, and what are the role of the other stakeholders in bringing about this increased investment and affordable access? In particular, what are the relevant practices by local agents (local government, civil society, local providers and entrepreneurs) to advance on universalizing meaningful access at the edge?*
5. *How is the idea that Internet access should be considered a human right considered in policy development around the world?*
6. *What are the relevant regulation issues regarding broader access to spectrum in order to stimulate dissemination of affordable and quality access at the community level?*