

Africa Community Internet Program

Digitalizing the Grass Roots White Paper 1.0 Executive Summary* 2.1.2023

Remote and rural community residents across Africa creating and operating their own decentralized Internet services is a reality in a growing number of African communities once considered beyond the reach of traditional telecommunications and energy infrastructure.

This White Paper presents an evidence-based vision and Universal Service strategy for communities to sustainably operate *their own community Internet*, in cooperation with the **Africa Community Internet Program (ACIP)**, launched at IGF 2022 Ethiopia by the Africa Open Data and Internet Research Foundation and Syracuse University, with support of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and in cooperation with the African Union.

- In **February 2023**, in cooperation with the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, up to ten national governments, parliamentarians, and civil society organizations including the Internet Society, Access Now, the Association for Progressive Communication (APC) and National Registries will be invited to consider participating in Pilot Projects.
 - Regulatory and policy changes required for participation, and funding and lease financing options are identified in the White Paper for nations and communities to consider.
- At **UN IGF 2023 in Tokyo, October 8-12, 2023**, we plan to share preliminary results from trials in five or more African nations with participants there in person and online around the world, to contribute to discussions to scale the effort to empower the 37% of the planet previously beyond the reach of sustainable, affordable, community-managed Internet.
 - We invite and welcome all to join us in contributing to Africa's Grassroots Digital Transformation, potentially in cooperation with our Africa Community Internet Program (ACIP).
- The White Paper discusses technical, social, legal, regulatory, policy, market, and standards aspects of the Africa Community Internet Program, and invites all interested in contributing to join the collaborative and cooperative effort to accelerate digitalizing the African grassroots.
 - There is much to be done to achieve our goals. The Timeline, Milestones and Objectives are for:

2023

Launch Africa Community Internet Pilot Projects in underserved areas of 5-10 African Union member nations. These nations may include Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania.

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Create an Africa Community Internet inter-ministry & -parliamentary Task force, Advisory Group, and dynamic coalition alliance (**ACITAG**) in cooperation with the African Union, UN Economic Commission for Africa, interested African national governments and parliamentarians, key non-governmental organizations, and other multi-stakeholders, to advise on best practices and inclusive options.

Refine affordable finance models, including lease finance options and data cost recovery plans.

Recommend national legal, regulatory and policy changes to accelerate grassroots digitalization.

Establish education and training following a ‘train the trainer’ model, and create a self-help library of video tutorials, infographics, and other materials on a Creative Commons model for communities to translate and adapt to their own languages and needs.

2024

Expand Africa Community Internet **Pilot Projects** in the first 5-10 AU member nations to additional communities, incorporating lessons learned.

Extend Africa Community Internet **Pilot Projects** to an additional 10-15 AU member nations.

Leverage Open Data for community wealth creation at scale.

2025

Reach all interested AU member nations.

Measurably raise GDP on the Continent while progressing towards SDGs.

Demonstrate the AU as a global leader in Community Internet innovations, markets, education and training, and societal impact.

Bring to G20 a now proven at scale evidence-based global model for universal service as an inclusive community-driven sustainable development dynamic ecosystem, for worldwide adoption following African leadership.

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