What would it take to affordably connect all schools to the internet?

Globally, 29 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24 worldwide – around 346 million – are not online.a

Around 60 per cent of young people in Africa are not online, compared to 4 per cent of those in Europe.b

Connectivity varies widely across the globe and within the regions. In Africa, the proportion of schools connected ranges between as low as two (Ethiopia) to as high as 85 percent (Mauritius).c

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a 29% ≈ 346 million

b 60% 85%

c 4% 2%

Ethiopia

Mauritius
Young People’s Agenda: Promising Ideas

What would it take to affordably connect all schools to the Internet?

**The Problem**

- Globally, 39 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24 worldwide – around 346 million – are not online. Young people in Africa are the least connected. Around 60 per cent of population aged 15-24 in Africa are not online, compared with 4 per cent of those in Europe.1
- To be unconnected in a digital world is to be deprived of opportunities to learn, communicate and develop skills deemed critical for the twenty-first century workplace. Not being connected to the Internet will exacerbate inequalities, putting young people who do not have access at a major disadvantage compared with their peers in other parts of the world.2

**Discussion and Co-creation with...**

- Schools represent an ideal starting point for connecting young people – as well as whole communities.
- Even in the mobile era where handheld devices offer a viable alternative to bandwidth internet, connecting schools and utilizing them as a locus for young people’s learning and local community activities have tremendous potential, especially in remote areas. A good school connection can allow for immersive web-use that is distinct from metered experience young people might get from home via mobile devices. In particular, it can help young people fully utilize the positive dimension of internet by guiding them how to properly browse and surf the web for a myriad of opportunities encompassing education, employment, civic engagement and beyond.
- Expanding digital connectivity will accelerate economic growth. According to a World Bank estimate, increasing the percentage of the total population connected to the internet from 48 to 75 per cent would add US$2 trillion dollars per year to world GDP and help create 140 million jobs.3
- Connectivity alone is only a part of the challenge. It is also important to think about quality and use of connection and find sustainable solutions for maintenance and covering variable costs. Reliable energy access should be an integral part of planning connectivity. Connecting schools not only helps young people, it also benefits local communities. Connected schools can act as centres for the larger community. It is important to remember that, while the rise of handheld devices has diminished the ‘Cyber café’ model in which community members would use on a pay-as-you-go, the need for tele-centres and community access point has not been resolved.
- Partnering with local businesses and communities (as opposed to only providing them the infrastructure) is critical to sustainability and maintenance.
- Government leadership depends on working across siloed ministries of ICT and finance, or ICT and education.

**The Opportunity**

- What can be done?
  - Work with interested governments to develop strategies and partnerships for school connectivity.
  - Map school connectivity and share as a public good
  - Document and share proven models

- Relevant SDGs:
  - [ ]
  - [ ]
  - [ ]

- Multinational technology companies investing in connectivity for marginalized populations.
- Multinational telecommunications groups.
- Non-profit social enterprises that aim to deliver sustainable computing and broadband to all.
- A global satellite initiative.
- An association of mobile operators worldwide.
- Research and consulting firms dedicated to building ethical and sustainable digital economies.

Relevant SDGs:
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