Community Networks: Complementary Solutions, Innovations and Partnerships to Bridge the Digital Divide

Side Event: 10th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development
March 30, 10:00-11:15 GMT+7

To join, please click:
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Passcode: 785074

Organizer(s)
Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia
Association of Progressive Communications

Co-organizer(s)
Internet Society
Global Digital Inclusion Partnership
Technological Innovations for Sustainable Development Platform
Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism- Social and Community Enterprise Constituency

Registration
To register for this side event, please use: https://tinyurl.com/APFSD-CommNetSideEvent
**Background**

Connecting the unconnected has always been about enabling connectivity of remote rural areas and bridging urban-rural digital divide. In current times, connectivity has come to have a new meaning that focuses more on meaningful connectivity that unlocks the full potential of internet access. There is an urgent need, not only bridge the digital divide, but also bridge the other social divides of gender, societal class and caste. Internet access is now sought in rural areas to enhance livelihoods, create jobs, entrepreneurship and contribute to economic growth. As access is still a distant dream, there has been innovative ways by which access is created based on needs of communities, designing of frugal technologies and its usage. Internet is being customized based on the availability of devices, mobile signal and inherent needs of the communities.

Immense strides have been made in exploring and implementing alternatives that challenge the expensive, top-down approaches adopted by more mainstream models. One alternative model is community networks. The internet and its benefits are said to be meaningfully accessed when it is pervasive, affordable, of sufficient quality and speed such that individuals are enabled to access information freely, seek their well-being, express themselves, create content while also engaging in development discourses actively. These networks are based on the needs of the people and are used to add relevance and value to the community. Some community networks have focused on enabling women's economic empowerment, sharing of traditional knowledge through art, craft, music and recipes, community radios that facilitate as a medium of self-expression by women. Community Networks have emerged as an important and innovative tool for making internet connectivity be meaningfully accessed by everyone in the community.

**Scope and Expected Outcomes**

This learning session aims at cases, partnerships, and policy on community networks. At the end of session, participants should have

- An understanding and introduction to community networks with models and case studies
- Participated in a discussion on partnership perspectives from current community networks enablers like ISEA, APNIC, ISOC, ITU and APC
- An appreciation on creating an enabling environment for community networks from relevant institutions (ADB, GDIP, ITU and APC).
Programme

3 parts in 1 hours 15 minutes (*to be confirmed)

Moderator: Sylvia Cadena, Asia Pacific Network Information Center Foundation

1. (10 mins) Towards Meaningful Internet Connectivity: Inputs to Goal 9
   Carlos Rey-Moreno, Association of Progressive Communications

2. (15 mins) Complementary Solutions to Bridge the Digital Divide: Community Networks
   Gustaff Iskandar, Common Room

3. (30 mins) Multi-stakeholder discussion on an enabling environment for complementary solutions
   Rajnesh Singh, Internet Society
   Puji Pujiono*, International Telecommunication Union
   Yoonee Jeong, Asia Development Bank
   Anju Manjal, Global Digital Inclusion Partnership
   Lisa Dacanay, ISEA

4. (20 mins) Open Forum

For information, please contact
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