Connecting the Unconnected: Community-Centered Connectivity.

The Connectivity Challenge

Nearly **2.6 billion people** are still offline

Connectivity is **essential** for life, work, and education

Internet growth **is slowing down.** Less people get connected every year

We need **innovative solutions** to achieve universal connectivity by 2030

Complementing traditional models to achieve Universal Connectivity

Community Networks: built by, and for, the communities they serve – communities build infrastructure that works to serve their needs.

Complementary Access & Connectivity Solutions – that reach people Where traditional providers can't.

Foster local empowerment and sustainability – because they are managed by the communities they serve, community networks support the development of technical skills, improve local economies, and ensure a sustainable solution to connect to the

Meaningful Connectivity

"Universal connectivity" means connectivity for all. "Meaningful connectivity" is a level of connectivity that allows users to have a safe, satisfying, enriching and productive online experience at an affordable cost. The two dimensions are complementary: neither universal connectivity with poor quality nor meaningful connectivity for the few will yield significant, society-wide benefits. At the same time, the two dimensions obviously reinforce each other: more use can lead to more meaningful connectivity, and vice versa.
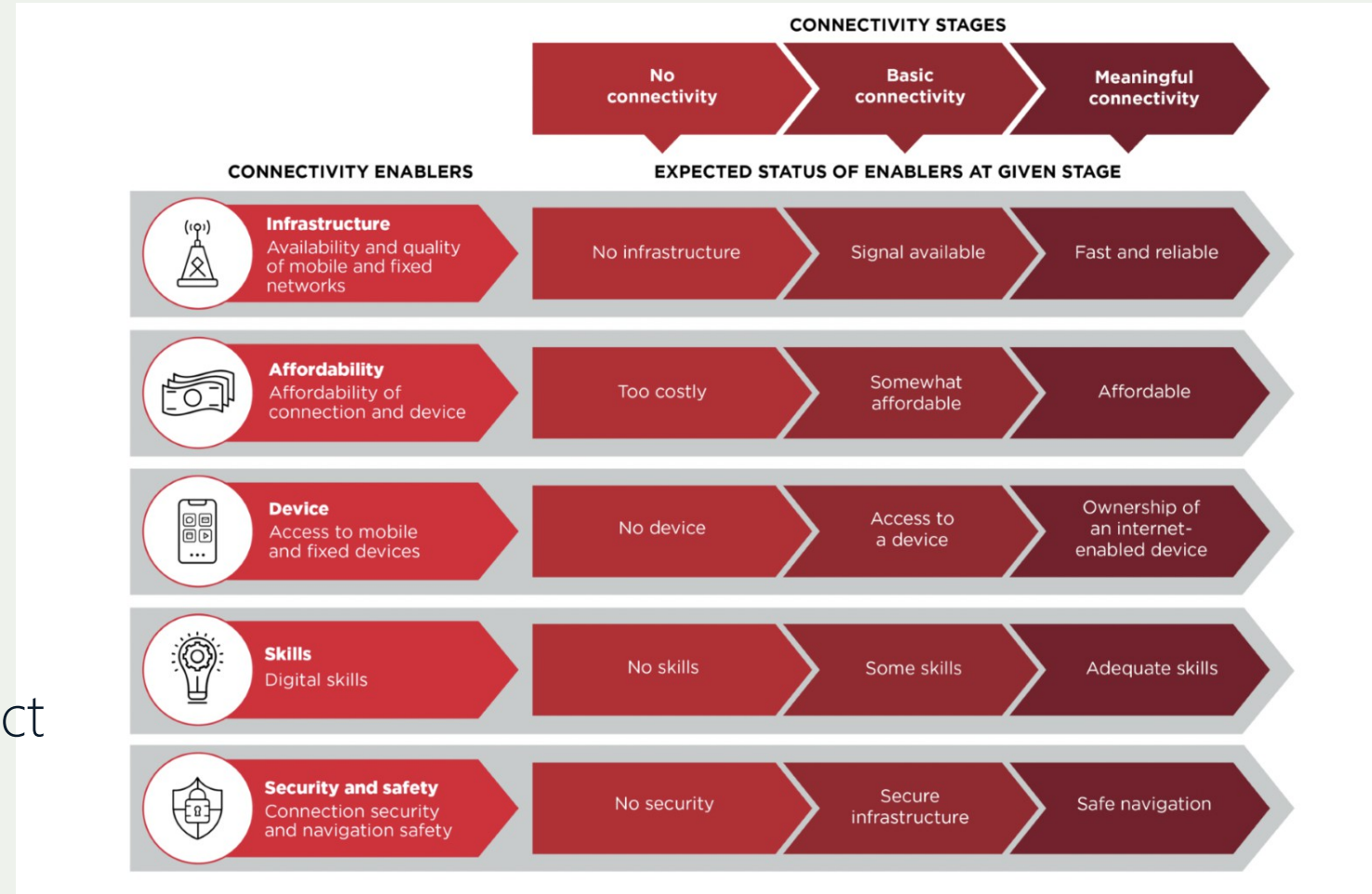
Source: ITU

Framework for Universal and Meaningful Connectivity

- Defining the concept of Meaningful Connectivity
- Measuring meaningful connectivity
  - Connectivity enablers
  - Use of connectivity
  - Quality of connectivity
- Computing the baseline
- Setting the 2030 targets for select indicators

Interventions

Awareness Creation

Create common knowledge in communities on the value of Internet connectivity

Capacity Building

Develop the capacity to build, operate and use the Internet productively

An Enabling Policy Environment

Fostering policies and regulations that enable community-centered connectivity solutions

Financing Mechanisms

Establishing ways to fund startup and growing community-centered connectivity solutions

An enabling policy environment

In more detail, we advocate for:

- Community-based models to access Spectrum in as many frequencies as possible. For wireless connectivity:
  - TVWS: TV White Spaces licenses available for local led networks
  - IMT: International Mobile Telecommunications spectrum sharing policies ("Use it or share it")
  - Unlicensed Spectrum: WiFi in 2.5Ghz, 5Ghz, 6Ghz
  - To be considered as part of technical deployments and technologies related to Dynamic Spectrum allocations, Spectrum sharing, Spectrum databases (i.e AFC technologies)
- International entities, companies, and regulators to provide accurate and updated coverage maps and access to open data about mapping

In 2024, the Internet Society will create a policy toolkit (as part of the DIY toolkit) to help stakeholders amplify these efforts.

Financing Mechanisms

- Community-based models can operate legally with the least (or none) financial and bureaucratic burden.
- Promote discussions for Community-based models to access/update new and existing funding mechanisms.
- Details on financing mechanisms are available in the Financing Mechanisms for Locally Owned Internet Infrastructure report.

Additional resources

- Universal Service Fund report (LAC): https://a4ai.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/USAF-Report-English.pdf

- Policy Brief: Spectrum Approaches for Community Networks:

  https://www.internetsociety.org/policybriefs/spectrum/

- Kenya Licensing framework proposal: **https://repository.ca.go.ke/handle/123456789/908**

- Argentina regulatory framework social purpose licensing:

  https://www.enacom.gob.ar/multimedia/normativas/2018/res4958.pdf

- TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATION HANDBOOK:

  https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/13277/74543.pdf?sequence=1

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