COMMUNITY NETWORKS

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UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY NETWORKS

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?

- Community is about people.
- People have multiple communities.
- Communities are formal and informal
- Communities are organised differently

WHAT IS A NETWORK?

The word 'Network' has two meanings.
- It refers to an interconnected group of people eg professional colleagues or friends.
- In computing, 'Networks' also refer to two or more digital devices that are connected to each other and can communicate.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY NETWORK

The Internet Society describes Community Networks as when "people come together to build and maintain the necessary infrastructure for Internet connection".

Or in other words,

Community Networks are generally run by a group of people (or an organization) who come together to install, operate, and maintain a telecommunications network that answers the needs or wants of a local community. Community Networks are about people taking power into their own hands to connect themselves and others around them to the internet.

Who can start a Community Network?

- People all over the world are setting up community networks
    - In the rural areas
    - In urbarn areas
    - In refugee areas
- Community Networks also require all kinds of people to make them work. They need people with good technical skills, business skills, and social skills. When used together, these skills help to make a Community Network successful.
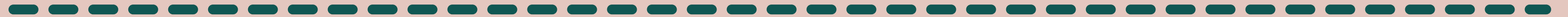
Are all Community Networks the same?

- Each Community Network is unique because they adapt to answer to their different community contexts.
- They have: - different ways of operating
    - different needs
- - different community challenges
    - that they use different technologies.
- There is no single 'right' way to run a Community Network.

WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO BUILD THEIR OWN COMMUNITY-BASED INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE?

People set up community Networks for lots of different reasons!

- For communities to pay much less money for their internet connection than if they had to use existing, commercial operators.
- To strengthen their community life by increasing communication among the community and getting people to share information more easily.
- To promote local economic development and employment.
- To strengthen local identities, and revitalize, promote, and maintain local communal, social, or cultural connections.
- helps the community to better organize and collectively address any issues they face.
- To make the communities more democratic by increasing the participation of people in the community.

Starting or growing a Community Network doesn't just happen overnight!

What is essistial in ...

STARTING A COMMUNITY NETWORK | GROWING A COMMUNITY NETWORK | SUSTAINING A COMMUNITY NETWORK

1

You must learn how to work with your community to identify all their connectivity challenges.

2

You must mobilize towards solving these problems.

3

You must learn how to build and maintain an internet infrastructure – or in other words how to actually work with the equipment.

4

You must learn how to offer your community an affordable and reliable internet in a way that helps your community to grow and develop.

5

You must understand the legal requirment of operating a community Network and comply

6

You must leverage on partnerships. All this requires people who have the understanding, ability, and the capacity to drive the process forward. These are called Community Network champions!

- Community Networks can be simple and small set ups, or large operations.

- The **skills, time and resources** that you require depend on the **complexity of the design** and also on the community dynamics and regulatory framework in which the Community Network exists.

- Legally, anyone can set up a Community Network, you just need all the right ingredients in place.

- We aim to offer you critical skills and knowledge to either **conceptualize** a new Community Network, or to re-think how to strengthen your existing Community Network.

- The focus is on **3 areas** of Community Networks: Network and Infrastructure, Sustainability, Local Content. You will also have access to professional and social networks.

- Each community has 3 representatives. Your community group is expected to work closely with one another to develop a Community Network plan for implementation.

JOIN US IN CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.

TOGETHER WE CAN DEVELOP OUR COMMUNITIES!

WELCOME TO THE MOVEMENT!