Connecting the Unconnected:
Providing Free Access to Global Health Information in Tanzania

The Basic Internet Foundation calls for action and your support in **c**onnecting **t**he **u**nconnected 4.000 villages in Tanzania (CTU alliance). Digital inclusion is a key for health, education and meaningful work. Connecting Tanzania with free access to information through the alliance of IT, Telecom, Academia, and public sector partners will create the showcase for Digital Africa with a use case dedicated to healthcare. The unique CTU alliance, addressing a common mission and best praxis for partnership in digital access, will build the basis for sustainable development, a catalyst for achieving the SDGs and business acceleration in Africa.

Opportunity

Higher penetration of Internet access, especially in rural areas, is the key for sustainable development and supports:

(i) Local governments, as digital inclusion is vital for six key sectors: health, agriculture, education, retail, government and financial services.

(ii) The people themselves to gain access to information related to education and healthcare, and finally more employment, income generation and productivity growth for everyone.

(iii) Companies that realise the market potential behind this vast number of people currently without access to Internet and, therefore, without market exposure. This may not be in terms of the purchasing power of each inhabitant, but as a result of the mere number of people.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have identified "access to information and communication technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet" (SDG target 9.c). Though mobile operators play an eminent role, partnership is needed to address the digital access to remote villages and provide information access to people otherwise left left behind.

World Development Report

The World Bank's 2016 World Development Report on Digital Dividends (WDR 2016) reports on opportunities of digital technologies and digital access. Digital access is the key for digital development being the positive driver for sustainable and inclusive development.
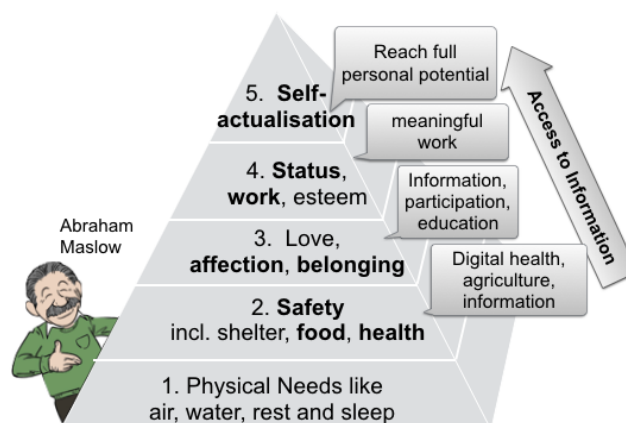

Figure 1 - Digital Inclusion starts with health and food

The CTU alliance will help the unconnected to reach the next steps of the Maslow pyramid (see figure 1), by providing access and information for food and health, and enable the further reach to levels 3-5 for everyone. The WDR 2016 report also highlights the risks that exist if digital societies are only limited to those already being better off.

Connecting Tanzania

The CTU alliance takes the challenges to connect rural areas, and aims at creating the showcase for digital information access in Africa. The government of Tanzania is building the fibre infrastructure connecting the various regions, which is an excellent starting point of bringing Internet to the 4.000 unconnected villages. We envision information hot-spots with free access to information with sustainable business models, and the commercial roll-out of mobile networks for coverage.

By connecting the unconnected villages we envision growth in access to mobile Internet, given the following developments:

(i) Current trends show that **smart phones** are getting dominant, thus allowing users access to digital information if data access can be made affordable.

(ii) Availability and **affordability** of data traffic. GSMA has pointed out that by the end of 2014 around 77% of the developing had no access to 3G/4G mobile networks. Though operators plan for cheaper networks with wider coverage, access to villages has to be ensured before mobile networks can be established.

(iii) **Addressing inequality**, and especially the education of women and girls, who typically don't have mobile broadband connectivity.

(iv) Free **access to information**, starting with **digital health**, being the basis for further education. The free access gives those who have never used a value proposition prior to the commercial uptake of mobile Internet.

(v) **Establishing** the base for **commercial** operations of Internet provision, mobile operations and digital job creation.

People know the value of television, voice calling on phones, motor bikes, refrigerators, etc., but not of the Internet and the opportunities enabled by the digital society.

Showcase for developing economies

Though appreciating the cultural and economic differences between regions, we believe that connecting the unconnected 4.000 villages in Tanzania will become the show-case for digital Africa. The collaboration between public authorities in connecting the regions, the joint effort of connecting the villages, and the duality in providing free access to information and commercial mobile/Internet access will become the catalyst for achieving the SDGs.

With half of the World's population growth taking place in Africa, digital Tanzania can provide the best praxis of digital inclusion of Africa.

From Health to Empowerment

Our primary focus is on digital health addressing SDG target 3. Digital information for health addresses the whole value chain of Global Health, including

(i) information to people on basic health, health practices, hygiene, and food security,

(ii) health workers to be connected to information and diagnostics services,

(iii) remote analytics, management of diseases and outbreaks.

Safety, food and health will enable people to aim for the higher levels including education, societal engagement, and participation in the society. Furthermore, digital inclusion will open for quality education, empower women and girls, and lead to economic growth, employment and decent work for all.

Priorities & Governance Principles

Given the governmental support of connecting the regions, priority is given to (i) extending Internet access to the villages, (ii) creating WiFi hot-spots at health centres, and (iii) the commercial roll-out of Mobile/Internet access.

The CTU initiative for Tanzania will create non-discriminating access to information, ensure net-neutrality, and provide a platform for commercial operations both from network providers, ISPs and IT services.

Given a close relation to the DDP of the World Bank, we will provide open information on all operations to ensure applicability in other markets, and best praxis for Internet for all, regional ICT markets, e-Government and digital innovation.

These principles are the basis for business roll-out, as well as open competence, extendability, and scalability of digital access.

The CTU initiative is inviting for partnership in networking, technology, and content to establish Digital Tanzania as showcase for Digital Africa.