

Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) 2018 Annual Report

Call for proposals

Terms of reference (TOR) for country reports

Theme: Community Networks

Deadline for proposals: **19 March 2018**

Introduction

This 2018 edition of GISWatch will focus primarily on community-owned networks for the provision of physical communications infrastructure.

Affordable and reliable internet access infrastructure has become a vital means of communication and access to information, to exercise fundamental human rights and to support economic, social and human development. However, as the internet becomes more ubiquitous, less is being heard from those who are unconnected – the less wealthy and more marginalised – who are unable to exercise their rights on the same footing. Those who do not have access are doubly excluded: excluded from the “new” world of information and communications that the internet delivers, and also excluded from the “old” analogue world they used to have access to – even if imperfectly – because so many of those services and opportunities are increasingly only available online. Ending digital exclusion is not simply a matter of improving the coverage of mobile broadband services, but also of improving the affordability and coverage of both fixed and mobile local network infrastructures and services, along with building the technical and human capacity to ensure reliability, the ability to deploy low-cost and open-access locally owned network infrastructures, and the ability to use the resulting connectivity in applications and content of local interest and benefit to local communities. Some examples of such applications would be agricultural systems, local government services, local news and market information, etc.

The 2018 edition of GISWatch will focus on local access models, specifically, community networks as self-organised, self-managed or locally developed solutions for local access, based on the conviction that one of the keys to affordable access is giving local people the skills and tools to solve their own connectivity challenges. Instead of buying an access service from a large corporate entity, community networks allow community members to self-provide and share infrastructure.

The 2018 edition of GISWatch will look at different experiences of community networks in 50 to 60 countries, using a common

framework of analysis, and will also identify policy and regulatory measures for supporting and strengthening the development of local access solutions worldwide. This call is open to community network operators¹ and/or civil society organisations that are familiar with community network initiatives or projects and want to share their views and reflections on their experiences and impact.

Join us in helping citizens get better connected and defend their freedoms and rights by researching, documenting and sharing community networks and how they are affecting communities and human rights. Let us share our diverse and compelling stories and views around the world! If you have an interest in the theme and have a case to share, please read on...

How to participate

1) Read the instructions contained in this call, and if you wish to participate, send your proposal before the deadline to GISWatch production coordinator Kathleen Diga (kathleen@apc.org) and editor Alan Finlay (editor@giswatch.org). This should reach us by **19 March 2018** at the latest, and include the following information (very briefly):

- a) Name, organisation, country.
- b) Brief information on the community network solution: Country(ies) and region(s) where the community network is operating, name of the network, whether the network is primarily rural or urban based, if and how it is currently registered (i.e. cooperative, NGO, etc.), and the number of users in the network.
- c) Has the community network been in operation for at least six months? If it is no longer in operation, how long was it in operation and what is the motivation for writing on this community network? One of the prerequisites for country report submission is for the community network to have been in operation for at least six months. For what duration has the network been in operation (the number of years/months)?
- d) Briefly describe in **half a page** your organisation and the community network project. What is the relationship between the community network and your organisation? Tell us about your story or experience with the community network – there are some suggestions on story angles below. This information is needed so we can ensure that the authors are on the right

1 Community network is defined as an initiative focused on the provision of physical communications infrastructure operated by individuals or collectives living in that community, whether or not community benefit has been identified. Community networks may include some community-owned telecentres, depending on the level of involvement of the community throughout the process and the outcomes or audience of its activities.

track. Main authors must have direct involvement with the community network. This means that you are either an operator of a network, or a community network has requested your assistance in preparing the report (in this case, a visit to the community network and fieldwork research would need to be completed).

e) Are you willing to fill out an information template on the community network and consent to APC using your data in this annual report?

f) Country reports which incorporate gender aspects around community networks will be given special consideration.

2) The authors will be selected by the end of April. If you are selected you will have up to two months to write and **submit your final full report by 31 May 2018**. The report must be written in English and have a maximum length of 2,300 words. For consistency, the report should be developed using the template provided at the end of this document.

3) To develop their reports, the country report author(s) will have to research the community network implementation, using a common template (structure) that we will provide. APC will provide you with background readings and online training, and support you during the writing process. Sharing your progress and ideas with other authors will make the report even more cohesive and representative of the global situation, and you will be able to do this through the mailing list that will be set up for GISWatch country report authors, once they have been selected.

4) Once submitted, your report will enter the editing process. The report will be edited by the GISWatch editor, with input from the coordinator and a review by an advisory team, and returned to you for clarifications or to respond to editorial comments. This process will take place from August until September 2018.

5) Once the final report has been accepted by the editor as completed, organisations will receive a payment in support of writing of USD 700 (seven hundred).

If you have questions do not hesitate to contact us:

- GISWatch: Kathleen Diga (GISWatch production coordinator, kathleen@apc.org)
- Website: www.giswatch.org

We look forward to your report proposal! Remember the deadline is 19 March 2018!

Important: Please note that the aim of GISWatch is to encourage local participation in rights-based issues. Because of this, for this

edition it is critical that lead authors or organisations have residence in the country they are writing about. Under certain circumstances, we may accept proposals from lead authors who are not resident in a country they wish to write about, such as proposals from displaced persons, or authors who have strong first-hand experience in a country. Lead authors may also wish to coordinate co-authors for the chapter and those co-authors may not necessarily need to be based in the same country.

Potential report angles

We would like GISWatch reports to represent a variety of local views on the innovations of community networks at a local level and their relation with national and local regulation and policy. Below are two potential angles for reports:

- One model will be more descriptive, that analyses the applied local connectivity model and its components and characteristics (i.e. technical, organisational, operational, etc.) in a structured way.
- The other model will be story based, and after some introduction, will focus on an innovative story related to the connectivity initiative. It can be about community network usage by its members, training, financial or operational sustainability practices, installation of technical solutions, maintenance, growth, competition, social or gender impact, decision-making approach for all aspects related to the community network, support, or practically any other lesson learned or experience.

This is for your information only. You do not have to decide yet how your report will be structured – this can be done once you are selected and learn more about the project.

The community network template

Country reports will also be accompanied with a common template to be filled out by the lead author. You do not have to complete it now – but it provides you with a brief idea of its needed content. The template requests information on overall community network information, description of the community network, organisational sustainability, operational sustainability, technical sustainability, and the community network's plan for the future.

Timeline

Deadline for proposals:	19 March 2018
Selection process	19 March – 31 March 2018
Authors informed of accepted proposals:	1 April 2018
Authors to prepare country report:	April-May 2018
Deadline for country report:	31 May 2018
Editing process:	1 June – 31 August 2018
Deadline for final country report:	31 August 2018