Rural Broadband Policy Framework: Closing the Rural Digital Divide

CTU ICT Week 2021

Presented by
Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI)
September 22, 2021

Agenda

- Introduction and Opening Remarks by Sonia Jorge, Executive Director of A4AI
- Presentation of the Rural Broadband Policy Framework (RBPF) by Yacine Khelladi A4AI Latin America & the Caribbean Coordinator
    - *Why is addressing the rural digital divide important?*
    - *What is the reality of connectivity in rural and remote areas (statistics)*
    - *Eight key elements of the Rural Broadband Policy Framework (RBPF)*
- Exchange on the relevance and feasibility to apply RBPF in Caribbean context
- CTU/A4AI RBPF Workshop invitation

Introduction

Who is Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI)?

We are the

world's broadest technology sector alliance

working to

achieving universal affordable and meaningful connectivity

by

transforming policy and regulatory frameworks.

Why is focussing on rural digital divide important?

- Nine years left to attain the Sustainable Development Goal of achieving universal internet access by 2030
- Rural areas hold an untapped economic potential but are at risk of exclusion
- Broadband in rural areas provides access to -
  - Social communities
  - Government services
  - Health services
  - Remote Learning
  - E-commerce





The state of internet access in the Caribbean

Among the CTU member countries...

ONLINE POPULATION

A4AI from ITU, 2019

FIXED BROADBAND PENETRATION

A4AI from ITU, 2019

MOBILE BROADBAND PENETRATION

A4AI from GSMA, 2020

But is it meaningful? affordable? for all, including rural?

Meaningful Connectivity- *why it matters in rural connectivity*

*We have meaningful connectivity when we can use the internet **every day** using an **appropriate device** with **enough data** and a **fast connection.***

Getting the Right Speed	Using the internet with a 4G connection
Having an Appropriate Device	Connecting with a smartphone
Connecting with Enough Data	Accessing a fixed (wired or wireless) broadband connection at home, work, or school
Using the Internet Regularly	Using the internet daily

Meaningful Connectivity in Practice

Meaningful Connectivity and Internet Use

	COLOMBIA	GHANA	INDONESIA
% of population who use the internet (ITU definition, 2020)	**84.1%**	**30.3%**	**77.6%**
Average meaningful connectivity score (2020)	**50.9%**	**12.5%**	**50.2%**

Source: A4AI 2020

Note: this data is from our pilot study. We are expanding survey into new countries this year, including a few African countries.

Affordability of Mobile Broadband, 2020

	1GB	2GB	5GB
Belize	4.80%	4.80%	4.80%
Cuba*	1.51%	2.27%	6.04%
Guyana	4.08%	4.08%	6.88%
Jamaica	2.85%	2.85%	2.85%
Surinam	2.34%	2.34%	3.65%
Trinidad and Tobago	2.33%	2.33%	2.33%

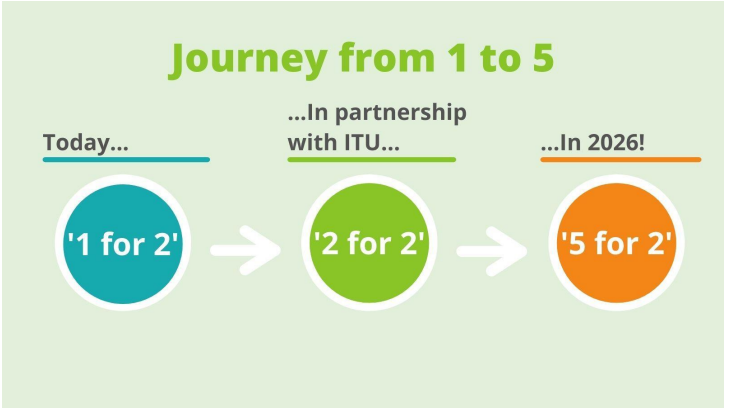
*Associate State Member

Affordability of GBs of data (as a %age of GNI p.c.)

>0 ≤ 1	> 1 ≤ 2	>2 ≤ 3	>3 ≤ 10	>10

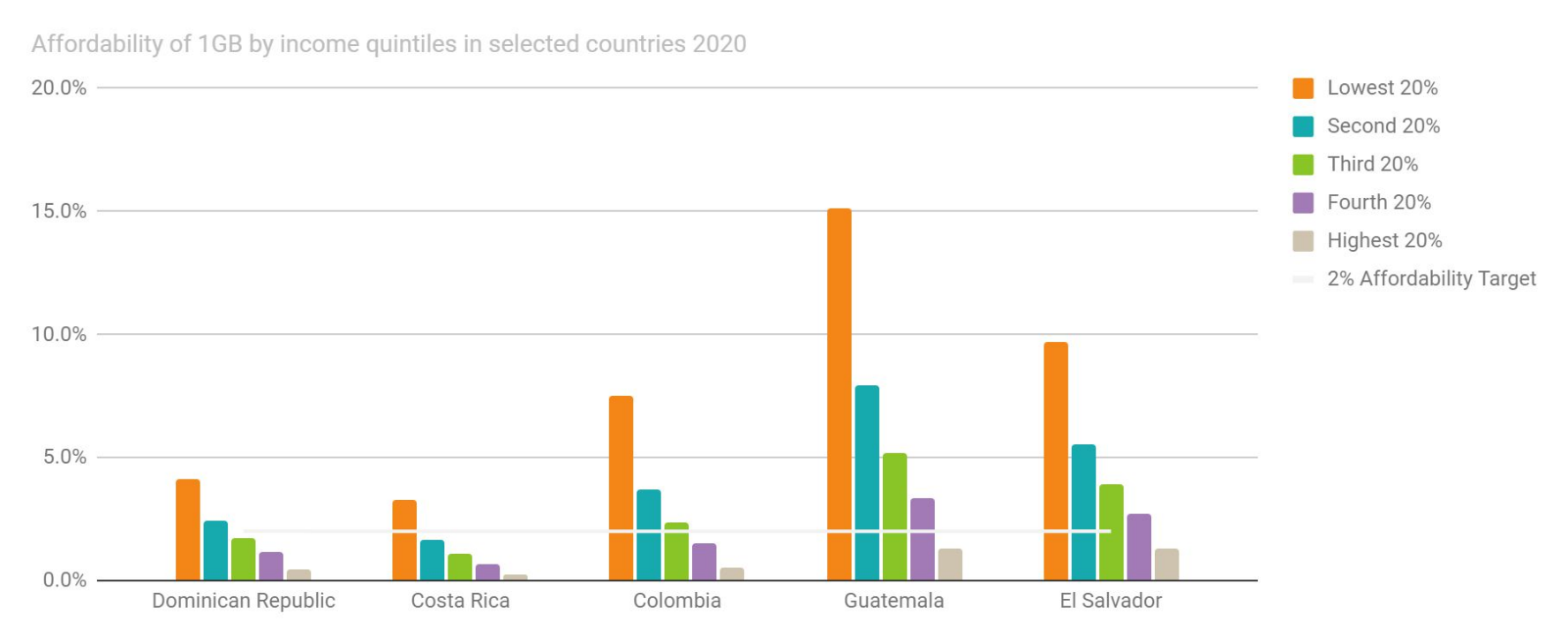
2020 Affordability report only tracks 4 Caribbean countries and measure their policy progress (ADI affordability drivers index). Affordable in Dominican Rep (1.19%) and Cuba (1,51%). Not affordable : Jamaica (2.85%) and Haiti (3.42%) - A4AI, 2020

What is affordable internet?
"1 for 2": 1GB of mobile prepaid broadband for 2% or less of average monthly income



Source: Alliance for Affordable Internet

Affordability and income quintiles

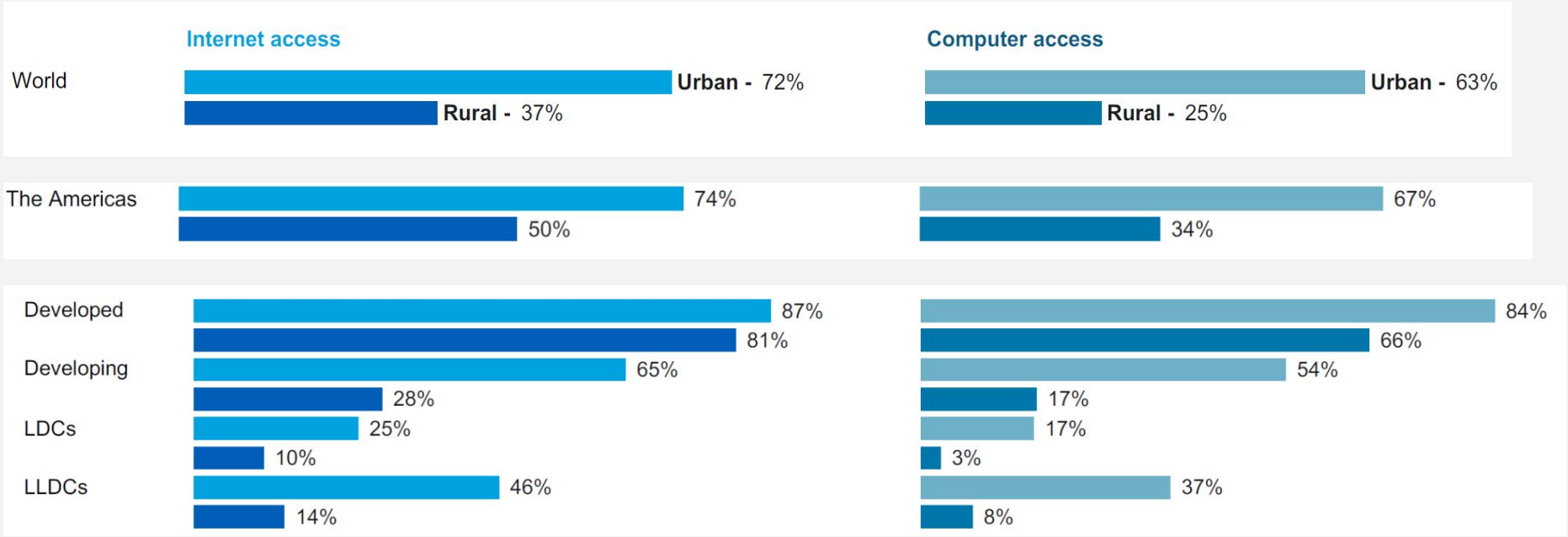


ITU data on Individuals using the Internet by gender and urban/rural location (%)

	Latest	All	Gender		Urban			Rural		
	year	Individuals	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Fem.
BVI	2017	77.7	76.8	78.6	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cuba	2019	68.0	60.7	75.1	84.1	76.7	91.1	13.8	12.4	15.5
Dominican Rep.	2018	74.8	74.6	75.0	78.1	78.5	77.7	60.5	58.9	62.3
Haiti	2018	32.5	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Jamaica	2018	68.2	64.8	71.6	...	...	...	...	...	...
Puerto Rico	2019	77.7	77.3	78.1	...	...	...	...	...	...

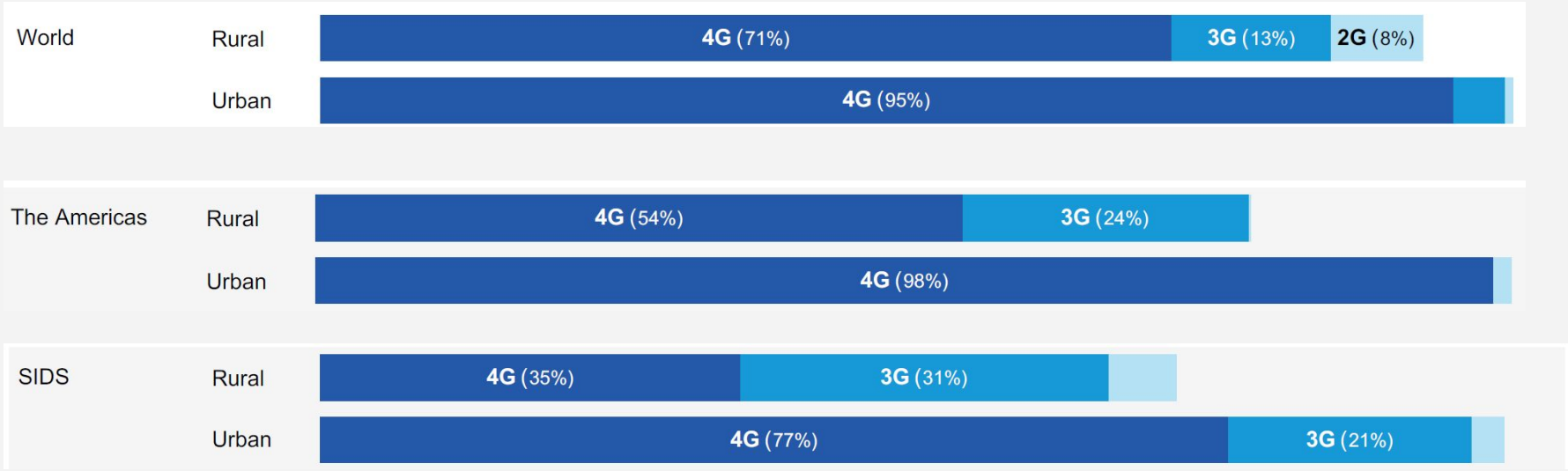
Lack of data is also a challenge...

Internet and computer access at home in rural/urban areas - a serious concern



* ITU estimate
Note: Insufficient data available to produce estimates for SIDS.
Source: ITU

Mobile-broadband network coverage



* ITU estimate. Source: ITU

We need to target and speed up rural connectivity :
The Rural Broadband Policy Framework

A4AI

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APC
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CIPESA

DEF
DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT *foundation*

FACEBOOK

6 CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL POLICY-MAKING

1. IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-QUALITY, AFFORDABLE BROADBAND SERVICES IN UNDERSERVED RURAL AREAS
2. DRAW FROM REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE – LOCALLY, REGIONALLY, AND GLOBALLY
3. HARNESS THE RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND COMPLEMENTARY PROVIDERS
4. BE COMPREHENSIVE, AND ADDRESS AFFORDABILITY AND DEMAND
5. BE GENDER RESPONSIVE
6. UTILISE EVIDENCE AND STANDARDS

THE PROCESS TOWARDS A RURAL BROADBAND POLICY

1	Encourage broad participation
2	Be transparent in decision-making
3	Allow for stakeholders to meaningfully participate

A fair process enables all stakeholders to:

- Evaluate the success and failures of policy decisions
- Make the necessary adjustments over time
- Hold other stakeholders accountable over time

The Eight Policy Elements of RBPF

A

Harness market competition while addressing market failures

B

Streamline regulatory processes

C

Invest in and improve public access and universal service and access funds

D

Effectively manage spectrum resources

E

Leverage innovative technologies, architectures, and business models

F

Adopt appropriate tax and fee structures

G

Stimulate demand for broadband services

H

Monitoring and Accountability

1: Harness Market Competition

- Support **market competition** as the first means for encouraging innovation and investment and supporting consumer choice in service providers.
- Recognise the limits of markets to deliver universal access on their own, and use **rural development funds and Universal Service & Access Funds** to support network deployment.
- Encourage **infrastructure sharing** at the wholesale level—which will ultimately facilitate greater competition at the retail level.

Good Practices: Encourage shared infrastructure

The regulator has continuously passed regulations to encourage passive infrastructure sharing as a means to expand mobile connectivity.

Stakeholder: Regulator

Learn more:
https://a4ai.org/studies/encouraging-shared-infrastructure/

2: Streamline Regulatory Processes

- Eliminate policies and regulations that are not necessary to achieve a valid and well-defined objective.
- Create a **supportive regulatory environment** for nascent rural operations.
- Include space for **innovations to scale**.
- Streamline regulations governing **market entry** in rural areas.
- Streamline processes for obtaining access to **rights-of-way** (ROWs).
- Leverage potential advantages within **dig-once policies**.

3: Public Access and Universal Service and Access Funds (USAFs)

- Invest in **public access** solutions as part of the RBPF.
- Employ public access facilities as community institutions to ensure **broader socio-economic impact** in society.
- Establish and implement **effective USAFs** to support investments in underserved rural areas.
- Ensure that USAFs operate under **non-discriminatory conditions and according to transparent and consultative processes**, incorporating stakeholder inputs and priorities.
- Adopt and employ **open data** practices.

4: Effectively manage spectrum resources

- Seek to **“unlock” spectrum** so that it can be effectively leveraged to address rural connectivity challenges.
- Incentivise operators to use their licensed spectrum resources in a **timely manner** and for the benefit of rural areas.
- Apply special, **more flexible rules** for spectrum use in rural areas.
- Enable **unlicensed use** of spectrum at additional wavelengths.
- Make spectrum available on a **technology-neutral basis**.
- Facilitate the **reallocation** of spectrum over time.
- Encourage **spectrum sharing**, under appropriate conditions.

5: Leverage innovative technologies, architectures, and business models

- Afford operators **flexibility** in structuring their networks and businesses.
- Promote the **free flow of information**.
- Ensure that rural populations can benefit from the **same service standards** as others in the country (e.g., in urban areas).
- Support **network cooperation**.

Good Practices: Building partnerships for affordable backhaul infrastructure

A cross-sectoral partnership helps finance an undersea submarine cable in Vanuatu to completely transform internet access and affordability for its residents across a wide archipelago.

Learn more:
https://a4ai.org/studies/building-partnerships-for-affordable-backhaul-infrastructure/

Stakeholders: Government, Private Sector, Public Sector

6: Adopt appropriate tax and fee structures

- Consider reducing or eliminating **taxes and fees** charged in rural areas.
- Ensure that the tax regime is competitively and technologically neutral and **non-distortive**.
- Ensure that rural broadband services are taxed in a manner similar to or more favorable than other services.
- Ensure that tax regimes **do not render broadband services unaffordable**.

7: Stimulate demand for broadband services

- Seek to enhance **digital literacy** amongst the rural population.
- Promote practices that protect the **safety and privacy, and personal data** of rural populations.
- Facilitate the development of **relevant content** that are responsive to local needs and languages.
- **Stimulate demand** for rural broadband services, e.g., with e-services.

8: Monitoring and Accountability

- Set up regular checkpoints to **monitor progress and create accountability** for policy leaders.
- Regular monitoring should include two key components – **data and people.**
- Collecting data on performance over time will encourage stakeholders to **create a track record, document improvements, and create the evidentiary basis** for any case for change that might be necessary.
- Data-driven process is best enabled and supported through an **inclusive process that allows government, private sector, and civil society to contribute data and analyse** the realities in the country and advise on the best next steps.

Good Practices: Measuring broadband progress with an iterative process

Costa Rica's broadband plan and its subsequent monitoring and evaluation methodology has set up the nation to achieve its digital connectivity goals, including around rural access, and also offers a framework for the country to regularly update its strategy.

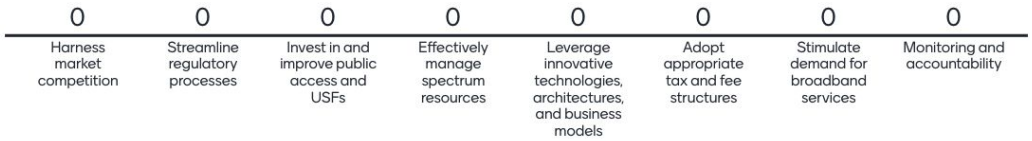
Learn more:
https://a4ai.org/studies/measuring-broadband-progress-with-an-iterative-process/

Stakeholders: Government, Regulator

Go to **www.menti.com** and use the code **4655 6569**

Mentimeter

Have your ICT policies incorporated any of the eight elements from the Rural Broadband Policy Framework? Please select up to two.



Discussion / Q+A

ITU data for 2020 - ICT price basket as % of GNIpc

Country	Fixed broadband, 5GB	Mobile broadband data, 1.5 GB
Bahamas	1.32	0.55
Barbados	3.08	1.88
Suriname	5.96	2.34
Saint Kitts and Nevis	2.74	2.37
Antigua and Barbuda	3.05	2.65
Jamaica	5.69	2.85
Cuba	6.79	3.02
Dominican Rep.	2.89	3.08

ITU data for 2020 - ICT price basket as % of GNIpc

Country	Fixed broadband 5GB	Mobile broadband data only 1.5 GB
Saint Lucia	4.07	3.25
Grenada	5.37	3.4
Haiti	83.54	3.42
Guyana	7.09	4.08
Dominica	5.17	4.62
Belize	9.47	4.8
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	7.2	5.7

Key Resources

- Rural Broadband Policy Framework Report
- ITU reports on digital trends
- Country case studies
- ITU global and regional ICT Data
- Database of case studies on broadband strategies
- A4AI's Good Practices Database

We are preparing workshops (1.5 and 3 days) for policymakers and regulators to adopt the Rural Broadband Policy Framework . Please email a4ai@webfoundation.org if interested.

Thank you!

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