**IGF 2023 Launch / Award #176**
**KYOTO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER, JAPAN**
**DIGITAL DIVIDES & INCLUSION**
**Topic: "Africa Community Internet Program" L/A**
**Date: Sunday 9 October 2023 | Time: 00:30 GMT - 01:15 GMT (UTC +9) | Venue: WS 4 – Room B - I**

## Organisers / Facilitators:

1.  Wisdom Donkor, Africa Open Data and Internet Research Foundation (AODIRF)
2.  Dr. Lee W.  McKnight, Associate Professor, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, USA
3.  Dr. Danielle Taana Smith, Professor, College of Arts & Sciences, Syracuse University
4.  Yusuf Abdul-Qadir, Adjunct Faculty, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University
5.  Kwaku Antwi, Africa Open Data and Internet Research Foundation
6.  Jane Asantewaa Appiah-Okyere, Doctoral Candidate, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University
7.  Zanyiwe Asare, Digitally Legal, South Africa

## Session Description

Availability of the Information Highway Access to information technology is one of the key advantages that community networks offer. As a result, locals can participate in the worldwide "information superhighway". At the local level, community networks provide a variety of educational options.

The success of community networks globally has been particularly insightful. These networks have demonstrated value as a tool for innovative employment opportunities to increase community economic resources, provided access to education for the populace of underprivileged communities, and sustained the ideal that the Internet is for everyone. Internet resources are needed to gather resources required to establish and sustain such networks. To assure connectivity in communities that are underprivileged, governments can allot funding and grant waivers to small organisations and ensure that less privileged communities have access to the Internet.

The Africa Global Community Internet programme firmly affirms that a digital future prioritizes the needs of local communities and aims to partner with governments to develop policies which similarly prioritize the needs of rural and underserved communities.

When rural communities migrate to urban areas due to a lack of Internet and electricity in their communities, the urban communities frequently observe the stifling of urban infrastructures. Creatives and other residents in the area are compelled to relocate due to a lack of access to free training opportunities on digital divide and Community Networks. Unification and peace are threatened and could be destroyed by systemic migration that is not stopped. Given that the infrastructure was not designed to support the number of incoming immigrants, migration threatens the communities that are only partially established.

Governments, private and civil society may assist, however communities can and will lead themselves in their own grassroots digital transformation, if national laws, regulations, and policies do not prevent them from supporting themselves. The objective is to move beyond the false focus on individual connectivity in rural areas, and instead help communities build their own Community Internet solutions. Shared connectivity also implies shared costs and cost recovery. In many cases, once regulatory and policy barriers are removed, rural communities can sustainably manage to recover costs and maintain service. In all cases, the cost of the

Community Internet service model proposed here can help nations achieve Universal Service objectives even in regions considered not economically viable by mobile carriers and other telecommunication infrastructure providers.

Where available, national Universal Service Programs can facilitate and accelerate digital inclusion for rural residents by contributing a fraction of the hardware and service costs of Internet Backpack operation. Depending on the specific national policy context, covering all or a fraction of the initial costs of the Internet Backpack's deployment into a region can be sufficient for the community to then share the remaining costs collectively. In other cases, an ongoing public contribution of the data charge, and where necessary, satellite Internet costs may be required. In this regard, the Africa Global Community Network (AGCIP) will discuss about the importance of funding rural community networks and electricity as well as the introduction of a platform to help bridge the digital divide in rural communities in Africa and around the world.

This session will be organising around three themes, each of which has several objectives:

**Theme 1: Solutions to rural community infrastructure and electricity**

**Theme 2: Bridging the digital skills gap and expanding training needs**

**Theme 3: Why funding for community networks and sustainable energy is necessary**

## Expected Outcomes:

The session will begin with discussions on creating a road map process to better understand what needs to be done in the short and long term. There are several expected outcomes:
- Determine possibilities and knowledge gained that would benefit developing countries' alignment of sustainable energy sources to help underserved urban, rural, and distant users.
- Determine the most important concerns regarding finance, resources, and capacity to be utilised as inputs for a roundtable with development partners and follow-up actions.
- Determine the issues, commitments, and priorities that will support rural communities moving forward.
- Identify the most critical gaps hindering the adoption and deployment of community networks in Africa and the world.
- Identify opportunities for governments to align national broadband and connectivity priorities programs with key community network infrastructure.

Four speakers will be invited to the session to examine the four themes and further the discussion on the major components of national policies, institutional strategies, investments, and the development and delivery of programmes. There will be discussion of success stories, problems faced, and tried-and-true solutions. The moderator will introduce each speaker and pose a question to them. Next, the audience and each resource person will take part in a conversation.

**Draft Agenda / Speakers**

1. Welcome, Introduction and Opening Remarks (Moderator)
2. Case Studies Presentation:
   a. Dr. Lee W. McKnight, Associate Professor, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University
   b. Jane Asantewaa Appiah-Okyere, Doctoral Candidate, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University
3. **Discussions**
   a. **Theme 1: Solution to Rural Community infrastructure and Electricity**
   b. **Theme 2: Bridging the digital skills gap and expanding the training needs**
   c. **Theme 3: Why funding for community networks and sustainable energy is necessary**

4. **Moderators / Speakers**

   Moderator: Yusuf S. Abdul-Qadir, Syracuse University

   Online Moderator: Lahari Chowtoori, Syracuse University

   Rapporteurs: Jane Appiah-Okyere, Syracuse University and Lindsey Ama Benewaah Bonsu, University of Ghana

   **Speakers**
   a. Kwaku Antwi, Director, Programs and Outreach, Africa Open Data and Internet Research Foundation (AODIRF)
   b. Jane R. Coffin, Senior Executive International Infrastructure and Internet Issues
   c. Hon. Samuel Nartey George, Member of Parliament, Ghana
   d. Victor Ohuruogu, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD), International organisation
5. In room / Remote audience Q & A
6. Launch of the AGCIP Website
7. Highlight and closing remarks, Moderator


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