GSMA Connected Society

Delivering digital inclusion for all

The internet has made communication quicker, information more available, businesses more efficient, and education, entertainment and public services more accessible than ever before. It is driving economic growth and societal development across the world. Mobile has already connected over 3.3 billion people to this opportunity and continues to lead efforts to close remaining coverage and usage gaps. Close collaboration and constructive partnership between industry, the development community, policymakers and regulators is key to ensuring no citizen is left unconnected.

The Opportunity

Mobile internet has become an essential **enabler for economic growth** and societal development and a key driver for achieving progress across all of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Mobile continues to **promote digital inclusion** by connecting more citizens to the internet everyday

The opportunity is for mobile to **connect the 4 billion citizens** who remain unconnected

Meeting this challenge is also a significant **commercial opportunity** for the mobile industry

What we need

We need to bridge the:

'**Coverage Gap**' of nearly 1 billion people still not covered by a mobile broadband network. Key to extending networks will be reducing regulatory and cost barriers to deployment, including rural infrastructure costs, which can be twice as expensive with revenues up to ten times lower than in urban areas.

'**Usage gap**' of over 3 billion people who have access to mobile broadband coverage but are either unable or unwilling to use it. There is a need to focus on:

Accessibility
Facilitating access to handsets, electricity, agents and formal IDs

Affordability
Tackling affordability including handsets, tariffs, data and transaction fees

Usability and skills
Improving usability of handsets and services, and building digital skills and awareness

Safety and security
Enhancing security and safety by addressing harassment, theft, fraud and data protection

Relevance
Promoting local, relevant content products and services

How to get there

Our top 3 recommendations for:

	the mobile industry	development community	policymakers and regulators
1	Develop and invest in operating models and technology innovations that can help bring down the cost of coverage	Embrace the critical role mobile internet can play in supporting progress towards all of the SDGs	Develop a policy and regulatory framework that encourages investment, enables innovation and builds trust in the take up and use of new digital services
2	Focus on the development of relevant and usable content and services that will help drive adoption and use of mobile internet	Partner with the private sector on commercially sustainable and scalable solutions	Support mobile operators' efforts to extend coverage by providing affordable access to sufficient spectrum, removing obstacles to deployment, and promoting best practice taxation policies
3	Develop and support solutions that address the principal consumer barriers to mobile internet adoption	Design interventions with an understanding of the barriers to mobile internet adoption and usage in low- and middle-income countries	Promote the use of mobile and digital public services across all levels of government and society, and support the development of digital skills.

Connected Society

Increasing access to and adoption of the mobile internet for the underserved in low- and middle-income countries

The GSMA Connected Society Programme works with the mobile industry and key stakeholders to increase access to and adoption of the mobile internet, focusing on underserved population groups.

The unconnected population is predominantly located in low- and middle-income countries, typically on low incomes and lacking basic and digital literacy skills.

Women are disproportionately affected by these challenges. Mobile represents the best opportunity for the underserved to join the digital economy.

We work with the mobile industry to reduce the key barriers to connectivity with a particular (but not exclusive) focus on a number of underserved population groups: women, rural and low-income.

Our approach

Mobile operator support
- Innovation Fund for Rural Connectivity
- Digital skills projects

Insights
- Industry leading research, data and case studies
- Mobile Connectivity Index and Coverage Maps

Advocacy
- Driving understanding and action among stakeholders
- Convening National Dialogues for Digital Transformation in key markets