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| Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau |
| GIGA UNICEF-ITU global initiative |
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| **Summary:** This document presents the GIGA UNICEF-ITU global initiative. Launched in 2019, GIGA sets the goal of providing connectivity to every school in the world. GIGA envisions bringing the power of meaningful connectivity to fast track young people’s access to educational resources and opportunities. It also serves as a platform to outline the infrastructure necessary to provide digital connectivity to an entire country, for every community, and for every citizen.**Action required:** TDAG is invited to note this document and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.**References:** N/A |

## GIGA, a UNICEF-ITU global initiative to connect every school to the Internet and every young person to information, opportunity and choice.

Launched in 2019, GIGA sets the goal of providing connectivity to every school in the world. Some 3.6 billion people in the world do not have access to the Internet. The lack of access to the Internet means exclusion, marked by the lack of access to the wealth of information available online, fewer resources to learn and to grow, and limited opportunities for the most vulnerable children and youth to fulfill their potential. Closing the digital divide requires global cooperation, leadership, and innovation in finance and technology.

GIGA envisions bringing the power of meaningful connectivity to fast track young people’s access to educational resources and opportunities. GIGA wishes that every child is equipped with the digital public goods they need and empowered to shape the future they want.

GIGA also serves as a platform to outline the infrastructure necessary to provide digital connectivity to an entire country, for every community, and for every citizen. It is about using schools to identify demand for connectivity, as well as using schools as an analogy for learning and connecting where the community may come together and support its next generation in a world where we are all increasingly digital, where the skills that are required are not formal ones, necessarily, and where learning happens continuously.

**ITU and GIGA**

The ITU Connect 2030 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/ICT Development focuses on how technological advances will contribute to accelerate the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. GIGA will support the implementation of:

* Goal 1 – Growth: Enable and foster access to and increased use of telecommunications/ICT in support of the digital economy and society
* Goal 2 – Inclusiveness: Bridge the digital divide and provide broadband access for all

As a reminder, in 2003 the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) determined through Target 2, to connect all secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs by 2015. Target 2 is linked to WSIS Action Line C2: information and communication infrastructure, WSIS Action Line C4: capacity building and WSIS Action Line C7: ICT applications (e-learning).

Based on the WTDC-17 final report, regional initiatives are intended to address specific telecommunication/ICT priority areas, through partnerships and resource mobilization to implement projects. GIGA hopes to benefit almost all ITU regions. The following eight Regional Initiatives 2017-2021 are linked to GIGA:

1. AFR2: Promotion of emerging broadband technologies.
2. AMS3: Deployment of broadband infrastructure, especially in rural and neglected areas, and strengthening of broadband access to services and applications.
3. AMS4: Accessibility and affordability for an inclusive and sustainable Americas region.
4. ASP2: Harnessing information and communication technologies to support the digital economy and an inclusive digital society.
5. ASP3: Fostering development of infrastructure to enhance digital connectivity.
6. CIS2: Use of telecommunications/information and communication technology to ensure inclusive, equitable, quality and safe education, including the enhancement of women's knowledge of information and communication technologies and e-government.
7. EUR1: Broadband infrastructure, broadcasting and spectrum management.
8. EUR3: Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development.

**GIGA and the Four Pillars**

### The GIGA initiative consists of four pillars: Map, Connect, Finance, and Empower.

**Map** – In partnership with governments, GIGA has started mapping connectivity demand, using schools as a base point, and identifying where there are connectivity gaps. This information, combined with existing ITU mapping data, allows governments to take stock of their own existing infrastructure and review wired and wireless availability when assessing appropriate solutions for connecting schools in their countries. Already more than 800,000 schools in 15 countries have been mapped, and are viewable live at [www.projectconnect.world](http://www.projectconnect.world)

**Connect** – In partnership with industry, and based on the above mentioned mapping results, GIGA wishes to support countries with information for them to consider, related to the technical solutions available to provide schools with the necessary connectivity, and countries with safe, secure, reliable, fit for purpose infrastructure to support future digital development needs. This includes looking at solutions for last mile connectivity, with the help of the “Last Mile Internet Connectivity Solutions Guide”, being developed by ITU. This solutions guide is designed for governments, service providers, communities, civil society and technical organizations to review the telecommunications service delivery (voice and data communications) in developing countries around the world. The focus is on identifying specific solutions for localities acknowledged as unserved and underserved in terms of telecommunications service. These are localities that currently do not benefit from connectivity and the link to the global network of voice and data communications is reference as “last-mile” in this guide.

**Finance** – GIGA hopes to work with governments and share ways on how to build affordable and sustainable country specific models for finance and delivery, subsidizing market creation costs and incentivizing private sector investment.

**Empower** – Building on investments by UNICEF’s Venture Fund in open source solutions, GIGA wishes to engage with governments to identify, localize and suggest appropriate Digital Public Goods at scale, as per a country’s development priorities and in coordination with their broader national digital strategy. The focus is on, but not limited to information and skills for children, teachers, and administrators.

### Updates from GIGA's work in three regions: January-May, 2020

GIGA is focusing its initial efforts on three regions (East Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Caribbean) in partnership with governments and regional leads.

**Central Asia** – Kazakhstan signed on as the “Regional Lead” in January 2020 and the first financial model is being developed for this region. A GIGA Regional Center and regional team in Nur-Sultan has been established to implement the initiative with a commitment to bring together countries in the region to review financial models over a series of workshops and meetings. In Kyrgyzstan, by obtaining real-time mapping of all 2180 public schools, the government was able to use the mapping information to already go on to connect 690 public schools (~32%) of them. In Kazakhstan, we integrated 10,200 schools onto the GIGA global mapping platform which currently displays over 800,000 schools in 15 countries. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are among the first countries in the to roll-out GIGA.

**Eastern Caribbean** – 9 out of 11 countries in the Eastern Caribbean states (OECS) have completed mapping of their school connectivity. In partnership with the OECS Commission, who have agreed to serve as the GIGA Regional Lead, GIGA hopes to enhance the connectivity of schools and develop digital public goods needed to support the new digital education vision for the Eastern Caribbean. In May took place the inaugural GIGA Eastern Caribbean Steering Committee call, as well as a call with the OECS Ministers of Education, both chaired by the OECS Director General.

**Sub-Saharan Africa** - President Kagame as co-chair of the UN Broadband Commission has expressed his full support for GIGA and has confirmed Rwanda's support as GIGA Africa Lead Country. GIGA has been working with the governments of Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda in mapping school connectivity real-time, and looking at business models to make connectivity affordable and sustainable. In Kenya, we’re also supporting the development of educational digital public goods to be rolled out with the introduction of a new competency-based curriculum.

### GIGA and COVID-19

The current climate created by the COVID-19 outbreak has shown us the importance of universal connectivity[[1]](#footnote-1).

The global school shutdowns and health crisis exacerbate already challenging realities for lower-income countries: with the limited or non-existent infrastructure to connect to distance learning and essential services, their current education and economic stability as well as future opportunities and welfare are significantly set back. This current situation proves how critical it is to now accelerate connectivity, online learning and other initiatives for children and their communities and drive economic stimulus.

GIGA wishes to support the immediate response to COVID19, as well as look at how connectivity can create stronger infrastructures of hope and opportunity in the "time after COVID."

The GIGA team has accelerated work on key connectivity initiatives, with a focus on providing connectivity and necessary services to 13 ‘Quick-start’ countries[[2]](#footnote-2) in the months between April and September.

Only by working together can GIGA succeed. GIGA welcomes engagement and leadership from governments, businesses, civil society, technology providers, donors, investors and finance experts. You can find out more information at [www.gigaconnect.org](http://www.gigaconnect.org)

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1. <http://reports.broadbandcommission.org/state-of-broadband-2019/executive-summary/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kenya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Niger, El Salvador, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent [↑](#footnote-ref-2)