Summary of Session: Capacity Building and Enabling Environments for Meaningful Access in Indigenous and Rural Communities

ITU-D Digital Inclusion, Rhizomatica Communications and Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Thursday, 16 March 2023 / 09:15–10:15 (UTC+01:00)

https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2023/Agenda/Session/383

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The importance of capacity building as part of the elements of an enabling environment is key, especially in rural and indigenous communities where infrastructure does not exist as in urban contexts.

- Technical and technological training must be linked to the real needs of the communities and their ways of sharing knowledge; this is the only way to achieve a comprehensive learning process.

- Complementary connectivity solutions, where communities manage and create their networks, are those that prove to be sustainable over time, for which training is an essential enabling factor.

- To achieve a comprehensive training ecosystem for rural and indigenous communities in the Global South requires collaboration among various stakeholders.

- Training programmes such as the one for technical promoters in Latin America coordinated by the ITU or the National Schools of Community Networks are experiences that can be a starting point for replicating successful capacity-building models in rural and indigenous communities.

Towards WSIS+20 and WSIS beyond 2025, please share your views on the emerging trends, challenges, achievements, and opportunities in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines to date (5-8 bullets)

- There has been an important change in the focus on access rather than connectivity as a goal. However, it is necessary to better understand what we mean by access and what elements must be strengthened for it to be meaningful.

- There is an increasing willingness to look at complementary access solutions in communities as viable initiatives to reduce the digital divide, but greater efforts are needed to generate enabling environments that favor their replicability and consolidation.

- It is important to look at the access and content creation strategies developed in indigenous communities; these other ways of approaching technologies and relating them to their ways of life and territories can help us to imagine a future with a better scenario in the digital era.

- It is necessary to more actively promote capacity-building processes that go beyond the use of certain technologies, as this allows people to take charge of their own telecommunications and communication projects.

- It is important to focus on the accessibility and universal design of technologies. In indigenous and rural communities, in addition to the gaps they face due to their general characteristics, the existence of other barriers such as gender, age, disability or educational level must also be considered. Access barriers become harder in these contexts and a comprehensive approach is needed to solve these problems.

Tangible outcomes (such as key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments (3-5 bullet points)

- A new edition of the Training Programme for ICT Network Managers in Indigenous and Rural Communities in Latin America 2023, coordinated by ITU and partner organizations, will be held.

- There will be continuity to the National Schools of Community Networks in two ways: replicating the model in other countries and strengthening capacities for those who have participated in this first edition of the Schools.

- The launching of the Learning Repository for Community Networks was announced: https://cnlearning.apc.org/

Actionable plan (2-5 points)

- Generate partnerships between ITU and civil society organizations for the creation of capacity building programmes for indigenous and rural communities. For example, through the creation of hybrid programmes in Asia-Pacific and Africa, based on the one being developed in Latin America. Or the articulation with processes such as the Digital Transformation Centers.

- Creation of an online course for the curricular design of training programmes in community contexts, based on the systematization of the experience of the National Schools of Community Networks in order to replicate the model in other countries.
- Give continuity to the possibilities of concrete articulation that emerged from the session with key stakeholders, such as governments, regulators and academia.

Suggestions for thematic aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2024 (WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event) (one paragraph)

- To better understand the needs of unconnected populations, it is necessary to involve them directly in high-level discussions, which will allow a better understanding of their communication needs and enabling environments to provide solutions. On the one hand, it is suggested for the WSIS Forum 2024 the direct inclusion of people from indigenous and rural communities who have developed complementary access solutions in their territories. On the other hand, it is necessary for the voices of Indigenous Peoples to be heard not only in the special sessions on them, but also in other spaces where other elements of the WSIS lines of action are discussed.