



# THE INTERNET and ICTs FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

## GOALS AND PRIORITIES

- Assist developing countries in fully benefiting from the Internet through assistance on ICT infrastructure, expanding access, and developing locally relevant content
- Connect the benefits of the Internet with its free and open nature
- Support incorporation of cybersecurity due diligence practices in the build out of ICT infrastructure and development of systems and software

*"We believe digital policy should seek to fulfill the technology's potential as a vehicle for global stability and sustained economic development... The Internet provides broadly-shared connections that are essential for modern economies to be able to grow. It's that simple. It can help people even in remote areas take advantage of government services and make a better business decision, for example... [In addition,] the Internet fuels innovation that can lead to improved efficiency, improved productivity in every sector of a developing country."*

— Secretary Kerry, *An Open and Secure Internet: We Must Have Both*, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, May 18 2015.

## CONTEXT

The Internet has proven to be a successful catalyst for economic and social development around much of the world, in large part due to its open, interoperable, secure, and reliable structure and its multistakeholder governance. Unfortunately, a discernible digital divide persists, with many developing countries lacking the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, broad and affordable access, and locally relevant content required to drive significant Internet usage, which is a precursor to achieving benefits. The United States seeks to maximize the impact of our own development efforts, in concert with those of our partners, by offering innovation-enabling solutions. However, in looking for quick solutions for infrastructure assistance, economic opportunity, and a greater voice in Internet governance, some developing nations are accepting offers of partnership with countries supporting a problematic "information security" vision of the Internet, based, in particular, on content control. Significant support for this vision could stifle innovation, hinder trade, limit the free flow of information, dissuade foreign investment, and propagate insecurity.

## CYBER DIPLOMACY

In 2005, the United States joined the global community in forging the Tunis Agenda at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The Agenda recognizes the existence of a digital divide that must be addressed



to promote economic growth and requires “adequate and sustainable investments in ICT infrastructure and services, and capacity building, and transfer of technology over many years to come.”

The United States is increasing and coordinating its technical and resource assistance to developing nations related to the Internet and other ICTs. This effort focuses on expanding infrastructure, increasing access and affordability of the Internet, and growing the ecosystem of appealing online options for local users. Each project to confront the digital divide also provides an opportunity to advocate for and demonstrate policies conducive to preserving the open Internet.

Locally relevant Internet content is a key tool for achieving two different, important goals. One is to increase demand for and use of the Internet. Development of widely popular content (news, sports, entertainment, social networking) helps create a large constituency of Internet users with a vested interest in good service, open access, and innovation. The second goal is to better achieve a development aim and help nations see how the Internet can help solve problems—examples include: e-health, e-governance, mobile agricultural tools, and distance learning. (The latter is development leveraging the Internet, as compared to ICT development, like infrastructure assistance. Both would fall under the broader and more popular term, ICT4D: ICTs for Development, and both are components of cyber capacity building.)

## U.S. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

### The Alliance for Affordable Internet

The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) is an initiative launched in 2013 to make broadband affordable for all. Sponsored by the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Alliance is a global coalition that now includes more than 65 additional organizations and companies. The Alliance brings together prominent players from the private and public sectors as well as civil society to create policy and regulatory solutions that drive down the cost of Internet access around the world. The target of reaching entry-level broadband priced at less than 5% of monthly income will enable billions of people to come online. The Alliance publishes recommendations on policy and regulatory best practices; produces country ratings, research, and case studies to bolster the evidence base; and encourages systemic change through deep country engagements along with a range of incentives.

Office of the Coordinator For Cyber Issues (S/CCI)  
United States Department of State

## Global Broadband and Innovation

USAID supports the Global Broadband and Innovation Alliance with the organization NetHope to focus on increasing access and connectivity. The GBI-NetHope Alliance provides technical assistance in developing national broadband plans, undertaking analysis of access gaps, creating processes and procedures to improve effectiveness and efficiencies in broadband expansion, implementing new innovative and cost-effective network technologies, and enhancing the capacity of local ICT government officials. The GBI-NetHope Alliance has also been able to leverage the capabilities and reach of 41 international nongovernmental organizations and 30 companies, which collectively operate in 180 countries, developing solution centers and other shared resources.

## Digital Development



USAID’s Digital Development Team in the Global Development Lab catalyzes programs and partnerships in 1) digital finance, 2) inclusive access to digital-and mobile-based information and service delivery, and 3) the use of data collected by digital devices to improve decision-making. The Digital Development Team aims to build a sustainable digital economy that is built on a robust infrastructure ensuring universal access, with the integration of real- or near real-time data and analytics, digital transaction platforms, and the promotion of digital entrepreneurship.

