

Bridging the urban-rural digital divide and mobilizing technology
for poverty eradication: challenges and gaps

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Good News

- Over half of the world's population is now “online”

Bad News

- The Other half is not!

What is the Digital Divide all about ?

- The gap between the technological “have” and the “have nots” associated with the use of modern ICTs. (Internet, Mobile phones etc.)

Two Gaps:

- The “gap” across countries
- The “gap” within countries

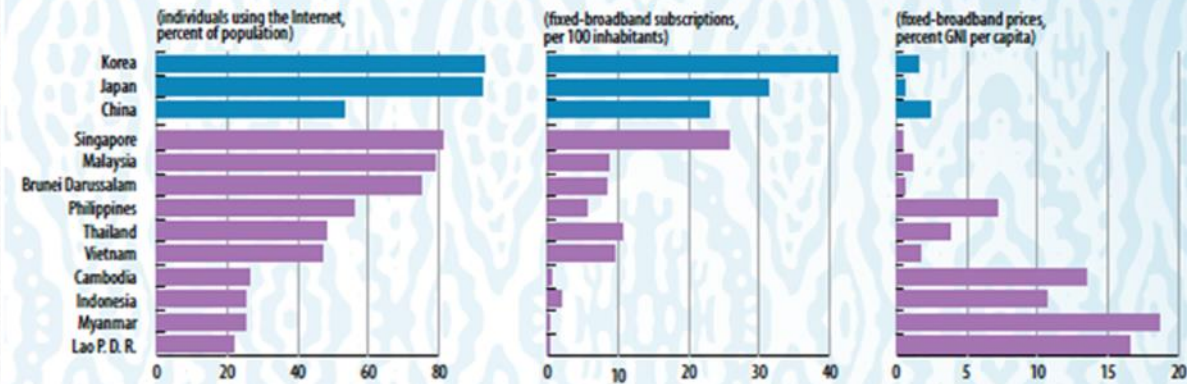
Why is it Important?

- Clear link between technological adoption/innovation and economic growth
- The digital economy is growing faster than the “real” economy
- Potential Use of ICTs in solving many problems that affect the poor
- The possibility of “leap-frogging” to more advanced technologies

Digital Divide: Asia

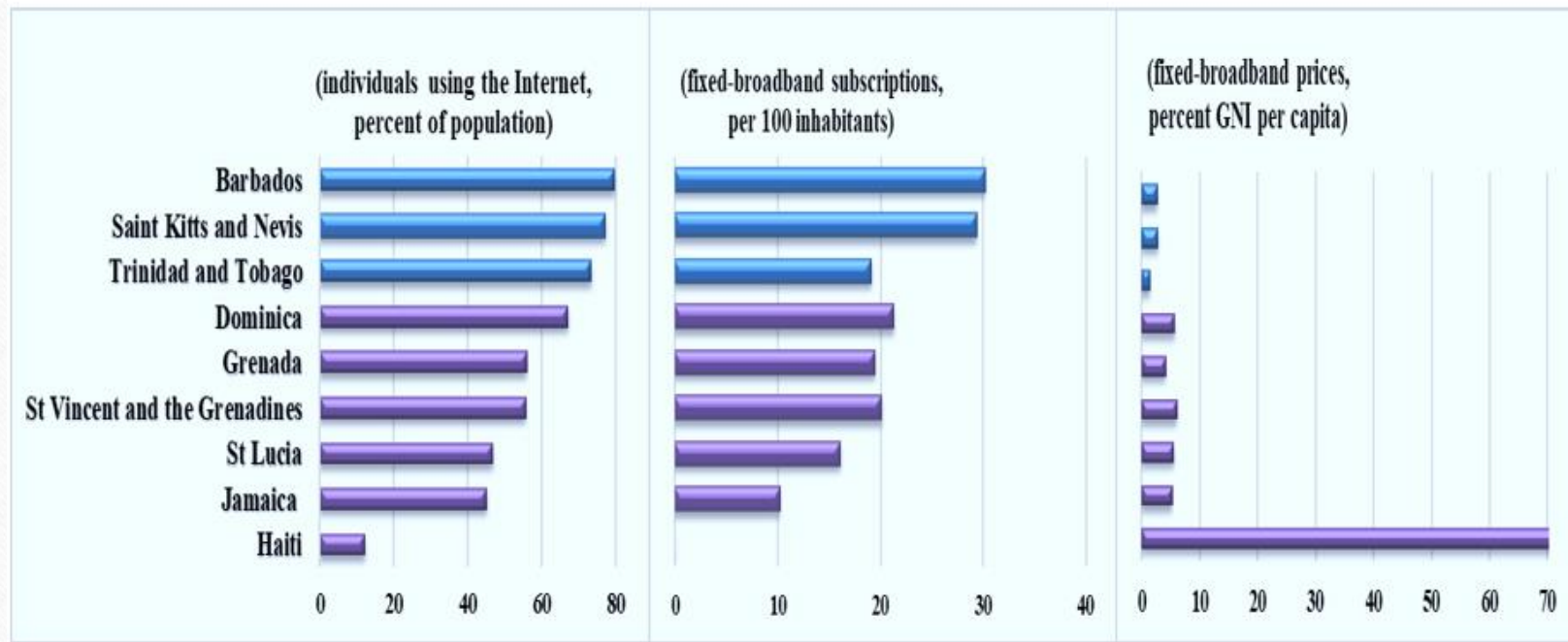
The Digital Divide

ASEAN has a large digital divide in Internet and broadband penetration. Fixed broadband is prohibitively expensive in many countries



Source: *Measuring the Information Society Report 2017*, International Telecommunication Union. NOTE: GNI=gross national income.

Digital Divide: Caribbean



Digital Divide: Africa



Reasons for the Divide..1

- Lack of electricity, especially in rural areas; 15 percent of the world population is estimated to be without electricity
- Literacy: many (13 percent) are still incapable of basic reading and writing
- Gender: women are 50 percent less likely to be online
- Poverty: millions of people still live below the international poverty line
- Affordability: the high cost of broadband access in many countries

Reasons for the Divide..2

- Language: most online content is only in a handful of languages
- Local content: lack of locally appealing apps hinders usage
- Network coverage: 3G networks reached 70 percent of population but was only 29 percent in rural areas in 2016.

Impact on Development...1

- **Mobile for Development** is an initiative of the GSMA, which is supposed to foster cooperation among mobile operator members, tech innovators, the development community and governments, to prove the power of mobile in emerging markets. They aim to identify opportunities and deliver innovations with socio-economic impact in financial services, health, agriculture, digital identity, energy, water, sanitation, disaster resilience and gender equality. They claim that their work has impacted 30 million lives across 49 countries.
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- <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/>

Impact on Development..2

- **GSMA mHealth program** Under the mNutrition Initiative funded by UK aid, works with mobile operators and other mobile and health sector stakeholders to support the launch and scale of mobile health services. As of June 2018, these services have cumulatively delivered lifesaving maternal and new born child health and nutrition content to over 2 million women and their families across eight sub-Saharan African markets: Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Uganda and Kenya.
- (<https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/mhealth/creating-mobile-health-solutions-behaviour-change>)

Impact on Development...3

- **Esoko** is a mobile app that was initially developed to provide a technology solution to collect and share market prices via SMS with farmers across most African countries. It has since evolved in having agricultural content and on-the-ground deployment services for any business needs with regards to agriculture. It is seen as the gateway to services such as marketing and goods sourcing, mobile money deployments, national farmer clubs and statistical services

Closing the Gap: Issues of Access

- Government policies that encourage competition in domestic telecom markets
- The removal of all taxes on Mobile and other ICT devices
- Public-private partnerships to incentivise the spread of devices
- Ensuring minimal access standards
- Developing broadband plans
- Careful spectrum policies
- Increasing the number of local IXPs
- Specific regions can move towards a single IT space

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Closing the Gap: Issues of Skills/Training

- Addressing digital literacy
- Promoting better understanding of the benefits of the internet
- A holistic approach to skills development strategy
- Systems to track new required skills
- Embedding IT skills in school curricula

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Closing the Gap: Local Content/Innovation

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- Locally appropriate, holistic and smart community-based policies
- Social and Community based networks.
- Encouraging more “digital villages”

Closing the Gap: Issues of Gender bias

- Wage parity between men and women
- Addressing “time poverty” issues (the ‘Internet Saathi’ campaign)
- Making programs “skill specific”
- Encouraging more women in STEM fields
- More gender specific data collection and research

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- Thank You!

Enjoy the Rest of your day!