Improving connectivity post COVID-19 economy

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Challenges in connectivity

• Only 50% world population has access to the internet
  • unconnected are from economically challenged/vulnerable communities
  • Older generation are behind in digital access
  • Pacific below global access levels

• COVID-19 transformed internet into an essential service

• Supply is not enough to meet the demand
Supply constraints

- Lack of long term sector planning and investment
- Rural, semi-urban areas lack infrastructure
- Private sector driven services limited to profitable urban areas
- Unaffordable for vast majority of the population
  - above UN standard of 2% avg per capita income
Role of Development Partners
ADB-SUPPORTED SUBMARINE CABLE PROJECTS IN THE PACIFIC

- Completed the main cable system in December 2017
- Currently supporting a terrestrial extension of the cable for better access for the local telecom players

North Pacific Regional Connectivity Investment
ADB funding $25.00 M

- For approval in March 2018
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- Kiribati already signed the contract

Improving Internet Connectivity for Micronesia
ADB funding $15.00 M
Others $36.20 M

Improving Internet Connectivity for Kiribati
ADB funding $21.00 M

Samoa Submarine Cable
ADB funding $19.00 M
Others $32.41 M

Tonga-Fiji Submarine Cable
ADB funding $9.70 M
Others $23.10 M

Improving Internet Connectivity for Cook Islands
ADB funding $15.00 M
Others $10.00 M

Legend
- Cable connection funded by ADB
- Cable connection funded by others

Infrastructure financing

PRIF Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility
Role of development partners

• Coordinating cost-effective regional solutions
• Influencing the policy decisions for universal internet access and regulatory regime
• Support digitization
Case 1: PNG health information

- 2015 ADB financed public health digital surveillance system in three provinces as pilot
- Tablets at health facilities and hospitals
  - collect data and generate health reports
  - allow information to be pushed out
- Data used by provincial and national health managers to identify outbreaks, routine reporting and distribute medical supplies
- System is now rolled out in over 840 health facilities across 17 provinces. Five provinces remain
- Challenge – maximize use of data collected
Case 2: Tonga – national health information system

• National health information system and the enabling environment
• Will connect all health facilities across Tonga and along transportability of patient information
• Automatic pushing of births and deaths data to CRVS
• Challenges: connectivity, basic digital literacy, lack of legislative framework, resistance to change
Case 3: Regional education resources

• Expand access to content and delivery platforms for open, distance, and flexible learning.

• Leveraging economies of scale to create and share Pacific solutions to accelerate opportunities to improve quality of education
  • contextualized teaching and learning resources by adapting open education resources, and coordinating and sharing of e-resources between Pacific countries
  • ensure limited financial resources deployed efficiently and effectively

• ADB and New Zealand are collaborating to scale-up ODFL regionally
  • establishing regional repositories to identify, adapt, develop, and aggregate e-resources for primary and secondary education, particularly literacy and STEM
  • supporting girls to pursue interdisciplinary studies relevant to Pacific context
  • allow countries and schools to customize learning content to meet local demands

• Strong partnerships. Governments of Fiji and New Zealand; key regional institutions including USP’s School of Education; Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development supported by COL.
Moving forward

• Investing in digitization for Governance, Health, Education etc.
• Exploring new technologies (Starlink, OneWeb) to connect the unconnected
• Exploring emerging technologies to create economic opportunities
• Supporting policy reforms and regulation to ensure affordability
• Training and protecting internet users
Thank You