

# Joining forces to advocate for a more affordable internet

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Imagine a world in which you spend 30% of your monthly income on basic internet service. Could you pay? What might you have to give up? For billions of people, these costs - and questions - are an unaffordable reality that stops them from accessing the Web.

Google has joined more than 30 members to launch the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), a new coalition that cuts across boundaries of geography, sector, or size. The goal? To help bring down internet costs through policy change.

New technologies play a crucial role in bringing the Internet to more people worldwide; we've developed and invested in many of these big ideas over the years. We broke new ground with balloon-powered Internet access, are bringing broadband to Africa with TV White Spaces, and are funding organisations like the Internet Society to develop Internet Exchange Points in emerging markets.

## Policy change can help new innovation

These technologies can have major impact, but no single solution can connect the 5 billion people living without Internet access today. Policy change can help new innovation take hold and flourish; outdated policies can stifle progress. In Kenya and other markets that have adopted national broadband plans, policy change has delivered results, fast. A4AI will focus on those policy changes that can bolster new access technologies and initiatives and make the Internet more affordable to people worldwide.

Initiated by the World Wide Web Foundation, A4AI includes members from the technology, government, and non-profit worlds, from developed and developing countries. Google, along with other global sponsors, joined the alliance in its early days to help establish the vision that exists today, as well as rally more members that share our mission for affordable Internet access.

A4AI has a specific goal in mind: to reach the UN Broadband Commission target of entry-level broadband access priced at less than 5% of monthly income worldwide. (According to the ITU, households in the developing world pay roughly 30% of monthly income for a fixed connection, so there's a lot of work to do.) We're working with A4AI on several initial projects, including:

- Publishing a set of policy and regulatory best practices;
- Working directly with governments, with plans to engage with 10+ countries by the end of 2015; and
- Releasing the first edition of an annual affordability report.

Ultimately, A4AI is about making the world a more connected place. Over 90% of people in the 49 least developed countries are still not online. A4AI wants to help people in these countries to get access, to find a door to new information, opportunities, and ideas.

Dr Bitange Ndemo, the honorary chairman of A4AI, has called for the need to remove "analogue policies that are holding back the digital revolution" in emerging markets.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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