



6-10 July 2026
Geneva, Switzerland

Session Outcome Document

Digital Inclusion as a Driver of Community Development. How ITU-D and Partners are Transforming Lives in Rural, Remote and Indigenous Communities

ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, Rhizomatica and Association for Progressive Communications

Thursday, 9 July 2026, 17:00–17:45

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2026/Agenda/Session/355>

Key Issues discussed:

- Digital inclusion requires a holistic approach that goes beyond infrastructure deployment and addresses affordability, accessibility, local relevance, and community ownership.
- Community-centred digital inclusion and connectivity initiatives play a critical role in extending meaningful connectivity to rural, remote and Indigenous communities that remain underserved by conventional telecommunications models.
- Capacity development emerged as a key enabler for sustainable connectivity, empowering local actors to design, deploy, manage and sustain digital infrastructure and services.
- Evidence from Africa and Latin America demonstrated that community-centred training programmes can generate tangible social, economic and development impacts at the local level.
- The importance of mentorship, peer learning and knowledge exchange networks was highlighted as a mechanism for strengthening long-term sustainability and replication.
- Participants emphasized that training alone is insufficient without enabling policy, regulatory and financing environments that support community-centred connectivity initiatives.
- Strong collaboration among international organizations, technical partners, civil society, academic institutions and local communities was identified as a key success factor.
- The session highlighted the need for continued efforts to address the specific needs, realities and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples and rural and remote communities

Key Outcomes of the session

- Shared evidence from ITU-supported capacity development programmes in Africa and Latin America, highlighting their contribution to digital inclusion and community development.
- The session reinforced the importance of combining capacity development efforts with enabling policy, regulatory and financing frameworks.
- Partners reaffirmed their commitment to continued collaboration, knowledge exchange and peer-learning mechanisms to strengthen local digital inclusion ecosystems.
- Successful community-centred approaches were recognized as scalable and adaptable to different regional contexts.
- Participants expressed interest in exploring opportunities to expand these capacity development models to additional regions, including Francophone Africa and Asia-Pacific.

Key Recommendations and Forward-Looking Actions

- Continue investing in community-centred capacity development programmes that equip local actors with the skills and knowledge needed to build, manage and sustain digital inclusion initiatives.
- Strengthen enabling policy and regulatory environments that support community-centred connectivity initiatives and digital inclusion efforts in underserved areas.
- Ensure that digital inclusion strategies address not only connectivity, but also affordability, accessibility and the specific needs of rural, remote and Indigenous communities.
- Foster stronger collaboration among governments, regulators, international organizations, civil society and local communities to accelerate inclusive digital transformation.
- Promote the replication and adaptation of successful community-centred models across different regions through knowledge exchange, peer learning and international cooperation.