

Meaningful Access and Inclusiveness

Challenges of Meaningful access, to achieve digital societal inclusion in the Arab region

{ Arab IGF AMPAC - STF }

Background

Securing Internet access is considered a human right and a lever to economic development for all countries. Therefore, governments must work to ensure universal internet access, just as they work to ensure access to other basic utilities such as water and electricity.

Furthermore, universal access to ICT, including connectivity to networks, devices and broadband digital services, is an essential and vital component for all people everywhere to reap the full benefits of digital transformation. It is a "lifeline" in emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as connectivity enables people to access essential business and public services, as well as connect with friends and family, work remotely, and access health care and education.

Accordingly, and in line with SDG 9, countries in the Arab region should devise universal internet access policies that allow affordable access to quality broadband services, facilitate digital inclusion, including the development of digital skills, access for women and persons with disabilities, and availability of relevant content and applications.

Description

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The main challenges to achieving the goals of meaningful access in the context of digital transformation revolve around three axes:

- Networking and connectivity challenges associated with financing and expanding broadband infrastructure
- Pricing/cost barriers that limit the uptake of digital services due to low purchasing power compared to high prices of services and end-user devices
- Challenges to Internet inclusiveness, which require eliminating digital divides, facilitating access to internet, developing digital skills, addressing gender disparities and accessibility of services for people with disabilities, and encouraging the development of digital content locally.

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