



Press Release

Date: 11 February 2014

Contact: press@webfoundation.org

Coalition of technology leaders moves to empower affordable internet access across Africa

- *Policy makers and technology pioneers congregate in Accra to develop national action plan for Ghana*
- *Alliance for Affordable Internet leads collaborative drive to increase affordable access in Ghana and other developing countries*

Accra, Ghana & Washington DC, USA. Today in Accra, the world's broadest technology sector coalition, the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), will host an interactive forum focused on driving down the cost of internet access in Ghana. The meeting - A4AI's first in-country engagement - will unite diverse players such as policy makers, technology pioneers, civil society groups, campaigners and researchers. Attendees will share insights and hammer out a new, long-term national plan designed to empower Ghana to slash broadband costs via lasting policy change and technological innovation. Participants include Dr Edward Kofi Omane Boamah, Ghana's Honourable Minister of Communications.

The interactive forum is the first of its kind, and has been arranged in conjunction with the Government of Ghana, with whom A4AI recently signed a memorandum of understanding. By uniting a diverse range of technology innovators to share insights and debate solutions openly, it is hoped that steps can be identified to tackle a number of challenges, which include:

- A lack of terrestrial fibre, and policies and taxes which limit the best use of telecommunications infrastructure
- The high costs of telecommunications equipment, often fuelled by taxation policies, and exacerbated by recent increases in value-added tax (VAT) due to government fiscal pressures
- Low citizen awareness about possible benefits of the internet and how to use it

Despite the recent landing of four new fibre optic submarine cables in Ghana, broadband remains too expensive for most Ghanaians and is largely an urban phenomenon. The ITU estimates that only 17% of Ghanians currently use the internet. By drawing on the expertise of A4AI's [54 members](#) - which include Omidyar Network, Google, the UK DFID and USAID - and the input of key actors in Ghana, this initiative hopes to build on recent progressive policies by the Government of Ghana and ensure that affordable broadband and universal access become a reality.



Dr Edward Kofi Omane Boamah, Ghana's Honourable Minister of Communication said:

'Ghana was amongst the first countries in Africa to connect to the Internet and in the last few years we have seen a surge in Internet usage and mobile broadband connections. However, we know we need to build on these successes so that all Ghanaians have access to affordable broadband. Our New Broadband policy, which has just been finalised, is evidence of our focus, commitment and plans for achieving this goal by 2020. Our work with A4AI improves our links with other countries in Africa and further afield that have similar aims. It also provides another platform for collaboration with them, as well as national and international private sector and civil society stakeholders.'

Sonia Jorge, the Executive Director of the Alliance for Affordable Internet said:

'Today, we hope to plant the seeds of further policy change in Ghana, unlocking the benefits of technological advances and innovation, and driving down the cost of access. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach that can make universal access a reality, so our work here will be grounded upon the principles of consultation and open dialogue. In Ghana, we are particularly concerned with affordable access for those living below the poverty line and those who are most excluded, including women, rural populations and minority groups.'

Estelle Akofio-Sowah, Country Manager of Google Ghana said:

"To bring more of Ghana online, we need partners—from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors—to work together. By launching its engagement in Ghana and bringing these partners together, the Alliance for Affordable Internet can help build the strong policy foundation needed to drive affordable, accessible Internet across the country. It's a big step towards laying the groundwork that can ultimately connect Ghana's current and future leaders and innovators."

Priya Jaisinghani, Director of Mobile Solutions for the U.S. Agency for International Development said:

"Ghana is a highly dynamic country that is aligning its regulations and policies so that it can capitalize on its robust telecommunications sector. This forum is a critical beginning for A4AI's coalition, including USAID, to begin work that we hope will drive down the costs of Internet access and serve as a model for the region. This approach will enable Ghanaians and others to take full advantage of the digital opportunity and to help build a more inclusive future."

Further Background

A4AI has grown rapidly as an coalition since its launch in October 2013, achieving a membership of over 50 organisations in just four months. Global sponsors Google, Omidyar Network, the UK's Department for International Development and the US Agency for International Development have been joined by a host of governments, technology companies and civil society organisations from developed and developing countries. The group is co-



ordinated by the [World Wide Web Foundation](#), founded by Web inventor, Sir Tim Berners-Lee. It will work in a number of countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, and has already signed a memorandum of understanding with the governments of Ghana and Nigeria. A4AI is advocating for open, competitive and innovative broadband markets with a focus on achieving the UN Broadband Commission Broadband Target of entry-level broadband services priced at less than 5% of average monthly income.

The commencement of A4AI’s long-term work in Ghana follows the publication, in December 2013, of the group’s first [Affordability Report](#) – a major study into the drivers of internet affordability in 46 developing and emerging countries. The report includes an ‘Affordability Index’, which ranks nations across communications infrastructure and access and affordability indicators fundamental to achieving affordable Internet. Ghana ranks 30 out of 46 in the Affordability Index. Malaysia, Mauritius and Brazil top the Index, with Morocco ranked as the leading developing country. Zimbabwe, Malawi and Yemen prop up the foot of the table.

Full List of Alliance Members

A4AI’s 50+ members reach across boundaries of geography, industry, and organisation type and include governments, companies, and civil society organisations from both developed and developing countries.

Global Sponsors	Private Sector	Public Sector and Academia	Civil Society and Foundations	Local Partners
Google Inc	Alcatel-Lucent	Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation	Association for Progressive Communications (APC)	Gambia YMCA Computer Training Centre
Omidyar Network	Cisco	Center for Technology and Society of the Getulio Vargas Foundation (CTS/FGV)	Cherie Blair Foundation for Women	Center for Business Transformations (at Millennium Development Institute Ghana)
UK Department for International Development	Digicel	Dialogo Regional sobre Sociedad de la Informacion (DIRSI)	Consumers International	Coollink



USAID	Ericsson	Government of Sweden (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	Ford Foundation	Fantsuam Foundation
	Facebook	US State Department	Global Partners	The Science Innovation and Information and Communication Technology Research Institution (SIITRI)
	Intel Corporation	Nigeria (Ministry of Communication Technology)	Grameen Foundation	Nigeria Network of NGOs
	Main One	Ghana (Ministry of Communications)	Internet Society	Africa ICT Right
	Microsoft Corp.		Inveneo	My Digital Bridge Foundation
	Yahoo!		IREX/Beyond Access	
	GSMA		New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute (OTI)	
	Cambium Networks		Research ICT Africa	
	Gilat Satcom		Software & Information Industries Association	
	Internet Solutions		The Centre for	



			Internet & Society	
	Phase 3 Telecom		Women in Global Science and Technology	
			World Wide Web Foundation	
			World Pulse	
			Internet Sans Frontieres	
			Digital Society Foundation	
			Taiguey	
			Internews	
			Mercy Corps	

--ENDS--

Photographs and interviews available on request.

Notes to Editors

1) The [Alliance for Affordable Internet](#) (A4AI) is a global coalition committed to driving down the cost of internet access in less developed countries.

A4AI focuses on creating the conditions for open, efficient and competitive broadband markets via policy and regulatory reform. Through a combination of advocacy, research and knowledge-sharing, the Alliance aims to facilitate the achievement of the UN Broadband Commission target of entry-level broadband services priced at less than 5% of average monthly income. In doing so, A4AI will help to connect the two-thirds of people in developing countries who cannot access the internet.

A4AI members are drawn from both developed and less developed countries and include public, private and not-for-profit organizations. The [World Wide Web Foundation](#), founded by



Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee, initiated the Alliance. Global sponsors are Google, Omidyar Network, USAID and the UK DFID and the Alliance has more than 50 members.

For more, please visit: www.a4ai.org.

2) The forum will be hosted at the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence, Located at the 2nd Avenue Ridge, Opposite the Council of State, GFA/GIJ Road. The full conference will take place between 09:30 - 15.00, with a press briefing at 12.45. Speakers at this event include representatives from A4AI; Edward Omane Boamah, Ghana's Honourable Minister of Communication; Estelle Akofio Sowah, Head of Google in Ghana; Kwaku Saakyi Addo, Chief Executive Officer at Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications; a number of leading Ghanaian academics and researchers; and senior representatives from all the key service operators in Ghana.

3) A4AI's recent report on internet affordability was released in December 2013 and is available here: http://a4ai.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Affordability-Report-2013_Final-2.pdf

Contacts:

Gabe Trodd, Communications Adviser, World Wide Web Foundation, London, UK

gabe@webfoundation.org / + 44 7730 522980 / Skype: gabe784

Alice Samson, World Wide Web Foundation, Washington DC, USA

alice@webfoundation.org / Skype: samsonalice

Dillon Mann, Senior Communications Adviser, World Wide Web Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa

dillon@webfoundation.org / +27 76 238 2313 / Skype: dillon.mann