

Press Release

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**A4AI** ALLIANCE FOR  
AFFORDABLE INTERNET

## **Report: More Than Two Billion People in Developing and Emerging Countries Priced Out of Accessing the Internet**

- *New report from the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI - [www.a4ai.org](http://www.a4ai.org)), shows that the price of broadband remains prohibitive for billions in developing and emerging countries, with women and rural dwellers hardest hit*
- *More than half the countries surveyed do not meet UN Internet affordability benchmark of entry-level broadband priced at 5% or less of monthly income*

**Barcelona, Spain.** At least two billion people living in poverty in 51 countries across the developing world cannot access the Internet affordably. This is revealed in the Alliance for Affordable Internet's (A4AI's) annual "Affordability Report", released today at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. A4AI is the world's broadest technology sector coalition, with Google, US AID, the UK Department for International Development and the World Wide Web Foundation amongst its 70+ members.

Across the countries surveyed by A4AI, a fixed broadband connection costs the average citizen approximately 40% of their monthly income, eight times more than the affordability target set by the UN Broadband Commission in 2011. Mobile broadband is cheaper but still double the UN threshold, averaging 10% of monthly income — about as much as developing country households spend on [housing](#).

The Report says bringing affordable broadband to all must be a priority in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals currently under negotiation at the UN. *"In the 21st century, inability to pay should not deny anyone access to the Internet. Universal broadband can easily become a reality if leaders commit to ending anti-competitive policies that keep prices artificially high, prioritising more well-planned infrastructure investment, and expanding public access programmes to ensure the poorest are not left behind,"* said A4AI Executive Director Sonia Jorge.

The Report also features an "Affordability Index", which combines primary and secondary data to score countries on the current and future affordability environment. High scores on the Affordability Index are strongly related to affordable Internet access.

## 2014 Affordability Index Rankings Snapshot

Top 5: Overall Index Rankings	Top 5: Developing Countries
1. Costa Rica	1. Rwanda
2. Colombia	2. Nigeria
3. Turkey	3. Morocco
4. Malaysia	4. Uganda
5. Peru	5. Kenya

Key themes emerging this year include:

- **Women and rural populations face the highest barriers to get online.** Social norms, income disparities, and infrastructure challenges all increase the real cost for these populations to get online, leading to their further marginalisation and exclusion from the benefits associated with Internet access.
- **Latin American countries are leading the way in policy reforms to expand affordable access.** Latin American states nabbed six out of the top 10 spots in this year’s Affordability Index rankings. Costa Rica’s innovative actions to expand broadband access to rural and poor populations and strong push to develop infrastructure — all guided by a well-formed broadband plan and supported by government — earned the country the number one spot. Robust broadband plans and similar integrated pushes to expand infrastructure found in Colombia, Peru and other Latin American countries resulted in the region’s high rankings.
- **There is a roadmap to progress.** Researchers identified five key policy areas which drive high Index scores. When developed and implemented in harmony, these measures will drive access prices down. They are: (i) the existence of an effective National Broadband Plan; (ii) an environment which promotes enhanced competition; (iii) strategies which permit efficient spectrum allocation; (iv) models designed to encourage or mandate infrastructure sharing; and (v) widespread public access through libraries, schools, and other community venues.
- **Strong political leadership is critical to increasing affordability and access.** While clear paths to progress do exist, strong leadership and commitment from the very top is required for meaningful change.

Commenting, Sonia Jorge, Executive Director of A4AI said:

*“Unnecessarily high prices, in tandem with a failure to expand public access, are still conspiring to bar billions from accessing the life changing potential of the Web. Those most in need of upliftment — women, rural populations and those living in poverty — are hit the*

*hardest. The good news is that a clear roadmap to progress has emerged. Global experience has delivered a set of policies and principles which — when implemented in an integrated fashion and combined with strong leadership — can deliver real change, fast. We urge policy makers in all countries to follow these recommendations. ”*

Allan Ruiz Madrigal, Deputy Minister of Telecommunications, Ministry of Science, Technology and Telecommunications, Republic of Costa Rica, commenting on his country’s top ranking:

*"Achieving universal broadband access has been a main focus of telecommunications sector reform in Costa Rica over the past seven years and continues to be a top priority. Our first National Telecommunications Development Plan, created in 2009, aimed to make broadband available to all users, develop access centres for vulnerable communities, and connect schools and government institutions. These objectives were central to our first National Broadband Strategy, which was formalised in 2012 and is now being revised to address barriers to affordable access and further these important aims."*

Dr. Omobola Johnson, Minister of Communication Technology, Nigeria, said:

*“The Federal Government welcomes the revised methodology applied in deriving the Affordability Index believing that it is aligned with the work we are doing to make the internet affordable and accessible to the citizenry. Whilst acknowledging our rise in the ranking, we continue in our unrelenting pursuit in removing impediments to infrastructure development and internet adoption in our country. We still have some way to go in meeting our national targets and international benchmarks but Nigeria's improved ranking on the Affordability Index validates our actions to date and shows that we are very much on the right track.”*

Patrick Ryan, Access Principal at Google, added:

*"More than four billion people are still offline, and the cost of Internet access is one of the biggest barriers to connecting more of the world. There's a huge need to understand what's working to make access affordable — the Alliance for Affordable Internet and its annual Affordability Report are helping us do this — so that we can all work together to put the Internet within reach of more people."*

Ann Mei Chang, Executive Director, USAID Global Development Lab, added:

*“The Affordability Report is a valuable resource for understanding the global Internet landscape, and its release today is so imperative because it pairs with the powerful consensus voice that A4AI has created among its diverse membership. Together, they offer us a clear pathway towards advancing a more inclusive digital economy.”*

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## **Notes to editors:**

1. The launch of the 2014 Affordability Report takes place March 4, 2015 at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. A presentation of the report's key findings will be followed by a panel discussion after which reporters will have the opportunity to ask questions and hold interviews. Reporters attending MWC may apply for an invitation to the launch event here:

<https://docs.google.com/a/webfoundation.org/forms/d/16KZy3vLG9bk4A4PiDKz3sKX2XHaevVtCu-Tm6phhr9U/viewform>

2. Photographs and interviews available on request.

3. **About the Affordability Report:**

The Affordability Report is an annual report produced by the Alliance for Affordable Internet. The report represents an ongoing effort to understand why some countries have succeeded in making Internet access more affordable, accessible and universal, and what others can do to catch up quickly. To do this, A4AI assesses expert survey evidence and secondary data on indicators proven to lead to lower Internet prices across 51 developing and emerging countries. The report produces an Affordability Index, a country ranking which assigns a score of 0-100 to each nation based on an in-depth analysis of communications infrastructure and access and affordability indicators. To allow for a fair comparison, country data was disaggregated according to the country's income level. The top 5 ranking countries on this year's Index are all middle-income, emerging economies.

4. **About the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI):**

The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) is the world's broadest technology sector coalition working to drive down the cost of Internet access in less developed countries. Comprising over 70 organisational members from across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors in both developed and developing nations. The [World Wide Web Foundation](#), founded by Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee, initiated the Alliance in 2013. A4AI global sponsors include Google, USAID and the UK DFID.

For more, please visit: [www.a4ai.org](http://www.a4ai.org).

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