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## **World Off-Track to Achieve UN Internet Access Goal as Broadband Prices Remain High**

- *New report from the Alliance for Affordable Internet reveals that if current trends continue, world will miss agreed target for universal Internet access by more than 20 years.*
- *Income inequality, gender discrimination, and poverty mean access remains unaffordable for over 70% of people in the world's least developed countries.*
- *The Alliance's Affordability Drivers Index ranks Colombia, Costa Rica and Malaysia as nations best placed to drive prices down fast.*

**22 February 2016.** Without immediate and urgent action, the world will miss the newly agreed global goal of universal Internet access by 2020. This is the key finding of the Alliance for Affordable Internet's (A4AI's) 2015-16 Affordability Report, released today. Analysis shows that, on current trends, the world's least developed countries will only achieve universal access in 2042 — more than 20 years past the target date set by the global community. As a result, at least one more generation in many countries will grow up excluded from the opportunities associated with Internet access.

In order to accelerate progress, the UN must set a more ambitious target for getting broadband prices down, the report argues. Even in those countries that have met the current target threshold of 5% of average income, income inequality means that nearly half a billion people — primarily women and the poor — remain priced out of the digital revolution.

The report examines the state of broadband affordability across 51 developing and emerging economies, with a focus on how policy and regulation are working to reduce prices and enable wider access. Key findings include:

- **Poverty and income inequality are masking the true state of Internet affordability.** While 25 of the 51 countries surveyed have met the current target

for “affordable Internet” — 500MB of mobile data priced below 5% of average national income — not a single country analysed met the target for those living in poverty (\$3.10 or less a day), while just nine countries met the target for the bottom 20% of income earners.

- **The high cost to connect continues to exclude billions from the digital revolution.** The global goal to provide affordable, universal Internet access focuses specifically on connecting people across the world’s least developed countries, yet 70% of people in these countries cannot afford a basic, 500MB per month broadband plan.
- **The affordability “sweet spot” is broadband priced at 2% or less of average monthly income, meaning it is time to commit to a more ambitious “1 for 2” affordability target.** When a basic broadband package is priced at this level, access becomes affordable for all levels of income earners. The report proposes a new affordability target: 1GB of mobile broadband priced at 2% or less of average monthly income (“1 for 2”). Driving prices down to the 2% average level will enable large swathes of the population currently priced out of access to get online, while increasing the data allowance to 1GB will allow users to make more meaningful use of the Internet.
- **Bold steps are needed to accelerate connectivity among women, the poor, and other marginalised populations.** Overcoming the challenges to access posed by income and gender inequalities will require policies designed with these populations in mind. Market forces cannot connect everyone — free or subsidised public access in tandem with digital education will be critical to enabling connectivity for populations left behind.

Commenting on the report’s findings, A4AI Executive Director Sonia Jorge said:

*“This report must serve as a wake-up call to policymakers, business leaders and civil society everywhere. If we are serious about achieving universal access by 2020, we need to condense almost 30 years worth of work into the next five years. Immediate, collaborative action is required — let’s work together to build open and competitive markets that can drive prices down to 2% of less of monthly incomes, while creating innovative public access programmes to reach those that market forces can’t.”*

The report also features an Affordability Drivers Index, which assesses how likely countries are to be able to drive prices down fast by analysing and ranking each nation according to the affordability policy and regulatory environment they have in place.

**Snapshot of the 2015-16 Affordability Drivers Index (ADI) rankings:**

<b>Top 5: Overall ADI Rankings</b>	<b>Top 5: Least Developed Countries</b>
Colombia (1)	Rwanda (11)
Costa Rica (2)	Uganda (16)
Malaysia (3)	The Gambia (20)
Turkey (4)	Myanmar (27)
Peru (5)	Tanzania (30)

Omobola Johnson, Honorary Chair of A4AI, and immediate former communications minister of Nigeria, added:

*“While it is heartening to see the progress made by some countries on the Affordability Drivers Index, overall, the results make for disappointing reading. The low scores across the board show just how far we have left to go toward developing and putting into place the policies necessary to reduce broadband prices and expand access. Yet progress is possible — countries like Colombia and Rwanda are testament to this. If we work together, think big, and learn the lessons from the journey so far, we can connect billions more to the life-changing potential of the Internet, fast.”*

The 2015-16 edition of the Affordability Report is available at [a4ai.org/affordability-report](http://a4ai.org/affordability-report), along with all supporting data and an interactive data explorer.

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## Notes to editors:

1. The 2015 Affordability Report will be released February 22, 2016 at [a4ai.org/affordability-report](http://a4ai.org/affordability-report).
2. Interviews with the report authors are available on request.
3. **About the Affordability Report:**

The Affordability Report is an annual report produced by the Alliance for Affordable Internet. It 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. The report provides analysis of relevant issues to understand key barriers to affordability, and develops actionable recommendations focused on how best to reduce prices and progress toward universal access.

To do this, A4AI conducts annual policy surveys and collects secondary data on indicators proven to lead to lower Internet prices across 51 developing and emerging countries. The report produces an Affordability Drivers Index (ADI), 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.

This year's report covers the same 51 countries included in our 2014-15 Affordability Report, and uses the same methodology as last year. While all data sources were the same, we did not conduct a new set of policy surveys for the 2015-16 Affordability Report. This was based on the assumption that policy and regulatory environments tend to change slowly, and was confirmed by a review of survey responses by several policy experts who participated in last year's survey. Thus, the results of the new report are based on changes in the secondary data only.

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 80 member organisations from across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors in both developed and developing nations. The [World Wide Web Foundation](http://www.webfoundation.org), founded by Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee, initiated the Alliance in 2013. A4AI global sponsors include Google and USAID.

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

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