

# Preface

Currently, around one to two billion users are able to connect to the Internet, most of them living in the industrialized parts of the world. However, if we want to improve the quality of life of the world population with the help of access to information and education, it is necessary that in the next decade an additional five billion people gain access to the Internet. Such a strategy is needed to fight poverty and inequality. The next five billion Internet users are mainly living in emerging economies. They cannot afford the kind of broadband data services many of us are enjoying today. In fact, most of them do not have internet access at all due to missing infrastructure. Therefore, the main challenge is to lower the economic barrier using new approaches for infrastructure deployment and service delivery, in order to provide affordable Internet access to billions of people living on the lower levels of the income pyramid. Lowering the costs basically means providing new low cost infrastructure, connectivity and terminals. Examples are cloud computing, advanced mobile backhaul solutions, or entry level PCs and novel mobile devices. However, this is not the only target which needs to be reached. Another aspect is to provide tailored services which are relevant to the people in their specific situation. The services should support them in their business, which is usually some kind of microentrepreneurship (e.g. farming or crafts). They also need to help overcome the lack of basic service infrastructure, e.g. by offering micro banking services. Other types of relevant mass market services are healthcare (eHealth), or services like Ambient Assisted Living. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can help increase the well being of people thus contributing to the economic development. In turn, ICT becomes more affordable to low income communities.

Even when the cost-efficient infrastructure and the relevant applications are available, there is still the need to implement new business models to reach out to rural areas and to train the people in using those novel services. Local village entrepreneurs or village kiosk concepts are models to be deployed here. The conference of the Münchner Kreis had looked into and discuss these challenges. Speakers from the ICT industry, academia, non-governmental organizations and governmental development organizations, among them many representatives from emerging economies in Africa and Asia, have presented their activities and share positive as well as negative experiences. They had highlight the real demand for ICT, and what impact ICT creates for the wealth and lifestyle of the people. Necessary measures to improve the speed of deployment were discussed, and ultimately the business opportunities behind these concepts were been shown. Furthermore, what mature economies can learn from the emerging markets was also being discussed.

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