

Facebook expands its African ecosystem

In addition to hosting its first African FbStart workshop for developers at AfricaCom, Facebook also shared how it seeks to empower local entrepreneurs with the new Internet.org Express Wifi programme.



Express Wifi by Facebook aims to empower local entrepreneurs to provide quality internet access to their communities and make a steady income. Working with local internet service providers or mobile operators, they're able to use software provided by Facebook to connect their communities. The programme is currently live at 150 locations in five countries across two continents. In Africa, Facebook has partners in Tanzania, Nigeria, and South Africa, with more deployments planned soon, including Ghana.

Chris Daniels, VP of Internet.org at Facebook, said: "Our mission is to give people the power to share and to make the world more open and connected. Only half of the planet is on the internet – our aim with Internet.org is to connect the other half through initiatives such as Free Basics, solar-powered airplanes, satellites, and our exciting new programme, Express Wifi. According to the ITU, internet penetration in Africa is now at 28%, but there is so much more to be done."

FbStart Meetup

More than 150 developers and entrepreneurs gathered for Facebook's first FbStart event in Africa on 15 November. FbStart is a global programme designed to help mobile startups build and grow their businesses. The event formed part of the company's FbStart world tour, which is a global event series connecting Facebook product experts and engineers with local developer communities.

During this half-day event, attendees met the Facebook team, learned about Facebook platform tools for developers, and saw how Facebook works with mobile app startups through the FbStart programme.

The programme gives startups access to year-round support from Facebook product experts, an exclusive community of global startups and free tools and services from premier partners like Amazon, Dropbox, and Stripe.

Population Density Map data

Also this week, Facebook announced that it is now releasing its [Population Density Map data](#) to the public. Government policymakers, academics and local organisations will all benefit from access to this rich data set, with potential applications such as socio-economic research, infrastructure planning, and risk assessment for natural disasters.

To start, the company has shared data sets for Malawi, South Africa, Ghana, Haiti, and Sri Lanka, and they can be found on the website of CIESIN at Columbia University. More countries will be added over the coming months.

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