

3.7 EASE AND AFFORDABILITY OF ENTRY FOR ALL SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY

In the absence of carriers being prepared to provide broadband coverage to certain areas and the lack of Government action to address the concerns of these residents, there is an emerging grassroots movement where people are prepared to undertake the provisioning of broadband services through cooperative action. This could prove to be a very important model in addressing broadband coverage in underserved areas in both developed and emerging economies.

With the introduction of relatively inexpensive and standardised WiFi (802.11b) equipment, there has been a rapid expansion in the number of voluntary groups involved in the provision of wireless community networks throughout cities and regions in many parts of the world. These new networks are often the result of a grassroots movement of people that have an interest in promoting the use of the Internet by ensuring free or at least nominal cost Internet access for everyone. Two of the more prominent are New York City Wireless and Champaign–Urbana Community Wireless Network (CUWin), but there are voluntary groups in virtually every country.

These wireless community networks have the potential to be one of the solutions to improving broadband access to disadvantaged groups within cities and also as a means of ensuring access in rural and remote areas where incumbent carriers are unwilling to serve. A notable example is the open access Djursland wireless broadband network serving some 3000 households in rural Denmark, where conventional broadband service was unavailable to 25% of the households.^[xviii]

The Southern California Tribal Digital Village (SCTDV) is a wireless network using unlicensed spectrum that has been deployed over a 7500 square mile area providing high–speed Internet connectivity for the first time to residents living in reservations throughout San Diego County. Many of its objectives relating to education and empowering communities are similar to those of the Wireless Ghana project in Africa that has established the Akwapim Community Wireless Network to provide high–speed Internet services to residents.

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REFERENCES

[xviii] Information provided by Djurslands to OPLAN.

[xviii] <http://djurslands.net/>