

MAKING THE CASE

Peru

Case Studies on Inclusive
Economic Development



Internet
Para
Todos

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1.0

Background



1.1 Context: Peru's Economy

Peru achieved substantial economic growth in the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, transitioning to the status of an upper-middle-income economy (World Bank, 2023). Peru's per capita income rose from US\$ 2040 in 2002 to US\$ 7126 in 2022 due to the country's macroeconomic stability, trade openness, and favourable international environment (World Bank, 2023). However, Peru still faces significant challenges in its economic growth and development efforts including the impact of climate change, rampant socio-economic inequalities, and an overdependence on natural resources (World Bank, 2023). These challenges hinder formal job creation, economic diversification, and inequality reduction (World Bank, 2023).

1.2 Bridging the Digital Divide: An Economic Opportunity for Peru

The pandemic has made it imperative to harness Peru's digital potential to rebuild its economy (AlphaBeta, 2020, pg. 1). By fully embracing digital technologies, Peru could yield an estimated annual economic impact of up to \$76 billion by 2030 (AlphaBeta, 2020, pg. 1). While mobile phones and internet connectivity underpin Peru's digital landscape, the nation faces rural connectivity challenges due to geographic hurdles like the Andes mountains and the Amazon rainforest (Corbera *et al.*, 2022, pg. 14-22). This digital divide is exacerbated by income disparities, with rural populations earning less than half of the national average monthly income (Corbera *et al.*, 2022, pg. 22). To address these issues, Peru must enhance rural connectivity, combining last-mile investments with digital literacy training to ensure safe and equitable technology usage (Corbera *et al.*, 2022, pg. 10). Achieving nationwide connectivity requires collaborative efforts from the government, private multinational companies, and the Peruvian community.

In February of 2019, **Telefónica**, **Facebook**, **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Invest**, and the **Development Bank of Latin America (CAF)** joined forces to launch **Internet para Todos (IpT) Peru** – an open access wholesale rural mobile infrastructure operator which aims to help bridge the digital divide in Latin America (Telefónica, 2019). This model aims to bring mobile broadband to remote populations where conventional telecom infrastructure deployment is not yet economically feasible. Telefónica shares its network, enabling any mobile network operator to use IpT's 3G and 4G infrastructure to deliver high-quality retail mobile communication services. Wholesale access is offered through a revenue share model, using open

technologies like automated network planning and open radio access solutions (Open RAN) to reduce the overall cost of deployment (Telefónica, 2019). Facebook has added capital and technology, while the two development banks have provided additional sources of funding (Springham, 2019).

1,900

Stations with 4G
internet

16,000

Rural communities
reached

3.3 million

People covered

Before IpT's operations in 2019, the digital divide in Peru was estimated at approximately 6 million people (Internet para Todos, 2023). IpT continued to operate throughout the pandemic, and during 2020 and 2021 managed to increase the number of rural population centres with access to 4G mobile internet by 240% (Telefónica, 2023). As of 2023, IpT has connected more than 1,900 stations with 4G internet, translating into more than 16,000 rural communities and covering more than 3.3 million people (Telefónica, 2023). In addition to providing internet access, IpT has launched the '[Juntos Conectamos](#)' alliance program, a private and public-private cooperation framework that seeks to "promote inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies and economies" (Internet Para Todos, 2023). Cooperating with Villa Planet, a Telefónica Foundation tool, Juntos Conectamos has created interactive recreational activities, as well as mathematics and communications challenges for Peruvian children living in rural communities (Telefónica, 2023). Additionally, in 2022 IpT built more than 57% of the stations for the 'Canon project' of the Deployment of the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Telefónica, 2023).



2.0

Built For All: Applied



2.1 Pillar One: Equitable Access to Resources and Opportunities

Internet para Todos (IpT) aligns most closely with the **first pillar of the ‘Built for All’ (BFA) Framework**, a set of ideal actions and outcomes that characterise a truly inclusive economy. This pillar highlights *“equitable access to resources and opportunities”* as a key factor of an inclusive economy (Franco et al., 2020). Since IpT provides an important basic resource needed to achieve economic prosperity (internet connectivity for a stronger digital infrastructure), it is addressing the spatial segregation in Peru that has created a lack of access for disadvantaged communities (Franco et al., 2020).

Under this pillar, one of the ideal outcomes is technology, data, and digital networks that benefit everyone. The expanded internet connectivity, as a result of IpT’s operations, proved to be crucial during the pandemic. For example, Moya, a small Andean town in Peru, became the country’s “lifeline into the outside world” because its 4G connection platform, installed by IpT in 2019, allowed local doctors to learn about the latest COVID-19 treatments (Margot & Cabañas, 2022). Furthermore, 1.5 million Peruvians were able to participate in the country’s online classroom system, which would have been impossible before IpT’s 4G internet installations across rural communities in Peru (Margot & Cabañas, 2022).

In meeting this outcome, the BFA Framework suggests that Businesses should “partner with government and civic sectors to provide digital products and services to discriminated populations” (Franco et al., 2020). In successfully reaching rural populations across Peru, IpT, a private company itself, partnered not only with other private companies like Telefónica and Facebook, but also with two multilateral development banks that have several governments as shareholders.



2.2 Pillar Two: A Level Playing Field for Work and Competition

IpT also contributes to outcomes in [Pillar 2 of the BFA framework](#) by advocating for improved physical and digital accessibility to job opportunities and community resources. By expanding 4G networks, IpT enables rural participation in the digital revolution (Internet Para Todos, 2023). An essential element in increasing employment rates is ensuring stable access to educational services and encouraging skill-building from a young age. As of 2018, only 36% of students residing in rural areas had access to the internet at home (Statistica, 2023), and thus, faced barriers in accessing online educational content during the pandemic. This digital divide threatens the widening of the digital skills gap, perpetuating employment inequalities. With IpT continuing to extend its services to over 3.3 million individuals, it has provided a tangible solution (Telefónica, 2023). The newly connected students gain access to learning materials usually only available in urban cities like Lima, while teachers find it easier to deliver video lectures and host virtual classes. Enhanced connectivity opens doors to essential skill-building opportunities, enabling youth to enter the labour force and reduce poverty.

However, as the company continues to work towards bridging the rural-urban digital divide, there is a growing need for comprehensive impact assessments within the rural communities it has connected. In particular, the company stands to gain valuable insights by analysing the effects of increased access to educational services on long-term employment rates. Further, collecting data on how heightened connectivity enhances individuals' digital proficiency and thus influences their employment status could help shape future government policy decisions on labour market dynamics.



2.3 Pillar Three: Collective Stewardship of Shared Resources for Future Generations

The ideal outcome of **Pillar 3 of the BFA** is the alignment of long-term research and development (R&D) efforts across sectors to address complex societal challenges (Franco et al., 2020). Additionally, Pillar 3 emphasises the importance of enacting mission-oriented policies that target specific societal challenges, such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

IpT utilizes an open-access wholesale rural mobile infrastructure model, which bridges the digital divide and enables widespread internet access in rural areas (Telefónica, 2019). IpT's commitment to leveraging open-access principles and new technologies aligns to expand the frontiers of knowledge, innovation, and technology, as emphasised in the framework. The project not only fosters economic competitiveness but also enhances livelihoods, thereby contributing to the well-being of the population.

Furthermore, IpT's emphasis on conducting workshops with a gender component underscores the project's commitment to empowering women and promoting inclusivity. This approach aligns with the mission-oriented policies advocated by the framework, demonstrating a targeted effort to address specific societal challenges.

2.4 Conclusion

Through its collaborative effort, technological innovation, and community engagement, the IpT project sets a precedent for inclusive connectivity - reflecting the significance of holistic approaches in bridging the digital divide. By expanding its innovative **Network as a Service (NaaS)** model to provide high-quality mobile communication services, the initiative showcases a commitment to continuous technological advancement and social inclusion. As a model for other regions, IpT exemplifies the transformative potential of embracing open access principles, leveraging new technologies, and implementing the right policies to foster sustainable development.

3.0

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