

# New undersea cable lands in Sierra Leone

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An undersea telecommunications cable landed in Sierra Leone on Monday, part of a 17,000-kilometre fiber optic line that aims to connect countries along the west African coast to Europe.

At a ceremony receiving his country's part of the line, President Ernest Koroma hailed the "momentous and great communication transformation" in a country where [Internet penetration](#) is currently at a mere six percent and mobile penetration at 35 percent.

The Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) cable, run by a 17-member consortium headed by [France Telecom](#), aims to connect 21 countries, 18 of them in Africa, and is due to be operational in the second half of next year.

The 17,000-kilometre-long (10,540-mile) submarine cable is to run from Cape Town along the west coast of Africa, through Portugal and to France, according to the project's website.

Much of Sierra Leone's communication infrastructure was severely damaged as a result of a 10-year war that ended in 2002.

The ACE project is one of a handful of submarine cables that have been launched in recent years connecting Africa with Europe.

In April a 14,000-kilometre (8,700-mile) West Africa [Cable System](#) (WACS) fibre optic line linking South Africa's Western Cape province to London landed in the country. The cable has landing points in 10

other countries along Africa's western coast.

All of the projects hold the promise of an [Internet boom](#) for Africa, where only 9.6 percent of people are web users, compared to 65 percent of Europeans.

The capacity of Africa's fibre [optic cable](#) connections has expanded dramatically since 2009, when the continent relied mainly on slower satellite connections.

But the increased capacity has often been slow to reach residents, especially in rural areas, as service providers have lagged behind in building "last mile" infrastructure -- the wires, cables and towers needed to get data to and from the end user.

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