

Q&A: How Internet.org aims to connect the world's poor

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Picture released by the Colombian Presidency press office showing Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos (R) with Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg during a meeting at Narino Presidential Palace in Bogota, Colombia, on January 14, 2015

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg was in Colombia to launch a project to boost web access globally, something he said can be a force for peace.

Facebook is a founding partner of Internet.org, which aims to provide Internet access to two thirds of the world's population who are not online, and are mostly living in poorer nations.

The Internet.org app was launched in Colombia Wednesday, offering users of the Tigo telephone network free access to basic online services including weather, Wikipedia, Facebook, and government services.

The service is already available in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia.

Vice president of Internet.org and Facebook executive Chris Daniels told AFP how he thinks Internet access can be a tool for social good worldwide.

Q: Why are Facebook and Internet.org focusing on emerging markets?

Facebook's mission is to make the world more open and connected and Internet.org's mission is to connect the two thirds of the world that is not yet connected to the Internet.

That two thirds that are not yet connected are primarily located in emerging markets, so this is why we have the focus on Internet.org in emerging markets.

Q: How can you convince people who have never used the Internet that it is a useful tool?

We think that there are two primary barriers to people using the Internet. What Internet.org is trying to solve is both affordability and awareness. Trying to give a small set of basic services that are going to improve people's lives.

We believe by people having their first experience on the Internet, they

will start to understand the value of the Internet, they'll pay for access to the Internet and hopefully improve their lives.

Q: Why did Internet.org launch a version of Facebook tailored to Colombians?

Part of making the Internet accessible is to make sure that the content that people have access to is relevant and that includes the language it is presented in.

When we launched Internet.org in Tanzania, we launched it in Kiswahili (the local language), and when we came here, we want to make language locally relevant.

Q: What does Facebook gain if more people around the world have Internet access?

Our mission in Facebook is to make the world more open and connected. And we don't feel we can do that until the entire world is connected. I don't think the question is necessarily what Facebook gains, but what the world gains. And what the world gains is more people have better opportunities in their lives, more people have the opportunity to express themselves, the communication tools.

Q: Your app aims to provide access to some of the world's poorest people, but how can they access smartphones?

Internet.org is available as an Android app but also on our website. So everybody with a feature phone (low-end mobile phone) can go to www.Internet.org, as long as they are on the Tigo network and have all the services of Internet.org so it does work for feature phones.

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