Digital connectivity is a necessity - not a luxury. While mobile network coverage is growing, worldwide adoption is still only at 57%. Over 2.7 billion people remain unconnected to the Internet.

Smartphone adoption is key to closing this digital divide. Studies have shown that in Africa, for example, 10% more people accessing high-speed networks would lead to an average 2.5% growth in GDP.

Smartphone ownership is lowest in emerging markets. Only 45% of adults in emerging markets own a smartphone vs. 76% in advanced economies. Findings show women in these markets are even less likely to own a smartphone.

Affordability is one of the key challenges to smartphone adoption. Smartphones can cost over 70% of the average monthly income in vulnerable countries, making them unaffordable.

Make devices affordable by:

1. Increasing device financing options (e.g. flexible payment options)

2. Introducing fair taxation and import duties

3. Improving distribution to remote areas

This is outlined in a 5 point action plan:

1. Create partnerships across the digital value chain
2. Improve regulation and quality standards for pre-owned smartphones
3. Develop strategies to recycle mid- and low-tier phone devices
4. Explore the use of Universal Service Funds and government subsidies
5. Model the benefits of reducing tax and import duties

The Broadband Commission Working Group on Smartphone Access recommends three key interventions to make smartphones accessible to all.

1. Increasing device financing options
2. Introducing fair taxation and import duties
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For more insights, read the full report at bit.ly/WGSmartphoneAccess

Strategies Towards Universal Smartphone Access is the first multi-stakeholder dialogue and analysis on addressing barriers to smartphone ownership, with a special focus on developing countries. Published by the Broadband Commission Working Group on Smartphone Access, and co-chaired by Commissioners from Vodafone, ITU, and UNOHRLLS, the Working Group report provides actionable recommendations to guide stakeholders in driving real progress in the area of smartphone access and tackling the digital divide.

Smartphone adoption which increases Internet usage that could boost both GDP and well-being. Smartphone ownership is lowest in emerging markets. Affordability is one of the key challenges to smartphone adoption. Make devices affordable by:

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