

Saint Lucia Seeks to Bring Internet to the Poor



Castries, March 24 (teleSUR-RHC) In a country where Internet penetration rate in some communities is as low as 13.2 percent, a new program is seeking to bring Internet access to residents and villages which are being left behind in a technological age.

Every country in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has a National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC), which regulates the telecoms industry.

The NTRC in Saint Lucia is using a portion of the fees paid by telecommunications giants to ensure access to information in schools, health centers and strategic locations in underserved communities. This is important as access to fixed Internet in Saint Lucia stands at 14.6 percent and mobile Internet at 28 percent. "It seeks to collect 1 percent of the revenue, on average 1 percent of the revenue of telecommunications license payments of telecommunications providers and put that into a fund and those funds are used to fund projects where telecommunications services are not adequately reaching certain areas," says Gerry George, the NTRC Commissioner in Saint Lucia. Yasmine Tyson, who head the schools learning resource, says for some students, it is a life-changing experience. "It will more or less revolutionize the way in which we deliver our content to our students. This is the digital age and students are demanding more from the classroom. They want the real life experience," she said.

Telecoms company, LIME is responsible for establishing the Internet access, which will bring service to lower income residents and the physically challenged. “We are clearly where our communities need to be better connected to the world wide web. Especially a project like this, it makes us very excited because we’re talking about schools and public access,” said LIME Chief Executive Officer for the Southern Cluster, Geraldine Pitt.

Initially, three secondary schools in Saint Lucia will serve as hubs for the program. NTRC officials are hoping that the project will be expanded to improve the quality of education and life for residents in communities across Saint Lucia.

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