



Bringing Broadband's Benefits to Rural Jamaica

TV White Spaces Provide Practical, Affordable Solution for Remote Areas



U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica Luis G. Moreno signs a Memorandum of Understanding officially launching the pilot on Jan. 21, 2015, as other signators and key officials, including Jamaica's Minister of Science, Technology, Energy, and Mining Phillip Paulwell (seated left) and U.S. Agency for International Development Mission Director to Jamaica Denise Herbol (seated right), look on.

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Telling Our Story

U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories>

GBI Email

gbi-operations@nethope.org

In partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Microsoft, and the Jamaica Universal Services Fund, the Global Broadband and Innovations Alliance (GBI) is bringing the benefits of broadband (high-speed Internet and data transmission) to rural communities in Jamaica through the cutting-edge television “white spaces” (TVWS) technology.

“White spaces” are unused parts of the spectrum of radio frequencies originally set aside for analog television. Broadband delivered through TVWS has a stronger signal able to travel a longer distance over hills and around/through buildings than other wireless Internet delivery methods. This makes TVWS a practical and affordable option for rural areas where homes, businesses, and community buildings are far apart. Due to high costs, such communities often are not hooked up to the fiber or cable networks delivering broadband in more urban areas.

The pilot project’s implementation will begin in June 2015, and by September 2015 more than 30 schools, libraries, and other community locations around the island will receive TVWS connections. Microsoft is also providing technical support for network deployment, and the pilot is working to leverage other education and community-focused technology grants and projects for the newly connected locations, such as a public-private partnership between USAID and Digicel supporting some 200 rural Jamaican schools.

For Jamaica’s rural residents, broadband access will mean:

- **Economic empowerment:** When people living in rural and remote areas can access the Internet for services, resources, and market information, they are immediately empowered to make their businesses more efficient, increase their incomes, and improve their quality of life.
- **More educational opportunities:** Connecting schools with the Internet gives students access to online books, distance learning programs, and other essential educational resources they previously went without.
- **More responsive government:** The Internet enables all levels of government to become more responsive to citizens and improve a range of essential services from education to healthcare.

GBI is a cooperative agreement between NetHope and USAID. NetHope is a nonprofit consortium of more than 40 leading international humanitarian aid organizations working with leading high-tech firms to leverage innovations in information and communications technology to improve the human condition worldwide. Microsoft is a key NetHope supporter.