

Digital Connectivity in the Pacific Islands

Key Issues, Challenges & Opportunities for Policymakers

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Introduction & Context

Why Digital Connectivity Matters

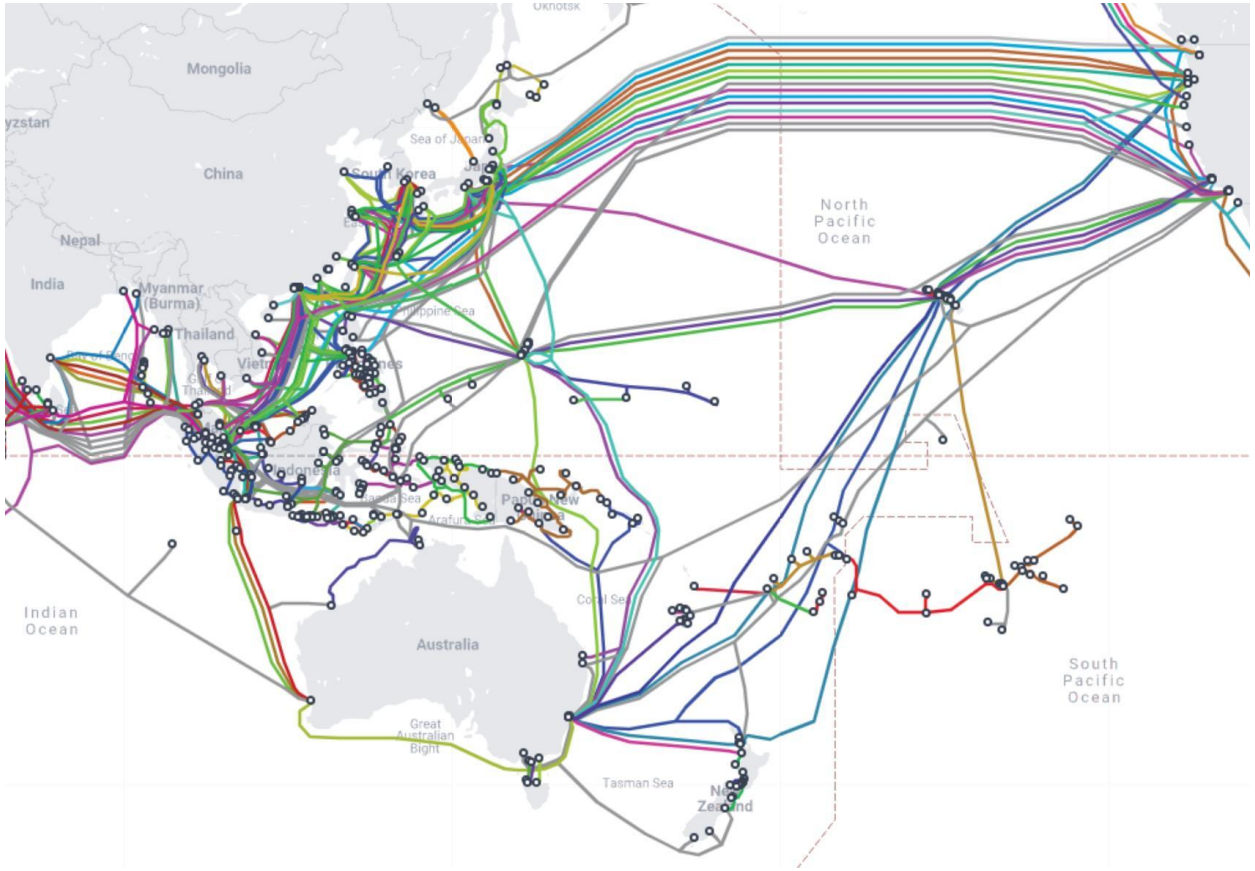
- Lifeline for education, healthcare, trade, governance
- Essential for climate resilience & disaster response
- Key to unlocking inclusive growth in remote island nations

Current Snapshot of Connectivity in SIDS

Where we are today:

- 2.3 million people, scattered across an area equiv. to 15% of the globe's surface
- Internet penetration: ~ 67% (2023, all SIDS)
- Mobile broadband coverage: urban vs rural gap: ≈37 pp gap, 2023 (100% vs. 62%)
- 7/20 SIDS depend on single subsea cable & outer islands rely on satellites
- Hight cost of access (FBB) vs global avg: ~25% (~50% higher compared to all SIDS)
- Adoption vs. coverage: ~59% usage gap (~27% mobile Internet usage vs. ~86% 3G/4G coverage)

Cable System in Pacific



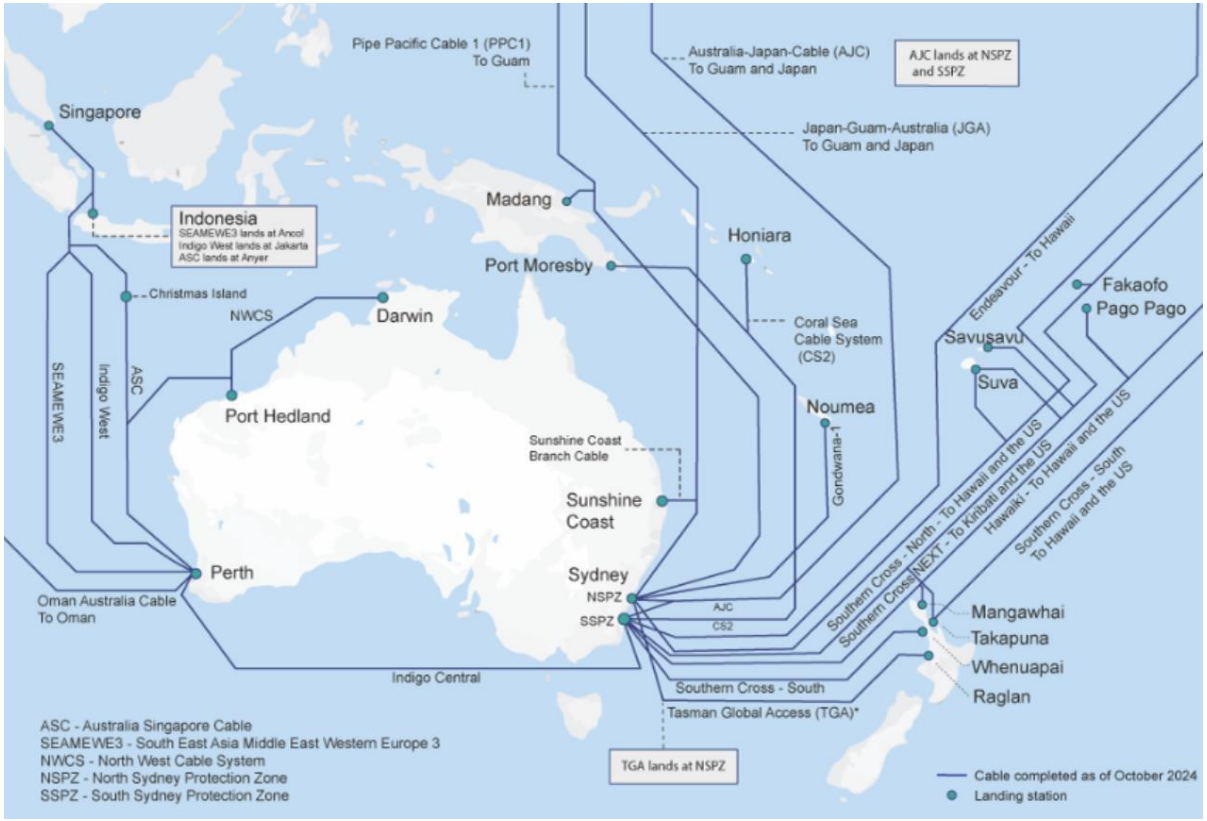
Submarine cable systems in the Asia Pacific region (from telegeography.com)

Infrastructure Gaps

Challenges on the ground

- Sparse undersea cable coverage: many islands unconnected/ rely on one cable
- Heavy reliance on satellite (latency, cost)
- Power supply & maintenance constraints (<60% HH in some states; lack of spare parts and skilled technicians)
- Scale and geography raise deployment costs

Subsea Cables Landing in AU



International submarine cables landing in Australia, Image courtesy: ACMA

Policy & Regulatory Challenges

- Monopoly/limited competition in telecom markets (13/23 SIDS, territories/dependencies, with only 1 provider)
- High retail prices, low affordability
- Weak data protection & cybersecurity frameworks
- Inconsistent policies across Pacific nations

Socioeconomic Impact

When connectivity is limited:

- Students unable to access online learning resources
- Healthcare: restricted telemedicine, delayed diagnoses
- Businesses excluded from digital trade/e-commerce
- Widening inequality between connected vs remote communities

Opportunities for Investment & Innovation

Emerging Solutions:

- Regional shared infrastructure (co-locating cables, consortia models, e.g. CPC- Central Pacific Cable)
- Low Earth Orbit satellites (Starlink, OneWeb, etc)
- Renewable energy–backed network operations (AUG's REnew Pacific)
- Upskilling: local workforce for Internet services, network and system design & operation

(PRIF, AUG (AIFFP, RAPID, SAEPAC, Safety, Security, Infrastructure), APNIC/Foundation- IX, CERTs, Digital Leap, ISIF Grants), WBG (ID4D initiative)

Immediate Recommendations (1–3 Years)

What Policymakers Can Do Now

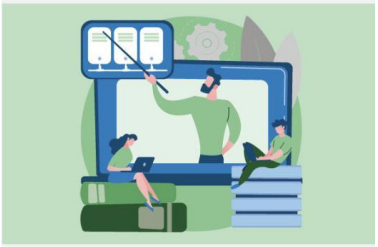
- Expand market competition and encourage new entrants
- Leverage Universal Service Funds for rural areas
- Build public–private partnerships for infrastructure projects
- Build technical, policy & leadership skills (Internet dev, operation, security)

APNIC Foundation
Skill Development Projects
(Digital Leap, Switch)

Learning that leads to industry-recognized certifications

APNIC Academy

Online courses



Gain a certificate of achievement with self-paced online learning courses.

Virtual labs

Hands-on e-learning using multiple cloud-based instances of virtual machines and network topologies.

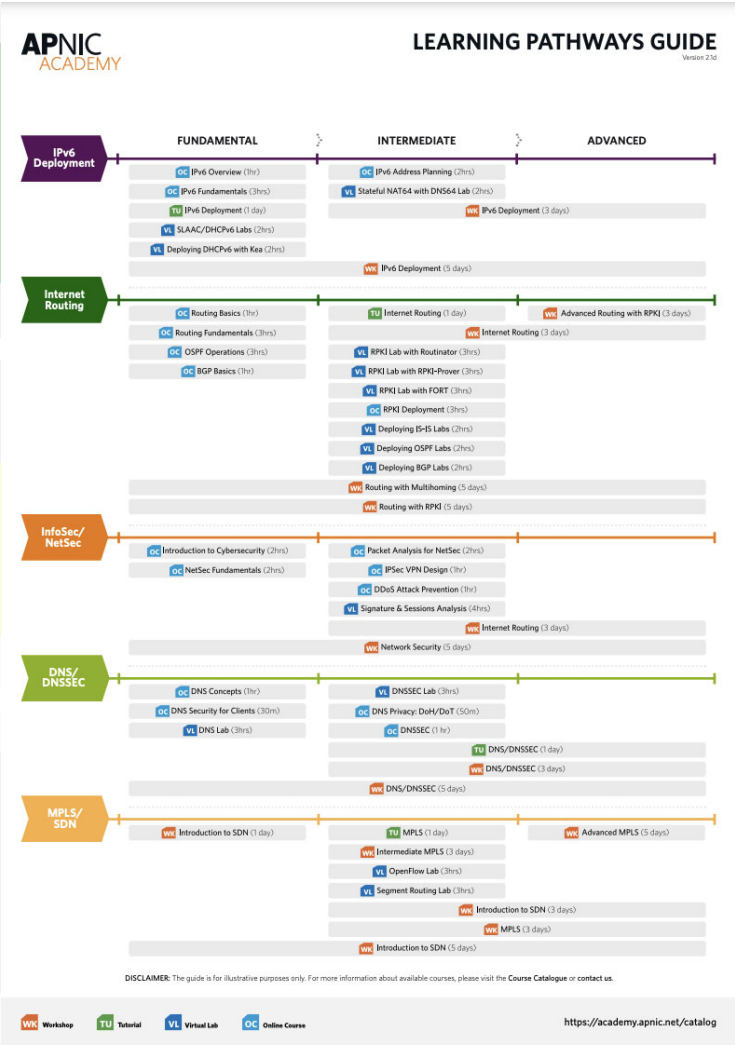


Find an expert on the Technical Assistance platform.

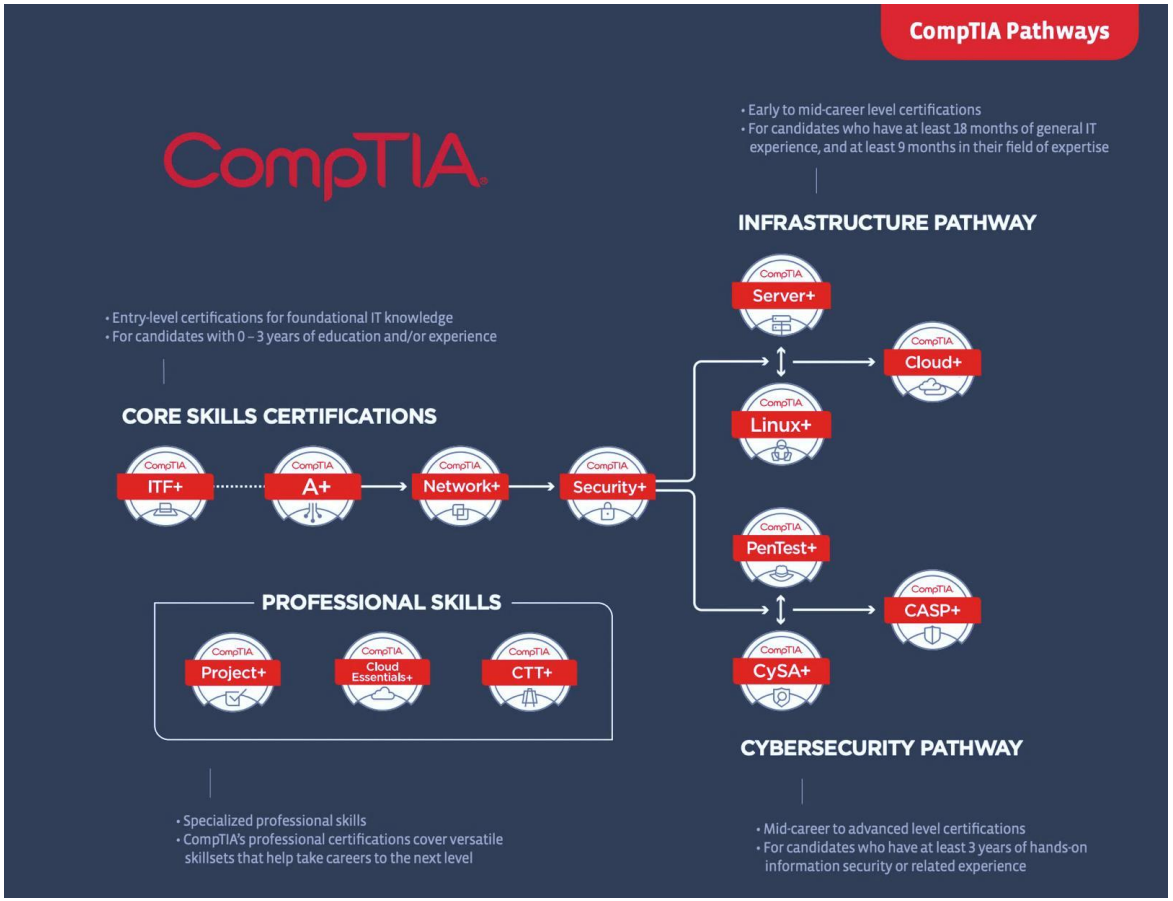
Training Events



Register for a range of upcoming online, face-to-face and hybrid events.



CompTIA


CompTIA Pathways
CompTIA
• Entry-level certifications for foundational IT knowledge
• For candidates with 0 – 3 years of education and/or experience
CORE SKILLS CERTIFICATIONS
ITF+
A+
Network+
Security+
PROFESSIONAL SKILLS
Project+
Cloud Essentials+
CTT+
• Specialized professional skills
• CompTIA's professional certifications cover versatile skillsets that help take careers to the next level
• Early to mid-career level certifications
• For candidates who have at least 18 months of general IT experience, and at least 9 months in their field of expertise
INFRASTRUCTURE PATHWAY
Server+
Cloud+
Linux+
PenTest+
CASP+
CySA+
CYBERSECURITY PATHWAY
• Mid-career to advanced level certifications
• For candidates who have at least 3 years of hands-on information security or related experience

ISACA



CISA
Certified Information Systems Auditor.

CISM
Certified Information Security Manager.

CRISC
Certified in Risk and Information Systems Control.

CGEIT
Certified in the Governance of Enterprise IT.

CDPSE
Certified Data Privacy Solutions Engineer.

CSX-P
CSX Cybersecurity Practitioner.

ITCA
Information Technology Certified Associate.

CET
Certified in Emerging Technology

ISC2



CC
Entry-Level Cybersecurity

CCSP
Cloud Security

ISSAP
Security Architecture

SSCP
Security Administrator

CGRC
Governance, Risk and Compliance

ISSEP
Security Engineering

CISSP
Leadership & Operations

CSSLP
Secure Software Development

ISSMP
Security Management

Other Providers

a menu of **90+** skills training providers

Digital Leap South Asia Graduates



Yasir Ahmed- Pakistan

PMI PMP- Project Management Professional



Mohammad Younus Omid- Afghanistan

Microsoft Certified: Azure Administrator Associate



Majid Khan- Pakistan

CompTIA Security+



Mohamed Mazeen. Mujtaba- Pakistan

AWS Certified AI Practitioner



Sumaya- Pakistan

AWS Certified Solutions Architect



Hassam Ud Din- Pakistan

Crowd Strike CCFA- Certified Falcon Administrator



Ibrahim Naaif- Maldives

CompTIA PenTest+ - Penetration Testing Professional



Munir Ahmed- Pakistan

ISACA CISA- Certified Information Systems Auditor



Sadaqat Waqar- Afghanistan

Cisco CCNA- Certified Network Associate

Future Outlook (5–10 Years)

Looking Ahead

- Next-gen connectivity: 5G, IoT, AI-powered services
- Digital resilience to climate change & natural disasters
- Regional policy harmonization for seamless markets

Roadmap for Policymakers

- Short-Term (1–3 years): Access, affordability, competition
- Medium-Term (3–5 years): Resilience, digital skills, regulatory reforms
- Long-Term (5–10 years): Innovation ecosystems, sustainable digital economies

Conclusion

- Digital divide = socio-economic divide
- Decisions today shape opportunities tomorrow

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Discussion