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Leveraging policy to expand mobile broadband access in India

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Agenda

1	**India's Recent Accomplishments**
2	**Coverage obligations**
3	**Spectrum**
4	**Industry Structure**
5	**Device Costs**
6	**Demand Side Stimulation**
7	**Research**

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1 - India's Recent Accomplishments

- High level of site sharing reduces costs of network deployment per operator

- New policy permits spectrum sharing and secondary market spectrum trading

- Reduction of barriers to/facilitation of M&A in telecommunications*

- "Digital India" policies going in the right direction with the creation of mobile-based digital identity

- New RBI payment licences for operators' payment services

* Several countries among the more competitive national markets are served by 3 or 4 significant operators, e.g. France, Finland, Japan, UK, Korea.

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2 – Coverage Obligations

- Use USF for rural broadband coverage. Encourage competition for subsidies for remote area coverage as is the case in Chile where the government subsidizes rollout and the lowest qualified bidder wins the contract.

- Introduce a rural-first deployment requirement (as in Germany) for low-band spectrum licences to ensure these areas are not neglected

- Stimulate deployments of fibre-to-the-site for broadband backhaul including expediting access to rights-of-way with creation of a national task force in Union government to help achieve this goal

3 - Spectrum

• Leverage 700 MHz spectrum re-auction to implement innovative mechanisms for rural coverage, including economic incentives to operators deploying rural-first

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4 - Industry Structure

- Allow industry consolidation that does not harm competition and delivers benefits thanks to greater efficiencies and economies of scale
- Encourage entry by MVNOs to serve market niches (by geography, customer segments) otherwise neglected by large operators
- Ensure favorable regulatory climate for participation by operators in value-added services to enhance their revenue potential

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5 - Device Costs

- Enable lower device costs for some customers, i.e. expand broadband affordability, by considering subsiding device acquisition from USF funds

- Expand and enhance "Make in India" opportunities for major smartphone manufacturers with a focus on lowering the costs of LTE devices

6 - Demand Side Stimulation

- Support development of content and apps in local languages, with help or similar services from the free, online language translation capabilities in Google and Facebook, including voice translation

- Fund assistance and training to make more Indians comfortable with using online broadband services and apps, working with grassroots digital empowerment groups and telecom operators

- Expand online accessibility and delivery of Government services

7 - Research

- Broadband for all is too important to be a guessing game: support for research on how, why, when and where in India the poor connect (or don't) should be an important part of the policy-making framework
- Cross-country research to look into the impact of regulation on broadband adoption is also recommended—issues such as "soft" and "hard" net neutrality rules, as in the case of variations of free-data regulation across countries

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