

8 of 993 DOCUMENTS

San Jose Mercury News (California)

February 22, 2016 Monday

## What s an Internet? **Facebook** eyes unconnected world

SECTION: BUSINESS

LENGTH: 489 words

More than 4 billion people can't post cat pictures on **Facebook**. In fact, those billions of people can't post anything on Facebook, or on any other site: They have no access to the Web. **In many countries in the developing world, large portions of the population have never even heard of the Internet.**

That information comes from **Facebook**, which just released a report on worldwide Internet access. The firm is pushing hard via its Internet.org project to open up the whole planet to its product — and, of course, bless those unconnected billions with the multitude of benefits the Web provides.

**The Internet is a catalyst for broader social and economic advances through access to education, economic and employment opportunities, and even healthcare.** Facebook's State of **Connectivity** 2015 report said. **It is a critical tool for development and should be available to everyone.**

Whether **Facebook** drones firing data-packed laser beams are going to bring Grumpy Cat, and the Internet's wealth of information and services, to the undeveloped regions of the world remains to be seen.

However, Facebook's research pointed to improvement in **2015 over 2014, with 3.2 billion people using the Internet, compared to 2.9 billion in 2014.** The number of people not using the Internet dropped to 4.1 billion from 4.3 billion. Here's the crux of the **connectivity** problem, according to the report: **The less money you have, the less likely you are to be online.**

**Mobile devices are the only way to get online in much of the developing world, and the cost of providing mobile service is two to three times higher in rural areas than in cities, the report said.**

**The report pointed to a gender gap in access to digital technology: In part because of unequal access to education and economic opportunities, girls and women remain disproportionately excluded from Internet use.**

**In Nigeria, three-quarters of people without access to the Web hadn't heard the word Internet. In all countries except Brazil, less than 15 percent of unconnected people said they know what the Internet is,** said the report. In Guatemala, that number was 60 percent; in Colombia it was 40 percent.

With such a vast untapped market out there, it's no surprise to read in **The Information that Facebook more than doubled its advertising spending last year over 2014, to \$281 million, with a heavy focus on the developing world, including India and Indonesia.** In addition to search ads, **Facebook** has also launched text and banner ads that can reach more low-tech-feature phones in developing countries, the article in **The Information** said.

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Photo:cChinese President Xi Jinping, left, talks with **Facebook** Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg during a gathering of CEOs and other executives at Microsofts main campus September 23, 2015 in Redmond, Washington. (Ted S. Warren-Pool/Getty Images)

The post cWhats an Internet?c **Facebook** eyes unconnected world appeared first on SiliconBeat .

**LOAD-DATE:** February 22, 2016

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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