

# USF Case Study

## Argentina

# Case Study: Argentina

- The goal of Argentina's USF is to guarantee access to the provision of Internet service to all the country's inhabitants in quality conditions and fair and reasonable prices
- The access to this right cannot be left to the discretion of the market
- USF run by ENACOM, and funded by 1% of the gross revenue – similar to Kenya
- Argentina has a Community Network license – similar to Kenya

# Development

- Establishment of the Special Projects Office started in June 2020 to with the aim of working specifically to address the needs of popular neighborhoods, rural communities and indigenous peoples.
- Special Projects Office developed three programs applicable to Community Networks:
  - a. Barrios Populares (Popular Neighbourhoods) Program
    - not exclusive to Community Networks
  - b. Roberto Arias Program for Community Networks
  - c. ICT Hubs
- a. & b. operate via an open-ended Call for Projects.

## a. Barrios Populares

- The Barrios Populares was created in June 2020 (call for projects opened in August 2020) to bridge the digital divide in barrios populares, also referred to as informal settlements, which are included in an official registry.
- Argentina has a national register for informal settlements with 5,687 entries. More than 1 million families (5.5 million people - 10% of the total population) without basic services and in precarious conditions. 60% of these people do not have connectivity.
- Try to go beyond MNOs as their connectivity doesn't quite solve the problem: FTTH, fixed wireless.

## a. Barrios Populares (cont)

- The program has a budget of 5B ARS (~32 million USD)
- The amount available per project ranges in between the minimum of 300 thousand ARS (30K USD) and the maximum of 40 million ARS (400K USD) and it is open to all ICT licensees.
- When the applicant is a Community Networks licensee, special conditions are included so different costs, such as maintenance and 6 months of the upstream internet connection can be considered.
- The program has been running for 18 months

# a. Barrios Populares - Impact

- 49 projects approved in 696 informal settlements
  - 27 by small ISPs
  - 12 by cooperatives
  - 6 by community networks (first time they access to funding)
  - 3 by state companies
- Awarded: ~4.3 billion ARS (USD 28 million) / Executed: ~2.1 billion ARS (USD 13.5 million)
- More than 225K families benefiting and 842 public spaces connected.

## More information

Details of the open call for projects:

<https://www.boletinoficial.gov.ar/detalleAviso/primera/234666/20200908>

Website to Enacom's Barrios Populares Program:

[https://enacom.gob.ar/programa-barrios-populares\\_p4615#contenedorSite](https://enacom.gob.ar/programa-barrios-populares_p4615#contenedorSite)

## b. Roberto Arias Program

The Roberto Arias Program is an open call for projects that began in February 2021. It is intended to address the connectivity needs of rural and indigenous communities.

Priority is given those in national registries for Family-based Agriculture (ReNAF and ReNOAF) and for Indigenous Peoples (RENOPI / RENACI)

Established through a dialogue at Argentinian *Summit on Community Networks*

Funds only available to those holding a Community Networks licence or having applied for one.

Available for 2 years and with budget of 300 million pesos (~3 million USD)

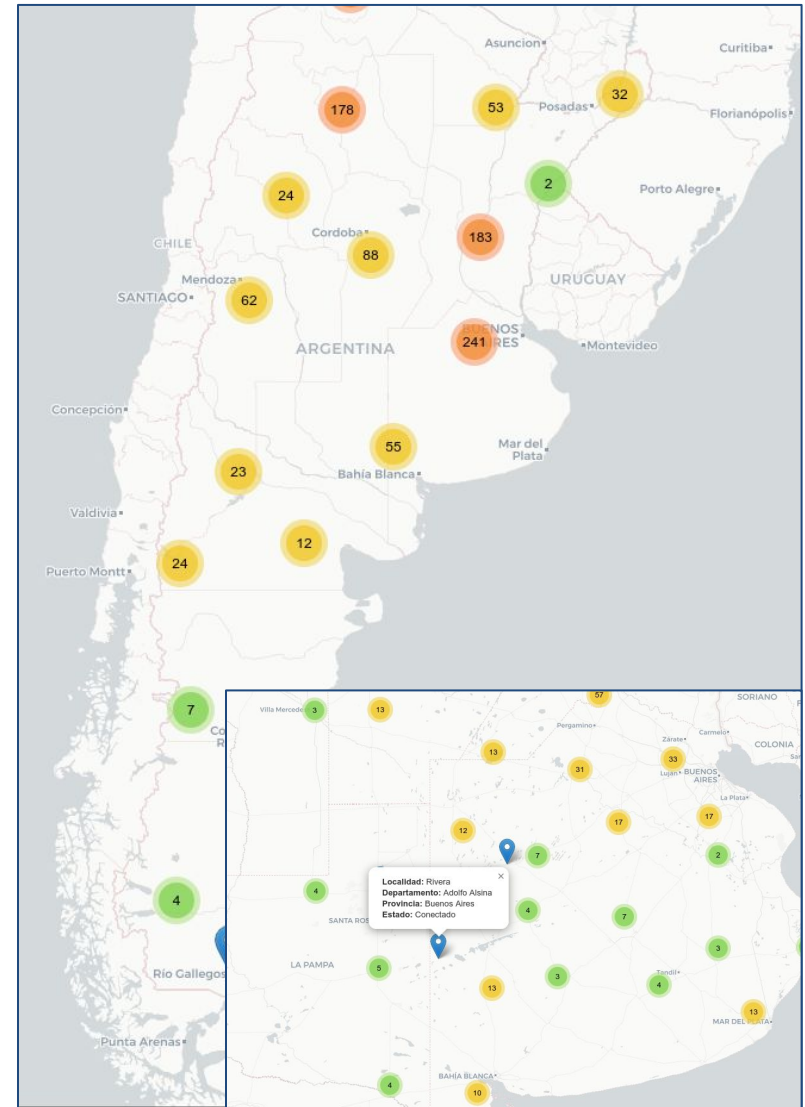
## b. Roberto Arias Program - Scope

- Available funding per project ranges from 300,000 ARS (30K USD) to a maximum of 10 million ARS (100K USD)
- Funds are available as non-refundable grants for projects of maximum 18 months may cover:
  - CAPEX: active and passive infrastructure, inclusive of the office equipment required to run the network;
  - Personnel for the installation, training and operation during the length of the project;
  - 6 months of upstream wholesale internet connection to help with the sustainability of the initiative;
  - Consultancy fees for efforts in crafting the application.
  - Project management fees (max 80,000 ARS)



## b. Roberto Arias Program - Backhaul

- Where possible internet backhaul should be provided via ArSat the public backhaul company.
- A map of their Points of Presence in the National Fiber Network (REFEFO) is made available to facilitate design.
- REFEFO is similar to NOFBI)



<https://carc.libre.org.ar/refefo/>

# **b. Roberto Arias Program - Application**

Application Requirements (in addition to Community Network license)

## **Administrative**

a folder containing all the documentation required to perform due diligence of the organization.

## **Technical**

a folder containing technical and financial aspects of the submission, including:

- map with planed connections and coverage

- diagrams of installations at each site

- bill of materials

- gantt chart of the planned activities

- project team.

All technical documents signed by a certified engineer.

## **Supporting documents**

Any additional administrative and technical documentation relevant to the project, as may be requested by ENACOM

# b. Roberto Arias Program - Phases

## Phase 0

ENACOM takes 3 months or more to approve each project

On approval 30% of the funds are disbursed

## Phase 1

Once those funds are reported and approved by ENACOM, 10 days later another 35% is disbursed.

## Phase 2

Once those funds are reported and approved by ENACOM, 10 days later another 35% is disbursed.

## Phase 3

Once all funds are spent and the project finished, a final report is submitted.

## b. Roberto Arias Program - Progress

- As of Oct 2022, 6 applications have been submitted (lower than expected, growing slowly but surely as challenges are understood and capacity is built)
- 16 more are coming thanks to project implemented by two APC members in Argentina: Altermundi and Nodo Tau, that are building the capacity and accompanying the project application for 16 communities.

### More information

Details of the open call for projects:

[https://enacom.gob.ar/multimedia/noticias/archivos/202106/archivo\\_20210625022117\\_4017.pdf](https://enacom.gob.ar/multimedia/noticias/archivos/202106/archivo_20210625022117_4017.pdf)

Website to Enacom's Roberto Arias Program where template for the administrative, technical and financial documents required are made available:

[https://enacom.gob.ar/redes-comunitarias-roberto-arias\\_p5049#contenedorSite](https://enacom.gob.ar/redes-comunitarias-roberto-arias_p5049#contenedorSite)

## c. ICT Hubs

- Approved in July 2022 as a complement to the Roberto Arias program, as it is understood that not all communities will have the organizational capacity to apply and implement successfully projects under the other two programs
- 1 million ARS for 40 hubs in selected communities
- ArSat provides satellite connectivity to the ICT Hubs

# Lessons Learned

- It was necessary to have a Community Network license so a program could be created to support them;
- Incentives matter: From 2 CN licenses in 2019 to 26 CN license today;
- The program over-delivered in urban areas (expected 300 informal settlements) but under-delivered in rural due to lower levels of organization;
- Community media (radio and television) played an important role as a platform to raise awareness; and,
- Capacity building and support throughout the process is essential, rural and excluded communities are unlikely to have the skill to produce the documents required.