

Methodology

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS FOR GLOBAL VOICES FREE BASICS CASE STUDIES

Global Voices' team of researchers conducted tests of the Free Basics app in six countries, evaluating the services offered from five different telecommunications companies: Colombia (Tigo), Ghana (Tigo), Kenya (Airtel), Mexico (Virgin Mobile), Pakistan (Telenor), and the Philippines (Globe).

The team developed a set of criteria on which to test the app, as well as a set of questions each researcher was directed to answer. These criteria, which were developed in consultation with expert colleagues from the Internet policy, access and ICT4D sectors, are outlined below. Wherever possible, they also captured screenshots of the app to document the user experience, available in this folder.

The researchers then compiled their findings into a series of case studies, which are also included as an appendix. They contextualized their research with additional statistics on the telecommunications landscape in their country as well as information on language, connectivity, and media habits.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION:

1. **Access and the communications landscape**
 - a. Compile ITU telecommunications data for 2014-2016, including (1) percentage of individuals using the Internet; (2) mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants.
 - b. Compile Freedom on the Net report rankings for 2013 - 2015.
 - c. Describe how most people communicate and get information, if they do so via digital means. The above sources have some information on this.
 - d. What are the dominant telecommunications methods people use to communicate?
 - e. Do they use SMS and Internet-based messaging applications, or do they tend to only use one of these methods?
 - f. If they use Internet-based messaging applications (i.e. WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber), which ones are most popular?
 - g. How do most people get their news? If they get it digitally, via which means?

- h. Think beyond just “Internet” -- what digital/networked apps and tools (i.e. Imo, Firechat) are prominent?

2. Getting started

- a. Where and how does one get a Free Basics package?
- b. Are there different versions to choose from, or just one? If there are different versions, how do they differ/what are the different options (list all of them if possible)?
- c. What type of mobile plan do you need in order to use the app?
- d. What does the plan cost?
- e. Do you need to show ID to make this purchase?
- f. What information does the app require you to submit in order to complete the setup process? (i.e. name, birthdate, gender, etc.)
- g. Does it ask where you live? What are the geolocation settings? Please take screenshots.
- h. Does it require you to create a Facebook account or submit login information for a pre-existing account?
- i. Are you asked to agree to a Terms of Use policy? At what point is this information presented? Please find a way to capture the Terms of Use document so that we can read them later.
- j. Are you asked to agree to a privacy policy? At what point is this information presented? Please find a way to capture the Terms of Use document so that we can read them later.

3. Quality of connection

- a. How does the app speed compare with other Internet applications you've used over the same network?
- b. Does the connection remain steady, or does it cut periodically?
- c. Do certain services within the app work faster than others?

4. Language & Accessibility

- a. In what languages is the app available? Is there a “default” language? If so, what is it?
- b. Do language offerings or defaults vary based on region or ISP?

- c. To what extent does the app require the user to be literate? Does it use symbols? Does it use audio?
 - d. What kinds of signals might this send to users? For example, in Peru, can you switch from Spanish to Quechua?
 - e. What features does the app offer for people who are visually or hearing impaired?
5. Terms of use and personal data
- a. Copy or download the complete text for all terms/agreements that you are asked to agree to upon sign-up.
 - b. How does one find this information? Does it appear automatically, or do you have to look for it?
 - c. In what languages can one read the terms of use for this data?
 - d. What information can you find regarding the use and sharing of users' personal data between Facebook, the ISP and the unique content/services within the app?
 - e. Conduct a few searches and share some information with keywords that might trigger tracking mechanisms. Does it seem like Facebook is collecting data from your searches elsewhere in the app?
6. Content & Services
- a. What information and services does the app offer?
 - b. How are services and information organized within the app? How do you find what you're looking for?
 - c. Within the social and communicational context that it is offered, consider how useful each content/service might be. Consider language, education, literacy, geography, socio-economic status, profession, age. For each item, describe:
 - d. Which populations do you think might benefit from the content/service?
 - e. Which populations do you think might be less likely to benefit from the content/service?
 - f. Do you think this brings the user new information that s/he might not have had access to before?
 - g. Compare and contrast the information and services offered with those that are accessible via community information centers, traditional media

channels (radio, TV, print), other digital communication methods (such as group SMS or MMS).

7. News & information sources

- a. Consider the news and information sources offered by the app.
- b. Who owns the different content and services offered by the app?
- c. How does the balance of ownership (state vs private vs non-profit) compare with the general media environment in the target region?
- d. How might state and corporate actors benefit from the app?
- e. Is there any indication that telcos and/or states are acting as “gatekeepers” for the content of the app? Describe.
- f. Are there certain topics that seem get lots of attention?
- g. Are there certain topics that seem to get less attention?

8. Sensitive information

- a. Select 2-3 sensitive topics for research using the resources provided by Free Basics. Pick at least one or two things that are specific to your country or region. These might be related to politics (political parties, corruption, elections), sex and gender (sexuality, sexual health, women's health), religion, ethnic minorities.
- b. Do your best to find good information on this topic within the confines of the app. Give a narrative description of what you found.

9. End of the relationship

- a. What happens to your Free Basics data if your plan expires and you no longer use the app?
- b. Can you delete your data? How does this work?

For additional findings, please visit <https://advox.globalvoices.org/2017/07/27/can-facebook-connect-the-next-billion>