



Kyle Whitehill,
CEO, Avanti

Connectivity is increasingly more important in achieving a healthy, safe and productive life, yet 3.7 billion people are not connected. Most of those people live in developing countries and half of the 3.7 billion are female.

Over the past two decades, digital technologies have advanced more rapidly than any innovation in history, reaching around 50% of the developing world's population, and helping to transform societies. We are incredibly proud of the part we have played in enhancing connectivity in some of the world's hardest-to-reach communities. In a post-pandemic world, where reliance on connectivity is evolving, the unconnected become even further removed from the digital world and its socio-economic benefits.

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Covid-19 has challenged everyone, but for those living in unconnected communities the challenge has been great. At the peak of the pandemic, we realised how much the digital divide was growing. Instead of watching it grow, we proactively identified opportunities to connect even more individuals, businesses, and communities.

This is even more acute in sub-Saharan Africa where the population is growing 2.7% per year. As terrestrial networks here are limited, rural expansion is desperately needed. Partnership is key to helping bring affordable coverage to these remote areas of the world. Over the past year, we have launched several new partnerships to help operators and other partners to expand their networks.

For example, our partnership with Clear Blue Technologies will accelerate the rural rollout of low-cost connectivity solutions in areas where network coverage and broadband services have been limited or non-existent. Everyone is entitled to a more connected life and the benefits that come with it, and this partnership is expected to deliver coverage to 400 million people living in remote areas within 3-5 years.

We have also launched our own service, Avanti EXTEND, a new managed service for rural connectivity, to support partners in their efforts to connect rural Africa. Avanti EXTEND provides high-performance and cost-effective 2G, 3G and 4G solutions to remote and hard-to-reach areas across sub-Saharan Africa. It enables MNOs and other partners to provide reliable cellular service to the 100 million people living in these challenging locations that would otherwise be impossible to reach using traditional terrestrial infrastructure.

Avanti EXTEND's built-in and fully operational

CAPEX solution integrates seamlessly into MNO's terrestrial networks to reduce network complexity and increase efficiency. It offers the opportunity for partners to undertake large deployments quickly and effectively, and scale operations to support long-term rural expansion at no additional CAPEX. This removes the need for them to manage satellite configurations, hub infrastructure or terrestrial networks to deploy a successful satellite cellular backhaul topology.

We are committed to enabling people, countries, and continents to 'Be More'. By helping communities across Africa to become better connected, we have been able to create better access to education, medicine and help provide a safer environment for them to live in. We believe in the power of education, and the transformative impact it can have on individuals and communities. We know connectivity has a key role to play in improving access to quality learning and are determined to use satellite technology to help even more people gain access to this.

We are a Business Avenger – committed to supporting the UN Global Goals for Quality Education in reflection of our wider commitment to improve access to education across Africa. For example, we recently partnered with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to help address barriers to girl's education in Kenya through targeted, context-specific awareness and information campaigns. The program aims to enhance and add value to girl's education which will in turn strengthen efforts to support

the achievement of SDG 4. We are proud to be working with the GPE to help break down some of the social barriers preventing girls from reaching their full potential.

Continuing our work supporting the UN, this year we also started working with the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, as a corporate partner to donate solar powered satellite broadband connectivity and laptops to seven UNHCR sites in remote and off grid refugee settlements in Uganda. By giving access to technology and helping refugees and the communities that host them to be part of a connected society, we are helping them build a better future for themselves and their families.

We already know the global demand for data outstrips supply, leaving many excluded. In Africa this is even more exaggerated, offering huge scope for future growth in the coming years. Rural network expansion is desperately needed. As a high throughput satellite company in Africa, Avanti is poised to unlock this.

Across our HYLAS fleet, more than 70% of our coverage is over Africa, where we have been providing connectivity services for more than a decade. To help power growth, we have also committed 75% of our total investment to help connect the continent. By continuing to use our strong business model, and partnering with providers across Africa, governments, and charitable entities, we believe we will continue to make significant progress towards worldwide connectivity. ■

Looking ahead: Collective action has the power to ignite real change, and we believe there is a real opportunity for the industry to play a key part in the global economic recovery. Since 2020, 90% of children living in sub-Saharan Africa did not have access to a computer and around 80% did not enjoy a basic internet connection. This emerging

digital divide has had huge implications across the continent, which has been highlighted further by the pandemic. The digital inequalities across the globe need levelling out, and the time has come for connectivity to take centre stage. To spearhead an 'accelerated transition' towards a more a connected world and close the digital divide.