

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE IN COLOMBIA

SES and INRED for MinTIC

Case Study

Industry

Telecommunications -
digital inclusion

Location

Colombia, Latin America

SES 



BACKGROUND

At the end of 2018, over 23 million Colombian households lacked internet access. While broadband penetration has increased in urban areas, poor infrastructure and high costs still limit widespread access, particularly in the country's more rural and remote areas.

The Colombian government has set out to change that paradigm with its "El futuro digital es de todos" ("The digital future belongs to everyone") policy, a plan to close the digital divide by ensuring every

Colombian has access to broadband connectivity. In March 2019, the Colombian Ministry of Telecommunications (MinTIC) announced the first project associated with this initiative, selecting local services provider INRED to install, operate, and maintain WiFi hotspots in rural areas around the country. INRED is capitalising on the power of satellite to achieve that objective, leveraging SES Networks' Signature Enterprise Solutions to deliver broadband to Colombia's most sparsely populated regions.



REQUIREMENTS

SES and INRED needed to provide MinTIC with all relevant network infrastructure, including VSAT and access points, as well as deliver 9Mb/s to each of the 1,000 sites. The two companies were also tasked with providing the following services:

- **IP termination**
- **Site surveys**
- **Installation**
- **Lifecycle services, including helpdesk, operation and maintenance**
- **Helpdesk**
- **Administrative and human resources**
- **Project management**

CHALLENGES

Broadband connectivity is easily accessible in Colombia's larger cities, where 67% of mobile subscribers are on 4G networks (source: GSMA) and free WiFi hotspots are prevalent. Small towns and rural regions – which are often characterised by challenging terrain and sparse population – are more likely to lack even basic connectivity.

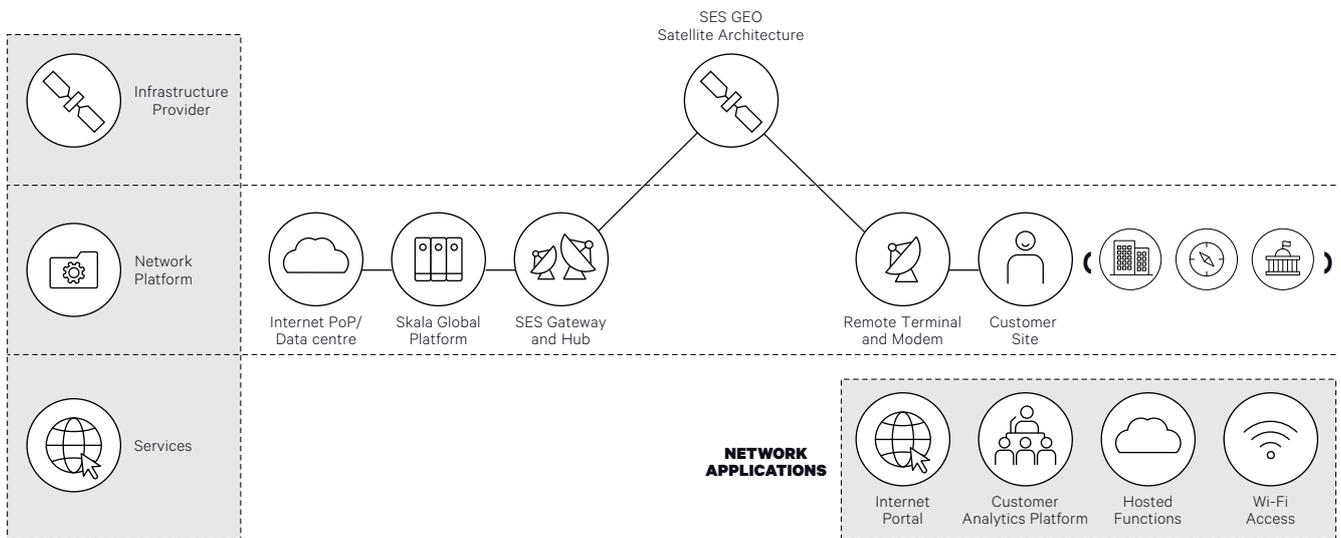
MinTIC's plan in early 2019 would connect more than 1,000 rural zones in the country to the internet, with the winner of the tender responsible for planning, installing, operating, and maintaining WiFi-connected community centres in some of the world's most remote areas.



SOLUTION

The SES/INRED solution is based on Skala Global Platform, SES's next-generation ground system optimised for the delivery of high-quality broadband services, paired with a combination of widebeam and high-throughput spot beam connectivity delivered by the SES-14 satellite as a fully managed offering. The Skala platform is housed in a Bogota teleport, augmented with a content filtering system provided by INRED that ensures compliance with regional regulations.

Skala provides INRED with a full suite of network and service management tools, enabling full network visibility, simple service provisioning, remote terminal configuration and control and network monitoring and troubleshooting capabilities. The platform's distributed architecture provides INRED with a way to easily scale capacity to meet MinTIC's ongoing requirements, while SES's turnkey managed services model reduces the cost and complexity of delivering satellite connectivity.



ACHIEVEMENTS

SES and INRED had worked together prior to the MinTIC engagement, delivering broadband connectivity to enterprise users, and that existing relationship meant the two companies were well-positioned to roll out services quickly and efficiently.

Working with its equipment suppliers, SES was able to start delivering terminals to INRED shortly after the contract was signed. INRED then transported them to the field for onsite installation and configuration, with remote support from SES. By the end of November 2019 – just over four months from the time MinTIC announced its selection of INRED and SES for the project – the mandate's 1,000 remote sites were providing 450 Mb/s, delivering broadband connectivity to end

users in 20 Colombian “departments”, or country subdivisions. Residents of these areas are now able to access the internet free of charge from centrally located community access centers, bringing the country closer to fulfilling President Ivan Duque's pledge to connect 100% of municipalities to the internet by the end of his term in 2022.

SES and INRED are now expanding their relationship in Colombia, winning an extension of the MinTIC contract that brings connectivity to an additional 300 sites and bidding on a new RFP issued in early 2020. This project would be a five-to seven-year initiative involving an additional 9000 sites, necessitating more capacity and the ability to quickly turn up service in more regions.



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Published in July 2020.
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