

Rwanda Internet Governance Forum 2019

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“DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR A BETTER RWANDAN SOCIETY”

In collaboration with



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Introduction

The Rwanda Internet Governance forum (RWIGF) 2019 edition was held on the 27th November 2019 at Marriott Hotel Kigali as a half-day event. This year's theme, "DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR A BETTER RWANDAN SOCIETY", gathered the local Internet community and beyond, to discuss about impact of digital inclusion for a better society.

Participation

RWIGF2019 was attended by 103 participants, coming from the private and public sectors. Among the organizations representing the public sector, we noticed the presence of:

1. The Ministry of ICT and Innovation, MINICT;
2. The Ministry of Education, MINEDUC
3. The Rwanda Education Board, REB;
4. The Rwanda Information Society Authority, RISA;
5. The University of Rwanda, UR;

From the private sector, we noticed the presence of:

1. The Private Sector Federation - ICT Chamber;
2. e-commerce platform service providers;
3. Internet service Provider and Mobile Network Operator, MTN, BSC, LIQUID;
4. Entrepreneurs in various sectors of activities.

Opening remarks

Mrs. Grace INGABIRE gave the opening remarks and welcomed all participants. She recognized the presence of the Guest of Honor, Mrs. Claudette IRERE, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of ICT and Innovation; and other delegates. She expressed the gratitude of appreciation to members, partners and sponsors of Rwanda IGF who accepted the invitation of RWIGF2019.

RCTA CEO gave a brief introduction of IGF as a global multistakeholder forum that promotes discussion and dialogue about public policy issues related to the Internet. She opened the discussion to the public by stating that the aim of RWIGF2019 theme is to include everyone in society by having access to ICTs and the skills, knowledge and confidence to use them to benefit their everyday lives. She concluded by highlighting that it is an open discussion and should focus on current status of Digital Inclusion in Rwanda focusing mainly on Accessibility, Adoption and Application.

Keynote Address

Mrs. Claudette IRERE, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of ICT and Innovation (MINICT);

Mrs. Claudette started by thanking the organizing committee and RICTA CEO for choosing "Digital Inclusion for a better Rwandan Society" as the theme of RWIGF2019 and continued by listing what can accelerate Digital inclusion in Rwandan society and boost active participation of citizens through different platforms.

- Connectivity
- Devices
- Application and Content

She mentioned that Government of Rwanda is pled to work and ensure that all needed infrastructure for the listed above points is availed, and when we look at the global rankings of different ICT statistics, Rwanda is far to reach important milestones.

Regarding digital literacy, statistics revealed that Digital literacy levels are less than 10%, and she encouraged all stakeholders to ensure that Rwandan citizens (clients) are at the center, the approach should look at the need in their environment on each policy and law to see if they are protecting and empower the citizens as to make at digital citizens.

Presentations

1. Status of Digital Inclusion in Rwanda (Status, Progress, Access, Skills, Motivation and Policies)

By Mrs. Josephine NYIRANZEYIMANA, Government Chief Information Officer, RISA

Mrs. Josephine started by thanking the organizers of IGF and emphasizing on what RICTA CEO stated in her opening remark to call all participants to an open discussion so that all Rwandans should benefit from digital economy advantages. She introduced that RISA (Rwanda Information Society Authority) as a public institution established in 2017 is mandated to implement ICT projects and policies of the Government and accelerate the community development through mainstreaming ICT in national social economic transformation.

Starting her presentation, she asked what digital inclusion is? And one of the definitions is the efforts to empower all people to equally take advantage of opportunity offered by ICTs to ensure none is left behind in digital age.

She focused on 3 A's mentioned earlier by RICTA CEO of digital inclusion as:

1. Access
 - Internet availability and affordability
 - Design for inclusion and public access
2. Adoption
 - Relevance / context,
 - Digital literacy and
 - Consumers safety
3. Application:
 - Economic
 - Workforce development
 - Civic engagement and
 - Social connections

She listed various policies developed and implemented by Government to reach digital inclusion in Rwanda, like:

- National Information Communication Infrastructure
- Digital talent policy
- ICT content strategy
- Broadband policy

- ICT Hub strategy and many more policies

She highlighted the achieved programs to meet the 3 A's like 7000 KM of National fiber backbone, 4G LTE deployment, One Government Network to connect all public institutions, Smart devices penetration (Maraphone), IREMBO, UMUCYO and other e-services

From the progress of Digital inclusion in Rwanda, we can map the status where 95% of 4G LTE population coverage, and the comparison of Rwanda status to other countries where we found that Internet cost of 8 Mbps/month is 94% cheaper than Lubumbashi and 66% more expensive than in Mumbai (Source: expatistan.com). In terms of Adoption we need to improve numbers as the digital literacy for citizen is below 10%, she also mentioned about the Digital ambassador's program in place with the aim of increasing digital inclusion in Rwanda.

Some of challenges highlighted in her presentation include:

- Electricity coverage
- Cost of Internet and quality in some cases
- Lack of awareness, incentives and motivation

Opportunities listed are:

- Social Justice: equality in improving citizen lives, access to information, and bridging digital divides
- Financial security: saving and spending on priority
- Individual growth: lifetime learning and earnings
- Innovation promotion

Mrs. Josephine closed her presentation by bringing on the table the way forward to:

- Conduct an assessment on the status of digital inclusion in Rwanda
- Set and measure indicators towards Rwanda becoming a knowledge-based economy

2. Future of the internet in Rwanda: a people's perspective on our Digital Future

By Jon Stever, MD & Co-Founder of IMPACTHUB

Jon started by giving a summary of Impact Hub activities where they organize Hackathon and bring together young engineers and students to conduct research which impact digitally the Rwandan society. They build tools, methodologies and trainings to support common interest formation and public policy co-creation at scale.

Jon highlighted the impact of Internet in our daily life, where he asked the audience some questions like: how many people send and read emails? How many people use Internet to find where to Go ??, how many people get news online? and the full room/entire audience found themselves using Internet everyday...

He tackled some points of security and safety over Internet, digital identity over internet and listed activities to be taken:

Government: Implement rules and regulations to protect digital identities

Private Companies: Improve their security systems

NGOs: Train people about efficient and secure ways to use their digital identity

Citizens: Learn how to protect their digital identity

Academia: Find innovative solutions to protect digital identity

3. Digital Application How to apply digital tools in Education

By Diane SENGATI UWASENGA, Director of Digital Content and Instructional Technology Development, REB

Diane presented the achievement, integration and utilization of ICT in Education in Rwanda and mentioned the key pillars for ICT in Education mostly ICT infrastructure. Some statistics from REB shows that:

- 64% of primary schools have laptops
- Secondary Smart classrooms (rooms with computers and Internet access) are covered by 55%
- More than 23,000 teachers are trained on ICT essentials and many more activities related to digital inclusion in Education sector.

There is an ongoing activity of developing digital content where the project created e-books to be used for e-learning and off-line platforms. Teachers now have access to computers, distribution is at low scale but with the MoU between Positivo BGH a local computer manufacturing company, distribution to remaining teachers will be accelerated.

Other projects in pipeline include:

- A project titled CADIE with target to build 60 centers of excellence for teacher's capacity building in ICT for education and to train 120 teacher-master trainers. This project was established in partnership between REB and KOICA.
- Establishment of 14 teacher training centers in 14 districts in ICT, Math and Sciences
- REB is working on e-assessment on www.elearning.reb.rw
- Development of Virtual science lab with GIZ support.

In her presentation she mentioned some challenges and recommendation, more details in presentation.

Panel Discussion

The 1st Panel discussion on “**Digital access, adoption and application in Rwanda**” moderated by Alex NTALE CEO of ICT-CHAMBER, with following panelist:

- ✓ Mr. Innocent KANEZA, CEO of ESICIA, a software development company
- ✓ Mr. Christian MUHIRWA, CEO of BSC, Broadband Systems Corporation
- ✓ Mr. Alexis KABEJA, CEO of LIQUID TELECOM Rwanda
- ✓ Mr. Didas Ndoli, Senior Manager, Commercial Sales at MTN Rwanda
- ✓ Mrs. Diane SENGATI, Director of Digital Content and Instructional technology development.

Alex started the panel by stating the questions to be discussed

Question 1: How are they tackling Access issue with all government policy and strategies?

Panelist started by defining digital inclusion as a way of solving day to day problems, to ease the access of services and access to information, so digital access is all set of tools available online for everyone to use in business, education, hospitality, ...but it needs means to access those information and tools.

The practical example was IREMBO application. Every Rwandan wants to access the IREMBO platform which is hosted somewhere in a Datacenter in Rwanda..., you need the means to connect to the platform, the means include connectivity and devices either mobile, or laptop

Didas Ndoli brought a definition of digital access as the ability for anyone to participate in digital environment or digital society, and digital inclusion goes beyond social media and include financial services.

The REB Representative stated that in Education sector, the numbers of digital inclusion are growing progressively with 2500 primary and secondary schools and among them there are 750 schools that have access to technologies.

Question 2: How connectivity affected digital inclusion in the last 15 years?

ESICIA's CEO pointed out that in the last 15years connectivity was very low and not everywhere, and you can't develop solutions without good connectivity; the investments were made by Telco's to enhance the connectivity. Today, it is much easier to talk about digital solutions because of the facility in place.

BSC CEO, stated that back few years ago the whole government of Rwanda was consuming 10Mbps of Internet capacity, but now the need of the consumers to use digital content has increased and the investment to match that need is required.

Mr. Ndoli Didas said that out of 5 million MTN subscribers, only 23% has a smartphone, which is a challenge to MTN. MTN is trying to partner with phone manufactures to come up with affordable phones.

Mr Alexis Kabeja mentioned that Liquid telecom Rwanda is working hard to reduce the cost of broadband connectivity where they implemented a project of fiber to home.

The 2nd Panel Discussion with topic: **"How Rwandan Society can be better with digital inclusion?"**

Moderated by Olivier Manzi from RSWITCH with below panelists:

- ✓ Mr. Atsushi YAMANAKA, Chief Advisor at JICA
- ✓ Mr. Alexis NTALE, CEO of ICT-CHAMBER
- ✓ Ms. Christa MUNEZERO, COO at AC GROUP
- ✓ Professor Tim BROWN

The Panel started with Atsushi who reminded us the journey that Rwanda took for digital inclusion, where back 10 years ago in Rwanda there was no Fiber, the Internet connection was on VSAT which was very expensive....;The government had put a lot of energy to build the infrastructure and now there is affordable prices, and the consumers are increasing.

Point 1: How and what to be done for digital inclusion to address the needs of citizens?

Alexis answered by giving the examples of strategies running in ICT_CHAMBER summarized in 5 pillars

1. Supporting the creation of new tech companies
2. Helping growth of existing tech companies
3. Facilitating and increase ICT adoption in non-tech companies
4. Increasing digital export

5. Attracting investors in ICT sector.

He focused on 3rd point to answer the point raised by the moderator, at the beginning of the year ICT chamber launched a program digital transformation class that meant to help touring companies located in the city or in rural areas to come into digital movement, the attendants were trained about the whole value chain approach from having a web presence (to facilitate booking up) to the payment, and this training helped around 53 companies in tourism and majority are in Kivu belt in Western presence.

Christa continued enriching the point where AC group changed transport model that was in place to the new model of using cards and mobile app to pay the transport prices and now the feedback is very positive.

AC group also helped to provide the real data to public institutions to improve the planning.

The moderator asked Professor Tim, where Academia can help in research to digital inclusion to fill the gap that is present and facilitate the citizens.

Tim responded saying that academia can really help in research, where from the higher-level research can be done to know the real question.

The real issue was on point of adoption where the adoption is at low rate, and the main challenge is on people with no means and people with smartphone who use them to for only texting and calls purposes without maximizing its capacity.

So, we cannot tackle the question by giving devices to all people due to some literacy level in citizens, they will not fully use the devices.... we can use another way of creating the services and put them closer to citizens so that they can access the solutions.

The message from all panelists was to train citizens about technology for the change management to take effect.

Awareness is the key for the population to embrace the technology and to produce Relevant content