

Rwanda Internet Governance Forum 200

GIZ Digi Center Kigali, Rwanda | 30 September 2020

“Internet for ICT and Innovation in the time of COVID-19”

In collaboration with



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1. Introduction

The Rwanda Internet Governance Forum (RWIGF) 2020 edition was held on the 30th September 2020 at GIZ Digi Center, 7th Floor, Career Center, Kigali-Rwanda. This year's theme, "Internet for ICT and Innovation in the time of COVID-19", gathered together key representatives from the Public Sector, Private Sector and Civil Society, to discuss about key areas of Internet governance, with particular emphasis on emerging challenges and opportunities resulting from the Covid-19 crisis.

The year's meeting format was quite different from the normal Rwanda IG Forum due to COVID-19 prevention measures. It was a virtual meeting with physical panels while livestreaming the Forum through some social media networks.

It served into the global philosophy of Internet governance by converging and mainstreaming diverse thought processes from various stakeholders in Rwanda on common issues of Internet Governance. This Forum focused on three main discussion tracks: (1) Internet Access and Affordability; (2) Digital Citizenship and (3) Present and Future of e-Commerce. The Forum also got an opportunity to hear from the leading actors of Rwanda Start-up Act and AI Policy in Rwanda.

2. Participation

RWIGF2020 was attended by 473 participants in total, i.e. 95 participants following via zoom webinar and 378 participants on our RICTA YouTube channel. Among the organizations represented the public sector, we noticed the presence of:

1. The Ministry of ICT and Innovation, MINICT;
2. The Rwanda Development Board, RDB;
3. The Rwanda Information Society Authority, RISA;
4. The Rwanda Investigation Bureau, RIB
5. IREMBO

From the private sector, we noticed the presence of:

1. The Private Sector Federation - ICT Chamber;
2. e-Commerce platform service providers; DMMHEHE Ltd
3. Internet service Provider and Mobile Network Operator, MTN, Airtel;

From the Civil Society, we noticed the presence of:

1. DOT Rwanda
2. i4Policy

3. Opening Remarks

Mrs. Grace INGABIRE, CEO-RICTA gave the opening remarks and welcomed all participants following the Forum discussions through different channels. She gave a brief introduction of Rwanda IGF as a platform that brings together public and private sector stakeholders along with civil society actors to discuss pertinent issues, opportunities and frameworks needed to be a digital nation.

She recognized the presence of the Guest of Honor, Mr. Yves IRADUKUNDA, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of ICT and Innovation; and all other eminent speakers of the day. She expressed the gratitude of appreciation to members, partners and sponsors of Rwanda IGF2020 edition.

Putting much emphasis on the year's theme, she highlighted that as COVID-19 accelerates the digital transformation, the digital world definitely plays a significant role in the daily lives of people. She noted that the online world is becoming a new normal evidently through online shopping, online food delivery,

teleworking, teleconference and even online education hence the Forum focusing the discussions on the 3 main thematic tracks; (1) Internet Access and Affordability; (2) Digital Citizenship and (3) e-Commerce solutions. With the panel of experts from the industry, the forum discussed how Internet allowed business and service continuity during total lockdown and post COVID-19 effects.

4. Keynote Address

Mr. Yves IRADUKUNDA, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of ICT and Innovation (MINICT);

Mr. IRADUKUNDA started by thanking the organizing committee and RICTA CEO for choosing “Internet for ICT and Innovation in the time of COVID-19” as the theme of the Rwanda IGF 2020 edition. He also stated that considering the COVID-19 situation the country and the entire world is going through, having this forum is an opportunity to celebrate what have been done in the journey of Internet and digitization efforts by different partners and stakeholders who have been at the Centre to successes that have been scored.

He also noted that as we celebrate the achievements, we also need to reflect on some of the lessons we are learning and we have seen tremendous improvements and significant progress as all of us collectively trying to respond to challenges brought by the COVID-19.

He also mentioned that the Government of Rwanda is committed to creating enabling environment that welcomes different key players to ensuring that all needed infrastructure for Internet Access and affordability is availed, and with that commitment we seen various organizations coming on to create different initiatives and solutions leveraging on that infrastructure.

He also cautioned the forum that as we celebrate again the achievements, we need to think about what is next. COVID-19 has highlighted some of the gaps that we still have towards the journey of leveraging on the Internet and other digital platforms that we have and at the ministry of ICT and Innovation, the journey needs to continue by ensuring there is digital inclusion to all citizens.

As he closed his keynotes, he highlighted that Rwanda Internet Governance Forum is a good platform that brings key players in the Internet governance and encouraged the forum to have a productive discussion and draw insights and outcomes that can help advance the various initiatives that we already have.

5. Panel Discussions

The Forum had 3 main panels with experts to discuss on the 3 main thematic tracks namely; (1) Internet Access and Affordability; (2) Digital Citizenship and (3) Present and Future of e-Commerce;

The 1st Panel discussion on “**Internet Access and Affordability**” was moderated by Dr. Ally Y. SIMBA Executive Secretary of EACO and was composed of the following panelists:

- ✓ Charles GAHUNGU, General Manager of ICT regulation at RURA
- ✓ Mitwa Kaemba Ng’ambi, CEO of MTN Rwanda.
- ✓ Eddy SEBERA, Managing Director of Mara Phones Rwanda
- ✓ Cecile MBASHIMISHE, Senior communications and events Officer at DOT Rwanda

The composition of the panel was well structured to have relevant insights and outcomes expected.

1. From regulator/government perspective discussing the increase of Internet Access & Affordability In response to COVID -19

2. From a private/operator perspective discussing the increase of Internet Access & Affordability In response to COVID -19.
3. From a Local hardware production (Mara Phones Rwanda) discussing about affordability & access, a case study of Rwanda
4. From a civil society perspective discussing digital inclusion in Rwanda

Here below were the discussion questions;

From Regulator Perspective:

- i. What policies and Regulatory tool are in place to ensure every Rwandan can connect to the Internet?
- ii. What challenges/lessons learnt from this global pandemic and as a regulator, what measures are put in place as a response to the crisis?

From Private/Operator Perspective:

- i. What Telco's/ISP providers like MTN did and are still doing to increase Internet affordability, availability and accessibility of services and to ensure business and service continuity?
- ii. Any special message to your partners more especially to Internet Users?

From Local hardware Production perspective:

- i. What opportunities indigenous production creates for Internet access and affordability?
- ii. What kind of Partnerships should be formed between government and local hardware companies to speed up the delivery of affordable devices to unserved areas and communities?

From a Civil Society Perspective:

- i. How is digital illiteracy handled to support the uneducated community make use of the Internet?
- ii. What lessons did you learn from this global pandemic from digital inclusion perspective?

Key takeaways from the regulator;

The government of Rwanda has realized tremendous development in the ICT sector since 2006. In terms of Internet there have been regulations set by the government to ensure Internet coverage, accessibility and affordability and as a regulator, we have worked hard to enforce these regulations so that Rwandans can easily have access to Internet.

- ❖ The regulator also in collaboration with Telecommunication operators have worked hard to ensure there is enough coverage in the country and as well as affordable Internet across all sectors
- ❖ Government has put in place a national fiber backbone across the country so that all citizens can easily have access to the Internet.
- ❖ There are policies in place like the policy levying taxes on the ICT related equipment all meant to encourage and stimulate access and affordability.
- ❖ As a regulator we have been developing policies and also enforcing them for citizens to have access on Internet.

Key takeaways from the Operator;

- ❖ As operators we realized a dramatic Internet growth in residential areas by the time total lockdown was announced and in conjunction with the regulator, we accelerated a lot of investment that we

had planned for the year and specific programs to cash on the infrastructure expansion into that specific lockdown period to ensure people are connected and to keep the economy going.

- ❖ We also advanced the plans for home connectivity by finding affordable home connectivity solutions to ensure social activities continue even in the lockdown period. We are now forecasting 1,000 homes connected by December 2020.
- ❖ As a mobile money operator, we quickly worked with Central bank of Rwanda to zero rate all mobile money transactions fees in order to facilitate the community do cashless transactions and see the government of Rwanda fight the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ We, as the operator we offered Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) free Internet access through all their screening centers.
- ❖ We engaged with the Ministry of education to provide free access to the educational sites/websites
- ❖ Still a lot of initiatives like connect Rwanda are still going on even post COVID-19.

Key takeaways from the hardware production;

The production and manufacturing of hardware devices came after having strong policies of digitalization of the country and smart phone penetration in place. Seeing the operators laying highways but without vehicles going there, the idea of producing smart phones came.

- ❖ We made sure we provided quality and affordable devices to the market
- ❖ We are still working hard in response to our clients' feedback to provide more affordable devices depending on their pyramid
- ❖ COVID-19 has challenged us but also geared us to meet the needs of our clients.

From a Civil Society Perspective:

- ❖ We have carried out the community digital literacy assessment
- ❖ We have designed very good programs to meet the needs of the people in line with digital skills so that can easily apply
- ❖ We also trained the fresh graduates as digital champions from their respective communities to help us train the local community in the digital Internet skills.
- ❖ We have developed an easy to learn curriculum in order to meet all levels of community.

With that we hope the community will easily make use of the available infrastructure.

The 2nd Panel discussion on “**Digital Citizenship**” was moderated by Robert N. Ford and was composed of the following panelists:

- ✓ Arthur FRANZON, Strategy Manager at IREMBO
- ✓ AKILI SHEMA, Division Manager Cybercrimes Investigation at RIB
- ✓ Innocent Asiimwe MUDENGE, Division Manager at RISA

Here below were the discussion questions;

- a) How does one become a digital citizen? What is it that qualifies one to be a digital citizen in Rwanda?
- b) Is Rwanda ready for the 4th Industrial revolution? If so, how?
- c) How is Rwanda dealing with limited digital literacy to ensure high efficiency for Government to citizen service delivery- (Irembo services)?
- d) What approach, strategy or policy has Rwanda Government designed for equitable digital etiquette?
- e) What are digital rights for a Rwanda Citizen? What are the parameters? What are the do's and don't's?

Key taken notes on Digital Citizenship;

- ❖ The Rwanda Information Society Authority/RISA is working hard to ensure informed and positive engagement of citizens with digital technologies by increasing digital skills to 60% within the community by 2024.
- ❖ We are looking at having active and responsible participation in the life of the community and at all levels of the country.
- ❖ There are different efforts and initiatives to make sure citizens are connected. Now 96% 4G network coverage.
- ❖ There is a government's social responsibility to enabling citizens with digital skills through different trainings to ensure government services delivery to citizens becomes real.
- ❖ We have deployed trained agents in the country to facilitate the understanding and usage of our services to the community.
- ❖ We are also training the entire population through sensitization campaigns. It is a long-term plan but it will enable the entire community with the basic skills of using the IREMBO services.
- ❖ The government of Rwanda has put in place the mechanisms/policies/laws as tools to prevent and protect the community from Cybercrimes and Cyber security.
- ❖ The RIB is not mandated to punish the citizens but also to prevent them from committing Cybercrimes. We work in partnership with other stakeholders to make sure we raise the awareness of our people.
- ❖ The people are advised to consider the kind of information they put on different platforms and also to understand the consequence.
- ❖ Our community is asked to always double check before transacting any online services with unidentical individual.
- ❖ Our community is also required to be interested to read these policies in place to prevent and protect themselves from committing cybercrimes. For instance, the data protection policy is going to be approved and people need to read this policy for them to be safe.

The 3rd Panel discussion on “**Present and Future E-Commerce**” was moderated by Alex NTALE and was composed of the following panelists:

- ✓ Diane SAYINZOGA, Head of Special Economic Zone and Exports at RDB
- ✓ Clarisse IRIBAGIZA, CEO & Co-founder DMM HeHe
- ✓ Pierre KAYITANA, Division Manager Airtel Money at Airtel Rwanda

Here below were the discussion questions;

- 1) What are the opportunities around e-Commerce platforms in Rwanda?
- 2) What challenges/impact of COVID-19 pandemic to trade in Rwanda?
- 3) What lessons learnt from this global pandemic?
- 4) What role did e-Commerce platforms play to ensure business continuity?
- 5) Some lessons learnt from this global pandemic crisis; could you share from a business perspective.
- 6) How should we motivate the community to embrace e-commerce solutions in the new normal?
- 7) Any special message to Internet Users?
- 8) What Role is MNOs playing on mobile financial services for e-commerce & business continuity during and in post COVID-19?
- 9) What lessons did you learn from this global pandemic crisis from a business perspective?
- 10) How are you motivating the community to embrace cashless solutions in the new normal?
- 11) Any special message to mobile money subscribers?

Key taken notes on Present and Future E-Commerce;

- ❖ There are a lot of opportunities around e-commerce platforms at both local and international market.
- ❖ With this COVID-19 pandemic, we seen a lot of industries putting the business online hence encouraging the local market to embrace the e-commerce solutions.
- ❖ E-commerce platforms like Alibaba Platform have promoted our exports services and I would like to encourage more local players in creating more e-commerce platforms.
- ❖ E-commerce platforms have offered an opportunity to businesses to continue operating even during this COVID-19 Pandemic
- ❖ The community should embrace e-Commerce platforms as most of the institutions have come on to endorse the use of online services mainly as COVID-19 challenges have pushed us to have various solutions.
- ❖ The availability of infrastructure and infrastructure aggregates are the most contributor to the solutions we are having today.
- ❖ The COVID-19 recovery would be going digital
- ❖ The MNOs turned their focus on payment integration and zero rated the service fee on mobile money transactions, merchant transactions and so on.
- ❖ We also facilitated both merchants and banks by creating an integration whereby a user can pull money from the bank to his/her mobile money account and transact easily. And this forced what we call bank to wallet grow by 250% in the time of lockdown.
- ❖ There is still a big reduction on the transaction fee on mobile money by 70%.
- ❖ Look at a problem in the mirror of figuring out a solution to it and try to find out your passionate
- ❖ Airtel Rwanda is trying to avoid dependency on the agent services.
- ❖ Moving to an open API service.
- ❖ Connecting businesses in the Economic zone and the local online platforms is our priority and is something we are considering an opportunity and we have held different sessions where these parties are meeting for the business.

The Rwanda Startup Act: The Government of Rwanda is initiating the development of a Startup Act through an open and inclusive process supported by i4Policy. The Forum had to hear from leading actors of this process and learnt more about how the Rwanda Startup Act is building upon and reinforcing existing cross-cutting reforms already underway, to contribute to innovation and digital transformation in the Country.

A.I Policy in Rwanda: The Government of Rwanda represented by Rwanda's Ministry of ICT and Innovation (MINICT) and Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) supported by GIZ have engaged The Future Society to develop Rwanda's national artificial intelligence strategy. Rwanda aims to harness AI, digital and emerging technologies to support Rwanda's development goals (including sustainable and inclusive growth), become an ICT and Innovation Hub, and position Rwanda as a leader on the African and global stage.

For more details on Rwanda Internet Governance Forum 2020 Edition, visit the following link; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hInfRBxf1E0&t=1s>