



# Rwanda Internet Governance Forum 2021

LEMIGO Hotel- Kigali, Rwanda | 30 November 2021

## “Internet in Post Covid-19 era- Lessons learned”

In collaboration with





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## 1. Introduction

The Rwanda Internet Governance Forum (RWIGF) 2021 edition was held on the 30th November 2021 at LEMIGO Hotel, Kigali-Rwanda. It attracted a wide spectrum of stakeholders from the public, private, academia and civil society domains to discuss a wide range of pertinent issues, opportunities and frameworks suitable for a digital nation. The main objective of this year's forum was to provide a platform to maximize the opportunity for open and inclusive dialogue and the exchange of ideas on Internet governance (IG) specifically on Child Online safety, opportunities for e-commerce and public service delivery.

This year's dialogue opened engagements on creation of Internet and online service opportunities, mapping out best practices during and in post covid-19 period. Identifying emerging issues and agreed on collective mitigations to enable smooth and transparent Internet governance.

Serving 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 year's theme was "Internet in Post COVID-19 era, Lessons learned." It focused on three main discussion tracks: (1) Public Service Delivery; (2) Child Online safety and (3) Opportunities for e-Commerce.

## 2. Participation

Rwanda IGF2021 was attended by 101 participants and among the organizations represented the public sector, we noticed the presence of:

1. The Ministry of ICT and Innovation, MINICT;
2. The Rwanda Biomedical Center, RBC;
3. The Rwanda Basic Education Board, REB;
4. The Rwanda National Police, RNP
5. Rwanda Utility Regulatory Authority, RURA
6. National Child Development Agency, NCDA
7. National Post Office, iPosita.

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 Providers, BSC;

From the Civil Society, we noticed the presence of:

1. Internet Society, ISOC Rwanda chapter

From the Academia, we noticed the presence of:

1. University of Tourism, Technology and Business Studies, UTB
2. Africa Institute of Mathematics and Science, AIMS

## 3. Opening Remarks

Mrs. Grace INGABIRE MWIKARAGO, CEO-RICTA gave the opening remarks and welcomed all participants in the room. She gave a brief introduction of Rwanda IGF as a platform that brings together public and private sector stakeholders along with academia and civil society actors to discuss pertinent issues, opportunities and frameworks needed for Internet Governance.



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 IGF2021 edition.

Putting much emphasis on the year's theme, she highlighted that COVID-19 Pandemic showed that Internet is not only essential for personal lives but also key for our professional lives. She noted that Rwanda government COVID-19 guidelines such as restricted mobility, temporarily closure of businesses and social distancing geared the Internet adoption and usage amidst pandemic.

She noted that the Forum will be focusing on the discussions under 3 main thematic tracks; (1) Internet's role in the public service delivery; (2) Child Online Safety forging a new discourse toward child online protection ensuring safe Internet for a generation so exposed and vulnerable and (3) e-Commerce. Developing oversight on best practices from online service delivery during the pandemic and how to build on lessons learned to strengthen the ecosystem. With the panel of experts from the industry, the forum discussed how the community can make use on Internet in the Post COVID-19 Era.

## **4. Keynote Address**

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

Mr. IRADUKUNDA started by thanking the organizing committee and the partners for making the IGF 2021 Rwanda Chapter happen. He also stated that considering the COVID-19 pandemic the country and the entire world went through, Internet connectivity played a vital role in making the normal life going on. He also took the opportunity to thank the partners in the room for working tirelessly with the ministry to make the community connected. He cited that 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 registered.

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 pandemic.

The Permanent Secretary mentioned that the Government of Rwanda has availed and enabled Internet access, skills and devices needed for citizens to be digital literate. He gave an example where by more than 100 services are accessed by the citizens through IREMBO platform. He also said that the leadership is committed to continue creating enabling environment that welcomes different key players to ensure that all needed infrastructure for Internet Access and affordability is availed. Different Policies like child online protection and data protection policy are in place to support safe Internet usage.

He cautioned the forum that as we celebrate again the achievements, we need to think about more initiatives and incentives that can raise awareness of digital tools and understand challenges in place that are hindering the Internet usage.

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 have in line with Child Online protection, e-Commerce services and he assured the openness and collaboration of the Ministry of ICT and Innovation.



## 5. Panel Discussions

The Forum had 3 main panels with experts to discuss on the 3 main thematic tracks namely; (1) Public Service Delivery; (2) Child Online Safety and (3) e-Commerce;

The 1<sup>st</sup> Panel discussion on “**Public Service Delivery**” was moderated by Egidie INGABIRE Senior Producer & Presenter at RBA and was composed of the following panelists:

- CP John Bosco KABERA, Rwanda National Police Spokesperson
- Alex NTALE, CEO at ICT Chamber.
- Fiona KAMIKAZI, Head of Communications and Marketing at I&M Bank
- Noella BIGIRIMANA, Head of Research, Innovation & Data science Division at RBC

The composition of the panel was well structured to have relevant insights and outcomes expected on how Internet played a vital role in public service delivery during the COVID-19 era.

### **Key takeaways from the discussion;**

- The government of Rwanda through the ministry of Health and Rwanda Biomedical Center started preparing from the time they heard there is a virus coming. Even before the world health organization (WHO) confirmed the kind of pandemic.
- Internet and ICT in general helped a lot in terms of awareness as there was a lot of misinformation on the pandemic. Different institutions managed to communicate well through online channels.
- Internet played a vital role on communication and community engagement and education.
- A lot of work went online and the Internet geared the process.
- ICT companies worked tirelessly to put in place a lot of solutions during the pandemic.
- Government guidelines were easily communicated and implemented through different social media networks using Internet.
- Internet played a very good function on helping different media like Youtube, Twitter to keep the communication online and sharing throughout the country.
- Internet helped different institutions to get information from different areas easily and giving back feedbacks.
- Internet also played a vital role in terms of depression and mental health management during different lockdowns. Applications like club house and Tiktok helped people from getting depressed.
- Internet kept activities like education, businesses on going and different other innovations were introduced.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Panel discussion on “**Child Online Safety**” was moderated by Robert N. Ford and was composed of the following panelists:

- Christian MUHIRWA, Chief Executive Officer at BSC Ltd
- James NDUWAYO, Head of Department for Child Protection at NCDA
- Maurice KAJANGWE, Senior Technologist, Privacy & Data Protection at MINICT
- Dr. Christine NIYIZAMWIYITIRA, Head of Department of ICT in Education at REB

Here below were the discussion questions;

1. How much awareness exists for the whole population especially in rural areas on COP
2. How do we categorise harmful Child Online content?



3. How best can parent's provide guidance to the children regarding Child Online safety
4. What are the specific child categories that are exposed or affected by online harm
5. What is the level of impact to Rwandan Children, how much at risk is Rwanda as a country
6. What are the legal and regulatory implications of COP in Rwanda.
  - a. Which existing laws in Rwanda deal specifically with COP?
  - b. Are there all necessary instruments to deal with the subject matter on investigation, prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators of Child Online Harm
7. What kind of response mechanisms are in place to handle victims of Child online harm
8. What kind of offender risk management mechanisms are place for COP
9. What kind of tagging systems and technical controls are in place to mitigate online harm
10. What kind of partnerships public or private exist for COP?
11. Do we have a database of digital images and cases on COP to guide the awareness and sensitization strategy on COP nationwide?

**Key takeaways on Child online safety;**

- ❖ Child on protection is not so different from the physical child protection. The difference is that the child is protected online from any harmful event.
- ❖ The child online protection policy is in place since 2019 to protect them.
- ❖ The child online protection starts immediately from the conception and must be protected from harmful online content. Parents are argued to ensure that they control what their children are consuming online.
- ❖ Rwanda Basic Education Board ensures that any content given to children is not harmful. In partnership with Internet Service Providers, content is filtered from both internal and external sources to ensure that the children are protected from harmful.
- ❖ Teachers and students are also trained from cybercrimes to make sure children are protected. Clubs in schools are formed to further educate children from any harmful content.
- ❖ Internet Service Providers work very closely with Education institutions to make sure that the content delivered to children is in line with our context.
- ❖ Awareness is much needed to make sure that children and parents are educated and are aware of any harmful information.
- ❖ Rwanda government has put in place different legal and regulatory frameworks to protect children online.
- ❖ Awareness is quite needed so that the community understands that laws protecting children are in place.
- ❖ Different sectors like media need to understand harmful
- ❖ There are different tools or mechanisms like toll free (hotline) 771 to use to communicate and report any harmful event to children. There are also initiatives like inshuti z'umuryango (friends of family) and ISANGE One stop center that help in case of any case child harmful.



- ❖ The Internet Service Providers are regulated to provide well secured Internet and make sure the tools are in place to protect children online.

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

- Charles GAHUNGU, General Manager of ICT regulations at RURA
- Albert MUNYABUGINGO, CEO & Co-founder Vuba Vuba Africa Ltd
- Ildephonse NSHIMYUMUREMYI, Ag. Director of Commercial unit & E-Commerce Project coordinator at National Post Office
- Pearl UMUHOZA, Founder & CEO of Yummy-N-Fresh.

Here below were the discussion questions;

- 1) How is the regulator defining e-Commerce, for the lay person in the audience what is the scope that RURA and government cover when it comes to e-commerce?
- 2) What challenges are you finding in this industry that require regulation, please use any facts and figures where possible.
- 3) You are one of the oldest companies in the country, please share with us what IPOSITA is doing to enable e-commerce practical examples of your experience will be helpful to our participants.
- 4) As a traditional company launching into e-Commerce how are you enabling cross border trade and exporters?
- 5) We have all seen you suddenly on the market, could you please share with us your journey into e-commerce, what opportunities did you see and what challenges are you facing you did not know of before you started this business.
- 6) What is missing in our market that you believe we need to be addressing as the Internet Community to have a thriving ecommerce industry?
- 7) Take us through your online ecommerce shopping journey, when did you start, why led to you starting to shop online and what has the experience been so far?
- 8) What advice would you give someone who is still not sure if shopping online is the right thing to do.

#### **Key takeaways on E-Commerce;**

- ❖ There are a lot of tools and regulations in place to ensure that e-Commerce is done in a protected way that people are protected with their businesses but also trust in the industry is built.
- ❖ The national post office has embarked on logistics to ensure the local market to embrace the e-commerce solutions as delivery through iPosita is covering the entire country and internationally partnering with IPO.
- ❖ E-commerce platforms have offered an opportunity to businesses to continue operating even during this COVID-19 Pandemic
- ❖ The community should embrace e-Commerce 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 COVID-19 should give the community a lesson of how good e-Commerce services are key and people should get encouraged to embrace online businesses.