Draft

IGF 2022 TOWN-HALL PROPOSAL

Topic: "Understanding rural and urban poor people in the developing countries and developmental and digital policy demands"

Organisers / Facilitators:

- Wisdom Donkor, President / CEO, Africa Open Data and Internet Research Foundation (AODIRF), Ghana
- Dr. Lee W. McKnight, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, USA
- Dr. Danielle T. Smith - College of Arts & Science, Syracuse University, USA
- Catherine R Kimambo, African Child Projects, Republic of Tanzania (Africa Region)

About the Session:

The objective of this town-hall session is to bring together key experts and stakeholders to discuss digital policy gaps hindering rural and underserved urban poor communities in developing countries development.

Background

Rural communities have long been expected to benefit from information and communication technology. In the twenty-first century, however, the reverse has proven true. Knowledge spillovers have fueled urbanization and drawn job seekers to big cities, widening the divide between urban and rural communities. We contend that recent developments in technology and decentralized social behaviors have begun to buck this tendency. A major reason for this is that rural communities struggle to maintain affordability given the pace at which digital connectivity grows capacity - in select regions of high density and income. *Internet and broadband infrastructures policies are not aligned with rural communities requirements in developing countries.* The focus is no longer on the "haves" and "have nots," but rather on the extent of use of edge and decentralized technologies, and diverse usage patterns across communities.

Many conversations globally have focused on the so-called "digital gap" between developed and underdeveloped countries. It is believed that failing to leverage the benefits of the ongoing technology revolution leaves developing countries behind and at an increasing disadvantage in a transforming world. While such broad discourse is beneficial for bringing attention to some of the most pressing issues, the development challenges it presents can be daunting seem unsurmountable. Moreover, when identifying intervention priorities, the available data tends to be obscure and incomplete. Oversimplifying complex and long-standing development concerns results.

The purpose of this town hall is to delve past the proclamations around the digital divide and examine pressing policy issues and repercussions, from the perspective of people's well-being and rural and urban poor development goals.

Objective

1. Promote dialogue, collaboration, knowledge sharing

2. Debate plans for collective action among local, national, regional and global multi-stakeholders
3. Enhanced sharing of strategies amongst stakeholders in addressing rural and underserved urban poor digital policy gaps
4. Initiate a stakeholder dialogue to inform policy direction and strategies at national levels.
5. Begin a discussion on priorities and use cases based on existing data, with a focus on digital policy gaps that need to be filled to facilitate the development of sustainable, decentralized solutions.

Expected Outcomes:

The workshop will begin with two quick policy talks on how to better understand the road map process and what needs to be done in the short and long term.

- Enhanced understanding and awareness on how investment priorities for economic convergence can help achieve the objective of the SDG2 at the rural and underserved urban communities in the developing countries.
- Identify opportunities and lessons learned that would support the developing countries alignment of practical digital policy interventions that support rural and underserved urban poor communities
- Identify the most critical digital policy gaps hindering the adoption and deployment of digital solutions for the economic benefits.
- Identify opportunities for governments to align national broadband and connectivity priority programs for rural and underserved urban poor communities in the developing countries.
- Identify key issues on funding gaps, resources and capacity at the national and local levels,
- Identify key policy gaps hindering the penetration of Internet to the underserved communities in the developing countries, and actionable digital economy community mechanisms to overcome them.

Discussion Facilitation:

This town hall meeting will serve as a focal point for coordination and constructive discussions about different but interrelated aspects of rural and urban poor people in the developing countries developmental and digital policy demands. The town hall meeting will include experts from the stakeholder groups who will be able to share knowledge and experiences. Collective insight on digital policy interventions necessary for the Internet to entrench human rights and we-being of all is a key desired outcome.

The format chosen will serve this purpose as it includes the gathering of experts to initiate the conversation as well as an open microphone in order to incorporate the broader views of the audience (onsite and online). The session will be structured around two core subjects, with each subject organized around specific digital access policy intervention to examine the current state of connectivity for the rural and underserved urban poor communities.

Agenda outline
1. Welcome, introduction and opening remark.
2. **Presentations:**
   a. Case Study I: Topic: Connectivity and Agriculture digitization and innovation, the situation in developing rural countries.
   b. Case Study II: Topic: How can rural and urban impoverished communities in developing nations effectively deploy cost-effective community networks?
3. Discussants and Q&A: There will be three (3) discussants in-room and remotely and will share their perspectives based on their experiences and the lessons they've learnt developing and implementing various digital policy programs and initiative, this will be complemented by a Q&A. The three (3) discussants from among the audience (in-room and remote) will respond to specific submissions made by the speakers.
4. Closing remarks

The initial two speakers will follow the same discussion structure. Speakers will be invited on stage to present and speak to the policy issues, followed by a response from the discussants among onsite and remote audience. To speed up the engagement with participants, a unique approach will be used to gather questions in the chat. The questions will be read out alongside discussants for the speakers to respond.

Moderator: Kwaku Antwi, Director Outreach and Programs, Africa Open Data and Internet Research   Foundation

Online Moderator: Lily Edinam Botsyoe, Africa Youth IGF

Speakers:
1. Andre Laperriere, Executive Director, Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) https://www.godan.info/
2. Lee W. McKnight, Associate Professor, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, USA https://ischool.syr.edu/lee-mcknight/

Discussants and Q&A:
1. **Dr. Danielle T. Smith, College of Arts & Science, Syracuse University, USA https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/smith-danielle-t/**
2. **Dr. Ephrem Kwaa-Aidoo, Senior ICT Lecture at University of Education, Winneba, Ghana http://pilot.uew.edu.gh/itservices/staff/profile/ekkaidoo**
3. **Hon. Neema Lugangira, Member of of Parliament, Republic of Tanzania**
4. **Hon. Samuel Nartey George, Member of Parliament, Republic of Ghana**

Rapporteurs: Akinremi Peter Taiwo, Africa Rapporteurs Network,
Jane Appiah-Okyere, Doctoral Student, School of Information Studies (iSchool), Syracuse University