



Outcome report

Connectivity for inclusive digital societies

Friday, 9 July 2021 (10:20 AM– 12:00 PM CEST).

Moderator: John Omo, Secretary General, African Telecommunications Union

Welcoming remarks: Andrew Rugege, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Africa

Speakers:

- Chako Armant, Head of Projects, La Difference
- Funke Atanda, Senior manager, INQ

Session Summary: in this session, panellists discussed the role of connectivity and emerging technology for creating more inclusive digital societies, especially in the post-Covid era. Panellists presented case studies and examples of implementation of inclusive connectivity solutions in the Africa region. Panellists also shared their experience of using emerging technology for connectivity towards digital transformation, focusing on challenges and opportunities for implementing inclusive connectivity solutions in the region.

1. Main outcomes highlighting the following:

- Announcement of the final Report of Study Group Question 7/1 'Access to telecommunication/ICT services by persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs' for the ITU-D study period 2018-2021. The report provides an overview of good practices and achievements in ICT accessibility worldwide and explores areas for improvement towards achieving full digital
- Funke Atanda presented some emerging technology solutions to provide connectivity for an inclusive digital society. The presentation highlighted that enterprises require connectivity between locations within their networks and they need reliable access to data centres for local applications as well as cloud-based applications. Therefore, **the use of software defined wide area network (SD WAN) technology for connectivity, organisations can leverage** the benefits of the cloud, the bandwidth of broadband, existing enterprise wide network infrastructure to efficiently and cost effectively transmit media (data, video and voice) and quick access cloud applications from anywhere and every location in the network.
- Chako Armant talked about the contribution of a community network in a specific community in a small island in DRC. Using the example of Pamoja Net, with local businesses, customers of Pamoja Net, she presented their

challenges and opportunities as well as their structure and governance models.

2. Main conclusions reached during the discussion:

- Partnership and particularly in partnership with the private sector is key for emerging technology for connectivity.
- Development of the skills is important for emerging technologies since the people that are using the connectivity services and playing a key role in the digital economy, are those that have skills and capacity to do that
- A community network is an essential instrument in the development of the connectivity in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, especially in this post-Covid era.
- Collaborative regulation with operators and private sector, operators and regulator working together to create regulations that favour the development of the sector, the citizens and universal connectivity.
- The need for Governments to involve all stakeholders right from the private sector to Civil Societies and have lasting policies that can accommodate all stakeholders.
- There is a need for governments to ensure that there is necessary support for private sector and Civil Society.

3. Panellists contributions to the outcome reports:

- *What are the opportunities and challenges of emerging technology for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS?*
 - Some connectivity challenges are in country distribution networks, cost last mile access, cost of building the network, cost of access to Spectrum.
 - Some **connectivity opportunities in LDCs are existence of green and underserved areas, coverage gaps, national broadband penetration goals which are not yet achieved, connectivity requirements for digital transformation in organisations and post Covid solutions requirements**
 - Maintaining a community network for many years is challenging and requires support from the state, the community and the partners
- *What are the most important points/aspects of the emerging technology that should be considered in order to accelerate the digital transformation in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS?*
 - Partnership and particularly in partnership with the private sector
 - A long-term view of investment into technology
 - Creation of new community networks and support the existing community networks, which can serve as models for new networks

- *Takeaway: please provide one key word and one sentence that most fit the session topic*
 - We need collaboration, rather than competition
 - We need to work with grassroot organization, regional organization, international organizations, the private sector, financial bodies to bring everybody on board for a massive push that can enable us to register some positive development
 - There is a need to ensure that the private sector is brought in the mainstream of activities and policy-making, as when the private sector sees the benefit, that is created by everybody being connected, universal access to connectivity can be achieved