Concept note

Stakeholder Workshop
Theme: Co-creating Sustainable Operating Models for Connected Schools in Kenya
Date: 22 March 2023 | 9:00am – 16:30pm
Place: Strathmore University

Background:

To ensure that school connectivity solutions are sustainable, effective, efficient, and long-lasting, it is critical to take a comprehensive approach that considers several factors. This includes understanding each school's unique needs and challenges, such as location and context, existing infrastructure, and available resources. It also entails identifying the necessary technical expertise, developing an implementation plan that takes into account both cost and long-term maintenance, and co-designing tailored solutions that meet the specific connectivity needs of each school. Furthermore, knowledge sharing and collaboration among various stakeholders is critical. Working together, stakeholders can find practical and long-term solutions to the connectivity and sustainability gap in schools.

The workshop on co-creating sustainable operating models for connected schools in Kenya, organized by ITU in support of the Communication Authority's ongoing efforts towards sustainable connectivity projects, brings together government representatives and other stakeholders directly involved in school connectivity projects or who may be able to support such initiatives, to share data and lessons learned in providing connectivity to schools, in order to co-create sustainable connectivity solutions for the benefit of the students, teachers and their communities. The workshop serves to support the Communication Authority's ongoing efforts, particularly the Universal Service Fund, to achieve sustainable connectivity by embedding sustainability in the design of the USF funded projects as well as those schools that are being connected through the Giga Kenya initiative.

There are many stakeholders who are making valuable contributions working towards improving school internet connectivity. However, it is also true that many stakeholders often work independently, and there is limited sharing of lessons and experiences. To address this gap, this workshop aims to create a platform for stakeholders to share knowledge and co-create sustainable connectivity solutions. By bringing stakeholders together in this way, we can facilitate greater collaboration and sharing of best practices and foster a culture of mutual learning and support which can inform future connectivity projects.

This workshop is part of a larger study, which aims to assess existing and new/innovative school connectivity models, working with school heads, conducting interviews with stakeholders who are directly involved in and impacted by school connectivity (such as computer teachers, technicians, school boards etc., communities surrounding the schools, companies which may be able to support (MNOs, ISPs, community networks, development partners, among others) and people/organizations that understand the actual situation in those schools), in order to identify connectivity operating models that work. Thus, ensuring the elaboration of solutions for the sustainable funding of internet connectivity that are feasible and tailored to actual needs and contexts.

This work is being carried out with the support of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)-UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) partnership in Kenya. The partnership, established in 2021, seeks to promote effective regulation, increase investment, and develop innovative models for expanding digital access and inclusion. This workshop will support the second pillar of the partnership, "Promoting sustainable models to expand school connectivity in underserved communities." Further, the workshop will also contribute to the work of Giga in Kenya. Giga, a global ITU-UNICEF initiative, recognizes the critical importance of connecting every school to the internet and every young person to information, opportunity, and choice. Giga serves as a platform to support governments in their efforts to provide the infrastructure required to ensure digital connectivity to every school and through this to every community, and every citizen. Giga has been investigating models for sustainable connectivity of schools, globally, including self-sufficient community models, in order to optimize funding resources and reduce costs.

Objectives:

The workshop's goal is to bring together government representatives as well as other stakeholders directly involved in school connectivity or who may be able to support it, to share data and lessons learned in providing connectivity to schools in order to co-create sustainable connectivity solutions and operational models. Further, the workshop aims to facilitate collaboration and foster a culture of mutual learning and support. The workshop will focus on the following critical issues pertaining to school connectivity:

1. What knowledge and lessons about sustainability have stakeholders gained from implementing school connectivity projects?
2. What are the essential elements for a sustainable school connectivity operating model across various types of schools in Kenya?
3. What are the sustainable financing options for internet connectivity in schools?
4. Recommendations on sustainable operating models for school connectivity, building on lessons learned, and the roles of the different players.

Expected Outcomes:

The expected outcomes of the workshop include:

1. Share and learn about key variables that should be considered for sustainable implementation of school connectivity across various types of Kenyan schools.
2. A compilation of lessons learned from implementing school connectivity in Kenya.
3. Based on workshop insights and lessons learned, create a high-level guide for implementing sustainable operating models for school connectivity in Kenyan schools.
4. Learn about the preliminary results of the ongoing study on co-creation of sustainable operating models for connected schools and provide input.

Participants:

The workshop will bring together around 60 stakeholders including government representatives (Communication Authority of Kenya, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, Ministry of Education, ICT Authority among others) and other stakeholders who are directly involved in school connectivity projects, including financing of schools, as well as organizations that may be able to support school connectivity (such as mobile network operators, NGOs, complementary access networks, development partners among others.)

Duration and Location: This will be a one-day event (9:00am to 16:30pm) to be held in Nairobi on 22 March 2023, at Strathmore University.

Post Workshop Follow-Up Actions: Following the workshop, insights and lessons learned will be compiled into a document that will then be used to inform the ongoing study, as well as the development and implementation of sustainable school connectivity operating models in Kenyan public schools.

Website: The event website http://www.itu.int/go/2023-expert-workshop-kenya is being updated with all information relevant to the event.