

Session Outcome Document

Unlocking Africa's Digital Entrepreneurship Potential: Insights from the Tech Hub Landscape post-Covid

International Trade Centre

29th May 2024, 11:00-11:45

[Session 309— Unlocking Africa's Digital Entrepreneurship Potential: Insights from the Tech... | WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event 2024 \(itu.int\)](#)

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- Challenges related to reduced access to funding and grants are prominent, highlighting the need for supportive financial mechanisms to sustain technology hubs. COVID-19 highlighted these weaknesses.
- On a positive note, COVID-19 revealed the strength of the community building role of tech hubs. Knowledge sharing is an essential part of the tech hub culture in Africa, especially during COVID-19 where we saw for instance the resurgence of HealthTech.
- Concerns about imported narratives within tech hubs and the need to reshape these narratives to better reflect and support African realities. There is a kind of 'American (Silicon Valley) dream' being offered to entrepreneurs in Africa and elsewhere that overlooks local realities.
- Conducting needs assessments to better target funding and resources is something that is important in today's African tech hub landscape.

Towards WSIS+20 and WSIS beyond 2025, please share your views on the emerging trends, challenges, achievements, and opportunities in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines to date (5-8 bullets)

- In terms of Emerging Trends, we see a massive, global rise in AI, big data, cryptocurrencies, distributed ledger technologies and the Internet of Things (IoT) impacting WSIS stakeholders. These technologies hold immense potential for development but raise concerns around privacy, security, and ethical use.

- Challenges abound: the digital divide persists, with unequal access to affordable and reliable infrastructure and skills. Cybersecurity threats are growing, and ensuring online safety remains a challenge. Additionally, the environmental impact of ICT needs to be addressed, especially with its exponential growth due to the hardware and computing requirements generated by AI.
- Achievements: significant progress has been made in increasing internet penetration rates globally. Multi-stakeholder collaboration through the WSIS Forum has fostered knowledge sharing and best practices.
- Opportunities abound too: the continued growth of mobile broadband and accelerated increase of smartphone penetration offer new avenues for bridging the digital divide, particularly in developing countries. Open access initiatives and digital literacy programs can empower individuals and communities.
- WSIS beyond 2025: the WSIS+20 review process is an opportunity to refine the Action Lines for the evolving digital landscape and align them directly with the SDGs – actually, a bold but sensible move would be to merge them.

Tangible outcomes (such as key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, commitments, figures, and success stories (3-5 bullet points))

- The Tech Hubs report : [Tech Hubs in Africa: Accelerating start-ups for resilient growth - 3rd Edition | ITC \(intracen.org\)](#)
- The NTF V program : [Netherlands Trust Fund – Phase V – Agribusiness and Digital Technology | ITC \(intracen.org\)](#)

Actionable plan and key recommendations (2-5 points)

- Creating any more tech hubs is not sustainable as Africa is already oversaturated with those. Invest in and mobilize those already existing.
- There should be a systemic reconfiguration of the way funding is sought, in order to address current issues.
- Policy makers should focus on developing affordable internet access and infrastructures, revising curriculum to match industry needs, and enhancing leadership within tech hubs to drive growth and innovation.

Suggestions for thematic aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2025 (one paragraph)



- From an SME perspective, thematic aspects for the WSIS Forum 2025 could focus on leveraging ICT to enhance competitiveness and navigate the digital economy. This could include workshops on e-commerce strategies, cybersecurity measures for small businesses, and utilizing AI tools for marketing and communication. The forum could also address challenges faced by SMEs, such as access to financing for digital transformation and navigating complex regulatory environments.