2020 Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)

Digital transformation to accelerate achievement of the SDGs
– Digital development, partnerships and funding

6-7 October 2020, 12:00 – 15:00 CAT (Virtual meeting)
with preparatory break-out sessions on 5 October 2020 (12:00 – 13:30 CAT time)

CONTRIBUTION BY Ministry of ICT & Innovation, Rwanda

TITLE: The Giga initiative in Rwanda

EXPECTED DURATION OF PRESENTATION: [5 minutes]

CONTACT: [Name, e-mail, phone]

❖ **Africa Regional Initiatives:** [Select the Regional Initiative(s) relevant for your contribution]

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 1** – Building digital economies and fostering innovation in Africa

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 2** – Promotion of emerging broadband technologies

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 3** – Building trust and security in the use of telecommunications/ information and communication technology

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 4** – Strengthening human and institutional capacity building

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 5** – Management and monitoring of the radio-frequency spectrum and transition to digital broadcasting

❖ **Related ITU development thematic:** [Select the thematic area(s) relevant for your contribution]

[Yes/No] Networks and digital infrastructure

[Yes/No] Cybersecurity

[Yes/No] Emergency telecommunications

[Yes/No] Environment

[Yes/No] Digital policy and regulation

[Yes/No] Capacity development

[Yes/No] Digital services and applications

[Yes/No] Digital inclusion

[Yes/No] Digital innovation ecosystems

[Yes/No] Statistics and data for evidence-based decision making

❖ **Year(s) of implementation:** [Select the year(s) for which your action/project/initiative is relevant]

[Yes/No] 2018	[Yes/No] 2019	[Yes/No] 2020	[Yes/No] 2021	[Yes/No] Others

❖ **COVID-19 response related initiative:** [Please indicate if your action/project/initiative is relevant for COVID-19 response]

[Yes/No] COVID-19 response related initiative

Background [max 300 words]

The GIGA initiative, a partnership between ITU and UNICEF, aims at connecting the 3.7 billion people still unconnected to the internet by connecting every school to the internet.

To achieve this, the initiative is anchored on four pillars:

1. Mapping every school's connectivity – 800,000 schools have been mapped so far including 4,234 schools in Rwanda.
2. Financing the common bid for aggregated connectivity demand across multiple countries.
3. Connecting every school using a range of possible solutions based on connectivity requirements and location context.
4. Empowering young people with skills to build relevant digital content for schools (children, teachers and administrators)

The initiative is focusing its initial efforts on three regions; East Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Caribbean. It leverages global cooperation, leadership, and innovation in finance and technology, to bridge the digital divide. The goal is to provide connectivity to every school in the world.

Rwanda has officially committed to lead the initiative on the continent. At the moment, the Ministry of ICT and Innovation is leading the development of a business case that will be the basis of partner mobilization.

Proposal [max 400 words]

The GIGA Initiative aligns well with Rwanda's vision to become a knowledge-based economy as articulated in our national vision. By connecting every secondary school to the Internet, we will empower young Rwandans who make up over 70% of our population with the resources, tools and information to learn, innovate and earn.

Young people across the world have been particularly affected by the COVID 19 pandemic because, during this year, as a mechanism of prevention, many countries have closed school doors. This has led to an unprecedented demand for digital learning content. While adapting to develop solutions to keep our young people engaged positively has led to the development of new ways to use the existing widely accessible media such as radio and television, we have also recognized that now more than ever, it should be a priority to make digital content accessible to every young person.

Digital exclusion is a real obstacle to social and economic development, affecting over 40% of the global population. Digital exclusion deprives young people of 21st century skills, education and earning opportunities, and affects their communities and entire societies. This is why Rwanda is committed to the GIGA initiative to ensure, that we further the mark of connecting the unconnected. The GIGA initiative will create an entry point to opportunity and choice for every young person who is currently disconnected.

Connecting schools therefore presents us with a unique opportunity to set up these schools as epicenters that can support the vibrant development of their communities. As we phase this last mile connectivity effort, we are looking to identify one strategically located school per community that can be connected first, and which in turn will make it possible for the nearby local government

office, healthcare centre and other businesses, to have improved access to the internet. This making it a strong business case for improved delivery of services to our citizens.

The GIGA Initiative provides an avenue for Rwanda to ensure affordable access to quality learning, a key pillar of our socio-economic transformation agenda.

The GIGA Initiative complements existing initiatives towards sustainable and extensive last mile connectivity and increased broadband access to essential services. Rwanda has rolled out more than 6,000 km of fiber optic backbone and achieved 96% population coverage on 4G across the country. Regarding school's connectivity, Rwanda stands at 52.9% of secondary schools and 30% of primary schools with access to the Internet.

As such with this initiative ties in well with the Smart Classroom program, which aims to bring 21st century education systems to Rwanda leveraging cutting edge and relevant technologies.

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