

GSMA Mobile 360 Series – Africa 2017

Highlights

GSMA Mobile 360 – Africa in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, focused on the central role of mobile technology in driving digital services in Africa. Presentations and panel discussions highlighted the positive impact of mobile-enabled solutions on individuals and communities. They also stressed the need for greater collaboration between stakeholders – governments, mobile operators, other ecosystem players, the private sector and development agencies – to enhance access to connectivity and sustain the delivery of life-enhancing services to underserved populations across the region.

Digital technologies central to addressing development challenges

Digital technologies are accelerating social development in Sub-Saharan Africa. While budgetary constraints and a shortage of qualified human capital impede traditional forms of service delivery, digital technologies – especially mobile-based solutions – are helping to address socioeconomic challenges in the region more efficiently.

Government and non-government institutions in the region are now leveraging mobile platforms to deliver services. In opening the event, H.E. Samia Suluhu Hassan, Vice President of Tanzania, declared that governments “can no longer overlook the critical role the mobile industry plays in the economy”, and mobile connectivity is now considered a “critical enabler to eradicating poverty in all its forms and achieving the sustainable development agenda.”

As well as further developments in established services such as mobile money, mobile health and mobile agriculture, the event also highlighted emerging business models targeting other sectors, such as utilities and transport. The first Internet of Things (IoT) session at Mobile 360 – Africa was a highlight of this year’s event. It provided valuable insights into emerging IoT use cases in the region, including services that enable smart geysers in South Africa, waste management systems in Kenya and drug verification in Nigeria, as well as preventing poaching in Tanzania.

Collaboration will enable digital transformation in Africa

There is a need for collaboration and a harmonised approach to digitisation by African governments and the mobile industry, in order to take advantage of ecosystem benefits and economies of scale. Shiletsi Makhofane, Head of Government and Industry Relations for Sub-Saharan Africa at Ericsson, echoed this sentiment, particularly with regards to policies around spectrum, rural connectivity and digital services.

Collaboration is already occurring across different areas of the digital ecosystem, reflected by increasing discussions on infrastructure sharing among mobile operators and a growing realisation of the need to work together to create scalable and interoperable platforms for digital services, such as mobile money, IoT and digital identity. Clearly, this is a step in the right direction as mobile operators have historically operated on a more siloed basis. Across the wider ecosystem, we expect mobile operators to increasingly partner with tech innovators to scale vital services, and development agencies to leverage mobile platforms, such as M2M and mobile money, to improve the efficiency and impact of their operations.

Looking ahead, we expect to see more industry and cross-industry collaboration on connectivity and digital services, though the extent and outcome will rely on the ability of governments to allow and create the right incentives for partnerships.

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