



# Africa Roundtable *on* Digital Inclusion

**Date:** June 9, 2021

**Time:** 15.00 EAT | 14.00 CEST | 08.00 EDT

**Location:** *Zoom Room*

## **Context:** Digital Divide in Africa

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the digital divide in sub-Saharan Africa, as more people require internet access and intermediate skills to work from home and run businesses remotely due to the measures put in place to manage the spread of the virus. According to a 2020 report by GSMA on Mobile Internet Connectivity, mobile internet adoption stood at 26% in Sub-Saharan Africa at the end of 2019. The region accounts for almost half of the global population not covered by a mobile broadband network. 3G internet coverage stood at 75% while 4G coverage was at only 49%, according to GSMA. There is also a large gender gap and rural-urban gap in mobile internet use persists, standing at 37% and 60%, respectively. GSMA also reports that the biggest barrier to mobile internet adoption is lack of digital literacy skills, especially for women and rural populations.

It is for this reason that the World Benchmark Alliance (WBA) and The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) are holding a roundtable with stakeholders committed towards digital inclusion in the region. We aim for this roundtable to help foster coordinated multi-stakeholder actions that encourage a race to the top on digital inclusion and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## **Host:** The World Benchmark Alliance

The World Benchmark Alliance (WBA) seeks to generate a movement that aims to increase the private sector's impact on the SDGs. In December 2020, the WBA's first Digital Inclusion Benchmark (DIB) ranked 100 of the world's most influential technology companies on four areas of digital inclusion: Enhancing universal access to digital technologies; Improving all levels of digital skills; Fostering trustworthy use by mitigating risks and harms; and innovating openly, inclusively, and ethically. Four of Africa's leading digital companies (Safaricom, Jumia, MTN, and Naspers) have been ranked and scored on digital inclusion. At the same time, these companies as well as the other benchmarked companies have a spread operated in more than 30 countries in the region.

While the WBA benchmarks diagnose the problem, more can be done to leverage this data and effectively equip stakeholders to influence private sector behaviour to advance the SDGs and achieve digital inclusion.

The DIB results show that commitment and contribution towards digital inclusion is highly uneven across industries in the digital sector. Clear and consistent support to improve digital skills is needed, especially for vulnerable and underrepresented groups. There is also an opportunity for companies to help bridge the gender digital divide, through initiatives that target skills training for women and girls.

## **Objectives**

1. Bring together African multi-stakeholders to foster greater collaboration on digital inclusion.
2. Share WBA's Digital Inclusion Benchmark data as a tool for companies, governments, investors and civil society organizations for driving digital development.

## **Co-Host:** CIPESA

The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) focuses on decision-making that facilitates the use of ICT in support of development and poverty reduction. Based in Kampala, Uganda, CIPESA has worked across East and Southern Africa, informing policy-making, stirring debates and convening productive gatherings. CIPESA works with networks, individuals and organisations (private sector, governmental, academic, civil society) across the region, and are key members of several African and international initiatives that aim to improve the inclusiveness of the Information Society.

---

## **Programme:** Running time 90 minutes

### **Moderator:**

Waihiga Mwaura, 2018 BBC Komla Dumor Award winner and Special Projects Editor at Citizen TV Kenya.

## **15:08-15:15**

---

### **Opening remarks**

Lourdes O. Montenegro, Lead Digital Sector Transformation,  
World Benchmark Alliance (WBA)

## **15:08-15:15**

---

### **Keynote**

Andrew Rugege – *Regional Director for Africa*  
International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

## **15:16-15:36**

---

### **Private sector action on digital inclusion in Africa: Insights from the DIB 2020**

Michael Minges (WBA Research Lead)  
Samantha Ndiwalana (WBA Research Analyst)

### **Discussion**

**1. How can various stakeholders use the WBA Digital Inclusion Benchmark data to support their efforts towards digital inclusion?**

#### **Discussants**

- 15:37-15:40 ■ **Karen Basiye**, Senior Sustainability Manager, Safaricom  
15:40- 15:43 ■ **Dr Wairagala Wakabi**, Executive Director, CIPESA  
15:43 - 15:46 ■ **Onica Makwakwa**, Head of Africa, Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI)

**15:47– 15:58** Contributions from audience

**2. How can Africa and global multi-stakeholders work together to drive corporate action on digital inclusion?**

#### **Discussants**

- 15:58 – 16:01 ■ **Farid Abasov**, Emerging Markets Telecoms Analyst at Fidelity International  
16:01 – 16:03 ■ **Philippe-André Rodriguez**, Deputy Director of the Center for International Digital Policy at Global Affairs Canada  
16:03-16:06 ■ **Angela Oduor**, Executive Director, Ushahidi

**16:06-16:17** Contributions from audience

## **16:17- 16:30**

---

### **Closing statements and call to action**

Lourdes O. Montenegro - Lead Digital Sector Transformation, World Benchmark Alliance (WBA)  
Dr Wairagala Wakabi – Executive Director, CIPESA

---