An ambitious digital agenda

The government is pursuing an ambitious digital strategy to transform the country into a knowledge economy. One priority is to develop e-governance through the Irembo platform, in order to improve public service delivery and bolster citizen participation in governance. These are the two main objectives of the Smart Rwanda 2020 Master Plan (2015).

In 2018, Rwanda began implementing its fourth medium-term strategy, the National Strategy for Transformation (2017–2024), which primarily addresses the transition from Vision 2020 to Vision 2050, Rwanda’s roadmap for becoming a high-income country. Under the National Strategy for Transformation the government has adopted a programme to develop ICT infrastructure. One objective of Vision 2020 was to achieve 60% mobile subscriptions by 2020. By 2019, this target had been surpassed (77%) but less than one in four Rwandans had access to Internet (Table 19.2), half the 50% target (Uwizeyimana, 2019). According to Rwanda’s Voluntary National Review (Rep. Rwanda, 2019), the government is committed to ensuring quality education. To this end, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2018–2024) centres on, inter alia, using ICTs in education and introducing a science culture into all levels of education.

This plan aligns with the ICT in Education Policy (2016), which has focused on developing digital content that is consistent with the curriculum being introduced through ‘smart’ classrooms connected to the Internet. ICTs will be used to train teachers and other education leaders and to enhance research.

The centres of excellence established under the World Bank programme will be a key element of this strategy, given their focus on data science and the Internet of Things (Table 19.4). Another subregional centre of excellence in theoretical physics was established in 2018 at the University of Rwanda (Box 19.9). Rwanda has also hosted one of the African Institutes for Mathematical Sciences since 2016.

Kigali Innovation City developing fast

Kigali Innovation City is a key realization of Vision 2020. A milestone was reached in late 2018, when the pan-African investment fund for infrastructure Africa50 pledged to contribute equity of US$ 400 million to the project. The AfDB is also a stakeholder in Africa50 (Bizimungu, 2018).

Kigali Innovation City is under construction in Kigali’s Special Economic Zone. The hub has been designed as a mixed-use development where people can both live and work. It will blend world-class universities, tech companies, commercial real estate and shops, hotels and apartments. Tech companies and their employees will be grouped in the Digital Innovation Precinct (Bizimungu, 2018). Carnegie Mellon University in the USA has already established its Africa campus on the site.

SOMALIA

ICT and natural resource sectors targeted for growth and inclusive economy

Since 2017, President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo has reviewed the country’s foreign policy, including its regional integration. This led to Somalia securing Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) membership in July 2018, a development that may have brought the country a step closer to its parallel goal of gaining membership of the EAC.

The government is endeavouring to develop the ICT sector. The draft National Information and Communication Technology Policy and Strategy covers the period to 2024. It prioritizes network coverage and the development of domestic digital infrastructure, among other areas. The policy...

UNESCO SCIENCE REPORT (2021)