Accelerating inclusion through mobile solutions

By Fida Kibbi   9 Oct 2020

Digital revolution has enabled various forms of innovation. We all agree that Africa is witnessing a major technology shift and the pace of change in Africa is becoming exponential.

Fida Kibbi, Vice President and Head of Marketing and Communications Ericsson Middle East & Africa

At Ericsson, we have launched #AfricaInMotion to accelerate technology roll-out in Africa together with our partners and re-iterate our commitment to the continent.

According to Ericsson's Mobility, more than 340 million people are connected to mobile broadband across Sub-Saharan Africa and, in just five years, this number will almost double. By 2025, mobile data traffic in Africa will rise by more than 50% year-on-year – by far the highest growth rate worldwide.

So, Africa isn't just catching up. There is a real buzz here and technology adoption is improving!

However, it's not about what we have, it's about what we will do with it! It's about the extent to which connectivity can accelerate finding solutions to our challenges in Africa whether economic or social.

The power of connectivity is addressing one of those major challenges and, in my view, an essential one to solve all other challenges; Education!

We all know that education brings growth and progress into society. The more the people in a society are educated, the more they can provide beneficial contribution to their environment.

Education fosters inclusion

Another fact that adds value to the importance of education, is that it has an essential role in improving individuals' lives and the communities. Education fosters inclusion and ultimately enables sustainable development goals and human development, creates opportunities for the people of Africa and sustainable development.

Quoting the late Nelson Mandela 'Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.'

If Africa is to compete in the digital age, a focus on people and the young ones is the starting point, and in parallel we need to leverage the power of connectivity to enable education and from there reap the benefits to the society and the economy.

So how can we enable digital inclusion to support the future of education?

Key enablers to support digital inclusion and greater adoption of mobile services to support future education are having the infrastructure in place, smartphone affordability, consumer educational readiness and content.

This pandemic has created the largest disruption to the education systems in history! Nevertheless, this crisis has stimulated innovation and was a great example of the power of connectivity sustaining education and also the power of collaboration. When all partners came together to enable connectivity and develop solutions for schools, education was sustained.

Closing the digital gap

This inspired us at Ericsson to partner recently and join forces with UNICEF to help close the digital gap by mapping unconnected schools worldwide in 35 countries by the end of 2023, many of which are in Africa. This is a critical first step towards providing every child with access to digital learning opportunities. This joint effort is part of the Giga initiative that aims to connect every school to the internet.

In addition to funding, we are committed to provide resources for data engineering and data science capacity to accelerate school connectivity mapping. Together with our partners in the industry, we will assist with the collection, validation and analysis of real-time school connectivity data. This is part of our Connect to Learn program, a global education initiative which has reached over 180,000 students located across 25 countries to date.

Today, technology is presenting us with an opportunity and it's on us all to collaborate, change mindsets, drive policy changes and create the necessary environment for knowledge sharing and execution and be part of building a brighter future for Africa.

But how can we contribute moving forward?

If we will have a true impact on inclusion, we must work together on behalf of the excluded population to scale connectivity,

enable technology adoption and leverage it towards enabling education. We will need to focus on public-private partnerships and collaborate to create the necessary environment for knowledge sharing and execution. To accelerate digital inclusion, we all have a role to play.

Just because a person is connected doesn't mean our job is done. It's about what connectivity will bring to him or her and what it will solve.

Together, we are fighting diseases and technology proved us that it has the power of saving lives and our world. Today, we have an opportunity to set #AfricaInMotion and accelerate Africa's growth with digital inclusion. We can create historical change with technology as a key enabler; a society where more people have the opportunity to enjoy what we take for granted.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fida Kibbi, VP and Head of Marketing and Communications at Ericsson Middle East & Africa

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com