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Major drivers for rural transformation in Africa: Job creation for rural growth

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Rural transformation processes: can we learn from other experiences?

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Executive Summary

People living in rural Rwanda represent more than 83 percent of the total population. Unfortunately; this vast majority has always been ignored by service providers, due to the poor purchasing power. This scenario has led to the situation where rural populace are being denied and deprived of various latest developments in ICTs and other socio-economic amenities.

However, the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) through shared facilities know as “Telecentres” provides a high potential to narrow the “service delivery gap” and remove all barriers related to the transportation of services from urban to rural areas. ICT has also potential creating digital opportunities for the majority of young Rwandans living in rural areas.

Based on the satisfactory results of a Telecentre established in one village of Rwanda in 2004, the Rwanda Telecentre Network (RTN) in partnership with Rwanda development Board (RDB) have started replicating the model in other villages of Rwanda by setting up 1,000 telecentres countrywide.

Each Telecentre is operated by a village based Entrepreneur or community based cooperative and is able to deliver a wide range of public and private services such as Agriculture, e-government, Banking, insurance, health, e-learning, rural business process outsourcing etc... The aim of this project is not only to bridge the digital divide but also is to narrow the “delivery gap” among government, business and social services. While the Teleservice project allows rural people to obtain all information and services at their doorstep, the unemployment problem of the country is also addressed to a large extent because direct and indirect jobs created by the project.

More specifically the project allows:

1. To develop rural community by facilitating access to knowledge and information through ICT.
2. To create employment for telecentre entrepreneur and staff: A telecentre is owned and run by a local entrepreneur, the Telecentre Manager. He or she is assisted by additional telecentre staff. The telecentre therefore provides employment opportunities to the local community.
3. To create an efficient channel for private, public and civil society organizations to deliver products, services and information to the community.
4. To create an efficient delivery channel for community products and services. Currently, Rwandan small producers have difficulty bringing their products to the market. Using the network of 1,000 telecentres, small Rwandan producers can use a single delivery channel to sell their products to the market. The network acts an information channel, supplying small producers with price and demand information through the telecentres, but also as a physical channel, using the local telecentre as a hub in transportation of products.