



RWANDA INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (RWANDA IGF) 2025 REPORT



"Building Digital Governance Together"



Table of Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
2. INTRODUCTION	2
3. PARTICIPATION	4
4. WELCOMING REMARKS	5
5. OPENING REMARKS	7
6. KEYNOTE ADDRESS	9
7. REMARKS FROM THE GUEST OF HONOR	11
8. FORUM STRUCTURE AND KEY TOPICS	12
8.1 Format	13
8.2 Key Topics and Presentation	13
8.2.1 Media and Digital Content Governance	13
8.2.2 Online Safety and Trust	16
8.2.3 A presentation on Navigating Open Data, Data Sovereignty, and Privacy in the Age of Global Digital Governance	18
1. Balancing Open Data and Privacy	19
2. Safeguards for Responsible Data Governance	19
3. Data Sovereignty and Local Control	19
4. Privacy, Oversight, and Trust	20
5. Challenges Identified	20
6. Opportunities Ahead	20
8.2.4 IGF and Economic Development – Driving Digital Inclusion and Growth	21
9. RWANDA SCHOOL ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE (RWSIG) 2ND EDITION	23
10. KEY FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS	23
1. Strengthen Digital Infrastructure and Access	23
2. Promote Local Content and Language Diversity	24
3. Ensure Online Safety and Trust	24
4. Advance Inclusive Digital Participation	24
5. Support SMEs, Startups, and Innovation Ecosystems	24
6. Enhance Data Governance and Sovereignty	24
7. Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration	25
11. CONCLUSION	25
12. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	26



1. Executive Summary

The Rwanda Internet Governance Forum (Rwanda IGF) 2025 was successfully held on 5th June 2025 at Lemigo Hotel, Kigali, convening over 200 participants from diverse sectors including government, the private sector, academia, civil society, the media, the technical community, youth, and development partners.

Under the theme *“Building Digital Governance Together,”* the forum served as a platform for inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogue to explore Rwanda’s evolving digital landscape, identify the gaps, and develop actionable recommendations.

The forum featured an opening ceremony with high-level keynote addresses, three major thematic sessions, and a special presentation by the National Cybersecurity Authority (NCSA).

Discussions focused on:

- Media and Digital Content Governance
- Online Safety and Trust
- The Role of Internet Governance in Economic Development
- Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, and Rwanda’s Position in the Global Digital Compact.

These sessions addressed a range of issues, including balancing freedom of expression with content regulation, safeguarding citizens' digital rights, and leveraging technology to drive economic growth and digital inclusion.

Participants emphasized the importance of collaborative governance, where government, private sector, civil society, and youth work together to ensure Rwanda’s digital transformation is safe, inclusive, and innovative.

Building on successful pre-forum activities, including the Rwanda School on Internet Governance (RWSIG) and the inaugural Rwanda Youth IGF, the forum aimed to strengthen collaboration and produce actionable recommendations for policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society. The event's success reaffirms the forum's history of influencing national policies, such as the Data Protection and Privacy Law and the Child Online Protection Policy and reaffirming Rwanda IGF as an important platform feeding into the EAC IGF, African IGF and the global IGF processes.

2. Introduction

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) serves as a neutral space that unites people from various stakeholder groups as equals to discuss public policy and development issues related to the internet. It was initiated by the United Nations in 2006 to provide a global, multi-stakeholder space for addressing Internet Governance related issues. At the national level, Rwanda IGF plays a critical role in ensuring that diverse voices, including those of youth and persons with disabilities (PwDs), are included in digital governance dialogues.

The 2025 edition of Rwanda IGF built upon the momentum of previous forums, focusing on the national theme *“Building Digital Governance Together.”* This theme reflected Rwanda’s vision of fostering a digital society that is **secure, inclusive, participatory, and development-driven.**



The Forum was graced by Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo the UN Resident Coordinator to Rwanda, senior officials and other distinguished representatives from local and international entities who shared their experiences and expertise on discussed matters through speeches, panels and presentation.

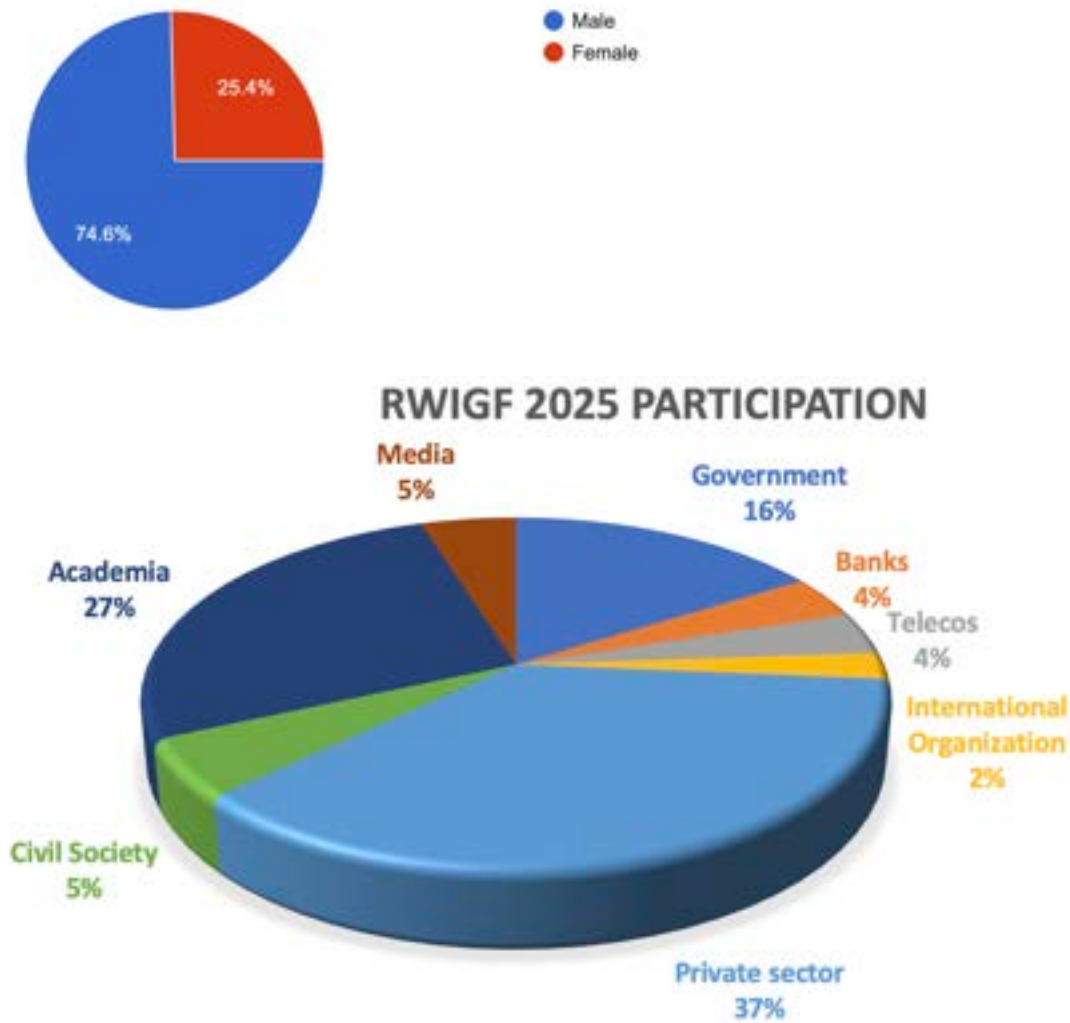
Serving into the global philosophy of Internet governance, the forum mainstreamed thought process on the three (3) main discussion topics; (a) Media and Digital Content Governance, (b) The role of Internet Governance in Economic Development (c) Online Safety and Trust, and a presentation on Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, and Rwanda’s Position in the Global Digital Compact. The objectives of Rwanda IGF 2025 were to:

- Strengthen Rwanda’s multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance.
- Provide a neutral space for dialogue on pressing digital issues such as misinformation, online safety, and digital rights.
- Highlight the link between internet governance and Rwanda’s economic transformation.
- Contribute Rwanda’s perspectives to the EAC IGF, African IGF and the Global IGF.
- Promote youth and women’s participation in internet governance.

“Building digital governance together means no one is left behind — government, private sector, civil society, and youth all have a voice in shaping the internet we want.”

3. Participation

Rwanda IGF2025 was attended by 203 participants from different stakeholders including government, civil society, the private sector, the technical community, academia, and international organizations. 24.4% of the attendance were female while 74.6% were male.



Among the organizations represented the public sector, we noticed the presence of:

- The Ministry of ICT and Innovation, MINICT;
- The Rwanda National Police, RNP
- Rwanda Utility Regulatory Authority, RURA
- National Cyber Security Authority, NCSA
- Rwanda Information Society Authority, RISA
- Rwanda Investigation Bureau, RIB
- Rwanda Public Prosecution Authority-RPPA

- The Ministry of Defense

From the private sector, we noticed the presence of:

- The Private Sector Federation;
- Internet Service Providers;
- Internet Resellers
- Banks

From the Civil Society, we noticed the presence of:

- Internet Society, ISOC Rwanda chapter
- UN Rwanda
- Media

From the Academia, we noticed the presence of:

1. Carnegie Mellon University, CMU Africa
2. University of Tourism, Technology and Business Studies, UTB
3. Africa Leadership University-ALU
4. University of Rwanda
5. University of Kigali
6. Independent University of Kigali-ULK

And more from technical community.



4. Welcoming Remarks

Robert Ford, Chairman of the Rwanda IGF Committee, opened the main forum with a warm welcome to all participants. As the master of ceremony, he expressed his gratitude to the audience comprising representatives from government, the private sector, civil society, and academia for their collective commitment to "Building Digital Governance Together."



Mr. Ford Robert delivering the outcomes of pre-forum activities.

His remarks highlighted the significance of the pre-forum events, particularly the inaugural Rwanda Youth IGF 2025 and the Rwanda School on Internet Governance (RWSIG) 2025. He highlighted that the 2025 edition of Rwanda IGF was preceded by two key pre-forum events:

1. Rwanda School on Internet Governance (RWSIG 2025):

- A three-day capacity-building workshop that brought 50 young professionals aimed at deepening their knowledge of Internet governance, digital inclusion, rights and freedoms, emerging technologies, and economic development.
- The school equipped participants with the skills to engage meaningfully in national and global internet governance dialogues.

The key outcomes were;

- Rwanda is making strong progress toward a secure, inclusive digital economy.
- Laws and policies must be implemented with awareness and accountability.
- Encryption is essential for both national security and individual protection—especially for vulnerable users.
- Addressing the digital divide is foundational to Internet Governance; inclusion must be intentional.

2. Rwanda Youth Internet Governance Forum (Rwanda Youth IGF 2025):

Ford also proudly announced the successful launch of the Rwanda Youth IGF, which brought together over 150 young participants from universities across the city. He emphasized that this platform was dedicated to ensuring that the voices of the next generation are integrated into national Internet governance processes.



Mr. Ford emphasized that the outcomes of these pre-events were directly feeding into the main Rwanda IGF discussions, ensuring that youth voices and perspectives were well represented in the national dialogue.

In closing, he reminded participants that Rwanda IGF is built on the principle of inclusivity and collective responsibility, encouraging everyone to actively participate, exchange knowledge, and shape the future of Rwanda’s digital governance.

“This forum is not only a space for dialogue — it is where Rwanda’s collective digital future is shaped, with every voice contributing.” – Robert N. Ford.

5. Opening Remarks



Mr. Alex NTALE, CEO ICT Chamber & RWIGF Committee Member, delivering his Opening Remarks

Mr. Alex Ntale, CEO of the Rwanda ICT Chamber and a member of the Rwanda IGF Committee, provided opening remarks by recognizing the presence of the UN Resident Coordinator in Rwanda, Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo, and all other distinguished speakers of the day. Mr. Alex expressed



the gratitude of appreciation to members, partners and sponsors of Rwanda IGF2025 edition that made it happen successfully.

In his remarks, he underscored the critical link between local content creation, internet adoption, and affordability. He underlined the importance of local content development as a driver of internet adoption and digital transformation in Rwanda. He emphasized that while infrastructure investments have significantly expanded access, the true value of the internet lies in the availability of content that resonates with people's daily lives, language, and culture.

Mr. Ntale pointed out that a critical gap remains in the production of online content in Kinyarwanda, Rwanda's national language. He noted that this gap limits internet usage for a significant portion of the population who would otherwise find digital services more relevant and accessible if offered in local language.

"AI can be leveraged to translate and create local content more easily," he observed, highlighting the role of emerging technologies in overcoming barriers to content localization.

He further connected the issue of low internet uptake to the challenge of affordability. Internet services remain costly partly because user numbers are still relatively limited, reducing the economies of scale for providers. He argued that expanding content in local languages would increase adoption, which in turn would make internet services more sustainable and affordable for the wider population.

Mr. Ntale also called for greater public awareness campaigns to highlight the benefits of digital platforms and services in sectors such as education, business, agriculture, and governance.

"The more Rwandans use digital platforms, the more sustainable and affordable these services become," he stressed, noting that while advocacy for lower prices will continue, long-term affordability depends equally on increased usage and engagement.

In conclusion, he challenged all stakeholders from policymakers to innovators to invest not only in infrastructure but also in the digital content ecosystem, ensuring that Rwanda's digital transformation is inclusive, affordable, and anchored in local culture.

6. Keynote Address

While addressing the RW-IGF2025 Participants, Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo, the UN Resident Coordinator in Rwanda started his keynote speech by appreciating his invitation to the important Annual Forum. The convening of the Internet Governance Forum 2025 in Kigali demonstrates the kinds of cooperation required to realize the principles and aims of the global digital compact. We salute all the institutions and partners that have come together to make this conversation happen.



Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo, the UN Resident Coordinator

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo commended Rwanda for its visionary prioritization of technology across sectors, which has positioned the country as a model for digital transformation on the continent. He reaffirmed the United Nations' continued support for Rwanda's digital agenda, noting the alignment between national strategies and global development priorities, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“Rwanda is establishing itself as a digital hub in Africa with strong national strategies and youth-driven innovation. But challenges like affordability, rural access, and gender disparity must be addressed and that why this forum is a very important platform to discuss these issues,” Dr. Ojielo remarked.

He also shared the UN's vision for a digital future, as outlined in the policy briefs of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres for a global digital compact. The Global Digital Compact seeks to close digital divides, promote data governance, and ensure that emerging technologies like AI are used responsibly and ethically. The purpose of the Global Digital Compact (GDC)¹ is to establish an inclusive global framework, essential for multi-stakeholder action required to overcome digital, data and innovation divides. The compact outlines principles, objectives and actions for advancing an open, free, secure and human-centered digital future for all, one that is

¹ https://www.un.org/global-digital-compact/sites/default/files/2024-09/Global%20Digital%20Compact%20-%20English_0.pdf



anchored in universal human rights and that enables the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

He emphasized that Rwanda's success in becoming a digital hub must also be measured by how inclusive and equitable this transformation is. While praising Rwanda's leadership in digital innovation, he cautioned that the next stage of growth will require deliberate efforts to bridge the digital divide, particularly for rural populations, women, and marginalized communities.

Dr. Ojielo highlighted the role of local content creation in stimulating internet usage and economic opportunity. He pointed to sectors such as film, music, and creative industries, which not only provide cultural relevance but also generate jobs for young people. He urged Rwanda to adopt strategies that encourage the development and promotion of local content, noting that:

“Nigeria’s example of local content quotas in broadcasting and entertainment shows how domestic consumption can be boosted. Rwanda too can consider such policies to amplify its own creative industries and increase digital adoption.”

He also drew attention to the global debates around artificial intelligence governance, stressing that Rwanda's leadership in digital transformation should extend to promoting responsible AI use that safeguards human rights, prevents bias, and enhances inclusivity.

The keynote further emphasized the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration, noting that governments alone cannot achieve digital transformation. He called on private sector, civil society, academia, and development partners to deepen their engagement and ensure that Rwanda's digital growth story leaves no one behind.

“Digital inclusion must be deliberate. Every woman, every young person, and every rural community must feel that they are part of Rwanda’s digital future,” he urged.

Dr. Ojielo concluded by reaffirming the United Nations' commitment to supporting Rwanda in achieving its digital ambitions. He pledged that the UN will continue working alongside the government and all stakeholders to address affordability, expand rural access, and strengthen inclusivity in the digital space.

7. Remarks from the Guest of Honor

Esther Kunda, the Director General of Innovation and Emerging Technologies at the Ministry of ICT and Innovation, delivered remarks on behalf of the Minister as the Guest of Honor. Her speech highlighted Rwanda's significant progress in building an inclusive and dynamic digital society. She began by presenting the latest statistics on internet adoption, noting that household internet usage has now reached 30% nationwide, a milestone reflecting the country's sustained investment in infrastructure and digitization of services.

She broke down the figures further, showing clear urban-rural disparities:

- 57% of households in urban areas have internet access, compared to
- 19% in rural areas.

These numbers, she explained, underscore both the achievements Rwanda has made and the challenges that remain in bridging the digital divide.



Ms. Esther Kunda, Director General of Innovation and Emerging Technologies, MINICT

Ms. Kunda also acknowledged the role of the telecommunications sector in Rwanda's digital journey. As of September 2024, active mobile-cellular subscriptions stood at 13.48 million, representing a 7.5% growth from 12.5 million the previous year. This demonstrates both the increasing demand for connectivity and the private sector's critical role in enabling digital inclusion.



“The global digital landscape is evolving, and Rwanda is part of that transformation. Our internet penetration has grown, driven by investment in infrastructure, digital literacy, and enabling policies.” – Esther Kunda

Despite these gains, Ms. Kunda stressed that significant challenges remain, particularly in terms of affordability and productive usage. She noted that while many Rwandans use the internet for communication and daily services, **not all can afford it, nor do all citizens have the necessary skills to harness its full potential.**

“While internet penetration is commendable, we still face gaps in access and affordability, especially between urban and rural areas. Many Rwandans use the internet for services, communication, and daily life, but not all can afford it or know how to use it productively.”

She emphasized that the Rwanda Internet Governance Forum provides an invaluable space for multi-sectoral dialogue and collaboration, where government, private sector, academia, civil society, and youth can collectively shape the digital ecosystem. Importantly, she stressed the role of policymakers:

“The inclusion of Parliament in these discussions is critical to formalizing supportive policies and laws.”

Looking forward, Ms. Kunda called for inclusive solutions that tackle disparities in access, affordability, and digital literacy. She reminded stakeholders that digital adoption must be accompanied by robust regulatory frameworks to build trust, ensure rights are protected, and guarantee sustainability.

“As digital adoption increases, we need robust regulatory frameworks that promote trust, inclusion, and sustainability.” – Esther Kunda

She concluded by reaffirming the Ministry’s commitment to supporting Rwanda’s digital transformation agenda, stressing that Rwanda’s success in the digital era will depend on collective effort, inclusivity, and policy innovation.

8. Forum Structure and Key Topics

The Rwanda Internet Governance Forum (RWIGF) 2025 was structured to maximize multi-stakeholder engagement, knowledge-sharing, and collaborative discussion. Held at Lemigo Hotel on 05 June 2025, the event included a mix of expert panel discussions, presentation and interactive Q&A segments to foster in-depth exploration of Internet Governance issues. The



diverse group of attendees included government officials, industry leaders, academics, civil society representatives, youth, and international partners, all of whom contributed unique perspectives on Rwanda's Internet Governance landscape.

8.1 Format

The Forum featured:

- Panel Discussions: Three thematic panel discussions focused on critical areas impacting Rwanda's Internet Governance, including (a) Media and Digital Content Governance, (b) The role of Internet Governance in Economic Development (c) Online Safety and Trust. Each panel included expert speakers and was moderated by experienced professionals.
- Presentation: A presentation on Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, and Rwanda's Position in the Global Digital Compact was presented by National Cybersecurity Authority-NCSA.
- Q&A Sessions: Each panel included an interactive Q&A segment, allowing participants to engage directly with speakers, ask questions, and offer insights.
- Networking Opportunities: The event included networking break and lunch to encourage relationship-building among participants from various sectors.

8.2 Key Topics and Presentation

Rwanda IGF 2025 addressed three main topics and one presentation that are highly relevant to Rwanda's digital future. Each session provided a deep dive into these themes, exploring current challenges, potential solutions, and actionable recommendations for policy and practice.

8.2.1 Media and Digital Content Governance

Moderator: Mr. Ian Nkera, Coventry University – Media Official

Panelists:

- Dr. Alphonse Muleefu, Principal, College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS), University of Rwanda
- Mr. Robert N. Ford, Chair, Rwanda IGF Committee



The first Panel discussing Media and Digital Content Governance- Navigating the digital information landscape.

The first panel explored the opportunities and challenges of digital content governance in Rwanda, with lively exchanges between academia and civil society perspectives. Discussions highlighted the dual nature of digital content — on one hand, a powerful enabler of democracy, civic participation, and creativity; on the other, a channel through which misinformation, disinformation, and harmful narratives can spread.

Key Discussions

1. Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation.

Both panelists underscored the need for stronger fact-checking initiatives and public media literacy programs. Dr. Muleefu emphasized that citizens must be equipped with critical thinking skills to differentiate between credible information and harmful content. Mr. Ford highlighted the role of partnerships between universities, civil society, and media houses in scaling these initiatives.

“Combating misinformation is not just about removing false content — it’s about empowering people to question, verify, and engage critically.” – Dr. Muleefu

2. Content Regulation and Freedom of Expression.



The panelists agreed that content regulation is essential for maintaining public trust and protecting citizens from harm, but warned against overregulation. Mr. Ford emphasized that democratic values must remain central to regulation.

“Freedom of expression and content regulation must be carefully balanced — we must protect democracy without stifling voices.” – Robert N. Ford

The discussion called for multi-stakeholder collaboration in shaping content regulation frameworks, ensuring that both rights and responsibilities are upheld.

3. Promoting Local Content.

Dr. Muleefu stressed the importance of producing and promoting high-quality local content in Kinyarwanda, as a means to not only drive internet adoption but also strengthen Rwanda’s cultural identity in the digital age. Incentives for local creators, partnerships with content platforms, and government support were identified as enablers.

“Digital spaces should reflect who we are as Rwandans. Local content is not just entertainment — it is cultural preservation and a driver of adoption.” – Dr. Muleefu

4. Media Capacity Building.

Panelists highlighted the need to equip journalists with digital-first reporting skills. This includes training in online investigative methods, ethical content creation, and adapting to fast-evolving digital storytelling tools. Mr. Ford noted that sustainable journalism requires capacity building alongside economic models that allow media houses to thrive in the digital economy.

Key Takeaways

- Fact-checking and media literacy are frontline tools against misinformation.
- Regulation must safeguard freedom of expression while mitigating harm.
- Incentivizing local content creation in Kinyarwanda is essential for adoption and cultural preservation.
- Continuous capacity building for journalists is crucial in the digital-first era.

8.2.2 Online Safety and Trust

Moderator: Mr. Ghislain Nkeramugaba- IXP Development Expert-ISOC

Panelists:

- Ms. Josephine Mukesha, Director General, National Identification Agency (NIDA).
- Ms. Jidia Gasana, Director of Enterprise Business, Airtel Rwanda.
- Ms. Sage L. Umutoniwabo, CEO, TransAfrica Communications (TrAC).
- Mr. Fabrice Ntare, Chief Information Officer, MTN Rwanda.

This panel focused on one of the most pressing themes in the digital era — building trust and ensuring safety online. Panelists acknowledged that while Rwanda has made notable progress in digitization, achieving sustainable transformation requires robust protection of citizens’ rights, security of personal data, and safeguarding vulnerable users like children.



The second Panel discussing Online Safety and Trust with emphasis on safeguarding citizen Rights and Promoting Digital Citizenship.

Key Discussion Points

1. Data Protection and Privacy.



Ms. Mukesha emphasized the importance of enforcing Rwanda’s Data Protection and Privacy Law, noting that compliance by both public and private actors is critical. Citizens must trust that their personal information is secure when engaging in digital transactions.

“Data protection is not just a legal requirement — it is the foundation of citizen confidence in e-services.” – Josephine Mukesha

2. Digital ID and Trust in e-Services

NIDA’s digital ID systems were highlighted as a backbone for strengthening trust in digital ecosystems. Ms. Mukesha explained how digital IDs ensure security, reduce fraud, and facilitate access to e-government and private sector services. By creating a secure identity framework, Rwanda is laying the groundwork for trusted online interactions.

3. Child Online Protection

Ms. Umutoniwabo drew attention to the vulnerabilities of children online, stressing the urgent need for tools, policies, and awareness campaigns that protect children from exploitation, cyberbullying, and harmful content. She noted that digital literacy must begin at an early age, and parents, schools, and service providers all have a role to play.

“Children are often the earliest adopters of digital tools, but they are also the most vulnerable. Protection must be proactive, not reactive.” – Sage L. Umutoniwabo

4. Private Sector and Telecom Role

Representatives from Airtel Rwanda and MTN Rwanda highlighted the responsibility of telecom operators in safeguarding users. Ms. Gasana and Mr. Ntare stressed their companies’ commitment to deploying tools against fraud, spam, and cybercrime, as well as ensuring affordable and secure services. They also reiterated the private sector’s willingness to collaborate with government to strengthen consumer protections.

“Trust is the foundation of digital transformation — without it, citizens will not fully embrace digital services.” – Fabrice Ntare

Key Takeaways

- Data protection and privacy enforcement are central to user trust.

- Digital ID systems enhance security and must be scaled across services.
- Child online protection requires urgent tools, education, and stakeholder collaboration.
- Telecom operators are pivotal actors in fighting cybercrime and ensuring user safety.
- Building trust in the digital ecosystem is essential for Rwanda’s digital adoption and economic growth.

8.2.3 A presentation on Navigating Open Data, Data Sovereignty, and Privacy in the Age of Global Digital Governance.

Colonel David Kanamugire, CEO of the National Cyber Security Authority (NCSA), delivered a presentation on "Navigating Open Data, Data Sovereignty, and Privacy in the Age of Global Digital Governance". His presentation focused on the central role of data governance in shaping Rwanda’s digital transformation and ensuring national sovereignty in a rapidly evolving global digital environment. He emphasized that as Rwanda advances toward Vision 2050, data has become both a strategic asset and a national security concern.



Col. David Kanamugire, CEO-NCSA making a presentation on Navigating Open Data, Data Sovereignty, and Privacy in the Age of Global Digital Governance.



Key Points from the Presentation

1. Balancing Open Data and Privacy

He explained the global push for open data and interoperability, referencing the UN's Global Digital Compact. While open data enhances service delivery and transparency, it must be balanced with governance to protect privacy and national interests.

- Key principles: accountability, proportionality, and transparency in data use.
- Open data should be a tool for empowerment, not exposure.

“Enable access without compromising trust or control.” – Col. Kanamugire

2. Safeguards for Responsible Data Governance

Col. Kanamugire outlined technical and organizational safeguards necessary to prevent misuse of data, including:

- Data Protection Impact Assessments
- Breach response and redress mechanisms
- Data processing agreements
- Capacity building in data stewardship and cybersecurity

He stressed that privacy must be designed into systems from the outset, not added later as an afterthought.

3. Data Sovereignty and Local Control

Sensitive data such as financial, health, and biometric information should remain within national borders to maintain Rwanda's jurisdictional control. To achieve this, Rwanda must:

- Invest in local infrastructure (data centers, cloud solutions).
- Build data science and cybersecurity skills.
- Reduce dependency on foreign service providers.
- Develop bilateral/multilateral agreements to enable lawful cross-border flows without undermining sovereignty.



4. Privacy, Oversight, and Trust

Global best practices require embedding privacy by design, integrating cybersecurity measures, and establishing independent oversight authorities. He cited examples such as CNIL (France) and PDPC (Singapore), calling for robust enforcement powers in Rwanda.

He highlighted Rwanda's Data Protection and Privacy Law (gazetted in October 2021) as a landmark step that:

- Grants citizens clear rights over their personal data.
- Provides regulatory certainty for businesses and investors.
- Aligns Rwanda with international standards, enabling participation in the digital economy.

The government has also adopted a data sharing policy to facilitate the secure and responsible exchange of information among government agencies to improve decision-making.

5. Challenges Identified

- Responsible AI use – risks of bias, misuse, and surveillance.
- Low digital literacy – limited awareness of privacy and cybersecurity risks.
- Global dependencies – reliance on foreign cloud services threatens sovereignty.
- Infrastructural gaps – need for more resilient, cost-effective digital infrastructures.

6. Opportunities Ahead

- Innovation and Economic Growth – data analytics can drive evidence-based policymaking and innovation in IoT and smart infrastructures.
- International Partnerships – cross-border data exchange and compliance with global norms can boost investment and cooperation.
- Trust and Confidence in Digital Systems – clear governance builds public trust in e-government platforms, making services more accessible and efficient.

“Data is the currency of the digital age — its governance will determine not only trust, but also Rwanda’s sovereignty in the global digital economy.” – Col. Kanamugire.

8.2.4 IGF and Economic Development – Driving Digital Inclusion and Growth

This final panel explored the intersection of internet governance and economic development, focusing on how digital policies, infrastructure, and innovation ecosystems can unlock inclusive growth in Rwanda.

Moderator: Mr. Theoneste Ngiruwonsanga (Smart Africa)

Panelists:

- Mr. Pierre Kayitana, General Manager, Zipline
- Ms. Jidia Gasana, Director of Enterprise Business, Airtel Rwanda
- Mr. Patrick Ndjientcheu, Chief Product & Technology Officer (CPTO), Irempo
- Mr. Gilbert Kayinamura, CEO, Broadband Systems Corporation PLC (BSC)



The Third Panel discussing the intersection of internet governance and economic development

Key Discussion Points

1. Digital Infrastructure as the Backbone of Growth

Mr. Kayinamura emphasized the urgency of expanding broadband networks and rural connectivity, noting that equitable access to reliable internet is a precondition for economic transformation. He explained that infrastructure investments must prioritize underserved rural communities, where connectivity gaps risk widening inequality.



“The digital economy will only succeed if rural communities, SMEs, and ordinary citizens benefit from access and opportunity.” – Gilbert Kayinamura

2. E-Government and Service Delivery

Mr. Ndjientcheu outlined Irembo’s ongoing work in scaling digital government services, stressing that accessible e-services not only enhance efficiency but also build trust in digital ecosystems. He argued that internet governance frameworks must ensure interoperability, data security, and citizen inclusion so that e-government becomes a driver of confidence in Rwanda’s digital economy.

3. Fintech and Financial Inclusion

Ms. Gasana highlighted the impact of Airtel Money and mobile financial services in advancing inclusion, particularly among the unbanked. She explained how fintech solutions lower barriers to participation in the economy and empower citizens through everyday transactions. However, she called for policies that reduce transaction costs and improve digital literacy, ensuring that financial inclusion reaches the most vulnerable populations.

4. SMEs and Startups as Engines of Innovation

Mr. Kayitana emphasized that Rwanda’s future growth lies in supporting SMEs and startups through favorable policies, incubation programs, and access to financing. Drawing on Zipline’s example in medical logistics, he highlighted how public-private innovation partnerships can create scalable solutions with national impact.

“When startups and innovators are supported, they can solve some of the country’s most pressing challenges — from healthcare delivery to agricultural efficiency.” – Pierre Kayitana

5. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Across the panel, there was consensus that sustainable collaboration between government, private sector, and innovators is essential. Effective PPPs help bridge investment gaps, scale innovation, and align national policies with the needs of digital entrepreneurs and communities.

Core Messages

- Connectivity is the backbone → Expanding broadband and rural internet access is vital for inclusive growth.
- E-Government as a driver → Platforms like Irembo improve service delivery, efficiency, and trust.

- Fintech boosts inclusion → Mobile money and digital payments reduce barriers but must remain affordable.
- SMEs & Startups matter → Innovation ecosystems need policy, finance, and incubation support.
- Partnerships power progress → Sustainable public-private collaboration is key to scaling digital transformation.

9. Rwanda School on Internet Governance (RWSIG) 2nd Edition

Handing over certificates to RWSIG 2025 participants, Mr. Robert Ford, Chair RWIGF Committee expressed his joy for the Rwanda's second edition of the Rwanda School on Internet Governance (RW-SIG). The workshop was more of a capacity building initiative with main objective of empowering a critical mass of people to meaningfully engage, contribute and participate in ICT policy making discourse in Rwanda, regionally and globally. It brought together 50 participants from diverse backgrounds and as RWIGF Committee, we commit to continue hosting the school.



The class of RWSIG2025 presenting their certificates

10. Key Forum Recommendations

Based on the deliberations, presentations, and multi-stakeholder discussions at the Rwanda Internet Governance Forum 2025, the following recommendations emerged:

1. Strengthen Digital Infrastructure and Access
 - Accelerate investment in rural connectivity, prioritizing underserved communities.



- Encourage innovative models such as community networks and public Wi-Fi hubs to bridge affordability gaps.

2. Promote Local Content and Language Diversity

- Incentivize the production of digital content in Kinyarwanda to increase internet uptake.
- Explore local content quotas (e.g., film, music, media) to boost cultural preservation and digital consumption.
- Leverage AI tools to scale translation and content creation in local languages.

3. Ensure Online Safety and Trust

- Fully implement and enforce the Data Protection and Privacy Law, with capacity building for regulators and businesses.
- Strengthen child online protection frameworks, including awareness programs for parents, schools, and service providers.
- Telecoms and ISPs to expand anti-fraud and cybersecurity tools to safeguard consumers.

4. Advance Inclusive Digital Participation

- Integrate digital literacy programs into schools, universities, and community initiatives to build critical online skills.
- Target vulnerable groups — women, youth, rural populations — with tailored inclusion strategies.
- Ensure that policies on content regulation balance the fight against harmful content with the protection of freedom of expression.

5. Support SMEs, Startups, and Innovation Ecosystems

- Strengthen policy and financial support for startups and SMEs driving digital solutions.
- Expand incubation programs and access to finance for digital entrepreneurs.
- Encourage public-private partnerships (PPPs) to scale innovative solutions (e.g., Zipline's medical logistics, fintech platforms).

6. Enhance Data Governance and Sovereignty



- Promote privacy by design and build local data infrastructure (data centers, cloud solutions).
- Ensure sensitive data (e.g., health, biometric, financial) remains under Rwanda's jurisdiction.
- Build skills in data stewardship, cybersecurity, and responsible AI use.

7. Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

- Institutionalize the Rwanda IGF as a permanent national dialogue platform, linking policymakers, private sector, academia, and civil society.
- Involve Parliament in internet governance discussions to formalize supportive laws and frameworks.
- Strengthen regional and global partnerships to align Rwanda's policies with international best practices.

11. Conclusion

The Rwanda Internet Governance Forum 2025 served as a vital platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue, where government leaders, private sector actors, academia, civil society, and youth converged to reflect on the opportunities and challenges shaping Rwanda's digital future. Across keynote speeches, expert presentations, and engaging panel discussions, one theme stood out clearly: trust, inclusion, and innovation must guide Rwanda's digital transformation.

The Forum highlighted the country's progress expanding internet penetration, growing mobile connectivity, and scaling e-government services while also recognizing persistent challenges such as affordability gaps, rural-urban disparities, child online protection, and data sovereignty. The conversations reaffirmed that sustainable digital growth will only be achieved when citizens not only have access but also the confidence, skills, and content needed to meaningfully engage online.

Speakers and panelists emphasized the importance of:

- Balancing regulation with freedom of expression, ensuring content governance strengthens democracy rather than suppressing voices.



- Protecting user data and privacy, with enforcement of Rwanda’s Data Protection and Privacy Law as a cornerstone of public trust.
- Investing in digital infrastructure and local content creation, to drive both economic growth and cultural preservation.
- Strengthening partnerships between government, private sector, and innovators to ensure inclusive participation in the digital economy.

Ultimately, Rwanda IGF 2025 underscored that the digital economy will only be sustainable if it delivers tangible benefits for rural communities, SMEs, youth, and ordinary citizens. As Rwanda continues its journey toward becoming a digital hub for Africa, the IGF remains an essential platform for ensuring that growth is not only rapid but also inclusive, rights-based, and future-ready.

12. Acknowledgments

The Rwanda Internet Governance Forum (RWIGF) 2025 was made possible through the invaluable support and contributions of many individuals and organizations. The Forum organizers extend their heartfelt thanks to the Ministry of ICT and Innovation, ICT Chamber, RICTA, ISOC Foundation, ISOC Rwanda Chapter, TeamCymru, TransAfrica Communication, Airtel Rwanda and all strategic partners who provided both financial and logistical support, making this year’s forum a success.

Special thanks go to the panelists, moderators, and distinguished speakers who shared their expertise and insights, enriching the discussions and setting actionable priorities for Rwanda’s Internet Governance landscape. The Forum also recognizes the dedication of the organizing committee and administrative teams, whose efforts ensured a smooth and impactful event.

Finally, our appreciation goes to all participants whose engagement and feedback have made the Rwanda Internet Governance Forum 2025 a meaningful platform for open dialogue, collaboration, and growth in Rwanda’s digital governance.