



Private Sector Partnership Forum

Innovative Solutions to Challenges in Slums & Informal Settlements in Africa
24 to 26 June 2020, eConference

INNOVATION ROUNDTABLE: Disruptive Technologies for Building Resilience
Date: Thursday, 25 June 2020, 1415-1515h

Themes Explored

1. Country Digital Acceleration
2. Big Data for Social Good
3. Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Technologies
4. Internet of Things
5. Smart Solutions
6. Recommendations and Way Forward

Moderator

Moderator – Juliette Page and Tania Lim, UN-Habitat

Presentations & Panel Discussions

1. Guy Diedrich, Vice President, Cisco
2. Ilana Cohen, Senior Market Engagement Director, M4D Utilities, GSMA
3. Timothy Oriedo, CEO, Predictive Analytics Lab
4. Leonard Mabele, IoT Manager, @iLabAfrica, Strathmore University
5. Graziella Roccella, Chief Research and Urban Planning Officer, Planet Smart City

About the Private Sector Partnership Forum

The three-day Private Sector Partnership Forum has been organized in recognition of the critical roles played by the private sector in innovating and piloting novel solutions to development challenges, and the public sector in scaling up successful innovations. To this end, the Forum seeks to facilitate partnership between national governments and municipalities with private sector companies, specifically investors and innovators with low-cost innovative solutions to development challenges.

Description of the Session

The creation, development and diffusion of knowledge, technologies and innovations are powerful drivers of inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development. As knowledge and skill diffusion are considered key to the reduction of inequality, investment in innovation capability is imperative if the SDG are to be realized. For lagging behind other continents in knowledge and skill diffusion, Sub-Saharan African continues to experience inefficiencies and productivity challenges in various sectors, significantly slowing down its economic growth and perpetuating income inequalities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant socioeconomic disruptions worldwide and is expected to have particularly devastating impacts in developing countries. Due to weak national health systems and economies, developing countries are expected to lose in excess of USD 220 billion, exacerbating the vulnerabilities of their predominantly poor populations. This is particularly so for populations living in densely populated slum neighbourhoods without access to water, sanitation, waste management and steady employment, and for whom observing physical distancing, handwashing and hygiene practices is impossible.

Whilst the pandemic presents a significant challenge to economic growth, the new normal also offers numerous opportunities for innovation, investment and policy reform in key sectors that have lagged behind

the sustainable development agenda. The session panellists will discuss the challenges facing to mSME in the current COVID-19 context, the opportunities available for the application of disruptive technologies to forestall further economic downturn, barriers to entry and investment in digital technology (legal, regulatory, political), trends in the innovation space, and take stock of pro-poor innovations worthy of commercial investment.

Guiding Questions

1. How are disruptive technologies and innovations being harnessed to addressing development challenges in key sectors (financing, housing, water, sanitation, waste management, health, education, clean energy) in Africa? What are some of the applications that have been successful and need replicating in Africa?
2. What are some of the technologies that are currently under development and have the potential to transform the development landscape in Africa?
3. What are the possibilities of applying these technologies for social good? How can artificial intelligence, big data, IoT, robotics, 5G, 3D Printing, augmented and virtual reality contribute to the realization of the SDG?
4. What are some of the challenges (privacy,...) in accelerating the application of disruptive technologies and what are some of the success stories that have overcome these challenges?
5. What critical role can big data “owners” play in the realization of the SDG?
6. What are some of the innovative partnership models that have been successful in stimulating the application of disruptive technologies for social good and how can these be replicated?
7. How can innovators and entrepreneurs leverage these new technologies to forestall further financial losses in the current COVID-19 context?
8. What opportunities (financing, incubation) are available to innovators seeking to develop affordable innovative solutions for low-income market segments in Africa?
9. What are the prevailing barriers to harnessing disruptive technologies in key sectors in Africa? What are some of the actions that governments have taken and need to take to eliminate these barriers and maximise the benefits of these technologies?
10. What measures can governments implement to incentivize or reduce the risks to investors venturing into the low-income markets and innovators willing to develop low-cost development innovations targeting the BOP?
11. What are some of the key reforms in science, technology and innovation policies and the national innovation systems that would accelerate innovation and private sector investment in the SDG? What has been the impact of recent policy reforms, and government plans and strategies on private sector investment in disruptive technologies in Africa?
12. What does a conducive innovation climate look like for investors considering investment in Africa? What leverage are impact investors looking for from governments before investing in low-income markets in Africa?
13. What critical role can communities living in informal settlements play in the realization of the SDG?

Expected Outcomes

The Forum is among a series of events organized by UN-Habitat to strengthen partnership with the business community to support sustainable and inclusive urban development and the New Urban Agenda. It provides a platform for matching the needs of informal settlements residents and demands of cities with innovative private sector solutions. The session is expected to have demonstrated the business potential and identified opportunities to develop and deploy low-cost innovative solutions in informal settlements.