

Rwanda: Microsoft4afrika Initiative Launched in Rwanda

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Microsoft Corporation last Wednesday launched its 4Afrika Initiative in Rwanda. This continental initiative set in motion by Microsoft aims to actively engages in Africa's economic development to improve its global competitiveness.

By 2016, the Microsoft 4Afrika Initiative plans to help place tens of millions of smart devices in the hands of African youth, bring 1 million African small and medium enterprises (SMEs) online, up-skill 100,000 members of Africa's existing workforce, and help an additional 100,000 recent graduates develop skills for employability, 75 percent of which Microsoft will help place in jobs.

While officiating at the launch of Microsoft4Afrika Initiative, Minister of Youth and ICT, Jean Philbert Nsengimana said that "Microsoft you're very welcome in Rwanda, we want to make a successful story through Microsft4Afrika Initiative you have all government support, private sector and the civil society support; we're a country on the move (...)."

"The world has recognized the promise of Africa, and Microsoft wants to invest in that promise. We want to empower African youth, entrepreneurs, developers and business and civic leaders to turn great ideas into a reality that can help their community, their country, the Continent, and beyond," said Fernando de Sousa, General Manager, and Microsoft 4Afrika Initiative.

"The Microsoft 4Afrika Initiative is built on the dual beliefs that technology can accelerate growth for Africa, and Africa can also accelerate technology for the world," he added.

The goal of the 4Afrika initiative in Rwanda is to disseminate affordable smart devices built specifically '4Afrika' with an AppFactory aimed at encouraging application development by Africans for Africans. The initiative will also run an education platform aimed to develop technical and entrepreneurship skills as a means to improve employability especially for youths.

The Minister of Youth and ICT, Jean Philbert Nsengimana said, "Tremendous opportunities abound in Rwanda's ICT industry. Technology is now becoming a driving force behind numerous aspects of national development and we cannot afford to be left behind. I believe a lot can be achieved through collaboration, consultation and smart private public partnerships. We welcome Microsoft's 4Afrika initiative and are committed to developing innovative ways using the power of technology to help transform social and economic progress in Rwanda."

The entry of the 4Afrika initiative in Rwanda is a significant step in the country's vision to become a knowledge based economy as it will play a role in bridging the digital divide and developing the skills to create relevant content for the country's growing economy. The Government of Rwanda (GoR) has identified two lead programs for possible collaboration with Microsoft within the 4Afrika initiative.

"The Viziyo program is designed to increase citizen-access to smartphones and the Smart Village program built on the concept of replicating digitized model villages across the nation as a means to achieve Rwanda's goal to become an ICT-driven economy," explained RDB's Head of the Department of ICT, Patrick Nyirishema.

The Government of Rwanda and Microsoft4Afrika will work hand-in-hand to provide the appropriate services needed to achieve the shared vision of increased accessibility for all.