

A REPORT FROM THE NIGERIA E-GOVERNMENT SUMMIT 2020, ORGANISED BY DIGISERVE ON TUESDAY NOVEMBER 17, 2020 AT THE SHERATON HOTEL AND TOWERS, IKEJA, LAGOS

INTRODUCTION

The annual Nigeria eGovernment Summit is focused on policies, strategies, solutions and technologies that would be required to achieve accelerated eGovernment deployment at the federal, state and local governments' levels, and to make government's online presence felt by all Nigerians.

This year's summit, which had the theme: COVID-19: Impetus for Accelerated eGovernment Adoption, focused on how governments at all levels could leverage technology to drive governance and address the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic that devastated global economies.

The Nigeria eGovernment Summit 2020, attracted government officials from the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Lagos Water Corporation, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Galaxy Backbone, Nigeria Communications Satellite Limited (NIGCOMSAT), Lagos State Government, Akwa-Ibom State Governor and several private sector organisations like VDT Communications, GMT Energy Resources, Upperlink, eStream, Medallion, Globacom, 9mobile, Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA), Association of Telecoms Companies of Nigeria (ATCON), Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), Pan African Towers Limited, Whogohost, Rack Centre, Anchor Telecoms, MainOne Cedarview, and Broadbased Communications.

The summit was declared open by the Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat, who represented the Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

A special addition to this year's summit, was the invitation of experts from countries where eGovernment has been adjudged to be successful. The countries, which include Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Egypt, including Nigeria, give country specific case studies of eGovernment deployment in their various regions.

WELCOME ADDRESS

In his welcome address, the Executive Chairman, DigiServe, Mr. Lanre Ajayi, explained that the government could be more effective when it leverages technology to drive governance. He assured Nigerians that the government could address the myriad of challenges facing the country, if it leverages emerging technology that is at its beck and call. He advised the government to adopt the use of technology that would eliminate physical contact between government officials and the citizens in every government transaction, while insisting that physical contact during transactions can breed corruption in government circles.

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

There were three keynote speakers that delivered speeches at the 2020 eGovernment Summit.

The first keynote speaker, Dr. Sehinde Oladapo, Managing Director, GMT Energy and Chairman NAHCO, said the effect of the total lockdown in Nigeria due the spread of COVID-19, coupled with the civil unrest across the country from the #EndSARS protest would have been worse, if not for technologies. With technology, many businesses survived during this period, because people were working from home, while keeping safe and observing social distancing. The early adoption of technology, helped government agencies to leapfrog and stayed on top of their games while the effect of the pandemic lasts.

Oladapo however said there remains a lot to be done in terms of adoption and use of emerging technologies. According to him, the public sector still lags behind in the adoption and deployment of technologies. He said early adoption and implementation of technology would improve efficiency in government businesses, accountability, improve revenue collection across government agencies, and also reduce government bureaucracy. He advised for early adoption of technologies, and stressed that eGovernment will deliver better public data services for citizens, and efficient delivery of public services. If well implemented, eGovernment will help government agencies and organizations to carry out their businesses in the most profitable way with less cost. Nigeria has the fastest growing telecommunications market in the world and we need technology to sustain that growth.

He expressed worries that in spite of the growth in telecommunications, Nigeria is still ranked among countries with low eGovernment strategies and implementation. He said the government can adopt better eGovernment strategies by ensuring that solution developers create solutions that meet the needs of the people, ensure consistency in service delivery, ensure collaboration between government and non-government agencies, create a central database and promote ICT in governance by facilitating the implementation of eGovernment.

The second keynote address, delivered by the Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Emmanuel Udom, who was represented by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Dr. Emmanuel Ekuwem, dwelt more on how Akwa-Ibom State government is leveraging technology to produce eGovernment services to the people of Akwa-Ibom in the areas of health and education. According to him, the state leveraged technology to provide medical services to patients in remote locations, without physical contact between the medical personnels and the patients. In the area of education, the governor said the state also leveraged technology to provide automated learning across all levels of education from primary, secondary to tertiary institutions, through the use of smart classrooms that are equipped with modern educational facilities that are driven by technology. The essence of all these is to build capacity in our school systems and we encourage other state governments to also leverage technology in providing eGovernment services to their citizens, the governor said, adding that the state is also using technology to provide security for the state to maintain peace and security in the state.

The third keynote address from Mr. Muhammad Nami, Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS), who was represented by the Coordinating Director, FIRS, Mr. Femi Oluwaniyi, focused on innovation, convenience and transparency in governance. According to him all these could be made possible with eGovernment, when the right technologies are applied and implemented.

Giving credence to the theme of this year's summit titled: COVID-19, Impetus for Accelerated eGovernment Adoption, Nami further said the spread of COVID-19 brought to the fore the

significance of technology in managing crisis. He said COVID-19 compelled more goods and services to be traded online, including putting more of government activities online, thereby boosting eCommerce and online education in the country.

Nami who commended the organisers for their choice of topic, said governments across boards must begin to devise means of leveraging technology in providing solutions, through various eGovernment initiatives. As a nation, we must appreciate the roles of technology on businesses and social lives on a daily basis. He says enabling an ICT environment would promote investments in various sectors of the Nigerian economy. Nami was of the opinion that ICT, if well implemented, could further develop the country and grow businesses. Nigeria must promote an enabling environment that promotes small businesses like the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Government must promote ICT infrastructure to further boost the Nigerian economy.

He gave instances how FIRS was already using technology to make payment transactions between the citizens and the government seamless, in the area of taxes. Growing the Nigerian online market is an added advantage to boost employment opportunities in the country. Government must work towards the adoption of ICT in governance, in order to increase competitiveness among SMEs.

GOODWILL MESSAGES

Executive Vice Chairman of NCC

The Executive Vice Chairman/Chief Executive Officer (EVC/CEO), Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Prof. Umar Garba Danbatta, who spoke through video conferencing from Kano, where he was attending the yearly retreat of NCC, emphasized the role of NCC in Nigeria's digital transformation agenda. He listed the long services that are hosted on the country's telecoms infrastructure to include education, financial transactions, communications, healthcare, entertainment, employment generation among others, which he said have brought about a new normal, resulting in changes in organisational operations, all geared towards achieving the country's digital transformation agenda. He spoke about the achievements of NCC in the last five years, in collaboration with industry stakeholders, to include increase in broadband services from 6 per cent in 2015 to 45.43 per cent as at September 2020; increase in the number of subscribers to reach over 205 million mobile subscribers as at September 2020, with an increase in teledensity to 106.62 per cent, using a population base of 200 million; increase in the contribution of telecoms to GDP, reaching 14.3 per cent, which translates to N2.3 trillion Naira for that quarter; increase in the number of internet users with over 150 million active users, out of which, 80 million access the internet, using high speed broadband; and increase in the adoption of technologies. He however warned that unless adequate measures are put in place to safeguard cyberspace, there will be a rise in cyber insecurity. He said the associated risks with internet access, could affect the level of adoption of technology to drive eGovernment services and solutions that could lead to huge financial losses and retard investors' interests from investing in the country, which can lead to perception and reputation issues.

He said the federal government is working to address cybersecurity issues in the country, through the launch of a cybersecurity team called the NCC CERT that will complement the electronic Computer Emergency Response Team (e-CERT). The NCC CERT will facilitate intervention, swift identification of

threats and vulnerabilities and share valuable information and resources. He said NCC would need collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure success of the initiative.

LAGOS STATE GOVERNOR ADDRESS

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who was represented by his deputy, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat, said Lagos State government understood the need for technology deployment in eGovernment to cushion the effect of COVID-19 on businesses and individuals, more so that the pandemic is still with us, just as most counties of the world are beginning to experience the second wave of the pandemic.

He however said the pandemic has made us understand the importance of technology and to see technology as an enabler in driving efficiency in governance. So adopting Information Technology (IT) has become a strategy for us to deliver improved services to citizens and to survive as a country. We therefore need to reinvigorate governance activities through digitalisation that will bring about quality of public service delivery, being provided through the various agencies of government.

Lagos State government has deployed technology innovation strategies in rendering e-Government services to the citizens.

The state government has partnered technology companies, especially tech startups to develop technology solutions for Lagos State. With technology, we were able to manage the spread of COVID-19 in Lagos by creating a database for monitoring the number of rising cases within the state. With our data, we were able to predict the spread of the virus and we are using data to control its spread.

Lagos State created a War Cabinet of six persons including the state governor, his deputy, Commissioner for Health, Attorney General of the state, Commissioner for Finance, and the Commissioner for Science and Technology and we held meetings to address the COVID-19 pandemic spread in the state.

The Governor however said despite the investments in technology in the state, the digital divide is still prevalent in our country today.

Last year, Lagos decided to build broadband infrastructure that allowed

the government to increase broadband penetration in the state. The broadband infrastructure, which is a 3,000km fibre metro network, has six lines, with one of the lines dedicated to Lagos government alone, while the other five lines were leased out to the private sector. The essence is to address the technology infrastructure deficit in Lagos State.

Again Lagos set up a N250 million seed fund for Lagos State Science Research and Innovation Council (LASRIC) to boost innovation in the state, and we are beginning to get innovative solutions to address specific challenges of the state. Lagos State will continue to invest in technology to sustain technology development in the state, the Governor said.

PANEL SESSIONS

First panel session

The Nigeria eGovernment Summit had various panel sessions made up of panelists who are professionals in the various topics discussed.

The first panel, which was a government agency panel, was made up of Mr. Osaretin Guobadia, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Digital Transformation; Mr. Tope Dele Oni, who represented Prof. Muhammed Abubakar, the Managing Director of Galaxy Backbone and Mr. Kola Okunola, the Special Assistant on ICT to the Executive Chairman of Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS). The panel was moderated by Mr. Olusola Teniola, the immediate past President, Association of Telecom Companies of Nigeria (ATCON).

Teniola began the session by asking the panelists to give a narrative of the present position of Nigeria, in relation to technology adoption. Mr. Guobadi, in his submission, said government agencies must adopt technology in order to help Nigeria be on the path to achieving a digital economy. He said the mindset around eGovernment is based on how agencies were able to digitally serve the people, using technology to drive processes. He stressed the need for government agencies to roll out more infrastructure that will enable them digitise the Nigerian economy.

Mr. Okunola who discussed digital identity and digital transformation, said the role of government is to create an enabling environment to drive digital transformation. He said government agencies must begin to develop solutions that would help the government achieve digital transformation. According to him, many years ago, FIRS came up with the Business Process Reengineering (BPR), which was a foundation for identity management. He however said the initiative could not fly because at that time, Nigeria did not have a robust identity management system in place. He said years later, FIRS came up with another idea, which is the Tax Identification Number (TIN), which gives companies and businesses unique identification, as soon as they register their businesses. TIN is done online and has brought automation in the system that has made registration much easier, Okunola said. He further explained how FIRS, in 2012, also introduced e-Tax Pay, which makes businesses pay their taxes online, which he said did not only make payment easier, but also blocked loopholes in financial losses for the government. He stressed the need for government agencies to adopt technology that would help citizens transact seamlessly with the government, thereby promoting eGovernment.

Oni, in his submission on how Galaxy Backbone is digitising the Nigerian economy, said Galaxy Backbone played a critical role in hosting the websites of government agencies, thereby developing local content for government agencies. Galaxy has automated its facilities and has judiciously utilized the investments of government in Galaxy Backbone to serve Nigerians better, Oni said, adding that Galaxy Backbone is fully ready to drive the Nigerian digital transformation dream.

Okunola also stressed the need for government to transform the informal sectors where SMEs play, into a formal sector by empowering SMEs through the creation of stimulus that will encourage SMEs to do more in driving the country's digital transformation agenda. According to him, if SMEs are empowered, they will grow their businesses and be able to pay their taxes as at when due. He also emphasised the need for digital training for SMEs on proper book keeping and how to better grow their businesses and expand from SMEs to big enterprises.

Oni said Galaxy Backbone built infrastructure across 13 states of the federation in its first phase of infrastructure rollout, with plans to link the states with fibre connectivity in the second phase rollout.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Galaxy Backbone has created an online platform where the Federal Executive Council (FEC), holds their virtual weekly meetings. So we are on top of our game in leading Nigeria to achieve digital transformation, Oni said.

Second panel session

The second panel session, which was held via video conferencing, discussed the state of eGovernment and critical success factors in specified countries. The panelists at that session included Mr. Thabo Mashegoane, President, Institute Information Technology Professional from South Africa; Dr. Waudo Siganga , President, Computer Society from Kenya; Mr. Mactar Seck, New Technologies and Innovation, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) from Ethiopia; Mr. Hossam Elgamol, President, African ICT Alliance (AFICTA) from Egypt; and Dr. Jimson Olufuye, Managing Director, Komtemporary Technologies Limited and past President of AFICTA, from Nigeria. The session was moderated by Dr. Ayotunde Coker, the Managing Director, Rack Centre Limited.

While speaking about the South African eGovernment experience, Mr. Mashegoane said the South African government is leveraging technology to serve the people of South Africa, by first putting some standardization process and automation process in place. The South African government segmented its digital transformation agenda into three parts: Government to Business Initiative; Government to Citizens Initiative and Government to Government Initiative, Mashegoane said. He explained that in the Government to Government Initiative, all government facilities were synchronized and were talking to each other in terms of government information and communication. For the Government to Citizens Initiative, all government activities were uploaded online and citizens are able to access government activities online. From the Government to Business Initiative, the South African Government was able to develop a platform where it was able to connect to all businesses in terms of support and growth. He however stated some of the challenges in implementing the eGovernment strategy in South Africa to include lack of cooperation and synchronization among the three layers of government in South Africa, which are the National, Provincial and Municipal. He said the situation led to different agencies of government implementing the same or similar projects.

Siganga from Kenya spoke about the development in Kenya, eGovernance in Kenya and the various achievements of eGovernance, using technology, as well as the key success factors of eGovernance in Kenya. According to him, different people from different countries have different perspectives about Kenya people. While some associate Kenya with long distance races, some associate Kenya with wildlife, while others associate Kenya with poverty. He however said Kenya is an Africa country with a population figure of 47 million people. He explained that Kenya has eGovernment objectives for the ease of payment transactions, and can conveniently use mobile devices to pay for goods and services. He said most government services can be accessed online, especially from rural areas. He stressed the need for increased infrastructure that will support eGovernance in Kenya. He said the eGovernance Policy of Kenya has been driving the growth process in Kenya. He called for training of government officials who are at the forefront of eGovernance in Kenya.

Seck from Ethiopia said digital identity is key for the Ethiopian government to enable it to promote digital learning and other digital services for its citizens. He said the state is keen at data protection and cybersecurity, using technology to achieve them.

Olufuye from Nigeria who spoke about eGovernment in Nigeria, gave comparative study of eGovernment, and discussed the eGovernment plan in Nigeria, as well as the challenges. According

to him, Nigeria has had a stable democracy since 1999, which has facilitated a lot of things, including the establishment of NCC in 2000 and the establishment of the NCC Act of 2003 and the NITDA Act of 2007. He said several institutional drivers have helped Nigeria in achieving its digital transformation agenda. He said the recent launch of the country's Digital Economy Policy and Strategy, is a testament of the federal government of Nigeria's commitment to grow its digital economy. He said all agencies and institutions of government like NIGCOMSAT, National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), CBN, NIMC, FIRS, Galaxy Backbone, among others are doing well in driving digital transformation. He said stakeholders in Nigeria are already pushing for telecoms infrastructure as critical national infrastructure in the country. He explained that the recent reduction in Right of Way (RoW) by some state governments, would further drive telecoms growth and promote eGovernance in the country. He said although ICT contributions to GDP is high, industry stakeholders should do more to further increase ICT contribution to GDP.

Third/Fourth Panel Sessions

The third and fourth panel sessions were combined and moderated by the Lagos State Commissioner for Science and Technology, Dr. Akeem Fahm. The combined panelists include: Mr. Biodun Omoniyi, Managing Director, VDT Communications; Mr. Muhammed Rudman, President, Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA); Mr. Muyiwa Ogungboye, Managing Director, eStream Network; Engr Muminu Adekunle Badmus, Managing Director, Lagos State Water Corporation; Engr Akin George Fashola, Director, Lagos State Vehicle Inspection Services (VIS); Mr. Ayodele Subair, Executive Chairman, Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS); Mr. Olajide Oduyoye, General Manager, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and Prof. Adetokunboh Fabanwo, Chief Medical Officer, Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH).

The combined panels discussed the theme: eGovernment at sub-national level, using Lagos State as a case study. It also discussed the positioning of telecoms infrastructure for eGovernment deployment.

Fahm started by commending the telecoms operators and the stakeholders in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector for providing the infrastructure, with which Lagos and other state governments, including the federal government, used in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic spread. He said on March 30th this year, at the beginning of the spread of the virus in Nigeria, Lagos State government held the first virtual cabinet meeting, which he said, was the first of any government in the whole of Africa. According to him, the following day after Lagos government held its first virtual cabinet meeting, Britain in the United Kingdom had theirs too, and since then, virtual meetings through zoom and other channels have become the new normal.

Giving details of how Lagos government is leveraging technology to drive eGovernment, Fahm said the state embarked on 3,000km metro fibre connectivity in the first phase, with plans to embark on another 3,000km fibre connectivity by next year. He raised the issue of the 5G network and its many benefits for the panel discussion. Managing Director, VDT Communications, Mr. Biodun Omoniyi, who started the discussion on 5G, said the journey began from 1G, 2G, 3G, 4G before getting to 5G. He however said the different generations of network do not use fibre since they are wireless technologies, even though telecoms service rollout is a combination of fibre cables and wireless technologies. He said more base stations would be required to boost 4G and 5G network rollout. He discarded the fears from some quarters that radioactive emissions from telecoms base stations will

cause health hazards in humans. With the 5G network, the benefits are much in terms of video streaming and speed of connectivity, Omoniyi said.

The Executive Chairman, Lagos Internal Revenue Service, Mr. Ayodele Subair, who was represented at the panel by Mr. Rasheed, discussed how the Lagos government is using e-Tax, driven by technology, to make tax administration a lot easier in the state. Before e-Tax, companies were evading taxes and some duplicated tax payment identities, which made tax collection a difficult task at that time, but with the introduction of e-Tax, the government is able to generate more money from tax collections with reduced overhead cost, Rasheed said.

Mr. Muiyiwa Ogunboye, Managing Director, eStream Network, who discussed local carriers in the telecoms sector, said the local carriers were licensed to provide data services, voice services and other ancillary services. He said their services are key in driving eGovernment services. He commended Lagos government for the metro fibre connectivity across Lagos, which he said, has reduced cost of providing data services to customers.

Discussing how Lagos Water Corporation is leveraging technology to provide portable water in Lagos, Engr Muminu Adekunle Badmus, Managing Director, Lagos State Water Corporation, said its billing and collection system, powered by technology, helped in making payments for water bills, a lot easier. He said they also introduced the Geographic Information System (GIS) to make service delivery a lot easier. He said technology is evolving and Lagos Water Corporation is leveraging technology to serve the people better.

Prof. Adetokunboh Fabanwo, Chief Medical Officer, Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), discussed e-Health and how LASUTH is leveraging technology to provide health services to patients. According to him, electronic medicine, electronic records among others, are important in delivering healthcare services to the people. He said technology has changed medical practice from what it used to be in the past, making it easier to provide healthcare services to the people in today's evolving technology that has eliminated paper reports in healthcare delivery services.

Engr Akin George Fashola, Director, Lagos State Vehicle Inspection Services (VIS), discussed how VIS is leveraging technology in monitoring healthy vehicles on the roads, including fine imposition and collection. According to him, VIS has installed cameras on Lagos roads and has a sufficient database of all registered vehicles in the state for proper tracking and monitoring, which helps to track road violators.

Mr. Olajide Oduyoye, General Manager, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA), stressed the need for safety of lives while driving and how LASTMA is leveraging technology to improve on its services in managing road traffic in the state. He advised road users to always obey road traffic laws in Lagos. With diligence in controlling road traffic, coupled with the application of technology, LASTMA will be able to manage traffic congestion. With technology like automatic plate number recognition, LASTMA is able to identify vehicles that violate road traffic laws, without arresting them on the road. With the technology, the vehicle plate number is automatically captured and the bill for the offense is sent electronically to the offender for online payment.

Mr. Muhammed Rudman, President, Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA), discussed the technology in .ng domain name, and encouraged Nigerians to patronise the country's domain name, which is Nigeria's identity in cyberspace.

Fifth/Sixth Panel Sessions

The fifth and sixth panel sessions were combined and moderated by the Director, Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Dr. Zainab Gobir. The combined panelists include: The Managing Director, Whogohost, Mr. Toba Obaniyi; Managing Director, Broadband Communication, Mr. Chidi Ibisi; Country Manager, Avanti Communications, Mrs. Jane Egerton-Idehen; and

The combined panels discussed domain names, datacentre and co-location. It also discussed development of sustainable eGovernment services.

One of the domain name registrars, who is the Managing Director, Whogohost, Mr. Toba Obaniyi, who was represented at the panel session, stressed the need for the .ng domain name and encouraged Nigerians to see the need to register their businesses with .ng domain name, which is Nigeria's Identity in the cyberspace, rather than registering foreign domain names like [.co.uk](#), .com and [.co.za](#).

Other panelists discussed contact centres and drop calls in telecoms services delivery.

Dr. Zainab Gobir, discussed how FIRS is leveraging technology to deliver services to Nigerians. According to her, FIRS has a robust infrastructure in place and has signed different Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with different organisations to improve on its services and make life easy for all Nigerians. FIRS deployed the *829 code for payment verifications and it has become data centric, designed to provide global standard services to the people of Nigeria, Gobir said.

Although the panelists recommended that the annual e-Government Summit be held twice in a year instead of the annual seminar, the organisers thanked participants for their time in attending this year's summit, and promised to look into the recommendation that suggested the summit be held twice yearly.