

SESSION REPORT ON DIGITAL INCLUSION IN AFRICA AS THE MOST IMPORTANT RIGHT DURING THE INTERNET FREEDOM FORUM, 2018 IN ABUJA BY AKINREMI PETER TAIWO, ACSIS WEST COORDINATOR.

The session seeks to identify the barriers to greater digital inclusion and recommend ways of overcoming these obstacles towards empowering Africans with the transforming power of ICTs. Tope Ogundipe, the Director of Programs with Paradigm Initiative moderated the session. She reflected on the 21% internet penetration in Africa, a figure that reflects the underdevelopment on a continent with a population of around 1.2billion.

On the panel were Chioma Agwuegbo from CC Consulting Services (Nigeria), Akinremi Peter Taiwo, a West Africa Coordinator of African Civil Society (Nigeria), Olajumoke Adekeye, a statistician (Nigeria) and Poncelet Ilegele from The Gambia.

Chioma, the first speaker listed three key factors that must be met before access would become a priority for the human kind which are Food, Shelter and Clothing. She further looked at how poverty has handicap many Africans in the area of affordability of computers and internet access. Peter, who was the second speaker touched on the area of policy, digital inclusion perspective, and dependent on a single solution. While speaking, he said that African actors operating in isolation and there is the absence of an inclusive blueprint for digital inclusion in Africa. The stakeholders' perception of digital inclusion needs to be interpreted and understood. He further states that Africa continent must explore different technologies which includes Wi-Fi, broadband and satellite.

Jumoke, the third speaker gave an insight on how right statistics could help in the race of digital inclusion in Africa. Having the right data is of necessity for every stakeholder, especially government for policy formulation.

Poncelet, the fourth speaker grace the session with a beautiful story of how a boy's life was transformed as a result of access to the internet and the right training. The beauty of the story was that the boy is currently studying in a renowned university in abroad. Aside of that, the boy then leverages on the use of the internet to expand his mother business to an international market where they supplied smoked fish with hundreds of employees in their firm. In summary, there must be access to training to build skills and knowledge.

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