Republic of Rwanda

Ministry of ICT and Innovation

Republic of Rwanda
Rwanda Digital and Innovation Promotion Project
Completion Report Summary

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Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

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Summary of the Project Completion Report

Project background and objective

- In the last 2 decades, Rwanda has been leveraging Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for the development of their nation, whilst shifting their economic focus away from agriculture and recovering from the aftermath of the 1994 genocide.
- However, the ICT development in Rwanda has faced many challenges such as securing finances for startups, retaining technology industry talent, and startups establishing strong network in both the domestic and international market.
- To overcome these challenges and establish Rwanda as the ICT hub of Africa, the Rwanda Digital & Innovation Promotion Project was set.

Overall Goal:

- Contribute to the realization of Rwanda's policy of being the leading ICT hub in Africa.

Project Purpose:

- Establish a model for promoting innovation through entrepreneurship and market creation in the ICT sector “the Rwandan model”.

Output

- Output 1: Strengthening the system for producing entrepreneurs by improving the support environment for ICT entrepreneurs nationwide.
- Output 2: Revitalization of the innovation ecosystem through public-private partnerships
- Output 3: Strengthening the capacity for integrated management of ICT initiatives.
- Output 4: Establishment of a "Rwandan model" for market expansion

The Model

- The Model refers to a model that integrates institutional arrangements, system architecture, and procurement approaches for new forms of public–private partnership (Digital PPP), developed by the Government of Rwanda to advance the digital transformation of public services (GovTech / public service DX).
- Among the available indicators, the E-Government Development Index (EGDI)[1] is considered the most appropriate and informative metric for this project. The EGDI is a composite index that comprehensively evaluates the extent to which governments utilize Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to deliver public services effectively. It is published biennially by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

The Impact of the model

- Conclusion: Rwanda’s Relative Performance and Sustainability Outlook
- In 2024, the global average EGDI reached 0.6382, while the African regional average stood at 0.4247. Between 2022 and 2024, Africa’s average EGDI improved from 0.4054 to 0.4247 (+4.8%), representing one of the highest regional growth rates globally, second only to Asia. This regional progress has been led by high-performing countries such as South Africa (0.8616), Mauritius (0.7506), and Tunisia (0.6935).
- Against this backdrop, Rwanda’s EGDI growth (+0.0310) exceeds the African

[1] https://data360.worldbank.org/en/dataset/UN_EGDI

regional average increase (+0.0193), indicating relative outperformance. Although Rwanda has not yet entered the upper-tier group of African countries (approximately 0.6–0.86) and remains below Botswana (0.6118) and Namibia (0.6007), it is approaching this cluster from below, signaling steady convergence toward higher-performing peers.

- Overall, Rwanda can be characterized as a relatively strong growth performer in digital government development. Its EGDI has improved in absolute terms and outperformed the regional average, reflecting tangible progress rather than incidental change. This advancement can be attributed to Rwanda's capacity to absorb, adapt, and leverage initiatives supported by international cooperation partners, including projects such as the one under review. Looking forward, the continued acceleration, institutionalization, and scaling of these efforts are expected to enhance the sustainability and resilience of Rwanda's digital transformation, creating favorable conditions for sustained progress and further advancement in digital governance.

Progress
Output 2

- PoC[2]1

Development of Health Facility Licensing Platform
(Ministry of Health)

- Purpose
  - The objective of this PoC was to validate the effectiveness of a public–private collaboration model utilizing Public Procurement for Innovation (PPI) through the digitalization of health facility licensing services.
  - Specifically, the PoC aimed to digitalize the end-to-end process of health facility license application, review, and issuance—previously conducted manually—in order to improve administrative efficiency, enhance transparency, and demonstrate the potential for market creation through the participation of private startups.
- Challenge
  - Institutional novelty: As PPI had limited precedent in Rwanda, it was necessary to establish a shared understanding of the concept among ministries and evaluation committees.
  - Scope expansion: Although initially designed as a pilot, the scope was expanded at the request of the Ministry of Health to a full operational level covering 13 services, increasing coordination and management costs.
  - Multi-stakeholder coordination: Significant time was required to align multiple actors, including the Ministry of Health, MINICT/RISA, startups, and the existing e-government service provider (Irembo).
- Achievement
  - Successfully digitalized 13 health facility licensing services, with the platform officially going live in April 2024.
  - Achieved 100% pass rate for all critical items during User Acceptance Testing (UAT)[3], confirming operational readiness for public administration.

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[2] Proof of Concept

[3] The final phase of software development where actual users test the software to ensure it handles real-world scenarios and meets business requirements before going live

- ✧ Demonstrated the effectiveness of startup-inclusive procurement under PPI and received strong endorsement from the Ministry of Health (9 out of 10).
- ✧ Established a flagship GovTech[4] × PPI success case in Rwanda, directly informing subsequent PoCs and the design of the PPI Ministerial Order.

- PoC2

Portfolio for Research and Innovation Portal
(Rwanda Polytechnic)

- ➢ Purpose
  - ✧ The objective of this PoC was to establish a digital platform to visualize and manage research and innovation outputs in higher education, while testing the replicability of startup engagement through PPI.
  - ✧ The platform aimed to connect students, faculty, research administrators, and industry stakeholders, thereby strengthening human capital development and promoting academia–industry collaboration.
- ➢ Challenge
  - ✧ Diverse stakeholder interests: Requirements definition required extensive coordination among educational institutions, regulators, and IT vendors.
  - ✧ Contract and budget control: Based on lessons from PoC 1, a two-phase contract structure was required to prevent mid-project scope expansion.
  - ✧ Schedule delays: Coordination of evaluation committee schedules and contract negotiations required additional time.
- ➢ Achievement
  - ✧ Established a two-phase PoC contract model (requirements definition / development), contributing to the institutional maturation of PPI operations.
  - ✧ Successfully launched the system in May 2025, with usage by more than 1,400 students and faculty members.
  - ✧ Demonstrated the scalability of digital public services in the research and education sector, providing important insights for applying the PPI model to other policy areas.

- PoC3

Real-Time Weather Data Dissemination System & Mobile Application
(Meteo Rwanda)

- ➢ Purpose
  - ✧ This PoC aimed to enhance public safety through real-time dissemination of weather and disaster information, while testing the potential of high-value GovTech services enabled by PPI.
  - ✧ By upgrading conventional information delivery mechanisms, the PoC sought to create an environment in which citizens and industries could make timely, informed decisions.
- ➢ Challenge
  - ✧ Redefinition of scope: The PoC was restructured following adjustments to its relationship with the Agriculture Management Information System (AMIS).
  - ✧ Technical complexity: The system needed to simultaneously ensure

[4] Government Technology: the use of digital tools, artificial intelligence, and modern technology to modernize public sector operations, making services more efficient, transparent, and user-centric

real-time performance, reliability, and accessibility for diverse user groups.

- Achievement
  - Completed the system design integrating weather data management, dissemination, and mobile notification functions.
  - Implemented a two-stage PPI evaluation process (document review and prototype demonstration), emphasizing both technical capability and social value.
  - Although still ongoing, the PoC has established a critical foundation for applying PPI in the public safety sector.

- PoC4

AI-Powered Commodity Classification System
(Rwanda Public Procurement Authority – RPPA)

- Purpose
  - The objective of this PoC was to apply artificial intelligence to public procurement data in order to predict procurement risks and enhance administrative decision-making, thereby testing the potential of advanced GovTech solutions enabled through PPI.
  - The system aimed to improve foresight regarding procurement delays and risks, strengthening evidence-based public sector management.
- Challenge
  - Data quality and utilization capacity: Initial limitations in data readiness and experience with AI-driven analytics posed challenges.
  - Project duration constraints: Full system development could not be completed within the PwC contract period, requiring a planned transition of implementation responsibility.
- Achievement
  - Defined a high-complexity GovTech use case involving AI-based prediction of procurement delays and risks.
  - Selected a private AI startup through the PPI process and completed preparations for transition to the implementation phase.
  - Positioned the PoC as a forward-looking example of data-driven public procurement, opening pathways for institutionalization and future scaling.

- Output 4
  - Output 4 focused on "Establishing the Rwanda model through market expansion for innovation". This entailed combining the efforts of all OP and establishing an environment/model which promotes and supports the ICT development cycle within Rwanda. The concept note for the Rwanda model has been drafted, and most of the Output 4 activities evolves around the promotion of the Rwanda model.
  - Communication and media related coordination was also a part of OP4. For this, a communication agency called Pixeleye was subcontracted, and Pixeleye has carried out various PR and media coordination around the Project.
  - The scope of the Subcontracted Work is categorized into five parts which are as follows:
    - Development of a comprehensive branding and communication strategy and action plan for The Project.
    - Design and conduct all relevant work including administrative processes to successfully hold events hosted
    - by MINICT and JICA, targeted to the duration of this Contract.
    - Design and production of advertising and promotional materials suitable for various communication channels,
    - with a focus on program impact, outcomes, and success stories in connection with The Project.
    - Conduct and oversee the overall branding, external communications, and media management of The Project.

Challenges

- With the significant number of stakeholders per each Output, there have been instances where certain meetings or a review process were not executed in a timely manner, due to the stakeholder's busy schedules. In order to carry out the project and activities in a timely manner, weekly meetings with Pixeleye, MINICT/RISA, and PwC were needed to update on immediate actions and to align on certain aspects of the project.
- Another challenge was around the change in the scope of work, especially for Output 2 regarding the PPI drafting assistance, and the change in development service number and level for PoC 1. These changes to the scope of work have resulted in increased workload by respective stakeholders, delay in schedule, and increased budget. To prevent future change to the scope of work, it is crucial that the overall PoC process is more streamlined and efficient for the upcoming PoC, and that the scope of each Output and/or activities remain as is.

Overall (Prospects)

- Looking ahead, the continued implementation of Proofs of Concept (PoCs) will remain a key foundation for innovation in Rwanda. Beyond validating individual solutions, there is growing potential to achieve more transformative, non-linear growth by strengthening collaboration across multiple ministries and agencies. Such an approach would enable GovTech initiatives to evolve from isolated pilots into integrated, system-wide solutions.
- Like many countries, including advanced economies, Rwanda faces challenges stemming from institutional silos in public service delivery. In this context, cross-government digitalization offers a promising pathway to improve coherence,

interoperability, and administrative efficiency.

- As these efforts progress, Rwanda has an opportunity to further develop a comprehensive GovTech ecosystem through a whole-of-government approach to digital transformation, reinforcing both public sector performance and its position as a reference case for forward-looking digital governance in the international development community.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Government continue to implement and scale PoCs while placing greater emphasis on institutional innovation and non-linear growth. Future initiatives should be designed to actively engage multiple ministries and agencies, as a multi-ministerial approach is essential to enhancing the scalability and transformative impact of GovTech interventions.
- The fragmentation of administrative services across institutional silos is a persistent challenge globally, and Rwanda is no exception. Addressing this issue requires a deliberate shift toward cross-government digitalization, supported by effective inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms and shared digital infrastructure.
- By advancing whole-of-government digital transformation that transcends organizational boundaries, Rwanda can move beyond incremental improvements toward a robust and integrated GovTech ecosystem. It is therefore recommended that Rwanda position itself as a leading example of government-led digital innovation, demonstrating how coordinated, cross-ministerial digitalization can drive administrative efficiency, industrial upgrading, and sustained national development.