

New mobile telephone network solution for rural Rwanda

Development in Africa has been held back by the limitations of traditional infrastructure in power and mobile networks. Rural areas are the worst affected. A case in point is Rwanda, where remote populations have not had the same opportunities and services in health, education or employment as a result of the lack of access to telecom services.



Encouraging, though, is that Rwanda is a country that has demonstrated its understanding of the benefit of connectivity, in particular as regards social and economic growth. According to Dr Vanu Bose, president and CEO of Vanu, “Rwanda is the leading country in Africa in terms of their vision for the use and deployment of Information and Communications Technologies, and they want no citizen to be left behind.”

Through its innovative approach to finding technology solutions, Vanu Inc. USA has established a subsidiary, Vanu Rwanda, which has deployed a solution that provides remote populations with the same levels of connectivity enjoyed by citizens in the world’s most developed markets. To date there are 10 sites on air and, by the end of 2017, there will be a total of 376 sites covering approximately one million people in unserved areas of rural Rwanda. With Vanu Inc’s service, Rwanda will be the most connected country in Africa.

Providing connectivity in rural areas is challenging. But Vanu, an innovator in cellular networks, has developed a technical and business model which addresses the challenges of sustainably delivering connectivity to remote areas. Vanu has licensed spectrum from the Rwanda Utilities and Regulatory Organisation to provide 100% solar enabled wholesale services to mobile network operators seeking to deliver services directly to hard-to-reach consumers.

These innovations make it viable for Vanu Rwanda to support people who spend less than one dollar a month on mobile services.

The first operator to use the Vanu service is Airtel Rwanda. Commenting on the development, marketing director for Airtel Rwanda, Moses Abindabizemu, says, “Airtel is committed to reaching rural populations. Vanu has provided us with a solution that works for us because it extends our coverage, increases our market share and generates additional revenue with no capital requirements.”

Vanu is a pioneer in software-based RAN solutions for areas that cannot be served profitably with existing technologies. The provision of connectivity to under-served markets is a crucial means of driving socio-economic growth and providing access to the resources and opportunities of today’s digital economy.

Bose explains the long-term vision of the project: “Although we will soon reach a million people in Rwanda, we are focused on replicating what we have done in Rwanda to reach the next 3 billion people globally who lack the connectivity that so many of us take for granted.”

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