Deploying ICT policy for economic development

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TANZANIA is among developing African states which strictly adheres to the implementation of its ICT policy initiatives for the achievement of the national economic development targets. Despite the efforts shown, little has been achieved.

Implementation of the policy in one way or another stimulates the assorted peripherals termed as the information gadgets to be considered as important tools of life in every aspect of human development.

For this purpose, therefore, strict implementation of the policy for

which they are made to operate in the country is crucial to make them workable for the better economic development in the country.

The Tanzania Government has been implementing a number of policy initiatives and strategies including the recently adopted National Strategy for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction (NSGPR), commonly known as Mkukuta in its ki-Swahili acronym.

Mkukuta is a five-year outcome based framework that is built under the effective participation of civil society, private sector development and through fruitful local and external involvement and partner-

ships.

In order to make Mkukuta's initiative a great success in the country, there are certain basic factors which have to be looked at, the most important one is the development of the ICT infrastructure such as roads, electricity and telephones.

The private sector participation in the aspect of establishment, development and investment of the ICTs in the country is of crucial importance if the basic infrastructure are available to make the tools work efficiently and effectively.

Imagine that you are bound to travel to your home village in a remote corner for an annual vacation where modern communication facilities

such as the Internet and mobile phones are assumed to be inefficient.

Roads are very rough, bumpy and full of potholes that cause the inconveniences while travelling all the way. There are no signs of communication towers to show the existence of the so-called GSM communications networks or something of that kind, nor transmission lines for either electricity or landline telephone poles.

Suddenly you start thinking of how you would communicate with your friends and pondered over how to overcome the impending situation. Rural African communities always lag behind in terms of communication.

Thus, this is how the

situation looks like in most rural areas in our African communities, and without finding a possible solution, you definitely come to know how most governments are reluctant to implement their national ICT policies set to liberate rural development.

Despite Tanzania's government move to exempt tax on ICT equipment and software, usage of the gadgets is yet to be maximised, and with the persisting situation of neglecting to bring ICT investments to rural people, there would be a stagnation of the national economic development set ups.

And while much remains to be done, it is critical to mainstream deploying ICT as appropri-

ate in all measures being taken to address the challenges of sustainable development.

However, it's useful to look at the ICT as a cross-cutting issue in its own right with its goals to achieve, among others, to develop and produce a pool of ICT proficient youth and students from which Tanzania can draw ICT engineers, programmers and software developers.

Currently, the continuation of ICT services is yet to be fully realised not only in Tanzania but in sub-Saharan Africa region due to basic factors which relates to poor ICT infrastructure, weak and or the lack of policies and low level of humans resource development.

This combination has resulted in inadequate access to affordable telephones, broadcasting, computers and the Internet. The framework for approaching ICTs for national development and poverty reduction is articulated in the National ICT policy initiatives.

In a bid to effectively ensure the success of the national strategies in the country, the Government has prepared a sound draft program that embraces all government's efforts to ensure optimal improvement of the ICT infrastructure in the country.

The Minister for infrastructure development, Basil Mramba, said recently when opening Government donor consultative invest-

ment forum in Dodoma that about US$5.5 million is needed to cater for the need of ICT infrastructure problem facing the country.

According to him, the money – once received – will be used to develop a strong infrastructure including transport that will be the basis for future communication network in the country.

The Government through the ministry of infrastructure development did realise some achievement which created the need for more concerted efforts for the establishment and development of a fully fledged national ICT policy to provide guidance on planning and co-ordination.