

Africa's data revolution

The African continent has various connectivity needs which are crucial for social and economic development. Increasing the availability of ultra-broadband services is essential for Africa's future development. Becoming digital is an important catalyst for change, for development and innovation. To deliver high-quality ultra-broadband connectivity to support added-value services for end users in both urban and remote areas The continent's infrastructure will need greater capacity. Alcatel-Lucent has deployed a number of LTE networks in Africa.



Daniel Jaeger

What makes Africa very special for us is that this region is very rich in history, its diversity, different cultures and environments, many strong developments in so many countries, all not at the same speed, a lot of creativity and innovation, but at the same time still plenty of challenges and local issues but with one strong asset who are full of energy: the people of Africa. Africa's success and prosperity relies on its people.

Alcatel-Lucent's history in Africa is also about people. Across the African continent we have strong teams with excellent local knowledge specialised in a wide array of technologies for both fixed and mobile communications, including fixed and wireless ultra-broadband access, optics and IP technologies as well as services, including deployment services as well as professional and managed services. Our experts on the ground are working with the African ecosystem to introduce new technologies and solutions that will help in developing and

creating social and economic value.

Alcatel-Lucent is working with service providers in Tanzania and Côte d'Ivoire to connect entire countries, sparking opportunities across Africa and ensuring future growth of 4G.

In the next five years, it's predicted that internet use on mobile phones within Africa will experience unprecedented growth, doubling the rate of the rest of the world. While the use of internet on mobile phones increases exponentially, so too does the need for the network behind it. "In most of the countries in Africa there is no strong fixed line network. The mobile is the number one medium for people to connect," says Daniel Jaeger, Alcatel-Lucent's Vice-President for Africa. In addition, Jaeger says "A lot of development has happened on this continent over the last few years, but at the same time there's still a lot to come. Telecommunications is a vital part of that."

Over the last century Dar Es Salaam, the bustling capital of Tanzania, has transformed from a sleepy fishing town into a thriving metropolis of over four million people who, for the last two years, have had access to lightning-fast internet access on their phones and at home (otherwise known as 4G LTE). This has not only allowed the country's economy to grow, it's already quickly bringing significant change to lives across the continent and creating a new blueprint for digital inclusion to the world. "The hunger for data in Africa is enormous, it's immense and every day we're surprised at how much data people use," says Tom Allen, chief operating officer of Smile Communications.

Since 2012 Alcatel-Lucent has been working with Smile to introduce and develop the 4G LTE network throughout Tanzania. "Networks are now fundamental. Being able to actually exchange information in a way that is quick and efficient - that's a data world," states Allen. He also added: "Alcatel-Lucent believed in us and the 4G technology they supplied does better than we could have imagined".

It's a sentiment echoed at the top of Alcatel-Lucent too. Michel Combes, Alcatel-Lucent's CEO, is emphatic in reiterating the significance of Africa to Alcatel-Lucent's growth and the pride of the company to take such a key role in developing opportunities across the continent. "Our Global 'Shift Plan' strategy perfectly focuses on those technologies that meet the connectivity challenges of the African continent," says Combes.

"What we are doing is much more than just installing a mast or selling a cable. It has an impact on the people in this country. It gets a different kind of meaning" said Jaeger.

Power to the people

4,000 miles away from Tanzania and with a population of almost 24 million, the West African country of Côte d'Ivoire will soon experience a surge in 4G LTE technology. "A study of the World Bank claims that a 10% growth in the number of internet users in sub-Saharan Africa will generate a GDP increase of more than 1.3%," states Chris Kilala, chief technology officer for YooMee Africa. YooMee is aiming to change the game for broadband connectivity in Africa and bring the quality of internet services to the level of that in Europe or the US. The company's group sales and marketing manager, Emmanuel Forson believes that together with Alcatel-Lucent's technology they can "reduce the digital divide in Africa, contributing to the emerging progress of the continent", a sentiment that is echoed throughout Alcatel-Lucent.



A vision for Africa

So what is next for Africa? Already 4G LTE and Ultra-Broadband networks have enabled a positive change - politically, economically and socially. Moving forward the goals are clear. "For me Africa is at the heart of tomorrow," says Combes.

He also added: "Becoming digital is an important catalyst for change. The focus of development will continue to bring connectivity to users by working with local, regional and international partners to literally help 'connect' the African people."

Ultra-Broadband is the most transformative technology since electricity, and one of the most promising assets for governments seeking to boost their economies and social development in an open digital world. It creates opportunities for people to unleash their skills by enriching the way they innovate, do business and share knowledge.

Broadband for all is not only a nice marketing motto, but every network has its success is the reality. Alcatel-Lucent strongly believes that universal access for all will break network barriers to improving the end user mobile broadband experience and that is the only economical way to meet the increasing demand for mobile broadband. Industry and service providers are changing and they need more than a traditional technology vendor but an innovative partner who will accompany them in the race of shaping the future - going forward from breakthrough innovation to proven and excellent operational capabilities in order to meet network requirements.

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