dial
Digital Impact Alliance

National Consultation Workshop On The Application Of Mobile Technology As A Catalyst For The Delivery Of The Sustainable Development Goals In Sierra Leone

JUNE 2019

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The Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation DSTI

SIERRA LEONE GOVERNMENT MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

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WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Together with the Ministry of Information and Communications and the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) facilitated a workshop on April 24, 2019, at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Freetown. The purpose of the workshop was to provide a cross-sector and multi-stakeholder platform to bring together nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), donors, government agencies, mobile network operators (MNOs), United Nations agencies and other private-sector players to discuss and chart ways to work together better and maximize the power of mobile technologies as a tool for social and economic development in Sierra Leone. The workshop was attended by 55 participants representing 38 organizations. The comprehensive list of participating organizations is included in Annex 3.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The workshop sought to address the following:

1. **Increase awareness** among the development community about the mobile landscape in Sierra Leone to understand the current state and trends of mobile connectivity and develop knowledge and understanding of the power of mobile to drive development in Sierra Leone.

2. Provoke reflection and critical evaluation of the key strengths and challenges of engagement between the telecommunications and development sectors and **share good practices and models for engagement**.

3. Inspire and motivate participants to **discuss collaborative approaches** to improve how partners can work together to create a digitally enabled ecosystem to address development challenges in the country.

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Setting the Stage

We began the day by asking participants to write down a response to the question: "What do you hope to gain from this workshop?" Responses were posted on the wall for perusal during the workshop. Apart from being an icebreaker, this activity was useful to chart the workshop experience over the course of the day, show the need for adapting the workshop to be more helpful for the intended audience, and ensure that the event delivered benefits to its stakeholders. The list of responses can be found in Annex 1.

We asked participants at their respective tables to develop a common definition of "underserved populations." We did this because we learned from DIAL's 2018 Global Digital Ecosystem Study that creating a shared language among the diverse actors in the ICT4D space is challenging. Three tables shared their definitions, with the supply-side issue of **lack of access** as the common thread:

1. An instance of a target segment/group not benefitting from full service offerings due to accessibility.

2. Lack of quality service due to various challenges. Everyone can be defined as underserved. Lack of access.

3. From the financial sector perspective, underserved are those who cannot actually access the formal financial system.

These two brief activities were useful in providing a shared context and common understanding given the sector diversity of the participants, and they formed a good basis for alignment on mutual goals.

Diana Sang then kicked off the agenda for the day by welcoming the participants and giving an overview of the day's schedule, asking participants to introduce themselves and establishing the ground rules.

OPEN PLENARY

The morning session featured three plenary presentations from the following:

- Hon. Mohammed Swaray - Minister of Information and Communications, Government of Sierra Leone
- Mr. Akinwale Goodluck - Head of Sub-Saharan Africa at the GSMA
- Mr. Pascal Egbenda - Deployment and Implementation Lead at the DSTI

Mr. Egbenda gave an overview of the Directorate's mandate: to use science, technology and innovation to support the government to deliver effectively and efficiently on its national development plan and to help transform Sierra Leone into an innovation and entrepreneurship hub. He asserted the president's belief that for Sierra Leone to take the quantum leap required to catch up with the rest of the world and work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, the government needed to be innovative in its use of science and technology to solve the country's perennial problems. In the endeavor for better service delivery and a strengthened ecosystem, he invited all stakeholders to come on board, form partnerships and take advantage of the numerous opportunities that can be harnessed with mobile technology. He maintained that DSTI's doors are open for people to explore ideas and collaborate.
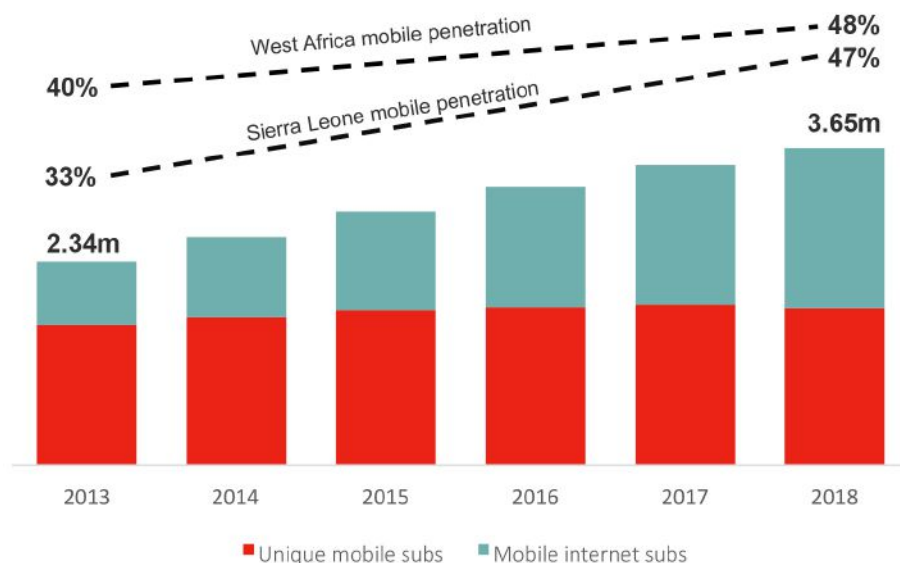

Pascal Egbenda - DSTI

The second plenary session was facilitated by Mr. Akinwale Goodluck, who was a special guest representing the mobile industry in Africa. In his speech, Mr. Goodluck lauded the MNO's investment of around half a billion dollars in network infrastructure development in Sierra Leone, which he highlighted as a key driver for growth of mobile adoption, as illustrated below.


Akinwale Goodluck - GSMA

Sierra Leone has a higher smartphone adoption rate than some of the biggest markets in the sub-region.

Unique mobile subscribers and penetration
Source: GSMA Intelligence

Mr. Goodluck also highlighted strides that Sierra Leone had made in the adoption of 4G, outpacing the subregional average despite the launch of the first commercial 4G network as recently as 2018. Sierra Leone has a higher smartphone adoption rate than some of the biggest markets in the sub-region. With mobile internet being the primary form of internet connectivity, he emphasized how access to smartphones and mobile broadband networks will be crucial to bringing people online in Sierra Leone.
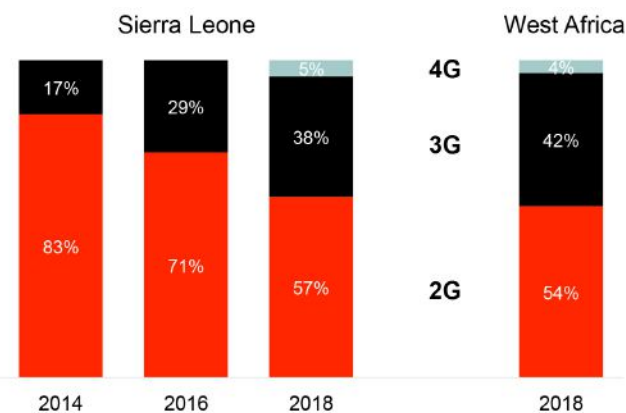
Mobile broadband
as a percentage of total connections
Source: GSMA Intelligence
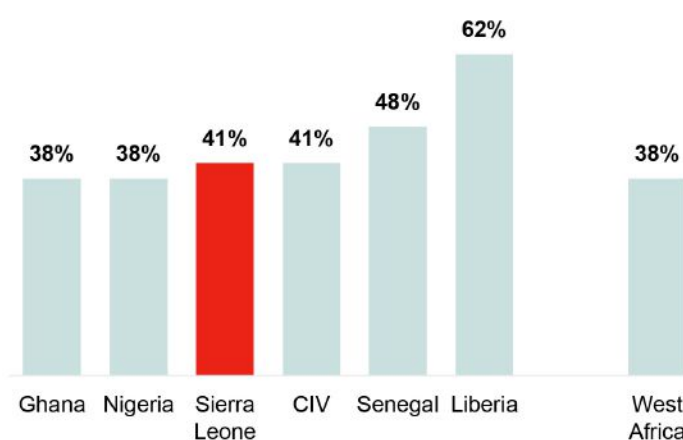
Smartphone connections
as a percentage of total connections
Source: GSMA Intelligence

The final plenary speaker was Hon. Mohammed Swaray, who delivered the keynote address. Hon. Swaray began by commending DIAL on the choice of topic and focus for the workshop, since partnership and collaboration within the ecosystem are key to bridging the digital divide in Sierra Leone.

The minister provided key statistics on mobile penetration in Sierra Leone: **71 percent** voice penetration and **11 percent mobile** broadband penetration. He emphasized the fact that **25 percent** of the country had no coverage at all, and underpinned the government's concern about this underserved population and its desire to have all citizens able to access all mobile services, including voice, data and mobile financial services.

Hon. Swaray asserted that the challenge of bridging the digital divide begins with government, and he shared key milestones and targets within the recently launched National Development Plan (2019-2023) through which his ministry aspires to:

Hon Mohammed Swaray - Minister of Information and Communications

1. Increase mobile coverage to **80 percent**
2. Increase mobile money penetration from the current 16 percent to **56 percent**
3. Increase mobile broadband penetration from 11 percent to **50 percent**

In addition to the National Development Agenda, the minister also put a spotlight on the newly set-up Universal Access Development Fund (UADF), whose mandate includes driving rural connectivity in Sierra Leone. To further this goal, the government's cabinet recently passed legislation ensuring that a reasonable proportion of the gross annual income of all MNOs will be allocated to the UADF to support this cause.

Additionally, the minister highlighted that under his leadership, the ministry had for the first time brought together all MNOs and ISPs under one roof to discuss issues that are pertinent to the sector. With a touch of humor, he said it would be better to *jaw jaw rather than war war*. He thanked the mobile operators in the room for their cooperation with his ministry thus far.

Recognizing the potential of mobile technology to support the delivery of public services and development initiatives, the minister underscored the critical need to work together to advance attainment of the SDGs in Sierra Leone. To this effect, he urged workshop participants to take a collaborative approach to adopting and using mobile technology and innovative services that could make existing programs more effective and scalable to better serve the people of Sierra Leone. In his closing, he expressed his keen interest to receive the final workshop report, indicating DIAL would present clear steps and commitments that the partners at the workshop were ready to take to move this agenda forward.

SESSION 1:
MOBILE FOR DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

MNO and NGO Panel Discussions

The purpose of the second session, which included two panel discussions, was to delve deeper and understand the mobile and development landscape in Sierra Leone.

As the first panelists from the MNO group settled in, we asked the audience to share their challenges in working with mobile and software providers using a free software called Mentimeter to anonymously poll the audience and see real-time answers. The key themes that emerged were **cost**, **coverage** and **customer service**. Please refer to Annex 1 for detailed poll results.

L-R) Joe Bangura, Elhadji Serge, Ebrima Jah and Diana Sang

The MNO panel was moderated by Diana Sang from DIAL, and included senior executives from the three GSM operating networks:

• Mr Ebrima Jah - Qcell
• Mr Joe Abbas Bangura - Africell
• Mr Elhadji Cheikh Serge Ndao - Orange

The second panel session was with NGOs. Similar to the set-up for the earlier panel, we asked participants to share their challenges in working with the development community. Common themes included **rigidity and misaligned interests and duplicity of ideas and requests**, including within the sector. Detailed responses are included in Annex 1. This panel consisted of the following senior representatives covering International NGOs, local NGOs and the NGO association.

• Dr. Victor Massaquoi - Sierra Leone Association of NGOs (SLANGO)
• Dr. Paul Sengeh - Focus 1000
• Mr. Christian Boombu Johnson - World Vision

The purpose of the NGO panel discussion was to hear from the development partners about their challenges and concerns in incorporating mobile technology in their programming and in engaging telecom partners and service providers, and the opportunities within their programming that would be areas of interest for MNO partnerships. Dr. Massaquoi from SLANGO kicked off the NGO panel discussion by giving an overview of the NGO landscape in Sierra Leone, which consists of 350 registered international and local organizations working on different initiatives across the country.

(L-R) Dr Massaquoi, Dr Sengeh, Christian Johnson and Diana Sang

NGOs play an important role in advancing the SDGs by contributing directly via the implementation of projects and communicating the SDGs. In most cases, NGOs target marginalized, rural and poor communities, most of whom are found in underserved areas in terms of public services and technology. Considering the high mobile adoption rates in Sierra Leone, this is an opportunity for NGOs to explore new ways of applying mobile technology, which has the power to increase efficiency, transparency and effectiveness of field activities.

Emerging Themes From Panel Sessions:

Challenges

1. MNOs find that one of the biggest misconceptions that the development community has is that MNOs have to provide free services as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR).
   - MNOs clarified that they normally have set CSR programs, which are separate from business and commercial initiatives. All other initiatives that are implemented within the business units need to meet commercial viability, and they are willing to help NGOs work through these discussions in a coordinated manner.

2. There is a lack of coordination and lack of sharing resources and lessons among NGOs, leading to duplication of efforts and the same mistakes being made over and over.
   - SLANGO was identified as an ideal coordinating partner.
   - SLANGO could create a platform to capture NGO ICT4D activities and to use for aggressive marketing and policy purposes. It could also serve as the mouthpiece for NGOs when meeting with MNOs and government ministries.

3. MNOs have limited resources and need to recoup investments, so need to prioritize new coverage points. How can we reach ALL potential customers, including the underserved, in a profitable way?
   - MNOs welcomed the opportunity to prioritize new sites together with NGOs depending on demand.
   - Demand aggregation was suggested as one way that NGOs could pool resources (e.g., aggregate mobile channel demand, joint procurement) to enhance shared value and reduce complexity.

4. NGOs expressed facing a lot of frustration and lack of clarity in engaging with MNOs in the past. Who are the right people to approach at each organization? How should NGOs engage MNOs once they have the blessing of the government? MNOs offered the following guidance for faster engagement and service rollout:
   - The more senior the person, the faster the decision will be made.
   - Make sure the commercial element/cost-benefit analysis is clear.

5. MNOs need to improve customer service to respond more quickly to inquiries.

Opportunities

6. MNOs recognize that NGOs have strong community ties, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas, which offer valuable potential customers for them. Therefore, MNOs are keen to partner with NGOs as a market entry customer acquisition strategy.

7. MNOs see NGOs as a source of innovation and revenue:
   - NGOs already have relationships in target communities, so can partner with MNOs to reach new customers and co-create new services.
   - How can NGOs showcase their reach and networks to attract MNOs?

8. MNOs felt that one platform that NGOs should consider using more is their mobile money payment solutions, such as for distribution schemes for beneficiaries and staff; closed user group services for staff; and fixed and mobile internet for staff in the field and offices.

Engagement

9. MNOs would like NGOs to engage with them in the early stages of product design and not at the last minute, when product is ready for launch, so that:
   - NGOs can get the right information on coverage to guide the selection of mobile channels
   - NGOs understand the full spectrum of MNO solutions to guide product design
   - MNOs can understand issues that NGOs are trying to tackle in the respective region
   - MNO can help identify the most relevant business unit/department to support the project
   - Early identification of key decision makers on both parties
   - Alignment on brand and messaging

10. When considering a new business or partnership opportunity with an NGO, MNOs insist that there needs to be a mutual benefit, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and a project that's sustainable and scalable in the medium and long term.

11. Currently, Sierra Leone has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world. How can we apply lessons in using mobile during the Ebola crisis to this challenge?

12. To help MNOs support and address NGO projects better, NGOs should come to the first meeting with the following information:
    - What problem they are trying to solve
    - Number of targeted beneficiaries
    - Location of beneficiaries
    - Equipment required or in use
    - Enrollment requirements or digital ID

SESSION 2:
BRIDGING THE GAP — FINDING AN INTERMEDIARY

Mobile Capability Guide And Aggregator Networks

One of DIAL's core objectives is to **facilitate better access to core mobile services for the development sector**. Apart from convening the ecosystem to facilitate stronger partnership, DIAL also aims to build awareness among NGOs of mobile channels and platforms and their capabilities, and provide guidance on how to partner with different telecom companies to deliver services at scale. The third session of the workshop was focused on this. Diana Sang introduced the two tools below (copies of which were distributed to the participants) and gave an overview of what they were and how to use them:

1. DIAL Mobile Capability Model
   Introduces basic mobile capabilities and use cases, elaborating where and how mobile can be incorporated to meet programmatic goals.

2. A Guide To Using Mobile Aggregators To Deliver NGO Services At National Scale
   The current engagement is characterized by multiple points of integration between the mobile sector and NGOs. One of the challenges that this poses for MNOs is that it leads to too many interactions and custom requests, which are difficult to service and address. On the NGO side, MNO engagement comes with many challenges, as discussed during the panel sessions. This paper introduces mobile aggregators, which are organizations that act as intermediaries between MNOs and their clients, in this case NGOs. Engaging with mobile aggregators presents an alternative to working with MNOs individually and reduces the complexity, cost and duration of implementation. Aggregators offer pre-negotiated commercial and technical arrangements with multiple MNOs, allowing NGOs to deliver services over a variety of mobile channels. This paper is designed to help NGOs make an informed decision about whether to use an aggregator to deliver services at scale. Section 1 outlines the advantages of using aggregators, while Section 2 presents the advantages of using MNOs. Together, they help NGOs evaluate their needs and determine the best option to fulfill them.

The workshop was attended by four regional aggregators that have vast MNO connections and experience across Africa:

- Roselyn Ilori - MTech
- Sandra Abrokwa - Viamo
- Conrad Nyuur - Mobile Content Group
- Boaz Yaya - SynqAfrica

The above aggregators were given a chance to introduce their organization and give an overview of their business and platforms. DIAL is working to raise awareness of aggregator platforms among NGO partners as a viable alternative to direct MNO engagement, depending on NGO technical capacity, project scope and needs. In the past, mobile aggregators have mostly been engaged with commercial projects and have subsequently had a

private-sector focus. By including them as one of the core participants in the workshop, DIAL hopes to increase aggregators' understanding and networks within the NGO sector, which will enable them to know how to customize their technical platforms and business support systems to address NGO challenges.

Some of the issues that emerged from this session include the following:

13. Most of the NGOs and government representatives were not aware of mobile aggregators and their offerings.

14. There are no local mobile aggregators present in Sierra Leone, so it was recommended that there be efforts to support the growth of a local aggregator. How can regional aggregators support this?

15. There are currently no regulations or licensing frameworks to guide the set-up of aggregator businesses and platforms.

16. There is a general lack of awareness of suppliers of wider technology services, e.g., software providers. During the discussions, a participant asked whether there are software providers present in Sierra Leone, and Pascal Egbenda from DSTI confirmed that there were, and the directorate was currently undertaking an exercise to map software providers in the country and would make this information available to NGOs. DIAL will support this mapping exercise to also include mobile aggregator information.

SESSION 3: CREATING SHARED VALUE

Breakout Session

The final session of the day featured a break-out session aimed at discussing key takeaways from the earlier sessions and working collaboratively to discuss next steps. Participants regrouped in four tables aligned to their sectors: MNOs, government, NGOs and mobile aggregators. The purpose of grouping by sector was to provide the participants a comfortable and intimate space to share and brainstorm ideas and point out observations from a common point of shared challenges, experiences and opportunities. Additionally, having the participants come up with joint commitments by sector was helpful in managing expectations about the realities of what it would take to execute, which enabled the teams to develop commitments that were practical, pragmatic and achievable. The groups had one hour to discuss, deliberate and fill the flipcharts. Each table assigned a lead to coordinate the discussions and populate the template.

DIAL provided a template where participants could define solid objectives:

1. **Commitments:** What commitments was the group going to make to support the workshop agenda? This was also in response to the call to action delivered by the minister during his speech.

2. **Requests:** What additional support/requests for the other groups are needed to address outstanding gaps?

The purpose of grouping by sector was to provide the participants a comfortable and intimate space to share/brainstorm ideas and point out observations from a common point of shared challenges, experiences and opportunities. Additionally, having the participants come up with joint commitments by sector was also helpful in managing expectations with realities of what it would take to execute, which enabled the teams to develop commitments that were practical, pragmatic and achievable. The groups had 1 hour to discuss and deliberate together and fill the flipcharts accordingly. Each table assigned a lead to coordinate the discussions and populate the template.

COMMITMENTS	REQUESTS
In response to the call to action, the following commitments were made by the participants on steps they are going to take to address some of the challenges raised during the day. Each group nominated a representative to read out and elaborate on the commitments to the rest of the participants:	The participants highlighted the need for additional intervention and support and made the following requests of other sectors and organizations.

COMMITMENTS	REQUESTS

Aggregators

Commitments
1. Commit to providing effective technical advice to all stakeholders
2. Willing and ready to invest in platforms for aggregation (USSD, SMS, IVR, MRS), which may include co-sharing and co-location
3. Support consumer education of services in partnership with network and device providers (OEMs)

Requests
1. Effective regulation to encourage industry growth, e.g., short code administration
2. Effective licensing by providing an effective framework
3. Faster turnaround times for integration, support, etc.
4. Self-regulation of aggregators, e.g., through a body with effective policies, rules etc., which is supported and endorsed by the regulator

MNOs

Commitments
4. Coordinate the expansion of network coverage and share a plan with NGOs
5. Build network sites with UADF funding and encourage co-location by all MNOs
6. Continue to work with government and NGOs in providing quality network services across the country
7. Ready and committed to share network coverage with NGOs on request

Requests
5. NGOs should align on their requests before coming to MNOs
6. NGOs should involve MNOs in their strategy and long-term planning
7. NATCOM should reduce interconnect fees and charges in Sierra Leone
8. MNOs should be involved in spending UADF funds

NGOs

Commitments
8. More collaboration among key stakeholders in technical information sharing
9. Commitment to the use of digital platforms
10. Commit to work with national aggregators
11. Advocate for the adoption of mobile technology by NGOs
12. Engage MNOs on government priorities for development

Requests
9. Establish national aggregators (government and private sector)
10. Reduction in data tariffs (government and MNOs)
11. Expansion of network coverage (MNOs)
12. Request MNOs for coverage map

Government agencies

Commitments
13. NATCOM as ICT regulator committed to reviewing old ICT regulations of MNOs and bringing in six new regulations, including:
    - Cyber security
    - Spectrum management regulations
    - Co-location and interconnection regulation, etc.
14. Bank of Sierra Leone committed to liaise with NATCOM to draft digital financial service regulation, and BSL committed to establishing a national switch, in partnership with World Bank.
15. UADF is committed to working with MNOs in expanding coverage and penetration in Sierra Leone through the use of subsidies from the fund.
16. The Ministry of Health will partner with other government agencies, MNOs and NGOs to roll out digital health interventions.

Requests
13. NATCOM expects MNOs to fully comply with upcoming NATCOM regulations when they take effect.
14. Bank of Sierra Leone requested for MNOs to collaborate in the area of broadening access and usage of mobile money to further enhance financial inclusion
15. UADF expects that MNOs should cooperate on payment of their contribution to UADF
16. The Ministry of Health called for Avoidance of duplication of activities by NGOs

CLOSING SURVEY

We asked respondents: "What did you learn today that could help you work better with your counterparts (MNOs or the development community)? Overwhelmingly, the responses focused on learning the capabilities of different partners and strategies to increase collaboration and partnership.

We also asked participants: "Do you feel more equipped to use technology to reach underserved populations after this workshop?" We received a **100 percent confirmation**, with nine respondents not providing an answer to this question. Several respondents provided more detailed responses as to why they felt more capable following the workshop, namely that they now had a better understanding of the technology and policy landscape in Sierra Leone.

NEXT STEPS

1. Report presented to the minister of information and communications for review and endorsement.

2. DIAL provides technical support and facilitates follow-up with individual sectors and organizations to pursue implementation of the commitments, with monthly progress updates to all.

3. Next workshop held to review and discuss progress on commitments (September/October 2019).

ANNEX 1: SURVEY RESPONSES

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SURVEY

Introduction

At the close of the workshop, DIAL staff asked participants to complete a survey to help us understand their experience of the day and other background information. DIAL plans to use these responses to improve future workshops and guide the development of products to meet the needs of the ICT4D ecosystem. We are sharing these anonymized responses with participants in the interest of transparency, open communication, and the hope to continue this exciting and needed engagement among ICT4D actors in Sierra Leone. Participants should reach out to Laura O'Brien, Senior Manager for M&E, at lobrien@digitalimpactalliance.org with any questions or concerns.
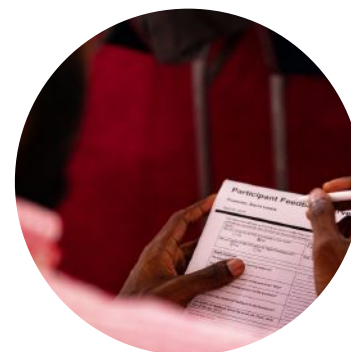
Respondent Overview

We received a total of **29 surveys** at the end of the workshop. This number was lower than the overall workshop participant count, likely due to drop-off over the course of the day.

Survey Respondents by Stakeholder Type

The breakdown of respondents represents the overall composition of the workshop, with a balance between commercial- and development-sector representatives. **Seven respondents** did not indicate their organization, so we were not able to determine their sector.

Survey Respondents by Sector

- NGO — 34%
- No response — 24%
- MNO — 17%
- Government — 10%
- Aggregator — 7%
- Private sector — 3%
- Multilateral — 3%
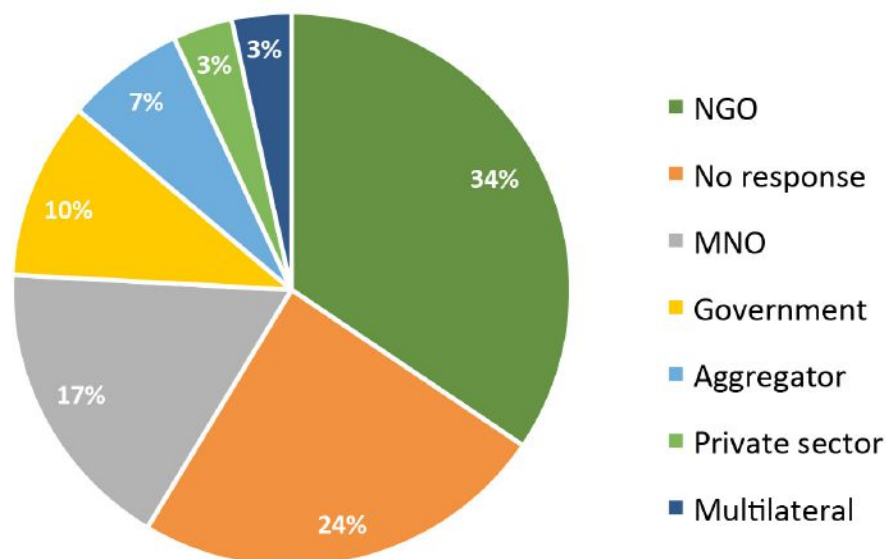
Expectations of the Workshop

Type	Expectations of what each participant hoped to gain from the workshop
Aggregators	Mobile engagement will be more embedded in development work.
Aggregators	Learn more about the West African market and understand NGOs' needs in the region.
Aggregators	Know how digital media and marketing could help achieve the SDGs.
Aggregators	Clearly bring out the necessity for collaboration between MNOs and third-party entities in service provisioning so that the MNOs see a good reason to be flexible in partnership terms.
Donors & UN Agencies	Meet with NGOs operating in Sierra Leone and other West African countries.
Donors & UN Agencies	Learn how the use of mobile aggregators can help benefit my organization.
Donors & UN Agencies	Scaling the regulatory challenges in costs and activization of services. Reducing cost barriers for investing in digital platforms for development of services. Effective collaboration between telcos and tech companies to provide solutions for development.
Government	Understand the dynamics of potential partnerships.
Government	Get a clear and better understanding of how mobile technology can help achieve the SDGs by 2030. Understand whether the mobile industry really helps progress toward the SDGs at all.
Government	Raise awareness about the opportunities around mobile technologies and how government can make the space viable for small start-ups to operate and thrive.
Government	Understand the roles of aggregators in mobile service delivery and how using them is an advantage.
MNO	Know what NGOs require from MNOs. Start building relationships with NGOs.
MNO	Create a road map to collaboration between industry and government.
MNO	Understand the opportunities for collaboration with development organizations.
MNO	Understand the frustration and needs of NGOs and expectations from MNOs.
NGO	Understand the benefit of digital reporting on local NGOs.
NGO	Get or broaden knowledge on the effective use of mobile services for development projects. Understand the common barriers within different demographics, specifically in Sierra Leone, that prevent such services from reaching beneficiaries.
NGO	Know how my NGO can benefit from mobile services
NGO	Know how CSO can avail the services of DIAL.
NGO	How to fix the problem in hard-to-reach communities. Get solutions for NGOs and the government of Sierra Leone. Gain more knowledge on mobile capability for my office.
NGO	The aim of the project is very good at the national/regional level but how realistic is the project at the local level? Most of the NGOs in Sierra Leone implement their programs in villages where there are lots of communication challenges. Understand how this project will benefit NGOs in relation to the grassroots or people at the village.
NGO	Know the difference between MNOs and mobile aggregators
NGO	Current MNO opportunities that my organization can leverage.
NGO	Understand the landscape so my organization can build on experience for better outcomes.
NGO	See an mHealth roadmap for Sierra Leone.
NGO	Understand what designs/approaches are suitable for international development in achieving the SDGs in low-income countries.
NGO	Understand some of the benefits NGOs might expect from DIAL with regards to their operations and how NGOs can incorporate these services into theirs.

As part of the survey, we asked respondents whether these expectations were met. A full 100 percent responded that they were met through the course of the day. Several respondents elaborated as to what exactly led to the fulfillment of their expectations:

Type	How were your expectations met from this morning?
-	Great engagement and commitment from the stakeholders
-	A lot of learning about the services of MNOs, aggregators, UNF
-	A clear and better understanding of the role of mobile tech in achieving the SDGs
-	New information
Government	Lots of discussion around coverage of penetration of NGO services using collaboration with MNOs and government
Government	Broad representation and informative panel sessions
MNO	The chance to expose Orange's way of working
MNO	Showed the importance of having an aggregator
Multilateral	Presence of relevant stakeholders, well-organized event
NGO	Insight that we can work with MNOs and aggregators
NGO	Feel equipped with knowledge of digital
NGO	Good materials
NGO	Know now how to deploy digital services
NGO	Aggregators and MNOs were understood
NGO	A broader understanding on how the various sectors present can collaborate
NGO	Know about aggregators
Private sector	Learned how MNOs, NGOs and government collaborate

Before we invited panelists from the MNO and NGO sectors to share their challenges with the audience, we used a free software called Mentimeter to anonymously poll the audience and see real-time answers.

Challenges in working with mobile or software providers

First, we asked the audience to share their challenges in working with mobile or software providers. The key themes that emerged were **cost**, **coverage**, and **customer service**.

What are your biggest challenges in working with mobile or software providers?

High cost of mobile services

Lack of adequately trained technical personnel

Non- responsiveness as well as openness to partnerships. Difficult procedure for obtaining shorts codes and access to APIs.

Low knowledge on the use of Technology and the workspace for developers

They are not present everywhere

Accession Lack strong internet.

Security

not incentivised to expand network to hard to reach areas. multiple large contracts with government to provide services but these don't translate into sustainable expansion to access (e.g. PHUs)

Quality of mobile services; dedication to meeting KPIs; Cost of services; innovation in terms of services; Equal and unrestricted access to service platform by Startups.

Connectivity and Cost of mobile data

Cost

Not applicable

Understanding each other's timing and ensuring the partnership is needed – a win win

Too slow to embrace new opportunities

Coverage not in areas where most our projects are concentrated. The airtime very high.

Lack of training or awareness of use of technology.

Our own lack of technical challenge of knowing what we need from them, we feel intimidated.

Not being given due attention and them taking the time to understand what we wre trying to achieve.

Coverage and service uptime

As NGOs we find it difficult to access network in some of our communities

Lack of understanding of systems and processes

High tariff rate

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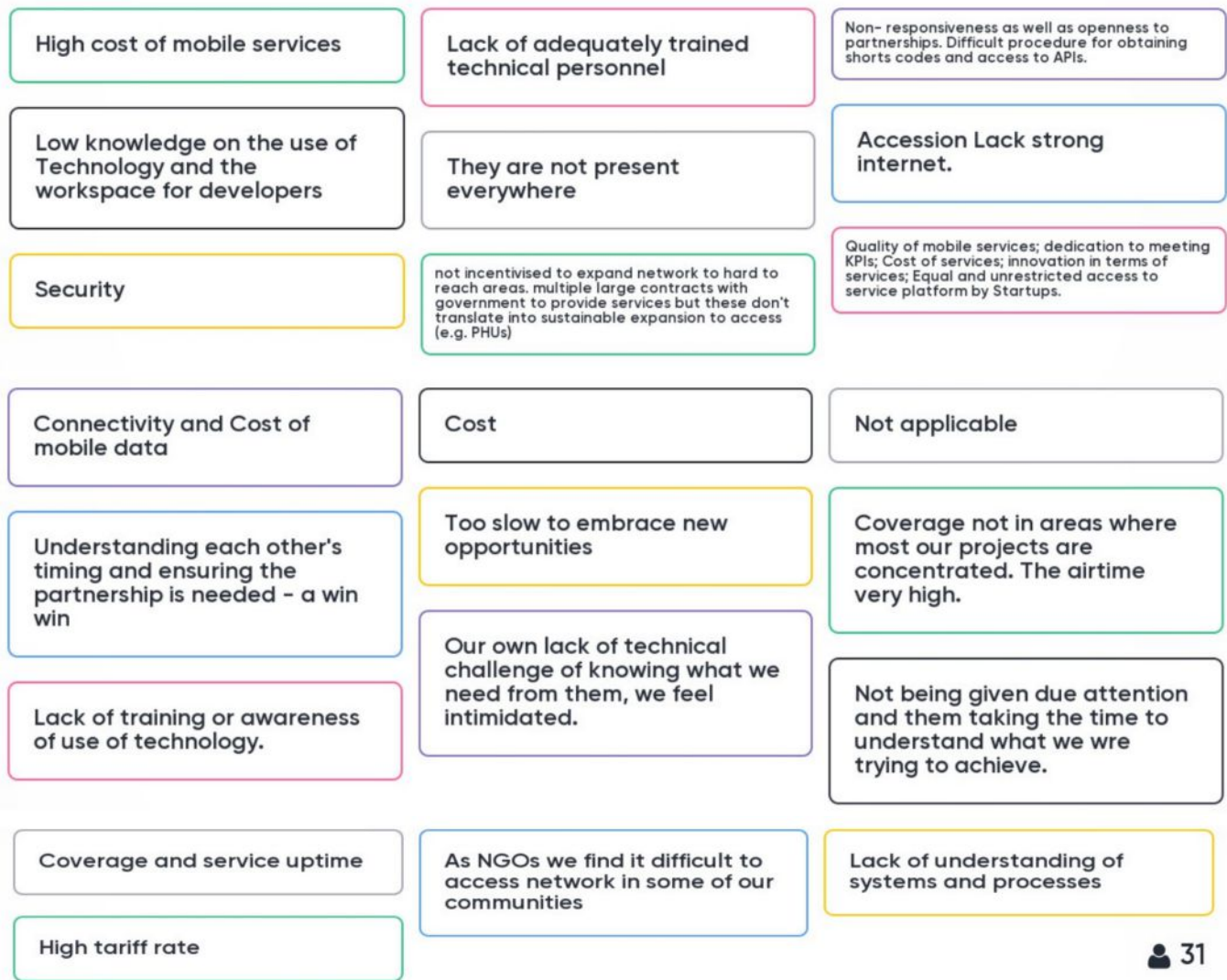
Challenges in working with the development community

Next, we asked the participants to share their challenges in working with the development community. Common themes included **rigidity and misaligned interests**, including within the sector.

What are your biggest challenges in working with the development community?

Misaligned interests and incentives.

Not applicable

Lack of flexibility

very pilot focussed

They are very expensive

Too much of changes to the initial plans as you progress

Tend not to communicate well and implement projects that are redundant or do not reflect the actual needs of their target population

Lots of conditionalities attached to development funding

No technical knowledge, Vague specifications, late involvement

Lack of strong internet

In addition to misalignment, there is always a shared understanding gap.

Very difficult finding developers with relevant skills and expertise. Very few senior / experienced devs.

👤 12

KNOWLEDGE GAINS

For DIAL, the principal objectives of the workshop were to increase the visibility of the different ICT4D actors in Sierra Leone in terms of who is doing what and to improve the quality of the relationships among these actors through better understanding of each stakeholder's challenges and incentives. We sought to measure any immediate changes through a few questions on the survey. We plan to follow up in the coming months to learn if these short-term knowledge gains have translated into new ways of working.

Likelihood of choosing to work with an aggregator

Specifically, we were curious as to whether this workshop had increased visibility of the services provided and services offered by aggregators to other stakeholders. DIAL recently published A Guide To Using Mobile Aggregators To Deliver NGO Services At National Scale and is continuing to work on an aggregator supply mapping tool that will showcase the coverage of aggregators across sub-Saharan Africa, with the goal of increasing choice and availability to the development community.

Thus, we were intrigued to see that the workshop's content and exposure to aggregators did increase the likelihood of respondents to choose to work with aggregators, with greater numbers of respondents selecting "Probably" or "Definitely" post-workshop compared to pre-workshop. DIAL will do further evaluations in the coming months to see if this short-term exposure leads to changes in behavior.

How likely are you to choose to work with an aggregator?

Using technology to reach underserved

As part of the survey, we asked participants: "Do you feel more equipped to use technology to reach underserved populations after this workshop?" We received a 100 percent confirmation rate, with nine respondents not providing an answer to this question. Several respondents provided more detailed responses as to why they felt more capable following the workshop, namely that they now had a better understanding of the technology and policy landscape in Sierra Leone.

LESSONS LEARNED

We asked respondents: "What did you learn today that could help you work better with your counterparts (e.g., telcos and the development community)? Overwhelmingly, the responses focused on learning about the capabilities of different partners and strategies to increase collaboration and partnership.

Type	Lessons learned
-	Mobile technology's role in growth and development
-	Partnership with other stakeholders
-	Learning about team work
-	Understanding MNOs and regulation with NATCOM
Aggregator	Effective collaboration
Aggregator	There are quite a number of NGOs in Sierra Leone, and we hope to engage more with them.
Government	Partners are willing to work together and communication is key
Government	The importance of regulation and policies
MNO	Proper planning and coordination is key with NGO and MNO partnerships
MNO	Good contacts
Multilateral	Capabilities of telcos and ministries, reduces information asymmetry
NGO	Using tech to enhance development
NGO	DSTI goal to support directorate of ICT strategy was new
NGO	Everything
NGO	Communication and partnerships
NGO	Working with aggregators
NGO	NGOs can work with MNOs
NGO	Collaboration of MNOs and NGOs
NGO	Inclusion and collaboration
NGO	Availability of services
Private Sector	Learned a lot about NGO operations

Likelihood of applying these lessons

Finally, we wanted to get a pulse check on how likely participants were to apply these lessons to their work. More than three-quarters of respondents indicated that they definitely would do so.

How likely are you to use the lessons from today in your daily work?

3%

21%

76%

- Definitely
- Probably
- No response
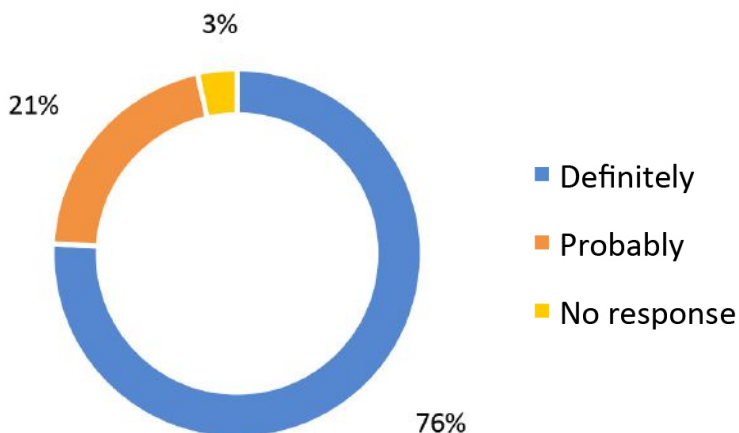
EVENT FEEDBACK

DIAL plans to host more country-level ecosystem convenings to bring together different actors within the ICT4D space. We asked participants for their feedback on specific sessions and overall thoughts to help us deliver highly engaging and collaborative workshops.

Favorite session

We were pleased to see that all of the major sessions were described by several respondents as their favorite session of the day. Several respondents listed multiple sessions, or "All," as their favorites. Many added that they were appreciative of the opportunity to get a clear understanding of the needs and services of their different counterparts in a risk-free, interactive and direct way.

Favorite sessions according to the survey respondents
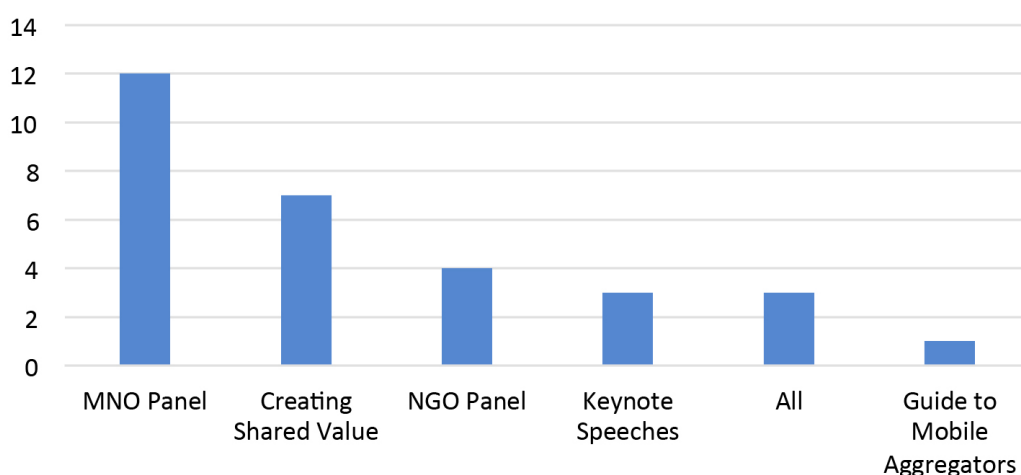
Least favorite session

We also asked respondents which session was their least favorite. While the vast majority skipped this question or noted "None," there was a vote for each of the above sessions, with requests to rethink the format or the timing.

Overall Feedback on Event

This event received a lot of praise, and the creation of a safe and open space for this discussion was highlighted. In terms of constructive feedback, we heard three primary requests:

- **Better time management.** We had planned to give more time for the aggregator session, and that is something we will work to ensure for future events. We also were delayed in starting, which was noted by several respondents.
- **Inclusion of Sierra Tel.** Several participants noted that Sierra Tel, a national MNO, should have been present despite not currently offering GSM services. DIAL committed to following up with Sierra Tel and ensuring its participation in future panels and discussions.
- **More exposure for aggregators.** One respondent said that the aggregators should have been part of the panel or given more opportunity to present.

Likelihood to recommend this workshop to a colleague

Lastly, **82 percent of respondents** noted that they would **"definitely"** recommend this event to a colleague, with the remaining 12 percent saying they would "probably" recommend it.

ANNEX 2: AGENDA AND PROGRAMME

Time	Session Title	Format	Speakers/ Responsible
7:30 - 8:30	Registration and Breakfast		
8:30 – 8:45	Opening Remarks	Plenary	DIAL
8:45 – 9:15	Introduction: 1st Speaker	Plenary	GSMA
9:20 – 9:40	Introduction: 2nd Speaker	Plenary	DSTI
9:45 - 10:15	Keynote Address	Plenary	Hon. Mohammed Swaray
10:45 - 11:00	**BREAK**		
	THEME: MOBILE FOR DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS		
11:00 - 11:10	Recap/Setting the Stage	Plenary	DIAL
11:10 - 11:40	**The MNO Landscape in Sierra Leone** Discussion of the challenges and opportunities of Telecom partnerships and an MNO perspective on how they can work with NGOs.	Panel	Orange QCell Africell
11:40 - 12:00	Q&A		
12:00 - 12:45	**The NGO Landscape in Sierra Leone** An introduction to NGO actors in the development/aid sector and perspectives from development players on priorities and where mobile can help them.	Panel	World Vision Focus 1000 SLANGO
12:45 - 1:00	Q&A		
1:00 - 1:45	**LUNCH**		
	THEME: BRIDGING THE GAP (II): FINDING AN INTERMEDIARY		
1:45 - 2:00	Recap/Setting the Stage		DIAL
2:00 - 2:15	Introduction to Aggregator Platforms	Presentation	DIAL
2:15 - 3:00	Aggregator Showcase	Activity	DIAL
3:00 - 3:15	**BREAK**		
	THEME: BRIDGING THE GAP (II): CREATING SHARED VALUE		
3:15 - 3:30	Recap/Setting the Stage		DIAL
3:30 - 4:00	Discuss Key Takeaways From the Earlier Sessions	Group activity	Diana Sang
4:00 - 4:45	Discussion and Development of Commitments	Activity	DIAL
4:45 - 5:00	Wrap-up/Conclusion		DIAL
5:00 - 8:00	**NETWORKING RECEPTION AND DRINKS**		

ANNEX 3: PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Africell

Bank of Sierra Leone

CARE

Child Fund

COOPI

DSTI

eHealth Africa

FOCUS 1000

FORUT

GIZ

GSMA

Health Alerts

ICT Academy

Living Goods

MCC Group

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Information
and Communications

Mtech

NATCOM

Orange

Qcell

RALSS

Save the Children

SEND

Sigma Ventures Limited

Skytech Media

SLANGO

SLENIA

SOLTHIS

Synq Africa

UADF

UNFPA

Viamo Technologies

WANEP

WFP

World Vision

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