

RURA to launch study on mobile usage

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Rwanda Utilities and Regularity Authority (RURA) will, by the end of this year, conduct a study on the use of mobile phones among the rural population to establish areas with rapid mobile phone and internet penetration.

According to the RURA, the majority of the country's mobile phone subscribers are concentrated in major cities and towns and there is need to assess its penetration in rural areas.

Mobile phone penetration grows rapidly

Director general of RURA, Regis Gatarayiha, said mobile phones penetration has grown rapidly but insisted that gaps still existed and needed to be worked on.

He said RURA was planning to use information from the recently conducted census to guide the study which will specifically identify which households own mobile phones.

The preliminary data of the national census is due to be released in December this year.

RURA will use the findings to work with operators to determine a clear visibility of the market and devise a strategy to connect those without mobile phones.

Opportunities for development

The study comes at a time when the general mobile telephony penetration has reached 45%, a trend that is believed to have opened up possible opportunities to enhance development.

The minister of ICT and Youth, Jean Philbert Nsengimana, said mobile telephone penetration was increasing but "I don't have the figures of how it is rising among the poor and the rural community."

Data from RURA shows that as of July 2012, Airtel has already accumulated 44 044 subscribers while its competitors, Tigo Rwanda and MTN Rwanda have 1 663, 672 and 3 082 025 active mobile phone users, respectively.

"We have targets, though the room for improvement is still big because mobile phone usage in Rwanda has moved beyond voice and short message services but towards mobile value added services," the minister said.

Nsengimana said Rwanda targeted to reach 25% internet penetration from the current 8%.

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