

Bridging the digital divide in Africa

With over 45% of the world still without internet access, the Dynamic Spectrum Alliance (DSA) has called for the increased utilisation of TV Whitespace technology (TVWS) to help bridge the digital divide that is still impacting billions of people across the world.



DSA Treasurer Mark Rotter.

Speaking on the third day of [ITU Telecom World 2018](#), a global platform for debating and sharing best practice across emerging and developed markets, DSA Treasurer Mark Rotter highlighted the wireless opportunities for Africa and the challenges that lie ahead.

“Digital inclusion is essential for driving economic development and enabling environmentally sustainable growth,” said Rotter. “Progress is being made but there is still a long way to go before the digital divide is closed.

“The DSA believes that one of the first steps should be utilising TVWS networks to lower the cost of access. TVWS technology uses unused or underused broadcast spectrum on a secondary basis to bring broadband connectivity to areas where other technologies are not cost effective.

“Changing the economics of rural deployment makes TVWS an economically attractive solution to solve one of the most intractable social issues of our time – how to bring opportunity to rural and economically underprivileged areas.”

Customisable solution

The DSA has long been championing TVWS technology to connect those in underserved areas. Earlier this year, the DSA released the publication of its new model rules for TVWS technology, to provide policy makers and regulators with the necessary tools to enable quick and efficient deployment of TVWS networks.

The model rules are based upon the regulatory environments already put in place by Ofcom in the UK and the FCC in the US, incorporating findings from the operations of TVWS network.



Icasa publishes regulations on TV white space use

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“Regulators can use the model rules as a customisable out-of-the-box solution, for a faster and more efficient way to enable TVWS networks to be launched in their markets,” continued Rotter.

“We believe one of the first steps towards connecting the unconnected in Africa is utilizing TVWS technology which, in turn will increase the amount of available wireless bandwidth and reduce its cost.”

Progression has been made in Mozambique, as the regulator there, INCM, recently announced they are adopting the DSA model rule framework for enabling the deployment of TVWS.

Rotter added: “The DSA model rules can be used to help accelerate new deployments of TVWS all over the world. The framework can be used as a starting point for policy makers in African countries that are similar to Mozambique to enable TVWS technology in months rather than years, whilst still being sensitive to local needs.

“INCM is currently running its own TVWS trial, which includes a geolocation spectrum database. Because INCM adopted the DSA model rules, the trial was able to occur quickly and was more simple to set up.”

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