

# Overcoming ICT Market Failures in FCV Countries: Liberia Focus

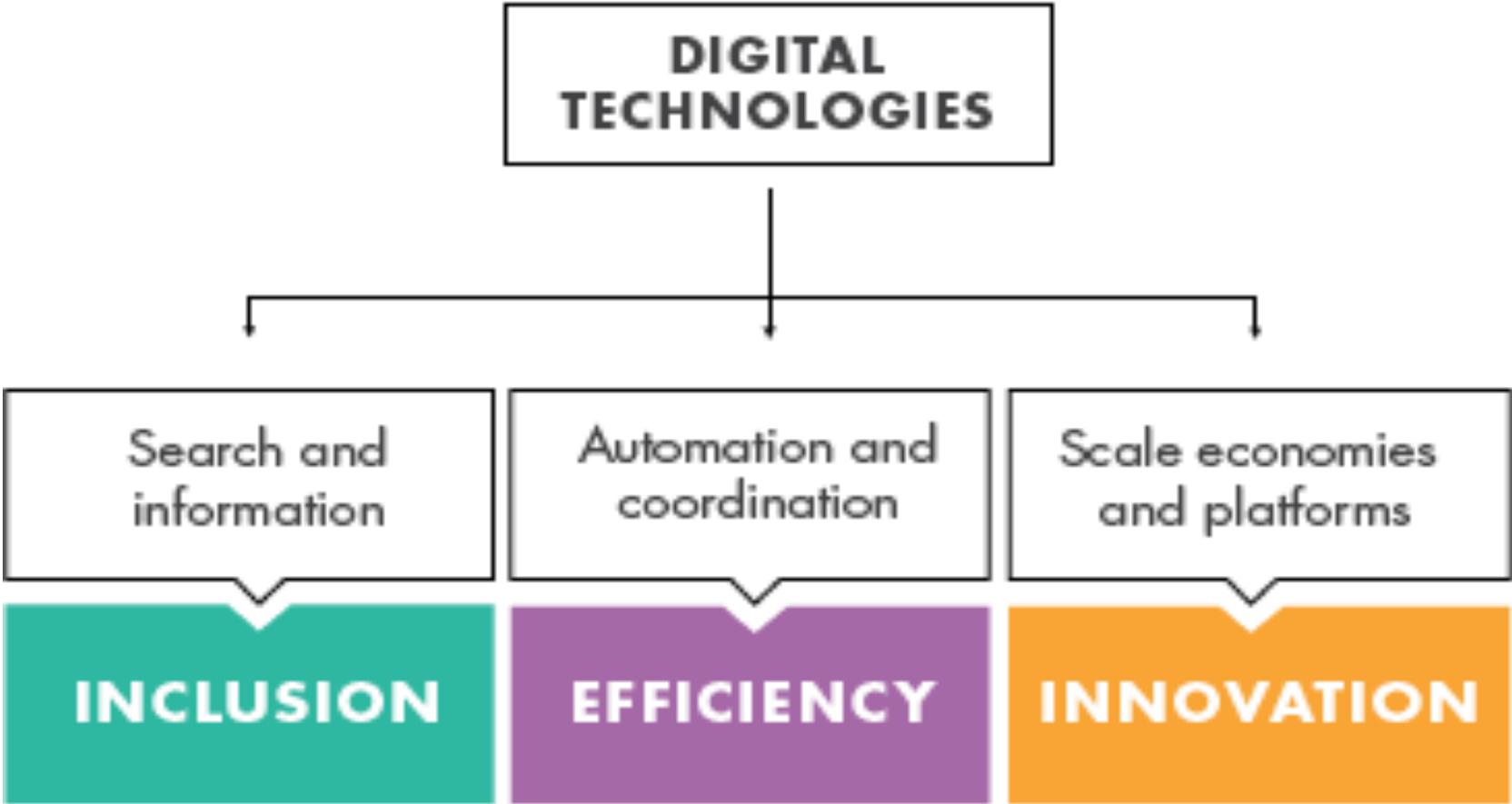
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# Agenda

- Mechanisms for Promoting Development
- Introduction to Infrastructure issues in Liberia
- How to achieve Digital Dividends? What is missing and how to overcome these challenges
- USAID's support to Liberia on ICT and e-Government

# Mechanisms for Promoting Development



Source: WDR 2016

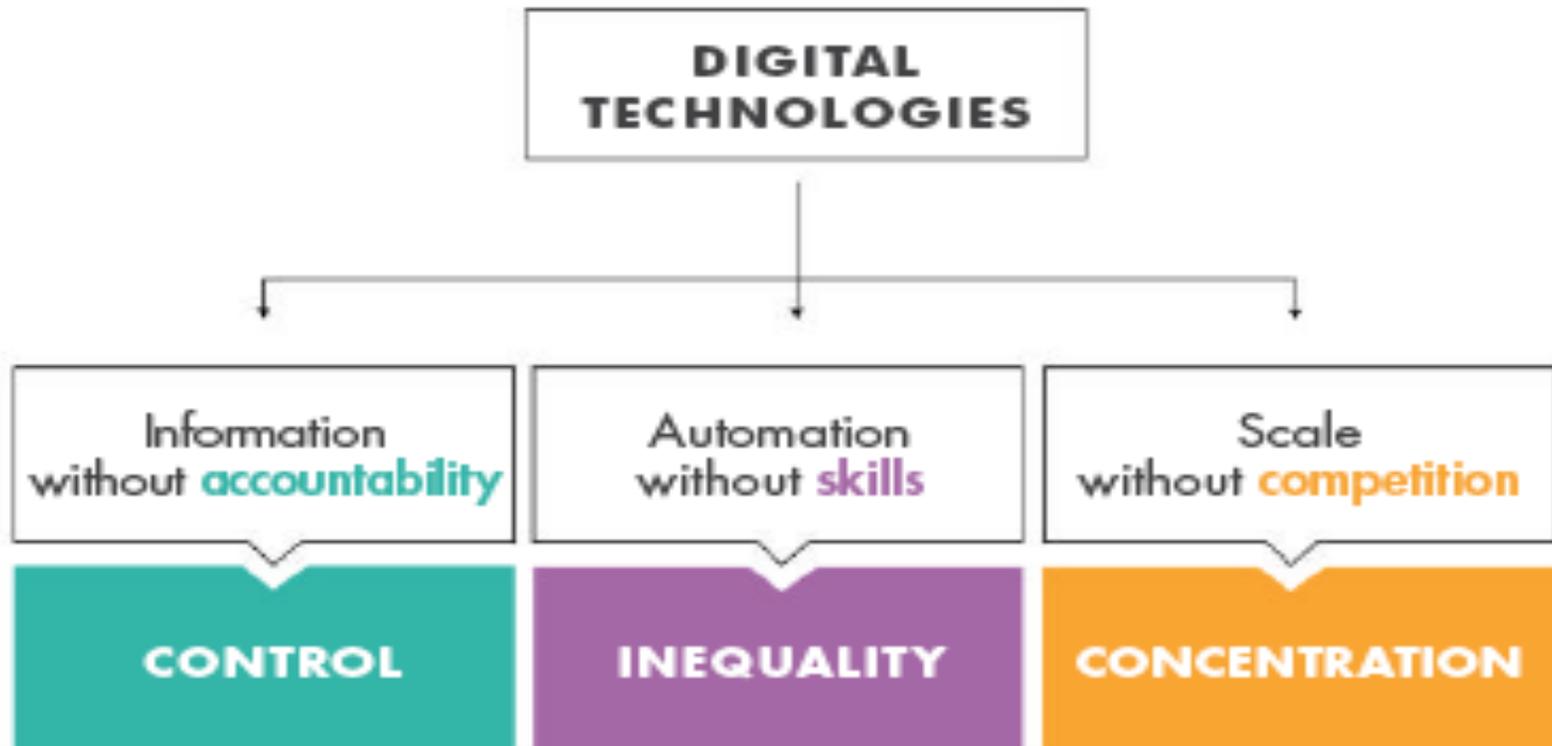
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- As the 2016 World Development Report points out the lack of infrastructure plays a key role in bringing the digital dividends highlighted in the WDR 16 to people
  - Connectivity shortcomings delay the benefits of technology from reaching everyone
    - ◆ A robust ICT Infrastructure helps close this gap.
  - But Infrastructure alone can not bring these dividends
  - Promotion of ICT and making this a priority in Government is also necessary
  - Liberia is a perfect case of why this is important

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- Connected to the ACE Cable in January 2013
  - Government owns a 60% stake in the CCL
  - But since Infrastructure and ICT not seen as a priority for the Administration, thus Fiber has not been distributed to Agencies.
    - ◆ Instead the Government is leasing its capacity to the private sector.
  - As a result, Government Agencies & Universities are using scratch cards purchased from the Mobile Operators to access the Internet
  - Communications costs for Government Agencies, which are the cost for purchasing scratch cards have increased by over 20% for the past two years since the Cable has landed and are expected to increase by over 25% this year.
    - ◆ This money could have been used to provide services to the public
  - Meanwhile Universities have minimal access to the Internet with little or no access to computers for students.

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- Liberia is not reaping sizable digital dividends from fiber
  - The situation in Liberia today is exactly why the WDR highlights the importance of “analog” development components as critical components to ensuring that the digital dividends promised arrive.
  - Not focusing on these development components will continue to mean that these digital dividends will be slow to reach the Liberian people.
  - Integrating ICT into all aspects of the economy should be a priority
  - Just as investing in ICT will lead to higher economic growth so does investing in people. Providing them with the skills they need to take full advantage of these digital opportunities

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## Without Strong Development Components, the Opportunities of e-Government may turn into risks instead of Dividends



Source: WDR 2016 team.

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- Skills, Governance, and Regulations should also be strengthened
    - ◆ Strengthening regulations to increase competition among businesses.
    - ◆ Adapting workers' skills to the demands of the new economy,
    - ◆ Ensuring that institutions are accountable to the public
  - Transformation works best when all three, a favorable business climate, strong human capital, and good governance are present.
  - Pushing for accountable institutions needs to be a priority.

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- Several NGOs are working in Liberia to change the culture of corruption by celebrating and promoting Integrity
  - Government Agencies can use the same tactics and celebrate employees who show initiative
  - The lack of digital literacy among the population means that citizens are not aware of the benefits that ICT can bring.
    - ◆ They do not even realize they are using the Internet when using Facebook or sending email.
    - ◆ Think Internet is only for people using computers
  - Efforts to enlighten the populace are often countered by other government institutions who would like to keep the populace in the dark
    - ◆ It is also why many have argued against automation

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- USAID through its GEMS program has been working to improve the performance of Government Agencies by strengthening public sector capacity in Liberia. They are also helping the Government to use ICT more effectively by implementing a whole of Government approach to automation.
  - Improving service delivery, increasing efficiency, and lowering costs
  - These are the dividends that the GOL will gain from adopting an e-Government strategy
  - E-Government in its basic form is about automating and computerizing systems and transactions, which in turn leads to increased transparency, accountability, and decreases the opportunities for bribes.

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- The E-Gov strategy will provide the means for Liberia to manage the process of transformation and show Government how to streamline processes and reduce transaction costs.
  - It will also ensure that the investment in ICT is aligned with Liberia's development goals and allow Liberians to take advantage of new opportunities and create innovations
  - The “e-Gov” strategy supports Government of Liberia's objective to deliver services to all Liberians, irrespective of location.

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- Just as the new Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by the UN in September 2015 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) takes a “Whole of Development” focus.
  - Similarly, the e-Gov strategy by taking a “whole of Government” approach, integrating ICT applications, systems and services across the Government will allow Liberia to reach these goals of connected Government.
    - ◆ One that promotes communication, interaction, participation, and collaboration.
  - ICT can only be an engine for inclusive growth if it is available, accessible and affordable for everyone from the Government Agencies, Businesses, NGOs, and Citizens

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- E-Government works best when all channels of communications are open.
  - Collaboration and communications must be at the front and center for the strategy to succeed
  - Governments collaborating and partnering with each other and with businesses
  - Governments working closely and listening to feedback from citizens on what type of services they want most
  - Governments empowering workers and listening to their ideas and implementing the ones that are good
  - Government energizing the students and young entrepreneurs to partner with it and create online services and applications to improve public service delivery.



## Questions, Comments, Suggestions?



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Thank You

