



November 24, 2020

Contact Info:

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Global Conversations: Digital Technology in Zimbabwe in a Deepening Economic Crisis

Time: 12:30pm

Three years after the overthrow of President Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe is in the throes of a deepening economic crisis. Join us for this 30-minute discussion with postdoctoral fellow Leon Gwaka on the nation's critical situation and what regulations on mobile technologies mean for Zimbabwe's future. Leon is a fellow of Penn Law's Center for Technology, Innovation, and Competition (CTIC) where he is working on the 1 World Connected project. Leon's doctoral dissertation provided an impact assessment of an intervention in Zimbabwe funded by USAID/Resilient Africa Network upon the community livestock system's sustainability and household food security. **For Zoom information, please RVSP below.**

Additional Details:

Zimbabwe is facing a deepening economic crisis. Inflation is close to 700 percent; the country has foreign currency shortages and a rapidly weakening currency. An estimated 90 percent of Zimbabweans are either unemployed or underemployed, with the UN World Food Programme warning that Zimbabwe is facing its worst hunger crisis in 10 years.

Millions of Zimbabweans rely on mobile money operators for basic payments because it is difficult to obtain physical cash. However, President Mnangagwa has accused mobile-money platforms of a conspiracy to sabotage the collapsing Zimbabwe dollar. And in June, the government ordered the suspension of transactions on mobile-money services, which are the main form of payments in the southern African nation. Ecocash (established by the mobile-phone company Econet Wireless) came under rising regulatory pressure, and has now committed to certain government-mandated integrations. Also this summer, Econet Wireless (Zimbabwe's largest mobile network operator) launched the country's first 3G smart feature phone. The company is pledging to address the 3 key barriers to internet access – device & data affordability as well as digital literacy. But will Zimbabwe be able to realize these promises?

Speaker Bio:

Leon Gwaka is a postdoctoral fellow in Penn Law's Center for Technology, Innovation, and Competition (CTIC) working on the 1 World Connected project under the supervision of Prof Christopher Yoo. 1 World Connected is an initiative to document and analyze global connectivity initiatives for the purpose of identifying what works, and why it works (or what doesn't work at all). His research focuses on digital infrastructure transformation in resource-constrained communities with a specific focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2015, Leon received funding from USAID and Resilient Africa

Network to implement the MOSMAC project in Beitbridge, Zimbabwe. His Ph.D. from the University of the Western Cape provided an impact assessment of the MOSMAC intervention on the community livestock system's sustainability and household food security.

Register for this event

Attendees*:

First name*:

Last name*:

E-mail address*:

Phone:

Penn Affiliation (e.g. L
78, C 97):

Please provide any comments or special instructions for the event organizer below:

Register