



**AMBASSADOR LEWIS A. LUKENS
REMARKS
TECH CAMP
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2012
19:00, Ndiambour Hotel**

(As prepared)

Thierno Alassane Sall, (Directeur), ARTP (Autorité de Regulation des Télécommunications et des Postes),

Abdou Lo, Minister of Communications,

Benoit Sambou, Minister of Agriculture,

I am happy to welcome you to the opening of TechCamp Dakar. A whole lot of people have worked very hard to make this event a reality. Thanks to you all. In particular, I'd like to thank the tech trainers who have volunteered their time to share their passion for technology, and teach Ag-NGOs about tech solutions.

When I first learned about this initiative, I asked my staff, "What is TechCamp?" They told me: "TechCamps are two day interactive conferences that pair leaders in the technology community with civil society organizations to provide training, resources, and assistance, enabling participants to harness the latest technologies to build their capacity to serve."

That's a mouthful. Simply put: We put the experts that have the knowledge together with the civil society organizations that need the knowledge. The NGOs learn how to solve problems by using easy-to-implement, accessible, low-cost technology solutions.

Why is this important? Because civil society organizations – such as NGOs, educational institutions, activists, and community groups – are catalysts for the advancement of democracy, transparency, respect for human rights, and good governance.

Given this important role, it is critical that civil society organizations keep up with the private sector, who are adopting new technology and tech-based tools; building new networks and relationships; and creating new avenues for communication. Civil society has got to learn to use these same tools if their work is to remain relevant in the 21st century.

In order to be relevant, we have to go where the people are. In Senegal, 87% of the population owns a mobile device, while only 20% have direct access to the Internet. Telecommunication revenues account for 10.8% of the country's GDP. Telecommunication employs more than 3,000 people, with another 55,000 working in jobs tied to the industry.

Mobile technology use is only going to continue to increase in Senegal. Experts predict that mobile traffic will increase by 18 times over the next five years. That's three times faster than fixed line accounts. The largest single area of growth will be in online videos. Right now videos make up 50% of all Internet traffic. A single video channel, YouTube, has over 600 million views per day. So here at TechCamp, you're going to learn how to produce and post low cost videos online.

And all this will be more feasible because devices are becoming cheaper. New smart phone and tablet devices have dramatically dropped in price – some selling as low as \$120.

For the next two days, you will focus on the power of mobile technology to transform the agriculture sector, another driver of economic growth in Senegal.

Among other things, you'll learn to:

- Document and distribute the results of your organization's research;
- Improve methods of collecting data, and learn best practices for dissemination;
- Safely transfer funds and lower transaction fees;
- Use global positioning systems like "Open Street Map" and "Google Maps" to help you adapt development programs according to geographical and climatic data; and
- Stay apprised of daily changes in market pricing.

Finding innovative solutions to challenges in the agricultural sector is a natural choice for our first West African TechCamp. Agriculture is an engine of growth in Senegal.

About 70% of the working population is involved in farming. Agriculture (including forestry, livestock, and fisheries) accounts for 18% of GDP. However, most Senegalese farms are small, and much of the agricultural land is still tribally owned. Only about 11% of Senegal's total land area is cultivated. At TechCamp we hope you will discover new ways to use new technologies to increase efficiencies within the agricultural sector to help Senegal become a net food exporter rather than importer.

Over the course of the next two days, you will have time to learn, ask questions, share insights, search for solutions, and collaborate with your colleagues. Connections you make here can lead you to solutions to shared challenges in the future.

One way to keep in touch is by staying connected on the TechCamp Facebook page. We want to hear about your successes, talk through your failures; and work with you to figure out ways to meet your goals.

Thank you for coming to TechCamp. Best of luck. I look forward to seeing your new ideas put into practice.