



Virtual Technical Assistance and Capacity Building: *A Critical Look at the Advantages and Limitations*

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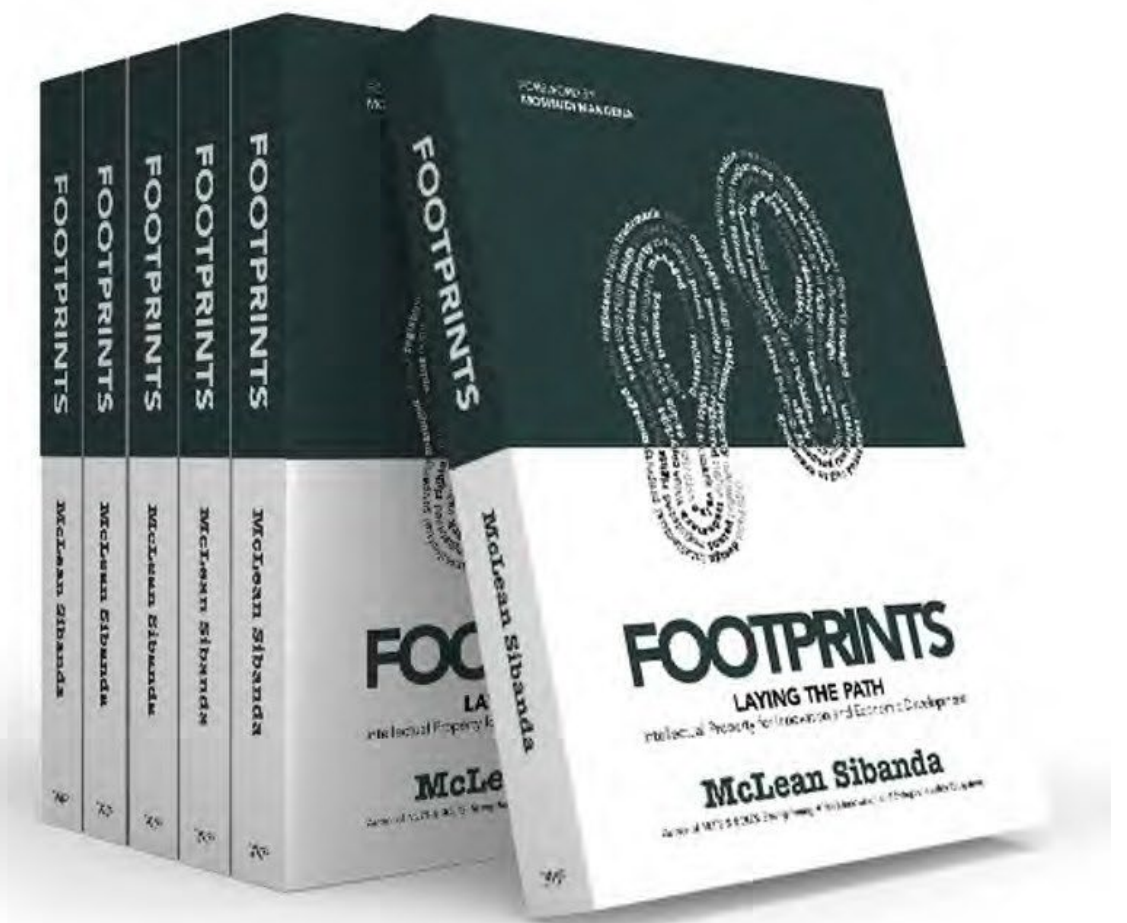


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Introduction

- Covid-19 pandemic mobility restrictions
- Uncertainty on duration of restrictions
- International travel affected by breakouts (±6-18 months)
- South Africa – Omicron
- Significant impact on business and development
- **Undermined delivery of WIPO technical assistance** and capacity development initiatives

Poll: Majority fear coronavirus restrictions will be lifted too soon

More Americans are fearful that the pandemic will directly affect them.



A highway sign in Monroe, Wash., reminds drivers to “Stay home, limit travel, save lives.” | Elaine Thompson/AP Photo

World closing doors to Southern African countries over Omicron variant

The new strain was first detected in South Africa and neighboring Botswana on Nov. 25



The World Health Organization called on countries not to close their borders



The African Union and South Africa criticized travel restrictions

TURKEY last week announced it would restrict travel from South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zimbabwe

Turkish Airlines also carried out an evacuation flight from Cape Town and Johannesburg on Nov. 27 for Turkish citizens in South Africa



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Introduction - Shift

- Shift towards virtual
- Use of virtual tools – Zoom, Teams, WebEx
- **At first glance – problems solved!**
 - At least partially – Remote work
 - Cost effective – no travel expenses
 - Ability to continue TA / Capacity Building (e.g. WIPO MIP)
- Abrupt embrace of virtual approaches presented challenges to recipients of TA / Capacity Building
- While online delivery of capacity building existed well before the pandemic – COVID exposed lack of foresight regarding context-specific planning and approaches to TA / Capacity Building



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WIPO's Delivery Strategy

Solutions to enable technical assistance delivery and capacity-building initiatives must honour WIPO's countenance towards development

- **Development-oriented, demand-driven, transparent**
- **Design, delivery mechanisms** and **evaluation** processes should be **country specific**
- Best understood through physical engagements – **Boots on the Ground**

Physical approaches are indispensable for WIPO's delivery strategy

- During Covid, abrupt embrace of virtuality proved limiting to the delivery of TA and capacity-building



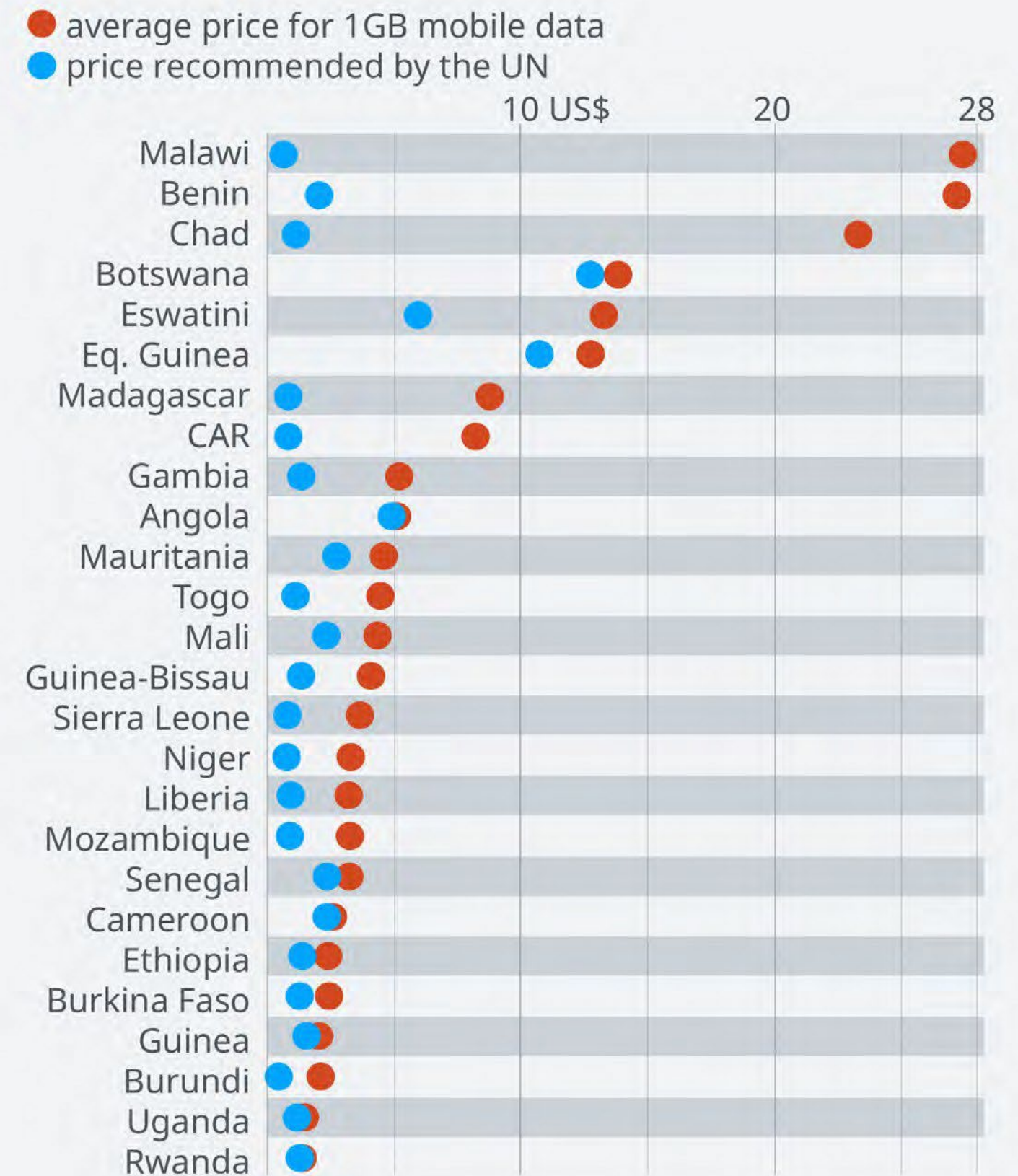
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Challenges of Virtual Platforms

Accessibility of virtual platforms	Internet connectivity / Bandwidth
Data costs	Access to devices
Unreliable Power / Electricity	Unconducive conditions for proper engagement
Lack of human engagement owing to most being voice not video	



Huge gap between affordable and real prices



Source: CableUK Research Unit (2020) | World Bank | DW analysis: github.com/dw-data/mobile-internet

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Limits of Virtual TA and Capacity-Building

What is Compromised?

- **In-depth personal interactions** essential for relationship building
- Lack of absence of **nonverbal cues** and difficulties inferring the intentions of others
- **Face-to-face contextual engagement** in delivery of technical assistance
- **Trust** is more difficult to establish and maintain
- **Uninterrupted focused engagement** – distractions easy with virtual
- Proper **assessment of impact** of the technical assistance initiative



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The Case for Hybrid Approach

- **Cost effectiveness** of virtual coupled with critical physical engagement (productivity, communication, trust)
- **Context-specific** strategic delivery approach
- Appreciation for nuance, customisation and innovation
- Exposes and refines WIPO's organisational values and views about **distributive & collaborative work**



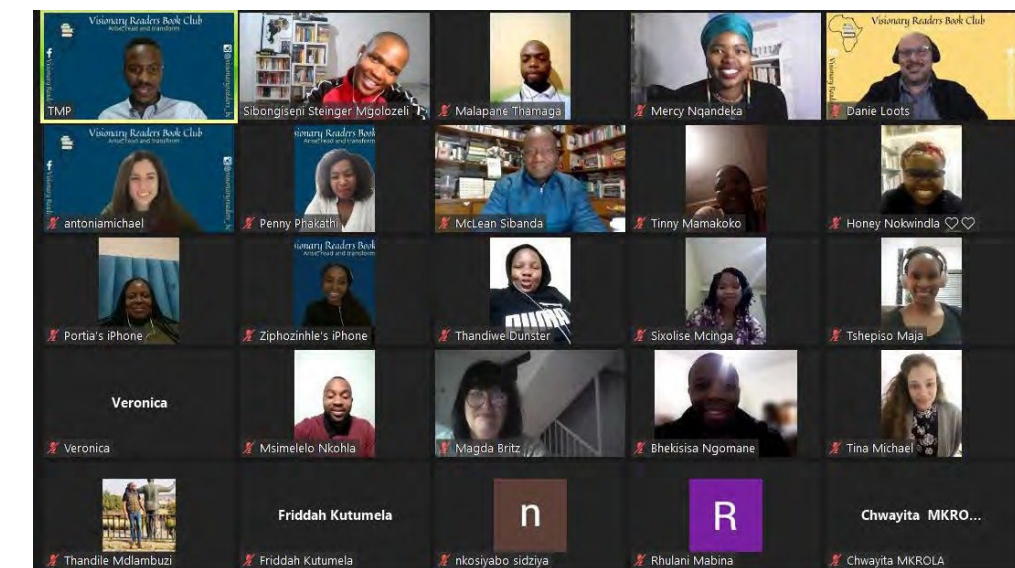
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Concluding Remarks



- Cannot merely substitute virtual work for in-person engagements
- Need for contextual implementation of hybrid approach
- Need to **consider entire lifespan of TA**/capacity building
- Identify **critical points where face-to-face engagements are critical**, often at beginning and end
- **Challenges identified** present serious limitations

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thank you



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