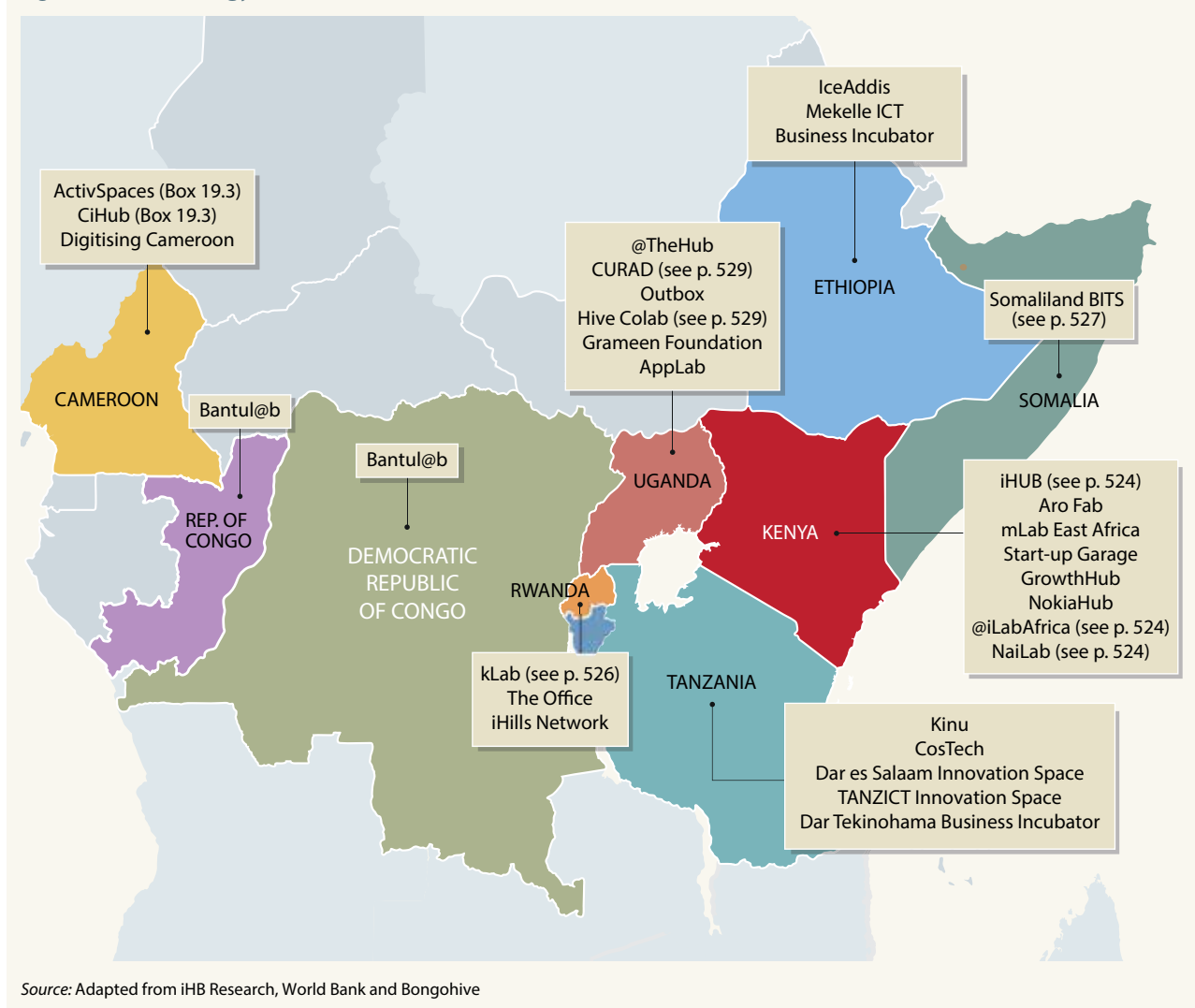


Figure 19.4: Technology hubs in East and Central Africa, 2014



Persistently low internet penetration

Low internet penetration nevertheless prevents many East and Central African countries from seizing fully the opportunities offered by ICTs for socio-economic development. Penetration rates of less than 7% are found in Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia (Table 19.1). Kenya leads the region for this indicator, having realized the feat of raising internet penetration from 14% to 39% of the population between 2010 and 2013, a compound annual growth rate of 41%.

Mobile phone subscriptions are far more widespread, reaching from one-quarter (Burundi) to more than 200% (Gabon) of the population. Their ubiquity has inspired countless applications for mobile phones.

Prizes for science and innovation

A growing number of national and regional prizes have been introduced recently to encourage research and innovation.

One example is the Olusegun Obasanjo Prize for Science and Innovation, named after the former president of Nigeria and implemented by the African Academy of Sciences. Also of note are the Annual Innovation Awards run by COMESA since February 2014 to celebrate individuals and institutions that have used STI to further the regional integration agenda.

Other actors are establishing prizes. In November 2014, the Moroccan Bank of Trade and Industry announced the creation of the African Entrepreneurship Award, with an endowment of US \$1 million. This private bank operates in 18 African countries and around the world. In 2009, the annual Innovation Prize for Africa was established by the African Innovation Foundation, a Zurich-based, non-profit organization; the Innovation Prize is open to all Africans, with prize money valued at US\$ 150 000. Now in its fourth year, the prize has been held in Ethiopia, South Africa and Nigeria. So far, it has attracted around 2 000 applications from 48 African countries.