Intellectual property rights and licensing obligations

The definition of intellectual property (IP) rights is any and all rights associated with intangible assets owned by a person or company and protected against use without consent. Intangible assets refer to non-physical property, including right of ownership in intellectual property.

Rwanda Intellectual Property law provides the main branches intellectual property: industrial property and copyright. Industrial Property covers Trademarks, Patents, Utility Models, Industrial Designs, Layout Designs and integrated circuits, Geographic Indication and Protection against unfair competition.

In the context of software , Government Institutions should be aware of the IP rights for any software in use and should only use it in accordance with its license. For example the software may be licensed for use by a specific number of users or licensed to only certain institutions. Violation of license requirements may have legal and financial implications to an institute. In addition, use of software that is not properly licensed may expose the organization to risks such as security risks as it may not receive relevant patches and security updates.

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