



# Our side of the divide

## African Perspectives on Information and Communication Technologies

Compiled by a Partnership of African  
Information Advocacy Organisations



**world summit**  
on the **information society**  
Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005



# African Perspectives on Information and Communication Technologies

Compiled by a Partnership of African  
Information Advocacy Organisations



**world summit**  
on the **information society**  
Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005

First published January 2003, Windhoek  
© MISA 2003

A special thanks to IBIS for funding this publication.  
Thanks also to Gender Links for exerts from 'Net Gains'.



Contributors to this publication have been drawn via email communications from all around Africa.  
Managing Editor—Tracey Naughton, Regional Broadcast Programme Manager, MISA.

In the spirit of promoting freedom of access to information and the right to communicate, portions of this booklet may be reproduced for non-profit research, education and advocacy purposes with due acknowledgement made of the source.

This booklet has been compiled by the following partner organisations:

#### **The Media Institute of Southern Africa**

Tracey Naughton  
broadcasting@misa.org.na  
www.misa.org



The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) is a non-governmental organisation with members in 11 of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) countries. Officially launched in September 1992, MISA focuses primarily on the need to promote free, independent and pluralistic media, as envisaged in the 1991 Windhoek Declaration and the African Charter on Broadcasting.

MISA seeks ways in which to promote the free flow of information and co-operation between media workers, as a principal means of nurturing democracy and human rights in Africa. The role of the MISA is primarily one of a co-ordinator, facilitator and communicator, and for this reason MISA aims to work together with all like-minded organisations and individuals to achieve a genuinely free and pluralistic media in southern Africa.

#### **ARTICLE 19**

John Barker  
Info@article19.org.za  
www.article19.org



Named after Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the organisation works world wide to combat censorship by promoting freedom of expression and access to official information.

With partners in over 30 countries, ARTICLE 19 works to strengthen local capacity to monitor and protest institutional and informal censorship.

ARTICLE 19 activity includes monitoring, research, publishing, lobbying, campaigning and litigation on behalf of freedom of expression wherever it is threatened. Standards are developed to advance media freedom and assist individuals to speak out and campaign for the free flow of information.

#### **SACOD**

Chris K  
sacod@icon.co.za  
www.sacod.co.za



SACOD is a coalition of Southern Africa filmmakers and organisations in related services whose primary focus is the production and distribution of social responsibility films and videos. It was founded in 1987 by independent institutions from Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique, and Canada to support the growth of independent video movement, and to support the process of democratisation in Southern Africa via the audio visual medium. SACOD now has members in eight SADC countries. South Africa (Regional Office), Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Angola, Lesotho, Zambia, Mozambique and Namibia with its regional co-operation office in Johannesburg.

#### **AMARC**

Michelle Ntab  
regc@global.co.za  
www.amarc.org



AMARC is an international non-governmental organisation serving the community radio movement, with almost 3,000 members and associates in 106 countries. Its goal is to support and contribute to the development of community and participatory radio along the principals of solidarity and international co-operation. All continents are represented on AMARC's International Board.

#### **APC—Association for Progressive Communications**



Emanuel Njenga or Peter Benjamin  
njenga@apc.org or peterb@apc.org

The Association for Progressive Communications is a global network of non-governmental organisations whose mission is to empower and support organisations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies to build strategic communities and initiatives for the purpose of making meaningful contributions to equitable human development, social justice, participatory political processes and environmental sustainability.

# Table of Contents

|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| Introduction ..... | (ii) |
|--------------------|------|

## **PART 1—The African Experience ..... 1**

### **Articles from around the continent concerning ICTs in Africa**

|                                                                                                     |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ICTs for African Women and Children .....                                                           | 2  |
| Bush Radio Case Study: Community Radio Africa – ICT Best Practices.....                             | 2  |
| Radio Galkayo (RG) Somalia .....                                                                    | 3  |
| Making the Internet Count for Africans .....                                                        | 4  |
| Bridging the Educational Divide in Africa: Towards Real<br>Access to ICTs in African Schools .....  | 5  |
| Open Source Movement Offers Potential to Leapfrog the Digital Divide in Africa ...                  | 6  |
| Community Radio Gets Connected... ..                                                                | 7  |
| Gender Network and ICTs: to Promote Gender Equity<br>in the Information Society .....               | 8  |
| African Women and WSIS: Bridging the Divide .....                                                   | 9  |
| ICTs Change Election Dynamics in Kenya .....                                                        | 10 |
| ICTs in Elections : the case of Côte d'Ivoire .....                                                 | 11 |
| ICT, Democracy and Politics in Ghana—A New Paradigm:<br>A case study of Ghana's 2000 election ..... | 12 |
| ICT Development Centres: A Rural Perspective .....                                                  | 13 |
| ICTs in Rural Africa .....                                                                          | 14 |
| Networking for Advocacy and Democracy.....                                                          | 15 |
| The place of ICTs in conflict .....                                                                 | 15 |
| AFRICA NET .....                                                                                    | 16 |
| Towards Universal Service: Telecentres and Public Access .....                                      | 17 |
| Civil Society, Government and Private Sector Develop ICT Policy for Tanzania ....                   | 19 |
| Tarzan Doesn't Live Here Anymore — musings on being donor sponsored<br>in Africa .....              | 20 |

## **PART 2—Rights and Access ..... 23**

### **Two essays on key areas for ICT development on the continent**

|                                                                    |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Towards a Perspective on the Right to Communicate—Article 19 ..... | 24 |
| The Halfway Proposition—by Richard Bell .....                      | 30 |

## **PART 3—Key African Charters and Conventions ..... 37**

|                                                                    |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| African Charter on Broadcasting 2001 .....                         | 38 |
| Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa ..... | 41 |
| Internet Rights Charter .....                                      | 46 |
| Charter on African Media and the Digital Divide .....              | 50 |
| E-Conference Statement .....                                       | 53 |



# Introduction

This booklet is part of a broad strategy called 'Speaking for Ourselves'. It recognises, that while the African perspective on the digital divide is underrepresented in the context of the World Summit on the Information Society, the people most directly affected by the digital divide have the best ideas, analysis and opinions about how to address the issues.

Numerous barriers to Africa's participation in the information society confront us. Paramount among them are poverty, illiteracy, limited access to communications infrastructure and a serious and debilitating lack of bandwidth. All this in the context of an increasingly globalised world that is propagating policies of free markets that hold some benefits but which also favour the world's stronger economies and have some fall out which directly increases the digital divide.

In Africa the World Wide Web is called the World Wide Wait; after 3pm when North America, home to the largest on-line community, becomes active, there is an even greater slow down. The cost of using a dial up connection results in extremely high access costs, which are out of reach for most African people. So access to electronic information is difficult and this is a tragic limitation because while it is possible to have information without development, it isn't possible to have development without information. If information is power, then access is empowerment.

The African continent has produced some innovative applications of ICT's and is taking great strides in interpreting the information society as a people centred, community based sphere. The cell phone and text message have changed the dynamic of elections, voice over IP, where it is available, is enabling family reunification and providing a reason for many people to make their first phone call to distant relatives.

African people are among the best communicators on the planet but for ICTs to be used, they have to have relevance. Technology itself cannot create change. The use and availability of technology is dependent upon both the historical moment and the prevailing social, economic, and cultural structure into which it is introduced. The legacies inherited in the process of unequal global development make it imperative that the laying of an information super highway in Africa must be supported with an appropriate framework to accommodate pedestrians and donkey carts too.

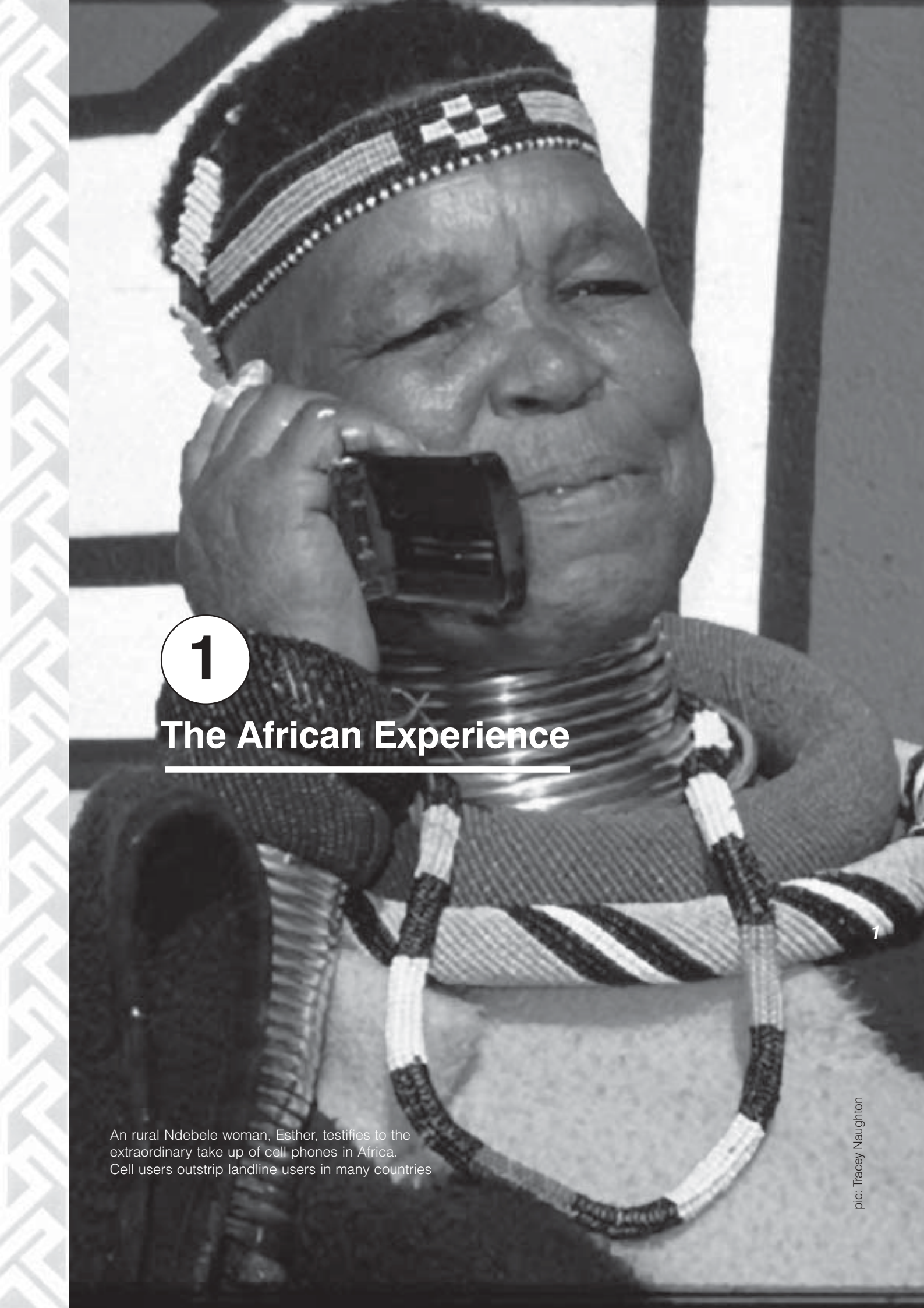
We hope that the perspectives in these pages deepen understanding about the opportunities and limitations to Africa's imminent leap into the information society.

ii

Tracey Naughton  
Regional Broadcast Programme Manager  
Media Institute of Southern Africa

Enquiries about this booklet can be sent to: [info@broadcastingcharter.org](mailto:info@broadcastingcharter.org)





1

## The African Experience

An rural Ndebele woman, Esther, testifies to the extraordinary take up of cell phones in Africa. Cell users outstrip landline users in many countries

## ICTs for African Women and Children

by Nnenna Nwakanma

In 1990, the Organisation of African Unity adopted the African Charter on Children's Rights. In 2000, the charter on African Women's Rights followed.<sup>1</sup> Among many other interesting rights, the African child is guaranteed the right to freely express his/her opinion in all areas. (Art.7) The governments are demanded to provide the child with an education aimed at promoting and developing personality, and building a respect for the environment and natural resources. (Art.11) Signatories of these charters also agreed to public education to eliminate all cultural and traditional practices against women. Part of this education will be information campaigns, formal and informal education, and broadcasting.

### Freedom of Expression

In as much as reading and writing can be powerful means of expression, ICTs are opening up new possibilities for African children to express themselves, to see and be seen. CD-ROMs, touch screens, Internet and speech-recognition technology are all making it possible for the child to go beyond the classical limits.

## Bush Radio Case Study: Community Radio Africa – ICT Best Practices

By Juanita Williams

Firstly, it's important to mention that there are several definitions of Information and Communication Technology – but this case study is done on the premise that ICT is a set of activities that electronically facilitate the processing, transmission, and display of information. Bush Radio disseminates information by means of its radio programmes, meetings, email and its website: [www.bushradio.co.za](http://www.bushradio.co.za).

Producers at the station use the Internet for research purposes, collecting information that is relevant to the issues discussed in the timeslot. The staff and volunteers have discovered that use of

## Self esteem, respect for the environment and natural resources

The Internet provides a wonderful portal for exchanges among the world population. It allows African children to expose themselves and to test and evaluate their worth. Like the saying: *unless a child visits the farms of others, he will always think*

*his father's to be the largest.*<sup>2</sup> The Internet allows for the discovery of others while maintaining pride in the child's own life.

## Eliminating negative cultural and traditional practices against women

Secrecy seems to be the biggest conspirator against women in this area. A whole lot would speak out, if only there was a

means. This secrecy is helped by the ignorance of those who perpetuate these negative practices. ICTs remain the surest means of *speaking out* against harmful practices. Female Genital Mutilation<sup>3</sup> is a strong case in point where all-out information and communication can win over age-old tradition.

ICTs are instrumental for the guarantee of the rights of African women and children. ●

<sup>1</sup> See [www.achpr.org](http://www.achpr.org)

<sup>2</sup> A Yoruba saying, from Nigeria.

<sup>3</sup> In many African countries, the practice is dying out slowly. Governments are beginning to prohibit. Efforts are underway to convert practitioners to other useful trades.

the Internet is open to abuse hence the strict measures placed on logging on. Although passwords are required to access the Internet and telephones are locked after 5pm, these precautions make it difficult for producers with legitimate research to complete their work.

The expense of maintaining an Internet connection can be traced to the fact that South Africa has only one telephone service provider, Telkom, which has been able to set prices with little opposition.

The News department uses the Internet to trawl for breaking news, and it has been particularly useful in collecting international news. The immediacy of updating news on certain websites has, in some cases, almost matched the speed of radio news.

In the programming department, the Internet is also used to download alternative radio pro-



grammes from around the world, for airplay – much faster than mailing CDs or cassettes, which was the previous mode of distribution.

Email has been integrated quickly into Bush Radio's administration and programme production, with correspondence between producers, interviewees, volunteers and advertisers taking place daily.

We've found that email is an essential way of maintaining contact with international funders – a way of managing relationships and getting clarification on roles by way of constant communication.

The station's producers and volunteers also use editing software on a computer in the production studio. And even though the studio is managed using an appointment book, the news department gets first priority when it comes to using the telephone hybrid and mixing desk for interviews. This situation is frustrating for the producers who have booked time in the studio – the only facility where telephone interviews can be done.

At the time of writing this we are in the process of acquiring hard and software to facilitate the training of blind and partially sighted journalism students from local training institutions.

The website is also used for disseminating in-



Amanda, a blind journalism student, enjoying the benefits of ICTs at Bush Radio, Cape Town, South Africa

formation about the station, and keeps its international audience informed about the station's activities. At the moment, the station is investigating the most cost-effective way of introducing a web casting component to the website, so that the station can literally service audiences from the Cape to Cairo and beyond. ●



### Radio Galkayo (RG) Somalia

Radio Galkayo, Puntland State of Somalia  
Website: [www.radiogalkayo.com](http://www.radiogalkayo.com)

Radio Galkayo, a member of AMARC Africa in the Horn of Africa, is the only community-based electronic media outlet in the northeast of Somalia. Based in Puntland, it was set up in 1993 to provide an alternative to the radio stations controlled by the warlords. Run by young people on a voluntary basis, its programmes focus on socio-economic issues, development strategies, education, de-mining, sports and culture, the concerns of women, peace and reconciliation.



For Radio Galkayo, the concept of "community" is not restricted to a narrow geographical area but rather extends to all Somali people. Radio Galkayo provides a platform for all segments of society to engage in the reconstruction of Somalia. The support provided by the Puntland Administration to Radio Galkayo seems to acknowledge the role of the radio station in its community. The interaction between Radio Galkayo and the Puntland Administration is creative in that it promotes greater participation by various segments of society.

Though Radio Galkayo successfully uses ICTs it is only equipped with two desktop computers, a laptop and a video camera. However, these have enabled Radio Galkayo to network and develop radio programmes with the participation of Somalis living abroad. These programmes are enormously popular. This has also been made possible through the use of Internet services, fax and telephone. Radio Galkayo rented an email address that facilitates contact with the Somali Diaspora and enabled it to open its own web site.

It acquires and disseminates its radio programmes using online radio, computers, Internet, fax, email and telephone. ●



## Making the Internet Count for Africans

Mbutu – Umuoko is about 30 kilometres from Aba, in the eastern part of Nigeria. This small village has neither government water nor electricity. Farming still reigns in this rural and quiet village. Excitement comes from marriages, funerals, and visits of children living in cities. That is my village.

Then I met a guy over the Internet, who lives and works somewhere in the United States.

### Shall I go against my culture?

At first, it was something strange. I live and work outside Nigeria, in Côte d'Ivoire. My parents stay in the village. Letters could take months to get to my father's postal box, if they ever got there. So how do I introduce an American fellow to my old father at Mbutu – Umuoko?

### Getting my father dot coming

I began by sending a picture to my father. I explained the situation to him. Only one choice was available. Letters were out, phones were not available. Internet was it! My father was torn between his sense of fatherhood and his hesitation to step into the unknown. The battle raged: love for a daughter, responsibility as a father, security for the family, safeguarding the African culture and tradition ... until the day I got an email from him!

### Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, United States

I sent my father's address to my friend. The younger must make obeisance to the elder. That is the way it is in Africa. So my father got a mail from someone in the US about his daughter in Côte d'Ivoire, and talks became multinational and multilateral ...

### Scanning, attached files and all that

At a point, heavy mails were going the US – Nigeria way. I kept asking myself what it was they were discussing. Now that I've got them together, they were doing business behind me. May God save women from men!

Finally I got it! It was an attached file. What! Someone in the US was asking for the hand of someone in Côte d'Ivoire for marriage from someone in Nigeria ... Aie, aie, aie!

My father has long gone beyond that now. His initial hesitation has given way to love, excitement, and activism. Village people may now send mails to their children all over the world from his mail box and get their answers.

He now monitors events in Côte d'Ivoire to make sure that his daughter there is safe. He has decreed that every member of the family not living at home MUST get a mailbox. That is the new way he has to keep an eye on his family, immediate and extended, as is the case in Africa.

He is also into research, being a medical fellow, he gets useful information that he needs for his village clinic. He is still at yahoo.com and every Monday morning, you are sure to find him online.●

*"A computer is like a person. If you don't take time to make friends with it, it will never be friendly with you. It will behave wildly. You have to take time to know it; show some patience for the new technology. It's not like a typewriter where you can just bang in a command. There is so much more to know about a computer.*

*But when you are familiar with it, and with the internet, your whole world opens up. The net is like a free zone for women. A place where you can have control, say what you want."*

*Rosemary Okello-Orlale, African Women and Child Feature Service, Kenya.*

## Bridging the Educational Divide in Africa: Towards Real Access to ICTs in African Schools

By Shafika Isaacs, Executive Director, SchoolNet Africa and Lawase Akpolou, Knowledge Warehouse Assistant, SchoolNet Africa

Education in Africa remains a privilege, not a universal human right. This is confirmed by UNESCO's recently published report<sup>1</sup> which reveals that in 1999, 42.7 million children in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are not in school. It further reports that 18 SSA countries are not on track to achieve the Education For All objectives of universal primary education by 2015.

SchoolNet Africa (SNA) is one African-based, African-led initiative which advocates the intrinsic worth of improving education access, education quality and education management through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in African schools. The long run economic benefit of investment in education has been demonstrated by a number of economic models.

SNA has not only evolved as a network of networks of African schools operating through individual nationally-based organisations called schoolnets, it has also been identified as a key flagship programme of the African Information Society Initiative's African Learning Network<sup>2</sup>. Over the years, it has gathered evidence that demonstrates the efficacy of applying ICTs for educational value and access to African youth in a number of countries.

However, many of the schoolnet initiatives face the challenge of extremely limited access to ICTs due to the exorbitant cost of hardware, software and access to appropriate network infrastructure, the lack of skills and policy support. Only 20 of Mozambique's 7 000 schools have computers with an average computer to learner ratio of 1: 636 compared to 1:24 in Europe and 1:6 in the USA.<sup>3</sup>

Real access to ICTs in African schools remains an important stepping stone for their effective educational use. SNA advocates *inter alia*, the following for policy consideration in advancing real access:

- The inclusion of a free rate in telecommunications policy for all education institutions. This allows for subsidised access to the Internet for all education institutions, especially schools.



Visually-impaired Ricardo Diergaardt, 17, from the School for the Visually Impaired in Namibia, using computer with software for learners with special needs. Says Ricardo "the computer opened up a world I would never have imagined".

- Price-fixing and preferential prices for ICTs designated for education institutions, especially schools.
- Setting minimum quality standards for the import and use of ICTs in African schools
- The relaxation of import duties and tariffs on imported ICTs designated for schools.
- The establishment of computer refurbishing and support centres in school districts with particular reference to supporting technical skill development for girls and women
- The increasing consideration of open source solutions for affordable, sustainable access to ICTs for education.
- The establishment of a dedicated education satellite or "bird in the sky" for Africa.

Both the MINEDAF VIII<sup>4</sup> and the WSIS African Regional Conference<sup>5</sup> identified ICT programmes in education as part of their strategy for action, is testimony to their strategic importance for educational improvement on the continent. It is imperative that the WSIS supports digital opportunity for Africa's youth by prioritising ICT access in education in Africa. ●

Contact Shafika Isaacs ([shafika@schoolnetafrica.org.za](mailto:shafika@schoolnetafrica.org.za)) or Lawase Akpolou ([lawase@schoolnetafrica.org.za](mailto:lawase@schoolnetafrica.org.za)) for more information.

<sup>1</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002: Is the World on Track?

<sup>2</sup> [www.uneca.org/aisi](http://www.uneca.org/aisi)

<sup>3</sup> Isaacs (2002): ICTs in African Schools: A Multi-Media Approach for Enhancing Learning and Teaching. TechKnowLogia, Jan-March, 32-34

<sup>4</sup> The Eighth Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States (MINEDAF VIII), Statement of Commitment, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 2-6 December 2002; [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

<sup>5</sup> Bamako Declaration May 2002, World Summit on the Information Society Africa Regional Conference [www.itu.int/wsif](http://www.itu.int/wsif)

## Open Source Movement Offers Potential to Leapfrog the Digital Divide in Africa

By Bildad Kagai, Interim Secretariat, Open Source Task Force for Africa (OSTA)  
(bill@circuitspackets.com) and Heather Ford,  
Development Communications Consultant  
(heather@sn.apc.org)

The 'digital divide' is a term being used widely in development circles to explain the growing rift between developed and developing countries in the face of massive social, economic and political changes brought about by the Information Revolution.

In the face of these challenges, leaders in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for African development have now recognised the significance of a tool that developing countries can use as a bridge over the growing development divide. The tool is called Open Source Software (OSS).

Open source software (OSS) is software that is licensed under terms that give its users three freedoms:

- the right to make copies of the software and to distribute those copies;
- the right to access the software's source code; and
- the right to make and distribute improved versions of the software.

Open source software has a rich history, with the Internet itself being built on the foundations of open source and open standards. In Africa, we see the value of open source in terms of its long term effects on issues such as empowerment, capacity building and independence, as well as local content and software development.

Some excellent OSS initiatives are already underway in many African countries. Schoolnet Namibia, a national representative organisation of Schoolnet Africa, is working with educators in Namibia to introduce open source projects in schools where young people can learn to use, maintain, modify and improve software for their own use. The effect of projects like Schoolnet Namibia is enabling Africans to become truly empowered to *own* the technology that we are becoming increasingly dependent on for our survival in the modern world.

The South African University of the Western Cape has established an African Virtual Initiatives and Resources Project (AVOIR) which supports open content education, research and development, provision of methods and tools for managing open content in Africa. This is in line with sentiments echoed by the South African Minister of Public Service and Administration, Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, that Africa should investigate how to better use the opportunities presented by the emergence of open source software in the context of limited financial resources.

Another recent development was the launch of the Open Source Task Force for Africa (OSTA) at an APC (Association for Progressive Communications) –organised workshop held in Addis Ababa at the end of last year. The workshop aimed to bring a group of African civil society organisations together in order to initiate the development of a group of activists that would drive the process of building an inclusive and equitable Information Society for Africa in the future. In their final statement, participants agreed that OSS is paramount to Africa's progress in the ICT arena, and began work on a coordinated approach to support open source development, distribution and integration.

The task force envisions a future in which governments and the private sector in Africa embrace the OSS movement and enlist local experts in adapting and developing appropriate tools, applications and infrastructure required for an African technology renaissance. South-to-South cooperation will see students from Ghana to Egypt and Kenya to Namibia developing programmes that are then adapted by software gurus in Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. The task force recognises the opportunity for Africa to decrease its dependence on the West by narrowing the effect of colonisation and, in so doing, narrowing the digital divide.

Since November, the Open Source Task Force for Africa has been working towards the establishment of an independent 'Open Source Foundation for Africa' at the WSIS PrepCOM II meeting. Once established, this group will become a driving force for the movement to establish OSS as a major vehicle for development in Africa. ●

Contact Bill Kagai (bill@circuitspackets.com) for more information on how to become involved.



## Community Radio Gets Connected...

by Michelle Ntab, Regional Director, AMARC Africa

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) Africa recently conducted a survey of fifty stations across Africa and found that 35% of stations have no access to computers.

Other findings include:

- 65% have at least 1 computer available at the station, but without a connection to Internet;
- Around 15% do have a permanent connection with a dedicated e-mail address;
- 20% use Internet as a source for content;
- 1% use digital broadcasting and computer editing for production;
- 75% of the stations connected are located in urban or semi-urban areas.
- 80% of the stations declared having 1 of their staff members trained on the use of Internet and on radio production and computer editing.
- 85% declared using free e-mail and telecentre facilities to receive information.

AMARC Africa's *Access to ICT's* programme aims to respond to these challenges through:

- Increased access to the use and availability of Radios and ICTs in local and rural areas;
- Offering capacity building in terms of ICT use,

repair and usage to link with wider Civil Society players;

- Recommending appropriate strategies;
- Sharing findings of the programme.

Specific Activities include:

Conducting Research

- Survey on use of ICTs and need assessment;
- Publish focus papers on the use of ICTs.

Equipment and access

- Equipment and technical support;
- Connectivity hub per region.

Training

- Curriculum development;
- Internet use;
- Radio in the Internet;
- Digital broadcasting.

Networking, information sharing and content development

- News agency for local content exchange in text and voice in local languages;
- Audio web site for access to information;
- Thematic networks for information dissemination.

### Conclusion...

Even if some networks have started using new technology, broadcasting through Internet, digital production and interactive networking remains a distant dream for African community radio stations. ●



Sepedi woman broadcasting from Moutse Community Radio, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

pic: Tracey Naughton



## Gender Network and ICTS: to Promote Gender Equity in the Information Society

by Marie-Helene Mottin-Sylla—Environment and Development

The ICT Gender Network was created in November 2002 after the workshop on "Gender Dimension of ICTs Policy" that was organised in Senegal by ENDA (Environment and Development) in partnership with the Senegalese Agency for Telecommunication Regulations, and the Research Institute of Computer Systems and Networks of Senegal (OSIRIS). This workshop was financed by the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC). The ICT Gender Network's mission is to facilitate the exchange between women's associations, civil society and the new technology sector in order to promote gender equity, peace and development at a national (country), regional (African) and international level.

This network comprises individuals as well as associations that work to promote gender equity in the ICT sector. It also works in partnership with the public and private sectors and with national and international development agencies. Its objective is to boost and facilitate the participation of women at the ICT sector decision-making level. This is done

in collaboration with national actors and international partners.

Its current action plan is to organise women's and civil society's capacity building activities and expertise in ICT. It also aims to coordinate their actions and to lobby for women's and civil society's ICT priorities to be taken into account and to enable their consultation and participation in ICT regulatory bodies.

This orientation strengthens women's position in society, as well as their organisations, their vision and their needs in relation to the other development actors namely: technicians, politicians, economists, marketing agents, media people and civil society. This vision must be accompanied by local and regional strategies and mechanisms in order to promote gender networks and ICTs.

Other available documents on the workshop can be downloaded from the website below:

<http://www.famafrique.org/smsi/genrticsn/accueil.html> ●

Marie-Helene Mottin-Sylla  
Environnement et Développement, Synergie Genre et Développement  
Environment and Development, Synergy Gender and Development  
email : [synfev@enda.sn](mailto:synfev@enda.sn)  
<http://www.enda.sn/synfev/synfev.htm>  
<http://www.famafrique.org>



p/c: Tracey Naughton

## African Women and WSIS: Bridging the Divide

WSIS Women's Caucus

For many women in Africa, the challenge is to overcome a double burden of marginalisation. The marginalisation of Africa is characterised by increased poverty, lack of infrastructure, conflicts, deepening rural/urban disparities and high illiteracy. Women's burden is heavier in all these aspects because women represent the majority of the poor and illiterate. The relatively high cost of access to ICT facilities and equipment as well as the unavailability of access to funding and credit also contribute to this burden. Further, the unavailability of appropriate technologies designed for an African context exacerbates the problems of women's access and participation in ICT and in the Information Society. Gender discrimination excludes the majority of women from benefiting from the opportunities that ICTs offer as a tool and catalyst for development and all human enterprise.

The ICT sector is dominated by values which favour profit over human well being. This lack of concern for human development objectives does not augur well for women in Africa. Within the firms, markets and institutional contexts through which ICTs are diffused, power relations do not advance women's empowerment and the agenda of the few groups representing the interests of gender equality and human development in policy processes is marginalised. These groups occupy low status and are seen to have little relevance. In addition, women are underrepresented in all aspects of decision-making in operations, policy and regulation. Unless this dominant culture and its related practices are changed, rapid diffusion of ICTs will contribute little to gender equality and human development for the world's majority.

The failure to achieve greater equity in access to the Information Society poses greater risks that the African region and women in that region will

fall further behind, becoming more marginalised and excluded. The Information Society as it is presently constituted does not reflect different women's concerns, needs and interests and fails to recognise and protect women's human rights and dignity. This failure is leading to the imposition of external models and perspectives that will aggravate present conditions of poverty and exclusion. The concept on the Information Society as it stands now, leads to an absence of an African, and an African women's perspective.

Women are seen as passive receivers of information rather than actors able to shape and contribute to decision-making and policy formulation in general and in the ICT sector in particular. African women are able to contribute to the formulation and implementation of creative solutions to the digital divide and are legitimate partners and actors in building an Information Society in Africa.

ICTs and the upgrading of human capacity are increasingly considered to be agents for development. It is, therefore, critical to ensure equal access and gender equity in the Information Society. Increased access to ICTs can uplift African women's livelihoods through:

1. Greater access to and control of local and international markets for African women producers and traders;
2. Employment and other profit-related opportunities which do not require a physical presence thereby allowing women to combine the care economy with their professional roles;
3. Promotion of health, nutrition, education and other human development opportunities;
4. The capacity to mobilise for women's empowerment and societal well being.

Join with the WSIS Gender Caucus to ensure that WSIS has meaningful outcomes for all people, including African women. ●

[www.wougnet.org/WSIS/wsiscg.html](http://www.wougnet.org/WSIS/wsiscg.html)  
email: [secretariat-WSISgendercaucus@wougnet.org](mailto:secretariat-WSISgendercaucus@wougnet.org)



## ICTs Change Election Dynamics in Kenya

by Bildad Kagai – ICT Consultant – Kenya

Kenya has been praised for the peaceful elections and transition that saw the transfer of power from a party that has ruled dominantly for the last thirty-nine years since independence without interruption.

It has been observed that Information and Telecommunications Technologies (ICTs) played a significant role in ensuring a fair election process. Less than five years ago, Kenya had approximately 300 000 land telephone lines but the licensing of two mobile operators saw the tele-density increase almost five fold with mobile lines peaking over 1.2 million in the same period. The Telecoms Act insisted on geographical coverage instead of mobile phones companies covering only major towns and consequently, for the first time, even the areas previously inaccessible could report results as soon as they were counted. It is believed election malpractices, especially rigging, used to occur during the transportation of ballots to the counting hall but this was thwarted by a regulation that ordered all ballots to be counted at the polling station and reported immediately.

Key political parties developed huge databases with up to 300 000 mobile phone contacts from volunteers in all corners of Kenya. Hence the dynamics of networking could take effect. Short

Messaging Services (SMS) were also heavily utilised in campaigns and reporting updates. Other countries in Africa such as Nigeria and Uganda are trying to adopt the lessons learned in Kenya but are inhibited by their Telecoms Acts which do not encourage the phone companies to lay a national grid. This causes operators to concentrate on the big towns whilst the rest of the country is not covered by the networks.

Whilst it is becoming evident that the development of telecommunications in Africa will be more wireless because of the speed of deploying the infrastructure and difficult terrain, there is a threat that agreements made between mobile phone companies

and telecom regulators are

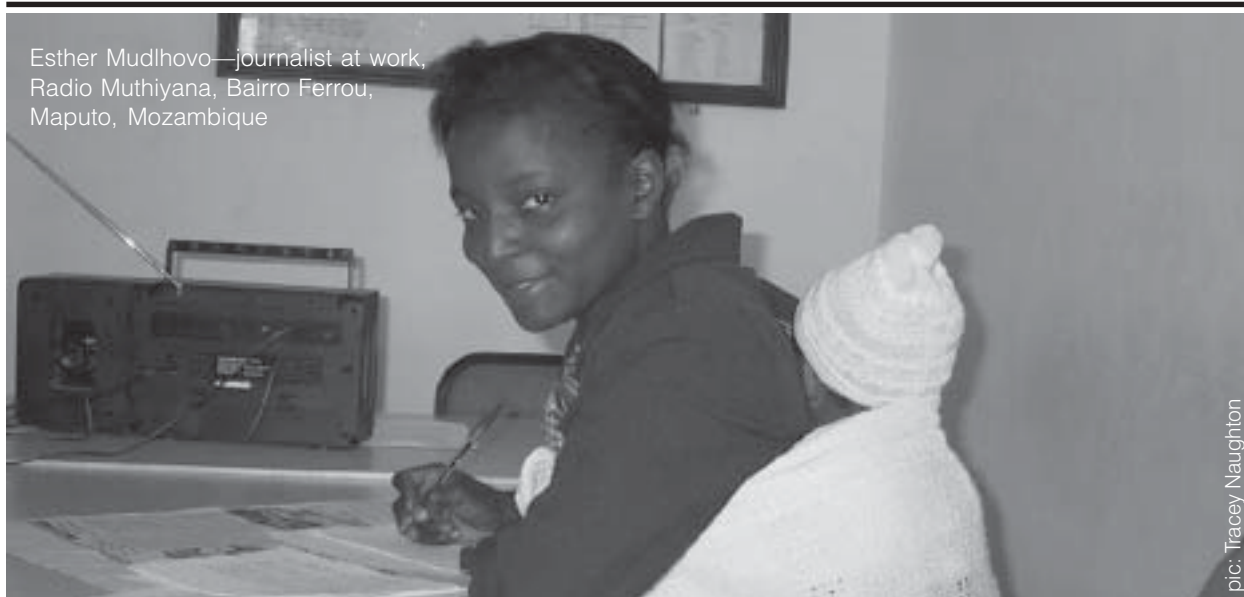
usually lop-sided and favour of the big players who are mostly well connected politically. In Kenya, there was a fear that since one mobile phone company is still government-owned and the other belongs to politically connected people, there was a possibility of the network being tampered with or entirely shut down during the election. If the right to information is to be entrenched, ICT players must strive to ensure that service providers are autonomous and do not respond to the whims of politicians. This goes further to prove that ICTs can contribute to good governance and upholding transparency in emerging democracies in Africa. ●

Email. [bill@circuitspackets.com](mailto:bill@circuitspackets.com)  
URL. [www.circuitspackets.com](http://www.circuitspackets.com)

*We must be the intermediaries, or "informed intermediaries" of ICTs, the link between the people and the rest of the world, including "clean" and "crooked" politicians.*

*Johnson Nkuuhe  
Parliament of Uganda*

Esther Mudlhovo—journalist at work, Radio Muthiyana, Bairro Ferrou, Maputo, Mozambique



pic: Tracey Naughton



## ICTs in Elections : the case of Côte d'Ivoire

by Nnenna Nwakanma

Between October 2000 and August 2002, Côte d'Ivoire had four elections: Presidential, legislative, communal and regional. ICTs were key instruments in their organisation, monitoring and reporting.

### Local Radios

In all four elections, *les radios de proximités* (community radios) were the launching pads for mass mobilisation campaigns, electoral education and sensitisation. Important messages were translated into home languages for local audiences.

### Telephones

The use of telephones increased after each election. Apart from being a means of lobbying and campaigning, mobile phones were essential tools in reporting results in real time. In local and regional elections, the radios co-operated with mobile phone owners to give the people results as soon as they were declared. Military personnel guarding polling booths also used their walkie-talkies to communicate results.

### National Radio and Television

All night coverage was allocated to the presidential, legislative and regional elections. Individuals who had questions and information could call the radio. The results were given as they came through.

### Internet

The net was instrumental in getting the results to a wider audience. Results were online at about the same time that they came on air. Even before voting ended in the country, results from voters in Europe were already online, due to the time difference. Eventually, all results went online.

### Perspectives

As peace talks continue, talks about earlier elections are getting real. The Independent Electoral Commission officers say the next elections are certainly going to be better than the others. The IEC now has its own website, with an Intranet that covers the regional, departmental and district offices. The Permanent Secretary is sure that the results of the next elections will be known in not more than 48 hours. This is a big change from the past when ballot boxes had to be transported vast distances to be opened and counted.

### Raising Hopes

As the elections draw near, excitement also draws near. For ordinary citizens, these are times when rich politicians bring out their money to share. Those who print on banners, T-shirts and paper, young men and women who are willing to dance all night in support of any candidate, lorry drivers, music makers, dancers, carpenters who make wooden ballot boxes, those selling lanterns, candles, whistles, and native drinks ... shall rejoice. ●

*Africa has two percent of the world's phone lines and twelve percent of the population. Fifty percent of these phone lines (and in some countries eighty to ninety percent) of the phone lines are in capital cities where only ten percent of the population lives.*

*The cost of renting a phone connection in Africa averages twenty percent of income per capita, compared to a world average of nine percent and only one percent in high income countries.*



## ICT, Democracy and Politics in GHANA — A New Paradigm A case study of Ghana's 2000 election

by Eric M.K Osiakwan—Internet specialist

In a developing nation like Ghana, ICT offers enormous opportunities and in our 2000 election we saw the integration of ICT into our democratic and political system. This showed signs of a new paradigm in our growing democratic process.

### Ghana's 2000 Election and ICT: Impact Assessment

In the 2000 elections we could identify how government and the private sector engineered the integration of ICT into the entire process.

In the government sector, the Electoral Commission (EC) got assistance from the US government through USAID to purchase and deploy 33 computer units, a server, printers, networking materials and software in a Wide Area Network (WAN). The network linked the (EC) headquarters to all its 10 regional offices and was used extensively for information collection, processing, dissemination and storage before, during and after the elections. Local companies were contracted to do the job of networking, content integration and developing of software for collection of voter data and displaying it on the EC website located at [www.ec.gov.gh](http://www.ec.gov.gh).

The network helped to collate data which was sent via e-mail to the headquarters and that helped avoid transcription errors and enabled rapid assembly of information which was then certified and placed in the database for display on the EC website for the general Internet community.

Significant was the development of an information system by the National Media Commission to monitor the media during the election and this instigated a lot of electronic activity among the local media (print, audio and audio-visual).

The system also had a web interface ([www.mediamonitornmc.com](http://www.mediamonitornmc.com)) which posted regular updates on findings on the activities and involvement of the media during the election.

The private sector also played a critical role since most content developing companies like Joyonline, Ghanaclassifieds, NCS, Africaonline and Netafrique developed specific websites to highlight and build synergy before, during and after the elections. Some

of the websites developed were located at [www.myjoyonline.com](http://www.myjoyonline.com), [www.election2000ghana.com](http://www.election2000ghana.com), [www.ghanaelections.com](http://www.ghanaelections.com), [www.politicsinghana.com](http://www.politicsinghana.com), [www.ghananewsroom.com/election2000](http://www.ghananewsroom.com/election2000).

Soft Ghana Ltd also developed vote collection software called 'ABATO' (voting) which was used by most of the content houses to collect, process and post election results on their sites. Some of the content providers also developed their own software for collecting the voting data and all these made a significant impact in regular and timely updating of the election results online. Some of the local ISPs also played a significant role by laying pipes with high bandwidth to handle the web traffic that was generated. Though all the sites were using the election results as provided by the EC, most of the private web interfaces posted more current updates on their sites than did the EC.

The political parties and some parliamentary candidates were also aggressively using the virtual space to fuel their election message. The dominant parties namely National Democratic Congress (NDC) and National Patriotic Party (NPP) located their official websites at [www.ndc.org.gh](http://www.ndc.org.gh) and [www.nppghana.com](http://www.nppghana.com) respectively to catch the attention of the virtual world. Dr. Kwesi Ndoum also developed a personal campaign website indicating his parliamentary intentions in cyberspace.

The above efforts of ICT integration before, during and after the election resulted in:

- Mass publicity of the 2000 election in Ghana to the real and virtual world;
- Development of local ICT expertise/capacity;
- Integration of a new ICT culture into the local democratic system;
- Transparency and accountability in the exercise of franchise as well as avoidance of transcription error;
- Faster and easier collation of election data and publication;
- Effective monitoring of the media during the elections resulting in its best output;
- Generation of local interest in ICT and especially the Internet;
- Development of local content and applications;
- Promotion of intercultural exchanges;
- The overall excellent change of power from one government to the other. ●

## ICT Development Centres: A Rural Perspective

by the Kgautswane community

### Address to Commonwealth of Learning Conference July 2002

Kgautswane is a village in a deep rural area of the Northern Province close to the border with the Limpopo Province and seventy kilometres from Lydenburg. Our Multi-purpose Community Centre was formed by 35 women in 1992 under the leadership of Clara Masinga, who was voted Community Builder of the Year in 1997 and one of the Community Builders of the Decade in 2000. The centre expanded its outreach to the formation of 17 creches and nurseries, 5 centres for the disabled, and many local enterprises such as vegetable growing, brick and fence making, poultry, carpentry, arts and craft making, a catering unit and sewing centre which mostly took place from Clara's house. Because of this expansion, support came from many sources such as Ithuba Trust, Old Mutual, Safmarine and local industries for building our Kgautswane Community Development Centre. The Government Department of Public Works also responded to this activity with a cluster grant of R7million for community facilities such as a hall, road repairs and school upgrading. Added to which we have a Polyclinic with assistance from the Development Bank of SA.

The Kgautswane Information Communication Centre was started in 1997 by twelve people, coordinated by Clara, after Technikon SA had introduced us to the Integrated Community Building Programme by Technikon SA, which encouraged us to set up our own ICT facility as a community owned and managed enterprise. From this course we learned about community economics and the importance of ethical leadership, and have been able to advise other communities on how to start their own development centres, not only in our province but with six others.

Kgautswane could not believe their eyes when they saw the wife of the President of the World Bank, Mrs Elaine Wolfensohn, at the launch of our centre. With Technikon SA we went into partnership with the World Bank who bought the necessary equipment which included a server, three P.C.'s and a printer / fax / copier / scanner. This enables

us to provide a service to our community for letter-writing, photo-copying, CV writing, typing business plans and printing business cards, posters and scanning documents etc. Our ICT centre gives training to the youth in computer literacy, and with the library, students and community members can do research and obtain references. The schools now report better attendances and greater hope for economic development in our community.

As a result of Technikon SA submitting our ICT centre to the Stockholm Challenge 2000, we attained recognition with an award, one of twelve out of 600 world-wide. This is one of the world's most prestigious information technology awards that is said by the organisation to be the equivalent of a Nobel Prize for Information Technology. These are given to projects that are unique examples of how IT may be used in innovative ways to benefit people and society in terms of education, economic and social welfare, health and the promotion of democracy.

In the same year, through the assistance of Antony Trowbridge of Technikon SA and Wezi Ximina, we also established our own community-managed Village Bank, which compliments the services of the ICT centre and the Government Communication Information office which can make available information from national, provincial and local government departments. This project also won a special award from the World Bank Development Market Place 2000 for the principle of "*Leveraging Local Savings for Development*".

Our use of the ITC equipment requires good management. We book a line from Telkom two days before use for people who want to send e-mails. When ready, we start our petrol generator, because we do not have electricity yet. Our centre shows a steady profit from the various printing and secretarial services and also from the storage and use of information.

We have managed to secure investors through the Internet who have invested in our Village Bank, some from Canada, America and Israel. They get information about our Village Bank through Internet. We also make use of Internet to sell our knowledge of our MPCC to other provinces. We are also selling our tourist potential to see our projects and to visit the nearby complex of caves – the best known of which is Echo Caves – which still have to be explored.

The secret of our community is the high level

of volunteer support. The Kgautswane Development Centre has 300 volunteers — 270 women and 30 men who are teachers, small business owners and farmers. Rural women are hard workers who are prepared to learn from the books and the information they obtain from the centre and the Internet and to put their knowledge into practice.

We wish to stress that the private sector and government must not be lured into the trap of undermining our peri-urban and rural areas. There is a vital need for centres and facilities like these. Africans who occupy positions of influence and authority in the banking sector, private companies and government departments are often unable to keep direct contact with the communities on the ground. We repeat our call for people in authority to please go to the rural villages and deliver development projects such as ICT centres, and to learn from Technikon SA how it is possible for a poor community such as Kgautswane to grow. Let us ensure that people or communities which receive loans or grants are really deserving and do qualify to start

ICT centres which are sustainable.

There is also a need for follow-up research on the loans and grants of projects, because some communities in the past have received millions of rands, on the basis of convincing consultants' business plans and proposals for funding projects which in fact will not be sustainable.

We are a proud and grateful community for all the support from own people, from Chief Kgoete, the Limpopo Premier and his office, and the knowledge and technical input from various sources. ●

Signed on behalf of the Kgautswane Community:  
Clara Masinga

Clara Masinga was the recipient of the prestigious State President's National Baobab Award in December 2002:

"For outstanding contribution to community development, through the promotion of social re-investment of skills and economic self-sufficiency."

## ICTs in Rural Africa

by Nnenna Nwakanma

Rural Africans are burdened by survival. Top on our minds are the means by which we can maintain our families. Information that is worth the most is that which contributes to fulfilling our daily needs. None is better than that given by us, about us, for us.

ICTs have been playing major roles in making rural life better. The Internet helps in knowing the prices of our local products. It builds bridges to hitherto unknown but similar regions of the world, with whom we can share and learn to improve our daily lives.

In Niger, rural radios that broadcast in local languages have always been welcome by the nomadic population. These are about us and around us, are run by the locals and powered by the sun.

These days, one hears about hygiene, health, environment, bush fires, epidemics, and much more useful information. What's more, if your camel or donkey is missing, you can get the news announced over the radio, and be sure to find your animal! ●

Eenhana environs—a village in the north of Namibia, with no electricity, where Eenhana Community Radio is received



pic: Tracey Naughton



## Networking for Advocacy and Democracy

by Samantha Fleming—Chapter 2 Network  
IDASA Institute for Democracy in South Africa

The Chapter 2 project started with the belief that possession of appropriate information and the right to communicate play a crucial role in informing citizens about government activities, and thus encourage people to engage with decision makers on issues of governance. Using ICTs as a tool to bring about this level of informed policy debate has been crucial to the success of the project. Given the low levels of connectivity in South Africa, the project found the easiest way to communicate with others was by email. The project has developed regular email products, including weekly, monthly and ad-hoc email services distributing information about 1) parliamentary activity; 2) current events; 3) upcoming workshops, marches etc.; and 4) new pieces of legislation. A database of nearly 800 subscribers continues to grow on a weekly basis. The project also hosts a database on their website for the above information; and prints a quarterly newsletter for those who do not have electronic access.

The project has provided several lessons: 1) you need a champion; 2) cultivate a passion for local content; 3) make personal contact and listen to subscribers; 4) Use email rather than the Internet as a primary tool; 5) Develop appropriate and flexible systems to allow for change.

Chapter 2 has endeavoured to make use of ICTs in an applicable, appropriate and useful way in an African context and shows that there is a place for ICTs in democracy development. In a time when citizens are increasingly disenchanted with traditional forms of democracy, ICTs open up new possibilities, new hopes and new dreams for more egalitarian and participatory forms of governance. ●

For more information, visit:  
[www.advocacy.org.za](http://www.advocacy.org.za)

## The place of ICTs in Conflict

by Nnenna Nwakanma

As Africa battles the digital divide, ICT specialists are having to deal with the question of armed conflicts. We realise that only a stable social and political environment can serve as a base for bridging the divide. The big question here is not whether ICTs can be a source of conflict, but whether their use should not be geared towards conflict prevention, crises resolution, and peace building.

### Promoting good governance

One way in which ICTs can serve, if not preserve, the African society is by contributing to government accountability and transparency. This balance of power and authority of leadership and understanding and trust of the population is missing. This lack gives rise to popular dissatisfaction.

### All-round information

In many countries where fierce conflicts are raging, a huge chunk of the population do not understand exactly what is going on.

Lack of information is dangerous, its insufficiency is more dangerous, but when it is poisoned with regional, ethnic, religious, or xenophobic sentiments, it is lethal! Balanced information to Africans is needed for a better tomorrow.

### The media and the Internet

Days are gone when leaders could do all the thinking for the people! Politicians should use the means available to disseminate their ideas. The people may then choose. In Côte d'Ivoire, thousands of people are visiting the website hosting the activities of the rebels. A feeling exists that their demands could have gone online before they took up arms!

ICTs must preserve the society that harbors them! ●

*The simple fact that it costs twenty times more to make a phone call from Africa than to Africa from outside the continent, illustrates that globalisation is simply not working in the interest of African people.*



## AFRICA NET

by Ken Lohento—President, Oridev / Iafic

AFRICA NET is a platform for discussion on ICTs in Africa. It was established in August 2000 by some members of African civil society. Its objectives are among others:

- To update the African civil society on ICTs issues;
- To serve as a platform for discussing ICT issues;
- To encourage the collaboration between African ICTs institutions.

French is the principal language for these discussions, but other languages are used from time to time.

In January 2003, AFRICA NET comprised more than 200 members from different countries namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, Mali, Togo, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Gabon, Cameroon, Congo, Canada, France and Belgium. These members are mainly researchers, free-lancers, members of associations (such as Oridev, Yam-Pukri, AEDEV, Jeunesse du millénium, ONG-JEDD NTIC-CNJF, Association Fête de l'Internet en Afrique, CSDPTT, IRIS, NTBF, Africa Computing, Iafic, Enda, ISOC-Bénin, ISOC Cameroun, ISOC-Togo, Groupe Internet-Niger, Linux-Afrique, SchoolNet, etc) or individuals working for different organisations. Members represent themselves and in general speak in their own name.

AFRICA NET welcomes any individual who expresses an interest in ICTs in Africa. By January 2003, more than 1 250 postings had been received.

One activity of the platform is to regularly organise thematic discussions (Virtual Thematic Chat

Room). Between February and April 2002, thematic discussions were organised on the following subjects:

- Free software: experiences, resources, and issues;
- Cultural impacts of the Internet in Africa;
- The Internet and Journalism in Africa: issues and usage;
- Infrastructure and ICT Networks in Africa.

The starting points for discussions were presented by volunteer members. The archives and summaries are stored in the provisional web pages.

Between February and April 2003 discussions will be held by volunteers on the following subjects:

- ICTs link to rural Africa: appropriate technologies, place of the Internet;
- The World Summit on the Information Society;
- ICTs and economics in Africa: electronic commerce, productivity;
- Telecentres in Africa: private/community, sustainability.

Since the announcement of the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society, AFRICA NET has served as a platform for discussions and meetings. It keeps its members up to date on news from the organisers, and other key events and meet-

ings on ICTs in Africa, such as the African WSIS preparatory meeting held in Bamako 2002. ●

Web page: [http://fr.groups.yahoo.com/group/africa\\_net/](http://fr.groups.yahoo.com/group/africa_net/)

For subscription: [africa\\_net-subscribe@yahoogroupes.fr](mailto:africa_net-subscribe@yahoogroupes.fr)

Contact: Ken Lohento [kenloh@avu.org](mailto:kenloh@avu.org)  
[www.oridev.org](http://www.oridev.org) <<http://www.oridev.org/>>  
[www.iafic.net](http://www.iafic.net) <<http://www.iafic.net/>>

*Teledensity (telephone lines per one hundred inhabitants) is 0.5 in sub-Saharan African countries (excluding South Africa) compared to 4.5 in emerging economies and 52.6 percent in industrialised countries.*



pic: Tracey Naughton

## Towards Universal Service: Telecentres and Public Access

by F.E Etta—IDRA, Nairobi

### What are Public Access Points?

**Public access points** a.k.a telecentres are called by a large number of very different names: Telecentre, telecottage, telekiosk, teleboutique, phone shop, infocentre, telehaus, telestugen, digital clubhouse, cabinas publicas, multi-purpose access centre, community technology centre, multi-purpose community telecentre (MCT), community access centre, multi-purpose community centre (MPCC), community media centre (CMC) or community learning centre (CLC), community multimedia centre, electronic village hall, tele-village or cyber café. To date the idea has been generally adopted in the United States, Canada and Australia, whereas in Africa and Asia the notion is still taking root having only commenced in the latter half of the 1990s.

Telecentres are facilities that provide public access to communication and information for economic, social and cultural development or telecommunication and information services for a range of developmental aims. The notion of universal access, which is based on Article 19 of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" has provided fodder for the expansion of information and communication services to all without discrimination. Telecentres are seen as potent instruments in the struggle for universal access especially in poor countries and environments.

### Why are they to be encouraged?

We inhabit a world where information is of growing economic importance. The new world of computers and telecommunications convergence is expanding rapidly and the digital divide will widen, aggravating existing social and economic inequalities. Efforts are being made to avoid the impending doom. But the tools for this world are expensive and distant from ordinary and rural folk on the continent. The telecentre is one hope of reaching all with information and communication at affordable prices services.

The current data pictures emerging from Telecentre studies show poor use, low familiarity, and adoption, high costs, weak administrative operational and conceptual models, marginalisation

of women and the old and little local or daily relevance.

### What to do?

On the basis of the above and if we subscribe to the idea of social change brought about by ICTs the following must be considered with urgency.

- 1 African governments, international donors and private foundations should support research that will illuminate the nature of interaction between the new ICTs and development now and on an ongoing basis. This means encouraging and supporting the participation and involvement of African researchers in the WSIS process. To date this group seems to be outside the action. Civil Society is getting organised to participate.
- 2 During the Africa Regional Conference, African governments stated among other things the value in showcasing the rich cultural diversity. This position sounds like a sales pitch for outsiders. But the gains of WSIS are as much for Africans, if not more, as for outsiders. One way to avoid the situation of the permanent disadvantage to which the lack of formal education condemns a large number of Africans is to articulate a

This man, who lives in a multi-generational family home in Accra, Ghana, is never without his radio



pic: Tracey Naughton

theory of use, adaptation and change based on the currently uneducated or poorly educated masses. If the telecentre is useful and useable by this group for the improvement of their lives and livelihoods then it would have served us well. Therefore the need is for a model of ICT development through the WSIS process which is based on the actual needs and realities of the majority of Africans i.e. the rural poor.

- 3 Following from point 2 above, it means that the process of preparing for the WSIS and the resultant plan of action must involve especially the illiterate, the poor, women, the elderly, the handicapped, those in the informal sector etc etc. Anything short of this will produce another elitist plan in the service of international market forces and their local continental collaborators.
- 4 The public nature of public access points that marginalises some users should be discussed as part of the process and discussing marginalisation from public places and spaces is not to be conducted in public.
- 5 Relevance, language and cultural sensitivity of products/services and costs are issues that

have to be considered by the WSIS process and not only with the educated public.

- 6 Above all it would be well for the process to discuss the role and responsibility of responsive and responsible governments with both governments and civil society organisations. As often governments are seen especially with the promotion and development of ICTs as obstructors and control engines instead of liberators.

Ask Anastasia Namisongo: She breaks all the stereotypes. ●



Anastasia, 70, using the computer in a Ugandan telecentre. She teaches other women and men to use the computer!

Mobile radio! Nampula Province, Mozambique



pics: Tracey Naughton



Inside the headman's hut in a San village in East Hanahai, Botswana—a broken radio museum!



## Civil Society, Government and Private Sector Develop ICT Policy for Tanzania

DigIT Africa (the publisher of IT Vision)

An Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy for Tanzania that bears the potential for catapulting the country into the enclave of global information superhighway powerhouses is in the pipeline.

In July 2002 a seminar on ICT for development was held for Tanzanian Members of Parliament, in the capital city Dodoma. Communications and Transport Minister Hon. Prof. Mark Mwandosya, minced no words in putting the ultimate goal of the proposed policy in perspective.

It was emphasised to the seminar participants that the "ultimate objective of ICT Policy is to provide national development goals, by exploiting digital opportunities in a sustainable way".

Gauging the dimensions of ICT in a world that is becoming increasingly globalised, with the information superhighway occupying a pivotal position, Members of Parliament considered a vexed question: "Would ICT be a positive force in the development of Tanzania and would it help to solve the many problems we are facing?"

One of the answers, according to the Hon. Mwandosya, is that Tanzania, like other developing countries, is undertaking reforms that cannot be achieved without transforming ourselves into a learning and a well informed society.

The framework of the draft ICT policy takes into account the status in Tanzania of human capital development; national ICT infrastructure; the multi-sectoral dimensions of ICT as an enabler of knowledge management and productivity; and ICT as a cross-cutting business sector in itself.

Tanzania plays a very important role in this part of Africa, especially in the context of geo-political stability and in the new world economy, and seminar participants took time to explore the potential for ICT development in Tanzania in buttressing peace in the conflict-infested Great Lakes region.

Hon Mwadosya made available a valuable accompaniment to his menu of advice to other Members of Parliament.

"Suffice to say that, if we do not change ourselves to cope with the revolution in ICT, our country or communities run the risk of falling further in to the phenomenon known as the 'digital divide'. We have to remember that ICT must be for all; must empower people to cross the 'digital divide'. ICT can allow citizens to fully participate in modern society."

The National ICT Policy Draft is in line with the aspirations of the country's developmental vision as espoused in "Vision 2025". Indeed the entire cross-cutting nature of ICT opportunities is wrapped around our own developmental goals that are summarised by its five key points:

- High Quality Livelihood;
- Peace, Stability and Unity;
- Good Governance;
- A Well-educated and Informed Society;
- A Strong and Competitive Economy Capable of Producing Sustainable Growth and Shared Benefits.

ICT can assist to sustain development, but misapplication can result in further marginalisation of the poor and the unconnected. In order for their development potential to be realised, all stakeholders – government, citizens, businesses, educational institutions, civil society and non governmental

organisation, and individuals – need to work together towards achieving real change.

A joint statement issued by Members of Parliament, said: "We all know that ICT will play a major role in this drive to leapfrog over the obstacles that obstruct our development. However, the most encouraging fact is that our Government is keen to draft, develop, coordinate, and implement ICT policy in partnership with civil society, NGOs, and all other key stakeholders. This seminar is concrete evidence of the Government's resolve in this regard." ●

*The most encouraging fact is that our Government is keen to draft, develop, coordinate, and implement ICT policy in partnership with civil society, NGOs, and all other key stakeholders.*

## Tarzan Doesn't Live Here Anymore — musings on being donor sponsored in Africa

by Zane Ibrahim—Director Bush Radio, Cape Town

During South Africa's State of Emergency in the late 80's, a small group of people interested in the development of a simple communications system, formed an organisation that would record information onto cassette tapes and distribute them. This group was called CASET (Cassette Education Trust).

They started to discuss the possibilities of establishing a community radio facility at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), just outside Cape Town. The College was named Bush College since it was located far from the nearest settlement and surrounded by bush. It was agreed to name the new radio station Bush Radio.

In 1992 CASET dissolved and Bush Radio was formed as a voluntary association. This would be the first time in the history of South Africa that 'black' people would have the opportunity to be broadcasters. Bush Radio pressurised the government to grant it a license to broadcast and after several rejections, decided to broadcast without one, on the 25th of April 1993. The then government confiscated the homemade transmitter and two Bush Radio members were charged. In 1994, the case was withdrawn after pressure from individuals and organisations across the world.

Bush Radio received a license to broadcast from August 1st 1995. Broadcasting commenced on August 9th, National Women's Day, as a symbol of appreciation for the role women played during the struggle for liberation.

Bush Radio's mission statement is:

"To ensure that communities who have been denied access to resources, take part in producing ethical, creative and responsible radio that encourages them to communicate with each other, to take part in decisions that affect their lives, and to celebrate their own cultures. Through such radio, communities will affirm their own dignity and identity, and promote social responsibility and critical thinking."

Some Days in the Life of Bush Radio.....

When Lungiswa's little 7 year old daughter, Thandi, didn't arrive home from school at the usual time, she ran to the school which was 4 miles away along a badly worn dirt trail through the bush. Everybody had left and a sick feeling overtook her. She hurried to the local store and at exactly 3.21 pm, called Bush Radio to report little Thandi missing. It went on air a minute later at 3.22pm.

As a rule, all programming comes to a halt when a child goes missing in our community.

We received the first call at 3.37 pm to say that Thandi was safe at a friend's house, two miles in the other direction from where she lives. Why did it take 15 minutes to find out where she was? Because that's how long it took to run, fast, to the nearest phone. Thank goodness that this was more of a town than a village, quite progressive, with three phones.

A few years ago, the vigilante group PAGAD, (People Against Gangsterism And Drugs), publicly set a drug dealer alight and declared war on journalists over the bad press they were getting. Bush Radio was asked to mediate. We contacted the parties and set up a meeting, on air, and invited our communities to participate in the discussions. The matter was resolved within two hours with the help of some wise elders who appealed to the hot heads within PAGAD.

We distribute 5,000 condoms every month when we take our outside broadcast unit into the townships. The community gets to meet and talk to the people behind the voices they hear daily on Bush Radio and we get to help in the fight against Aids.

These are exactly the reasons why the project was started in 1989. The Scottish Catholic Mission decided to give a few pounds to a small group of rabble that included a contentious objector, a people's poet and a newly outraging queen, so that they could 'free the airwaves'. This group grew to what is today called the 'Mother of Community Radio in Africa.'

Saturdays are set aside entirely for children. No adult voices are heard on Bush Radio on a Saturday. With the youngest trainee at eight years old we start the day by collecting the kids from the townships at 8 am for a class that starts at 9.

You have never heard radio like this before

To sustain the project, Bush Radio representatives have had to go begging for assistance as far

afield as the U.S and all corners of Europe.

Why?

Because advertisers don't want to sell their products alongside messages that promote a gun free society, a stop to Male Terrorism and an end to child sexual exploitation. Our nation has gone gun mad over the last ten years.

In ten years we've seen homicides rocket. In the U.S. the homicides are 8.5 per 100,000. In Sweden it's 1.5 per 100,000. In our beloved land, a land that has seen it's share of pain in the past, it has just this month decreased to 65 per 100,000.

A DECREASE to 65 per 100,000!!!!

Here's where child sexual exploitation is going these days.

A woman gets off a plane with her two daughters, one aged about 9, the other no more than 11. They flew in from Kuala Lumpur. They're met at the airport and whisked away to one of Cape Town's better hotels.

Fast forward.

A man in his 50's books into the same hotel an hour or so later. He flew in from Miami. The weekend package cost this guy about \$8 000. Most of it goes to the agency the woman works for, with the rest for the return flights and the hotel.

We were asked to broadcast from the House of Parliament earlier this year when the International Conference to End Child Sexual Exploitation was held there. It was held in the houses of Parliament because there were threats to blow up the venue previously chosen to have the conference.

This is why Bush Radio exists. To help rid our country and our world of this kind of sickness.

When I spoke to a group of visiting foreign journalists about this one of them said to me, 'damn, you're depressing me'.

WELL EXCUUUUUUSE ME!!!!!!!

I'd like to tell you that we inherited a squeaky clean system. I would like to report that the last owners left it spick and span and overflowing with goodwill.

Not so.

Fact is, we've inherited a mess. A mess that we are dealing with in the best way we know how. All this may sound as if we're giving up, as if we're beaten.

Nothing could be further from the truth. What is emerging is the frustration of years and years of feeling diminished, years and years of a people being subjected to the worst kind of spirit breaking techniques.

But what is also coming to the fore is the humanity of our people, the compassion displayed spontaneously. There are many instances of a real reaching out from all sides. Being in the grass roots media we witness some wonderful things. The amount of advantaged families adopting children orphaned in disadvantaged communities is on the rise. Cross cultural marriages are on the increase. At Bush Radio we promote these cross cultural shifts that are slowly but surely happening. We see ourselves as a safe haven and a bridge for social openness - not something the South African population is very experienced in.

Many Bush Radio people have realised that the black white thing was, for the most part, a red herring. Many now realise that it was simply the old garden variety have and have not system doing its thing. When I'm asked how the white people are taking the transition I like to say, the white people have all left. They've gone to Canada, Australia North America and England. All we have left is the 'rainbow nation' of South Africans trying to come to terms with our transformation.

The whole talk about the miracle of our liberation is just that - talk. The struggle will continue for decades while we all make major adjustments. What was a Godsend to us was a person like Nelson Mandela to be the midwife at the birth of our democracy. Had we had a bitter vengeful person in that position the world would have seen the worst tragedy imaginable. It would have made the holocaust look like a love in.

I am truly grateful for what Mandela has done but I remain one of his strongest critics because he is a politician and politicians perform best when we are keeping their feet to the fire. We don't have an opposition in South Africa and we need to be careful of this. None the less, South Africa is one of the better achievements of the last millennium.



The task of re-constructing our emotionally blunted population would be considerably easier if we didn't have to deal with that horror of horrors - the Aid Agencies. Please don't get me wrong. After having been robbed blind by the north for the last three hundred years we need all the help we can get. But we need it from those who wish to walk beside us as friends; from those who are truly interested in our welfare and our future. We need the locally appointed representatives for donors to walk with us too and not continue with the entrenched liberal attitudes that ultimately only serve to undermine us.

At Bush Radio we are truly concerned about those gruesome statistics I mentioned earlier and we are prepared to get down and dirty and with rolled up sleeves help us get the children fed, the aged made more comfortable and the general population move forward with a sense of confidence and hope.

How can we get it across to arrogant funders that we know that this funding thing is a huge industry and that we are 'hip to the jive'. For how long are we expected to wait to be respected? For how long do we have to be afraid to question the ones who intimidate us and shake our confidence? Why is it so difficult to make these people understand that we are simple life loving people who desire nothing more than the opportunity to determine our own future and meet the challenges we face. After all we've shown the world that no matter how we've suffered in the past we were capable of forgiveness and took the first courageous steps towards reconciliation. We are capable of managing our own future and we have a right to make some of our own mistakes. Sometimes what may read as a mistake to a donor could be a huge and insightful leap forward for us. We must all avoid dogma when deciding how things should be.

When some well tanned, well fed person with a great white hunter attitude looks at me with suspicious eyes and asks me to very carefully explain why I think I need two hundred rands for a new microphone, I count to ten and ask myself, 'Is this worth it?'

Then, I think of the new teenage mothers who will learn about post partum depression, the aged who will find out the latest relief for the pain of gout or rheumatism. I think of the young men we

speak to daily about the uselessness of crime. I think of the children who just love coming in on Saturdays to make radio. I think of all these things and say to myself, 'It's degrading, it's humiliating and it's a bloody shame, but .....it's worth it.'

That's when I go into my shuffle mode and smile that smile that we save for bwana. You wouldn't believe how many 'donors' with closed minds come by and preach to us about how we should strive for an open society.

The African Media Partners, the AMP, met in South Africa in December. They meet each year in a different country. This group consists of the funders who fund media projects in Africa. They meet to decide the direction our development will take. They don't invite us.

When will the post colonisation colonisation end?????????

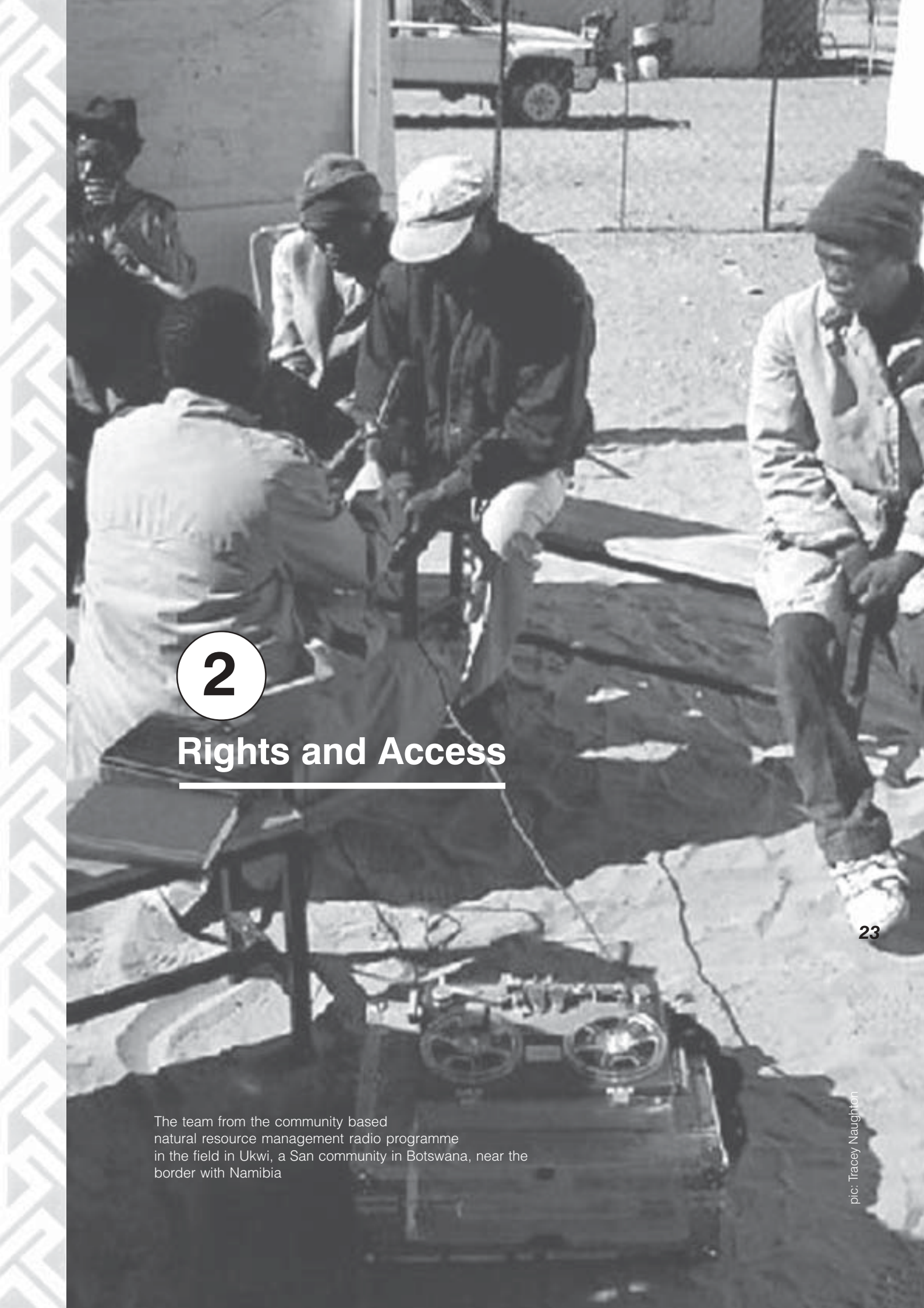
If only they would spend a little money on getting the grass roots media makers together.....I guess that would never happen, it would deprive donors of an extra trip to sunny climes when it's freezing in the north. We notice how all the trips to Africa happen during the coldest part of the northern winters. In the last month I must have hosted twenty funders coming to see if everything is going all right. In December last year I hosted thirty German people sent by the Expo 2000 committee to come and visit to find out if they made the right choice inviting Bush Radio to come and present itself in Hanover.

We were all very honoured at the invitation but we still don't quite know what it means. We think we may have to put bones in our noses and wear designer loin cloths so people can see where we come from. We don't think that hard hitting social reality will be a big attraction at the Expo.

In the old days, aaaahh in the old days, we felt a lot safer from this lot. Why? Because we had Tarzan to make sure that our dignity, our culture and our resources weren't raped and plundered. He always knew the right thing to do.

So this is a serious cry for help.

TARZAN, IF YOU'RE OUT THERE PLEASE COME BACK AND SAVE US FROM YOUR KIND. ●



## 2

## Rights and Access

---

The team from the community based natural resource management radio programme in the field in Ukwi, a San community in Botswana, near the border with Namibia

# Towards a Perspective on the Right to Communicate



## ARTICLE 19 – Global Campaign for Free Expression

---

### Introduction

As the preparatory work for the World Summit on the Information Society gathers pace, an important debate has started over whether this Summit should lend its support to a Declaration on 'the right to communicate'.

Different rationales have been expressed to support formulation of a new or emerging right to communicate. In a broad sense, its advocates appear to act out of a concern that increasingly, the media are becoming homogenized and minority or dissenting voices are rarely heard.

Globalisation and commercialisation of the media is one of the chief concerns: it is argued that in countries around the world, threats from the private sector, such as large media corporations, are as harmful to the right to freedom of expression as 'traditional' state threats. Whilst in many African countries, it is 'the state' which is the problem by imposing restrictive rules and regulations on freedom of expression or by itself dominating the media sector while failing to reflect the diversity that exists within its territory.

The formulation at the international level of a 'right to communicate', it is said, would remedy both these problems. Legal recognition of a right to communicate would additionally help bridge the growing digital divide by empowering those currently left behind in the communications revolution.

However, there appears to be little agreement on the precise definition or content of the right to communicate. How it is different from the right to freedom of expression or to what extent such a right or a Declaration would fit in the existing international 'Bill of Rights', formed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Less still, it is unclear to what extent a 'right to communicate' — particularly if formulated so as to impose substantive duties on private media concerns — is sufficiently supported to be considered an 'emerging right' suitable for international endorsement at the World Summit.

### Definitions

In its broadest sense the right to communicate has been described as "the right of every individual or community to have its stories and views heard." Others have advocated a right to communicate encompassing a right of access to the means of communication, a right to information, a right to participate in political processes, a right to participate in cultural traditions, to practise one's culture, and to express one's culture, and a right to communicate anonymously, to name but a few.

Thus understood, the right to communicate is better understood as an umbrella term. Describ-



ing the various elements that have been developed as forming part of the right to freedom of expression, emphasizing elements of diversity and plurality and positive obligations on the state while adding cultural rights and 'facilitating' rights such as the right to be free from unwarranted surveillance.

The argument supports a broad diversity of voices in the media; it presupposes freedom to practice one's culture and freedom to disseminate information without hindrance. It also presupposes a right to receive information, both from state and private sources: communication is not a one-way process.

However, some have gone further, advocating that extensive duties be imposed on individuals as part of the right to communicate. For example, it has been argued that all media should be under a legal obligation to provide the fullest possible information about local, national, and world politics; to grant access to minority voices or to contribute to social progress or cultural diversity. This is justified by arguing that private actors who dominate the world's media are under an obligation, moral or legal, to share the resources they control.

ARTICLE 19 rejects that the right to communicate imposes duties on individuals. Although human rights conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, include preambular statements regarding obligations of individuals to the community, these were included to prevent the abuse of rights: rights should not be used with the aim of destroying other rights or democratic values.

They have rarely been subjected to judicial interpretation and cannot be interpreted as imposing substantiated duties on individuals, for example requiring the media to provide access to minority voices. However intensioned, such an interpretation would be wide open to abuse. States seeking to control their national media could use a 'right to communicate' to suppress or weaken dominant national media, for example by requiring that they should give space to government officials because they 'represent the people'.

Similarly, we reject the notion, advanced by some, that there should be a difference between socially useful information and other forms of information. Expression cannot be ranked according to content. Any attempt to do this will be ultimately subjective and constitute a form of censorship.

For these reasons, we advocate for a declaration on a right to communicate that endorses strongly the individual right to freedom of expression. Governments, not individuals, are charged under international law to make this a reality, including by encouraging diversity and plurality.

The right to be informed, the right to practise one's culture and the right to participate in public decision-making process are further essential elements, as are 'facilitating rights' such as the right to respect for private life including freedom to communicate anonymously, and the right to be free from unwarranted interference.

## International Law & Practice

### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

It is common ground that the right to communicate is deeply rooted in the 'traditional' right to

freedom of expression, long regarded as one of the most fundamental human rights. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

The importance of freedom of expression cannot be under-estimated. Freedom of expression is among the most important of the rights guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international human rights treaties, both because of its fundamental role in underpinning democracy and because it is key to the fulfilment of all other rights.

The recently adopted Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa reaffirms “the fundamental importance of freedom of expression as an individual human right, as a cornerstone of democracy and as a means of ensuring respect for all human rights and freedoms.” Democracy can flourish only in societies where information and ideas can flow freely.

## **PLURALISM, DIVERSITY & ACCESS**

The notions of plurality and diversity, fundamental to the advocates of a right to communicate, are well rooted in international and comparative freedom of expression law. Article 2 of the ICCPR places an obligation on States to “adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognised by the Covenant.” This means that States are required not only to refrain from interfering with rights but also to take positive steps to ensure that rights, including freedom of expression, are respected.

A key aspect of the positive element of the right to freedom of expression is the obligation on governments to create an environment in which a diverse, independent media can flourish, thereby satisfying the public’s right to receive a variety of information.

An important aspect of any State’s obligation to promote freedom of expression and of the media is the need to promote pluralism within, and ensure equal access of all to, the media. One of the rationales behind public service broadcasting is that it makes an important contribution to pluralism. For this reason, a number of international instruments stress the importance of public service broadcasters and their contribution to promoting diversity and pluralism.

A key aspect of pluralism is that all groups have access to the media. For example, in 1988 the Zimbabwean Supreme Court observed, “[t]oday television is the most powerful medium of communications, ideas and disseminating information. The enjoyment of freedom of expression therefore includes freedom to use such a medium.”

However, there is no absolute right of access to the means of communication. For example, there is no absolute right to broadcast: it is well established that because of the scarcity of this resource, governments have a right to regulate its use. This is not a restriction on freedom of expression: careful regulation will ensure diversity and plurality on the airwaves, thereby protecting freedom of expression. Nor does the right of access to the means of communication imply a right of access to privately owned means of communication. Human rights cannot be understood as imposing duties on individuals or media corporations. For these reasons, it is better to speak of an equitable right of access to the means of communication.

Under international law, the state is under a duty to ensure equitable access to the means of communication. This implies both a 'negative' duty not to restrict access to the media and a positive duty to ensure plurality and diversity. The negative duty includes primarily a duty to abolish all forms of censorship, both formal and informal. It also includes such restrictions on freedom of expression as are imposed through licensing or registration. State broadcast monopolies and state monopolies in the telecommunications sector have also been held to constitute illegitimate restrictions on freedom of expression.

The positive duties on States to promote plurality are manifold. The recently adopted Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa states:

Freedom of expression imposes an obligation on the authorities to take positive measures to promote diversity, which include among other things:-

- availability and promotion of a range of information and ideas to the public;
- pluralistic access to the media and other means of communication, including by vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as women, children and refugees, as well as linguistic and cultural groups;
- the promotion and protection of African voices, including through media in local languages; and
- the promotion of the use of local languages in public affairs, including in the courts.

In its most general sense, the duty to ensure diversity requires States to promote an environment within which freedom of thought and expression can flourish. Partly, this refers back to ensuring the absence of obstacles to the exercise of freedom of expression. However, it also implies taking positive measures, for example through non-discriminatory media subsidies, the promotion of local content and encouraging community broadcasting.

Providing effective access could go further. With regard to diversity on the Internet, the G8 Genoa Plan of Action states "local content on the Internet should be strengthened and encouraged, including by encouraging governments to provide freely-available access to State-owned information and local content, except where it is genuinely private or classified." In addition, community broadcasters or newspaper publishers could be granted preferential access to publish on the Internet, including the provision of the necessary hardware and software as well as training, as envisaged in the African Charter on Broadcasting.

The Charter also recognizes that public service broadcasting makes a key contribution to plurality and diversity of expression in the media. Similarly, a Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, passed by the European Union, recognises the important role played by public service broadcasters in ensuring a flow of information from a variety of sources to the public. It notes that public service broadcasters are of direct relevance to democracy, and social and cultural needs, and the need to preserve media pluralism.

For these reasons, a number of international instruments stress the importance of public service broadcasters and their contribution to promoting diversity and pluralism. The 1992 *Declaration of Alma Ata*, adopted under the auspices of UNESCO, calls on States to encourage the development of public service broadcasters. *Resolution No. 1: Future of Public Service Broadcasting* of the 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy, Prague, 1994, promotes very similar principles. This resolution notes the importance of public service broadcasting to human rights and democracy generally and the role of public service broadcasting in providing a forum for wide-ranging public debate, innovative programming not driven by mar-



ket forces and promotion of local production. As a result of these vital roles, the resolution recommends that member States guarantee at least one comprehensive public service broadcaster that is accessible to all.

## **CULTURE & PARTICIPATION**

The freedom to practise and express one's culture is key to diversity in society generally and is therefore inextricably linked to freedom of expression and the right to communicate. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, included a number of cultural rights, later elaborated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Similarly, the right to participate in public decision-making processes is protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Human Rights Committee has emphasised that the exercise of this right is closely linked to the right to freedom of expression. In its General Comment No. 25, it states "[c]itizens also take part in the conduct of public affairs by exerting influence through public debate and dialogue with their representatives or through their capacity to organize themselves. This participation is supported by ensuring freedom of expression, assembly and association."

Moreover, the Human Rights Committee has emphasised that "[f]reedom of expression, assembly and association are essential conditions for the effective exercise of the right to vote and must be fully protected. Positive measures should be taken to overcome specific difficulties, such as illiteracy, language barriers, poverty, or impediments to freedom of movement that prevent persons entitled to vote from exercising their rights effectively. Information and materials about voting should be available in minority languages. Specific methods, such as photographs and symbols, should be adopted to ensure that illiterate voters have adequate information on which to base their choice."

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

All forms of communication require a free flow of information, both to and from the communicant. In particular, the exercise of democratic rights requires freedom of information. Freedom of information is an important component of the international guarantee of freedom of expression, which includes the right to seek and receive, as well as to impart, information and ideas.

There can be little doubt as to the importance of freedom of information and numerous authoritative statements have been made by official bodies to this effect. During its first session in 1946, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 59(1) that stated:

Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and... the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the UN is consecrated.

## **RESTRICTIONS**

The right to freedom of expression cannot be exercised in a hostile environment. For example, if an Internet user suspects that his or her on-line movements are monitored, he or she will exercise caution with regard to statements made or sites visited. Therefore, the right to respect for private life must be guaranteed fully, including the right to communicate anonymously.

While it is acknowledged that in certain circumstances, it may be necessary to monitor or intercept communication, for example in the prevention of serious crime, guarantees are necessary in order to safeguard against abuse of these powers. There exists a wealth of case law and national practice, from international institutions as well as from national jurisdictions, on the kind of safeguards that are needed.

Similarly, protection of anonymity is central to both the right to freedom of expression and to the right to respect for private life. Particularly in those countries where there is heavy State monitoring, anonymity tools can allow users to communicate with the outside world without fear of identification and reprisals. Any restrictions on the use of anonymity tools will impact on the right to freedom of expression.

Finally, any restrictions on the right to freedom of expression must remain within strictly defined parameters. Article 19(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights lays down the conditions that any restriction on freedom of expression must meet. It states:

The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

- (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
- (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals.

It is a maxim of human rights jurisprudence that restrictions on rights must always be construed narrowly; this is especially true of the right to freedom of expression in light of its importance in democratic society. Accordingly, any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must meet a strict three-part test, as recognised by the Human Rights Committee. This test requires that any restriction must:

- a) be provided by law,
- b) be for the purpose of safeguarding one of the legitimate interests listed, and
- c) be necessary to achieve this goal.

## Conclusion

A review of all the rights outlined above reveals that a 'right to communicate' may indeed fit within existing rights and may be conceived in a broader understanding and conceptualisation of the right to freedom of expression and its links to cultural rights and the right of participation in decision making processes. This means that we may not need to establish a new set of rights as suggested by some 'right to communicate' advocates. We must also be careful not to subscribe to calls for a proliferation of 'protection' rights placed on individuals or media outlets that go beyond more explicit guarantees concerning media pluralism, diversity and access. This would have the danger of empowering governments to control media and communications 'in the interest of the people' and challenge current advances in freedom of expression made in recent years in Africa. ●

# The Halfway Proposition

by Richard Bell

---

*The current burden of paying for International Internet Bandwidth Costs is unfairly weighted onto countries in Africa. The existence of these reverse subsidies is the single largest factor that is contributing to high bandwidth costs in Africa. A cursory look at the figures will show that these reverse subsidies are costing the continent anything between US\$ 250 and 500 million per annum.*

## Overview

1. The Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force), whose effort is complemented by the UN ICT Task Force, has identified several possible actions to achieve sustainable ICT development in poorer economies, and has stressed the necessity to “*improve connectivity, increase [ICT] access and lower costs*”. The high cost of bandwidth is cited as a key inhibitor of Internet development in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). There has been a lot of research ([www.itu.int/ipdc](http://www.itu.int/ipdc)) into the root causes of these high connectivity costs and associated obstacles to reducing them. However it does not appear to address the subject of the reverse subsidies, nor suggest concrete steps for reversing the situation.
2. Incumbent Telcos and Internet operators, extracting maximum return out of their positions in monopoly or partially liberalised markets, characterised bandwidth costs in Africa in the 1990s. During the last few years connectivity costs have reduced substantially due to increased competition resulting from the ongoing tide of liberalisation. Today a benchmarking study of liberalised markets in Africa would show that end user prices are broadly speaking similar. There are regional variations and there are some variations resulting from the degree to which the relevant market has been liberalised, however none of these countries differ from each other in orders of magnitude. In all cases the service providers will cite their upstream bandwidth costs as their single biggest cost of doing business, and in all cases the average end user prices would be considered high if benchmarked against end user prices in G8 countries (particularly USA and Europe).  
So what is the root cause of this differential?

## Aim

3. The Aim of the Halfway Proposition is to articulate the root causes of high connectivity costs in Africa and to map out a strategy of how to tackle the problem.

*Our aim is to strengthen African Internet Backbones and build our own infrastructure, not to encourage multinationals to gobble them up.*

## The Problem

1. Obtaining upstream connectivity requires African Internet Backbones (AISPs) to purchase bandwidth from International Backbone Providers (IBPs), which are largely network operators from within G8 countries. Typically 90% of an AISP's upstream cost is the physical link from them to the IBP's country and 10% is the cost of purchasing IP Bandwidth once they get there. Whether the service is purchased as a bundle or separately the AISP pays 100% of the International carrier to get from Africa to the IBP network and then 100% of the Internet bandwidth cost. This amounts to a reverse subsidy of IBP connectivity costs by AISPs.



2. Both the AISP and IBPs sell capacity to customers in their country. When an end user in Kenya sends E-Mail to a correspondent in the USA it is the Kenyan ISP who is bearing the cost of the International connectivity from Kenya to the USA. Conversely when an American end user sends E-Mail to Kenya, it is still the Kenyan ISP who is bearing the cost of the International connectivity, and ultimately the Kenyan end user who bears the brunt by paying higher subscriptions. The analogy can be extrapolated to all forms of traffic passing over the Internet. Indeed this unfair distribution of bandwidth cost sharing is actually driving traffic out of AISP backbones and into IBP backbones. Evidenced (for example) by the fact that the UN has a major headquarters in Kenya, and yet hosts all of its web sites in America, or the fact that 50% of Kenyan web sites are hosted overseas. AISPs are subsidising the connectivity costs for IBPs. This imbalance can never be redressed unless there is a more equitable distribution of the costs of international connectivity between AISPs and IBPs. The challenge is to develop a realistic strategy for redressing the balance.
3. ITU conventions governing interconnection principals for voice traffic, where member countries each pay their own half circuit costs for International traffic, would at first glance seem like a reasonable starting point for Internet interconnection principals since it would result in an equitable split of the connectivity costs. The reality is that it wouldn't work. Voice interconnection principles have been widely criticised. Monopoly Telcos have in the past used them as a means of keeping prices artificially high, and global liberalisation of the telecom industry has in any case made them redundant. Few International Voice carriers still adhere to the settlement rate system, and where monopolies are still trying to force the system, operators are simply being bypassed using (sometimes illegal) VOIP routes into the countries concerned. The system failed to achieve its aims for voice traffic and would most probably fail to achieve its aims for Internet traffic. More importantly it would be difficult to enforce since an IBP is unlikely to agree to pay half the connectivity costs to interconnect to an AISP.

**"If you (AISP) want service you have to come to me, if you don't want to come to me – that's fine, I'm not paying to come to you....".**

## The Approach

4. ISPs in the Pacific Rim faced a similar problem in the 90's, and it was compounded when they were hit by a recession which made paying for international circuits in US\$ even more problematic. Their approach was to say, "Why do we need to get to the USA anyway? Most of our trade is National or Regional. If we all peer our traffic within our countries and then within our regions we can dramatically reduce our connectivity costs". So the quality of local and regional connectivity increased, the quality of international connectivity decreased and costs came down. In the process IBPs found that the quality of connectivity that they were offering their customers in domestic markets was reducing. The only way for them to maintain the quality was to establish Points-Of-Presence at the national and regional peering points in the Asia Pacific Area. Problem solved. The IBPs bear the International connectivity costs not the Asia Pacific ISPs (it is interesting to note that the Korean Internet Exchange Point is today the largest in the world). This is a slight oversimplification of the many changes that took place in Asia but it is essentially accurate. More important is to note the approach that was taken:
  - a. The process was driven by commercial imperatives not regulation.
  - b. The adjustments took place through commercial negotiations not through imposed dictates.
  - c. Connectivity costs reduced dramatically.

## Obstacles to this Approach

5. Using the same approach in Africa could yield similar results. That said, there are some specific obstacles that will need to be overcome:

6. Satellite versus Fibre Optic Cables. The cost of operating Satellite Connectivity is inherently expensive, and in the case of IBPs using it to establish global PoPs, prohibitive. Furthermore even Fibre costs are not necessarily cheap, if there is only a single cable owned by a single operator. Experience in South America (particularly Brazil) is a good illustration of this. When there was only one cable owned (or at least terminated through) the incumbent monopoly, connectivity over fibre was only marginally cheaper than satellite. It wasn't until a second cable operated by a competitor appeared that prices began to tumble. South Africa is another example where they have had a cable for some time but owned by the monopoly telco and therefore expensive. The availability (indeed oversupply) of cheap fibre optic connections from Europe & North America to the Pacific Rim was a key factor in the decision by IBPs to establish PoPs in that region. Furthermore IBPs had the financial resources (thanks largely to the telecom industry bubble at the time) to be able to own the cable infrastructure itself rather than having to purchase lit fibre from third party carriers. Without this prevailing environment, the commercial incentive would have been considerably less.

*G8 countries are actively propagating their policies of globalisation and free markets. They need to be shown that while there may be benefits in some areas to pursuing these policies, there is also some fallout which is directly increasing the digital divide which they so often claim they wish to bridge.*

7. National Policies & Regulation. The Asian telecom industry was relatively liberalised already, which enabled Exchange Points at both National and Regional Levels to appear quickly. Furthermore Governments were keen to facilitate the process and there were only limited regulatory or infrastructure obstacles to the emergence of regional carriers who were able to link exchange points in neighbouring countries. The regulatory environment in Africa is far less enabling.
8. Commercial Incentive. Asia is a large market place with GDP several orders of magnitude larger than Africa's. It will be substantially more difficult to make it commercially attractive for IBPs to want to establish PoPs in Africa than it was in Asia. As with everything, volumes drive prices down and the economics of the Internet are no different from any other industry. This is where the development community has a role to play.
9. National Policy of G8 Countries. Prevailing G8 doctrine has globalisation of trade driven by free market forces at its core (scrutinizers of EU and US policies on matters such as agriculture and steel will see the irony here). The Halfway Proposition maintains that the prevailing situation of reverse subsidies is the result of fallout from this doctrine, and is unfair. If one accepts these two statements as fact then one is led to the inevitable conclusion that there is an obligation on G8 governments to provide financial assistance to help create telecommunications infrastructure in Africa. To date G8 Governments have researched causes and debated solutions but they have not accepted this obligation and there has been relatively little substantive financial assistance. This policy will need to change if the Halfway Proposition is to succeed.

## The Half Way Proposition

10. The Halfway Proposition is a strategy that borrows the experience of Asia and adapts it into a realistic strategy for Africa. The strategy is driven by two underlying philosophies:
  - a. First – The need for Traffic Aggregation. IBSSs have no interest in creating National or Regional IP networks in Africa. The size of our individual markets is too small to provide them with any real commercial incentives to do so. Indeed our aim is to strengthen AISPs and build our own infrastructure, not to encourage multinationals to gobble them up. Conversely what would attract IBPs is the ability to establish PoPs at “Key Traffic Aggregation Points” so that they can improve the quality of connectivity between their networks and Africa as a whole. Creating these traffic aggregation points is therefore key and will require two things;
    - i. Emergence of National Internet Exchange Points throughout Africa.
    - ii. Emergence of Regional Carriers interconnecting these Exchange Points.
  - b. Second – The need to create Digital Arteries. Africa requires massive investment into creating fibre optic digital infrastructure to carry traffic cost effectively;
    - i. Linking Africa (particularly East Africa which currently has no international maritime fibre) to the rest of the world.
    - ii. Linking the major population centres within countries and regionally between neighbouring countries.

### National Peering (Internet Exchange Points)

11. The first step in Traffic Aggregation is the creation of National Internet Exchange Points – IXPs.
12. Without an IXP, ISPs have to pay International bandwidth prices for traffic that is actually destined locally within a particular country. In most cases the traffic travels overseas through two satellite hops before it reaches its destination a few kilometres across a city. With an IXP present within a country, each ISP pays HALF the cost to reach each of the other ISPs, since they all meet at a neutral point in the middle. Statistics in Kenya show that initially between 20% and 30% of upstream traffic is actually local. Local data circuits cost a fraction of what Satellite capacity costs. Implementing an IXP has an immediate impact in reducing costs and improving performance through reduced network latency.
13. South Africa has had two IXPs for some years, although other African countries have been slow to realise the benefits. Kenya’s KIXP was the first IXP outside of South Africa and it has sparked similar IXP initiatives to get started in other countries including; Nigeria, Uganda, Mozambique, Ghana, and Tanzania.
14. Creating IXPs is not technically challenging. The challenge is to manage the human dynamics of creating an exchange point. There is a place for commercially run IXPs in more developed markets. However within Africa those IXPs, which have been successfully established and managed are those that are exclusively set up by ISPs for ISPs, and generally through some form of ISP Association (ISPA). The moment that other organisations get involved the whole proposition becomes complex and messy. Donors, Regulators, NGOs, Governments, ISOC Chapters are all major offenders in this regard. The message to these entities is: “Leave it to the Private Sector. Give assistance to IXPs but don’t get actively involved in them”

15. Efforts to encourage the creation of IXPs have been gaining momentum. The East Africa Internet Forum held in Nairobi in August 2002 was a landmark in this respect. It brought together many players from across the continent and saw AfrISPA launch its road map for creating IXPs across the continent ([www.tespok.co.ke/eaif](http://www.tespok.co.ke/eaif)). There are currently 18 countries with IXPs in the making and more emerging by the day.

## Regional Peering (PAVIX)

16. National IXPs are the first “halfway step”, next comes regional peering.
17. Traffic that is not National is by definition International, but this does not mean that the traffic is destined for an IBP’s country of origin. Regional neighbours generally represent a large chunk of an African country’s international trade. So it follows that regional peering would also divert a large proportion of a country’s International Bandwidth requirements away from upstream connections to IBPs and into Regional Exchange Points where the ISPs in each country are effectively paying HALF instead of the arrangement with IBPs where they pay 100%.
18. Facilitating regional peering is somewhat more complex than peering at the National Level. Experience elsewhere ([www.pch.org](http://www.pch.org)) suggests that a model where national Exchange Points in neighbouring countries interconnect with each other directly, does not work. There are a multitude of reasons for this but what they boil down to is that the levels of trust that were required between ISPs at the national level begin to break down when this is extended to regional peering. There is a danger that the costs of operating regional exchanges can actually drag the National Exchanges down. Therefore while the concept of a Pan African Virtual Internet Exchange (PAVIX) is an appealing one, the mode of implementing it needs to be thought through very carefully. There are a few options;
- PAVIX Inc. PAVIX could be established as a separate “for profit” organisation whose sole aim is to link IXPs across the continent. This could be further enhanced by encouraging ISPs to take an equity stake in the organisation. Experience elsewhere suggests that so long as the organisation doing the regional peering is not directly linked to the national IXP it can work extremely well. That being the case a “for profit” model is more attractive than any attempt at a “not for profit super peering house”.
  - Regional Carriers. Encouraging the emergence of regional carriers who establish inter-connection agreements with ISPs in countries that have IXPs and then sell transit traffic to ISPs from different countries may be a more realistic and fruitful approach. This would in effect encourage the creation of African Internet Backbone Providers (AFIBPs) who would in turn have the ability to aggregate sufficient traffic and routes such that the AFIBPs could negotiate with IBPs to provide them with PoPs for transiting traffic into Africa.

## Digital Arteries (& the danger of VSAT)

- 19. Beware of VSAT.** Satellite communications in general and VSAT in particular have been touted by many (including the donor community) as the Holy Grail to solve the Digital Divide. Many western satellite operators are even being encouraged by their governments under a banner of “helping to bridge the digital divide” to target Africa with their services. Operators are keen to oblige since they are suffering reduced profitability at home due to competition from broadband cable operators. In reality when a VSAT operators takes traffic directly from end users in Africa to an IBP’s network they are actually “de-aggregating” traffic and compounding the problem. That is not to say that VSAT does not have a



rôle to play but it must be used for bridging connectivity problems between urban and rural areas within Africa using hubs within Africa. The impact of VSAT used the wrong way has far wider implications. It, for example, reduces hosting of applications within AISP data centres, in favour of hosting applications in IBP data centres.

**20. Digital Arteries.** The creation of Digital Arteries within and out of Africa will be a crucial requirement to allow Intercontinental peering to succeed. The current reliance on satellite communications has a negative impact on both price and quality of international connections. The creation of Fibre Optic Digital arteries in and out of the continent will overcome this. The absence of Digital Fibre Optic Arteries all over Africa is not because of technical obstacles. The problem is that the existing volumes of traffic will not generate sufficient financial return to justify commercial investment into fibre. Overcoming this obstacle an empowering the private sector to invest in fibre optic connectivity is a key part of the Halfway Proposition.

## Who Needs to do What?

**21. ISPs/AfrISPA.** AfrISPA is now a reality and has a road map for rolling out IXPs throughout the continent. The process is being supported by amongst others DFID, Cisco Systems and Packet Clearinghouse. For those countries that have not started the process of creating National Exchange Points, the time has come for ISPs in those countries to get together and to start doing so.

**22. African Governments & Regulators.** Regional Peering and the Emergence of Regional Carriers can only become a reality if Regulators and Policy makers allow the process to take place. They need to ensure that implementation of cross border connectivity within Africa is not hampered by regulatory obstacles. A policy that has created monopolies or duopolies on provision of International connectivity inevitably makes regional connectivity expensive. Where possible the “\*\*opolies” should be removed completely. As a minimum, Regulators need to distinguish between regional and international connectivity to encourage growth of regional traffic and to drive down costs through competition.

**23. NEPAD/AU/ATU.** The role of these various regional geo-political bodies should be to take the agenda of the Halfway Proposition forward. At the domestic level they need to promote the need for regulators and policy makers to pursue policies that will facilitate rather than obstruct the objectives of the Halfway Proposition. At the International level they need to take the Halfway Proposition onto the world stage to influence G8 thinking. G8 countries are actively propagating their policies of globalisation and free markets. They need to be shown that while there may be benefits in some areas to pursuing these policies, there is also some fallout which is directly increasing the digital divide which they so often claim they wish to bridge. If they can do this, they may be able to create sufficient momentum to ensure that G8 countries do come to the negotiating table.

**24. G8 Governments.** The Telecommunications infrastructure in Africa has (for whatever reasons) suffered from massive under investment. Investment at the levels that will be required to achieve results will not be justified by the immediate commercial returns. That being the case there is no incentive for the private sector to make the investment on their own. Since most African governments already have a budget deficit, the only other realistic solution is for G8 donor countries to provide grant funding that when supplemented with private sector funding will facilitate the required levels of investment into infrastructure. If donor grants and substantial loan guarantees are not forthcoming, then African countries

will have no option but to address the matter of reverse subsidies on Internet traffic to Africa through the WTO and the ITU. It would be unfortunate and retrogressive if they were forced into this approach through a lack of donor commitment.

## Summary

25. The current burden of paying for International Internet Bandwidth Costs is unfairly weighted onto countries in Africa. The existence of these reverse subsidies is the single largest factor that is contributing to high bandwidth costs in Africa. A cursory look at the figures will show that these reverse subsidies are costing the continent anything between US\$ 250 and 500 million per annum.
26. Redressing the balance through regulation by the ITU is not the way forward. It would be far better to allow the process to be driven by the private sector. To do so requires certain obstacles to be overcome, building blocks to be put in place, policies to be changed and donor support to be forthcoming. The Halfway Proposition has articulated these requirements into a cohesive plan involving a few specific steps:
  - a. Step 1 – Create Traffic Aggregation within Africa
    - i. Through the creation of Internet Exchange Points
    - ii. Through the emergence of Regional Carriers facilitating regional peering
  - b. Step 2 – Create Digital Arteries to carry the traffic
    - i. Regionally. Regional Fibre Optic Infrastructure to reduce the costs of regional peering
    - ii. Internationally. International Fibre Optic Infrastructure to reduce the costs for IBSSs to establish PoPs at Points Of Aggregation in Africa.
27. This strategy requires the active participation of a number of players:
  - a. ISPs. Through the efforts of AfrISPA, ISPs need to ensure that traffic at the National level is kept that way through cooperating in the creation of effective National IXPs.
  - b. National Regulators & Policy Makers. They need to provide the required enabling environment.
  - c. ATU/AU/NEPAD. These geopolitical organisations need to ensure that governments are providing the necessary enabling environment to allow National and Regional Peering to evolve quickly. They also need to ensure that the International community is fully sensitised to the existence of these reverse subsidies that Africa is currently paying.
  - d. G8 Donor Governments. Donor governments have long lamented about the Digital Divide in Africa without fully acknowledging that its existence is to a large extent the result of fallout from their policies on globalisation and free trade. Reversing the situation will require the financial support of these G8 Donor Governments.
28. There is no doubt that bridging the digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world involves a multitude of issues. However, if we can dramatically reduce connectivity costs we will have gone a long way towards providing the required environment for resolving them. The strategy articulated by the Halfway Proposition **will** achieve this. ●

Richard Bell has been operating an IP Network in Kenya since 1995. His current positions include: 1. Swift Global (Kenya) Limited (Kenya's second largest IP Network Operator) – Managing Director. 2. The Telecommunications Service Providers Association OF Kenya (TESPOK – Kenya's ISP Association) – Secretary. 3. The Kenyan Internet Exchange Point (Kenya's IXP) – Managing Director. 4. The Kenya Network Information Centre (Kenic – Kenya's ccTLD) – Director. 5. AfriNIC (Africa's Emerging Regional Internet Registry) – Director & Eastern Africa Representative. 6. The 1<sup>st</sup> East African Internet Forum – Organising Chair. 7. Nairobi Stock Exchange – Member Of The High Tech Growth Committee.

A vertical decorative border on the left side of the page, featuring a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking triangles and lines in a light gray color.

# 3

## Key African Charters & Conventions

---



# African Charter on Broadcasting 2001



*Acknowledging* the enduring relevance and importance of the Windhoek Declaration to the protection and promotion of freedom of expression and of the media;

*Noting* that freedom of expression includes the right to communicate and access to means of communication;

*Mindful* of the fact that the Windhoek Declaration focuses on the print media and recalling Paragraph 17 of the Windhoek Declaration, which recommended that a similar seminar be convened to address the need for independence and pluralism in radio and television broadcasting;

*Recognising* that the political, economic and technological environment in which the Windhoek Declaration was adopted has changed significantly and that there is a need to complement and expand upon the original Declaration;

*Aware* of the existence of serious barriers to free, independent and pluralistic broadcasting and to the right to communicate through broadcasting in Africa;

*Cognisant of the fact* that for the vast majority of the peoples of Africa, the broadcast media remains the main source of public communication and information;

*Recalling* the fact that the frequency spectrum is a public resource which must be managed in the public interest;

We the Participants of Windhoek + 10 Declare that:

## PART I: GENERAL REGULATORY ISSUES

1. The legal framework for broadcasting should include a clear statement of the principles underpinning broadcast regulation, including promoting respect for freedom of expression, diversity, and the free flow of information and ideas, as well as a three-tier system for broadcasting: public service, commercial and community.
2. All formal powers in the areas of broadcast and telecommunications regulation should be exercised by public authorities which are protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature, by, among other things, an appointments process for members which is open, transparent, involves the participation of civil society, and is not controlled by any particular political party.
3. Decision-making processes about the overall allocation of the frequency spectrum should be open and participatory, and ensure that a fair proportion of the spectrum is allocated to broadcasting uses.
4. The frequencies allocated to broadcasting should be shared equitably among the three tiers of broadcasting.
5. Licensing processes for the allocation of specific frequencies to individual broadcasters should be fair and transparent, and based on clear criteria which include promoting media diversity in ownership and content.



6. Broadcasters should be required to promote and develop local content, which should be defined to include African content, including through the introduction of minimum quotas.
7. States should promote an economic environment that facilitates the development of independent production and diversity in broadcasting.
8. The development of appropriate technology for the reception of broadcasting signals should be promoted.

## **PART II: PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING**

1. All State and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, that are accountable to all strata of the people as represented by an independent board, and that serve the overall public interest, avoiding one-sided reporting and programming in regard to religion, political belief, culture, race and gender.
2. Public service broadcasters should, like broadcasting and telecommunications regulators, be governed by bodies which are protected against interference.
3. The public service mandate of public service broadcasters should clearly defined.
4. The editorial independence of public service broadcasters should be guaranteed.
5. Public service broadcasters should be adequately funded in a manner that protects them from arbitrary interference with their budgets.
6. Without detracting from editorial control over news and current affairs content and in order to promote the development of independent productions and to enhance diversity in programming, public service broadcasters should be required to broadcast minimum quotas of material by independent producers.
7. The transmission infrastructure used by public service broadcasters should be made accessible to all broadcasters under reasonable and non-discriminatory terms.

## **PART III: COMMUNITY BROADCASTING**

1. Community broadcasting is broadcasting which is for, by and about the community, whose ownership and management is representative of the community, which pursues a social development agenda, and which is non-profit.
2. There should be a clear recognition, including by the international community, of the difference between decentralised public broadcasting and community broadcasting.
3. The right of community broadcasters to have access to the Internet, for the benefit of their respective communities, should be promoted.

## **PART IV: TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND CONVERGENCE**

1. The right to communicate includes access to telephones, email, Internet and other telecommunications systems, including through the promotion of community-controlled information communication technology centres.
2. Telecommunications law and policy should promote the goal of universal service and access, including through access clauses in privatisation and liberalisation processes, and proactive measures by the State.
3. The international community and African governments should mobilise resources for funding research to keep abreast of the rapidly changing media and technology

landscape in Africa.

4. African governments should promote the development of online media and African content, including through the formulation of non-restrictive policies on new information and communications technologies.
5. Training of media practitioners in electronic communication, research and publishing skills needs to be supported and expanded, in order to promote access to, and dissemination of, global information.

## **PART V: IMPLEMENTATION**

1. UNESCO should distribute the African Charter on Broadcasting 2001 as broadly as possible, including to stakeholders and the general public, both in Africa and worldwide.
2. Media organisations and civil society in Africa are encouraged to use the Charter as a lobbying tool and as their starting point in the development of national and regional broadcasting policies. To this end media organisations and civil society are encouraged to initiate public awareness campaigns, to form coalitions on broadcasting reform, to formulate broadcasting policies, to develop specific models for regulatory bodies and public service broadcasting, and to lobby relevant official actors.
3. All debates about broadcasting should take into account the needs of the commercial broadcasting sector.
4. UNESCO should undertake an audit of the Charter every five years, given the pace of development in the broadcasting field.
5. UNESCO should raise with member governments the importance of broadcast productions being given special status and recognised as cultural goods under the World Trade Organisation rules.
6. UNESCO should take measures to promote the inclusion of the theme of media, communications and development in an appropriate manner during the UN Summit on the Information Society in 2003. ●



**AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**  
**COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES**

---

## **Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa**

### **Preamble**

*Reaffirming* the fundamental importance of freedom of expression as an individual human right, as a cornerstone of democracy and as a means of ensuring respect for all human rights and freedoms;

*Reaffirming* Article 9 of the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*;

*Desiring* to promote the free flow of information and ideas and greater respect for freedom of expression;

*Convinced* that respect for freedom of expression, as well as the right of access to information held by public bodies and companies, will lead to greater public transparency and accountability, as well as to good governance and the strengthening of democracy;

*Convinced* that laws and customs that repress freedom of expression are a disservice to society;

*Recalling* that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right guaranteed by the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, as well as other international documents and national constitutions;

*Considering* the key role of the media and other means of communication in ensuring full respect for freedom of expression, in promoting the free flow of information and ideas, in assisting people to make informed decisions and in facilitating and strengthening democracy;

*Aware* of the particular importance of the broadcast media in Africa, given its capacity to reach a wide audience due to the comparatively low cost of receiving transmissions and its ability to overcome barriers of illiteracy;

*Noting* that oral traditions, which are rooted in African cultures, lend themselves particularly well to radio broadcasting;

*Noting* the important contribution that can be made to the realisation of the right to freedom of expression by new information and communication technologies;

*Mindful* of the evolving human rights and human development environment in Africa, especially in light of the adoption of the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights*, the principles of the *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, 2000, as well as the significance of the human rights and good governance provisions in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); and

*Recognising* the need to ensure the right to freedom of expression in Africa, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights declares that:

## **I The Guarantee of Freedom of Expression**

1. Freedom of expression and information, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other form of communication, including across frontiers, is a fundamental and inalienable human right and an indispensable component of democracy.
2. Everyone shall have an equal opportunity to exercise the right to freedom of expression and to access information without discrimination.

## **II Interference with Freedom of Expression**

1. No one shall be subject to arbitrary interference with his or her freedom of expression.
2. Any restrictions on freedom of expression shall be provided by law, serve a legitimate interest and be necessary and in a democratic society.

## **III Diversity**

Freedom of expression imposes an obligation on the authorities to take positive measures to promote diversity, which include among other things:

- availability and promotion of a range of information and ideas to the public;
- pluralistic access to the media and other means of communication, including by vulnerable or marginalised groups, such as women, children and refugees, as well as linguistic and cultural groups;
- the promotion and protection of African voices, including through media in local languages; and
- the promotion of the use of local languages in public affairs, including in the courts.

## **IV Freedom of Information**

1. Public bodies hold information not for themselves but as custodians of the public good and everyone has a right to access this information, subject only to clearly defined rules established by law.
2. The right to information shall be guaranteed by law in accordance with the following principles:
  - everyone has the right to access information held by public bodies;
  - everyone has the right to access information held by private bodies which is necessary for the exercise or protection of any right;
  - any refusal to disclose information shall be subject to appeal to an independent body and/or the courts;
  - public bodies shall be required, even in the absence of a request, actively to publish important information of significant public interest;



- no one shall be subject to any sanction for releasing in good faith information on wrongdoing, or that which would disclose a serious threat to health, safety or the environment save where the imposition of sanctions serves a legitimate interest and is necessary in a democratic society; and
  - secrecy laws shall be amended as necessary to comply with freedom of information principles.
3. Everyone has the right to access and update or otherwise correct their personal information, whether it is held by public or by private bodies.

## **V Private Broadcasting**

1. States shall encourage a diverse, independent private broadcasting sector. A State monopoly over broadcasting is not compatible with the right to freedom of expression.
2. The broadcast regulatory system shall encourage private and community broadcasting in accordance with the following principles:
  - there shall be equitable allocation of frequencies between private broadcasting uses, both commercial and community;
  - an independent regulatory body shall be responsible for issuing broadcasting licences and for ensuring observance of licence conditions;
  - licensing processes shall be fair and transparent, and shall seek to promote diversity in broadcasting; and
  - community broadcasting shall be promoted given its potential to broaden access by poor and rural communities to the airwaves.

## **VI Public Broadcasting**

State and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, accountable to the public through the legislature rather than the government, in accordance with the following principles:

- public broadcasters should be governed by a board which is protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature;
- the editorial independence of public service broadcasters should be guaranteed;
- public broadcasters should be adequately funded in a manner that protects them from arbitrary interference with their budgets;
- public broadcasters should strive to ensure that their transmission system covers the whole territory of the country; and
- the public service ambit of public broadcasters should be clearly defined and include an obligation to ensure that the public receive adequate, politically balanced information, particularly during election periods.

## **VII Regulatory Bodies for Broadcast and Telecommunications**

1. Any public authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications regulation should be independent and adequately protected against interference, particularly of a political or economic nature.
2. The appointments process for members of a regulatory body should be open and transparent, involve the participation of civil society, and shall not be controlled by any particular political party.
3. Any public authority that exercises powers in the areas of broadcast or telecommunications should be formally accountable to the public through a multi-party body.

## **VIII Print Media**

1. Any registration system for the print media shall not impose substantive restrictions on the right to freedom of expression.
2. Any print media published by a public authority should be protected adequately against undue political interference.
3. Efforts should be made to increase the scope of circulation of the print media, particularly to rural communities.
4. Media owners and media professionals shall be encouraged to reach agreements to guarantee editorial independence and to prevent commercial considerations from unduly influencing media content.

## **IX Complaints**

1. A public complaints system for print or broadcasting should be available in accordance with the following principles:
  - complaints shall be determined in accordance with established rules and codes of conduct agreed between all stakeholders; and
  - the complaints system shall be widely accessible.
2. Any regulatory body established to hear complaints about media content, including media councils, shall be protected against political, economic or any other undue interference. Its powers shall be administrative in nature and it shall not seek to usurp the role of the courts.
3. Effective self-regulation is the best system for promoting high standards in the media.

## **X Promoting Professionalism**

1. Media practitioners shall be free to organise themselves into unions and associations.
2. The right to express oneself through the media by practising journalism shall not be subject to undue legal restrictions.

## **XI Attacks on Media Practitioners**

1. Attacks such as the murder, kidnapping, intimidation of and threats to media practitioners and others exercising their right to freedom of expression, as well as the material destruction of communications facilities, undermines independent journalism, freedom of expression and the free flow of information to the public.
2. States are under an obligation to take effective measures to prevent such attacks and, when they do occur, to investigate them, to punish perpetrators and to ensure that victims have access to effective remedies.
3. In times of conflict, States shall respect the status of media practitioners as non-combatants.

## **XII Protecting Reputations**

1. States should ensure that their laws relating to defamation conform to the following standards:
  - no one shall be found liable for true statements, opinions or statements regarding public figures which it was reasonable to make in the circumstances;
  - public figures shall be required to tolerate a greater degree of criticism; and
  - sanctions shall never be so severe as to inhibit the right to freedom of expression,

- including by others.
2. Privacy laws shall not inhibit the dissemination of information of public interest.

### **XIII Criminal Measures**

1. States shall review all criminal restrictions on content to ensure that they serve a legitimate interest in a democratic society.
2. Freedom of expression should not be restricted on public order or national security grounds unless there is a real risk of harm to a legitimate interest and there is a close causal link between the risk of harm and the expression.

### **XIV Economic Measures**

1. States shall promote a general economic environment in which the media can flourish.
2. States shall not use their power over the placement of public advertising as a means to interfere with media content.
3. States should adopt effective measures to avoid undue concentration of media ownership, although such measures shall not be so stringent that they inhibit the development of the media sector as a whole.

### **XV Protection of Sources and other journalistic material**

Media practitioners shall not be required to reveal confidential sources of information or to disclose other material held for journalistic purposes except in accordance with the following principles:

- the identity of the source is necessary for the investigation or prosecution of a serious crime, or the defence of a person accused of a criminal offence;
- the information or similar information leading to the same result cannot be obtained elsewhere;
- the public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm to freedom of expression; and
- disclosure has been ordered by a court, after a full hearing.

### **XVI Implementation**

States Parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights should make every effort to give practical effect to these principles.

Adopted by The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, meeting at its 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session, in Banjul, The Gambia, from 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2002. ●

# Internet Rights Charter



The Internet has become a powerful and widespread communication platform. Access to the Internet has increased, in spite of the continued exclusion of marginalised communities and many people in the developing world. At the same time it has become subject to increasing commercialisation, corporate ownership and control.

New information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the Internet, are part of the globalisation process - a process that takes place on unequal terms, and that often increases social and economic inequality between and within countries. At the same time the Internet and related tools can be used for resistance, social mobilisation and development when they are in the hands of people and organisations working for freedom and justice.

In order to realise the empowering role of ICTs, the Charter - developed by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) - aims to ensure that rights of freedom of expression, communication, association and protest on the Internet are protected in practice, enshrined in national, regional and international legislation, and exercised through awareness-raising and action.

The Charter is not comprehensive. It highlights some of the specific issues that individuals, civil society organisations, community media, and policy makers and regulators, need to consider in their efforts to protect the right to communicate freely via the Internet and realise its potential to create a better informed and more just world.

## Theme 1: The Right to Communicate

**1.1 Right to access:** We believe the right to communicate is a fundamental human right. Rights related to access and use of the Internet and telecommunications are extremely important if ordinary people are to have their voices heard. ICTs - and help to use them - effectively must be made available to all<sup>1</sup>.

**1.2 Training to use ICTs:** Most people need some training to be able to use ICTs to meet their needs. Local and national government and international organisations must support and promote the development of free or low-cost training methodologies, courses and materials for citizens on how to use ICTs for social development.

**1.3 Inclusiveness and usability:** ICTs should be designed and developed to ensure that they are accessible to and easily used by marginalised groups, people who are not fully literate, minorities, and people with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities. Innovations should promote the development of people's different capacities.

**1.4 Equity between genders:** Strategies to provide access to ICTs need to advance gender equity by strengthening the economic power, access to education, freedom of

<sup>1</sup> The targets for the percentage of people having access to ICTs will vary by country, region, and technical platform, and should be revised in response to people's changing needs and the emergence of new ICTs.



mobility and freedom of speech of women. Access targets and efforts should protect and advance gender equality.

**1.5 Affordability:** Governments must ensure that all citizens have affordable access to the Internet. The development of telecommunications infrastructure, and the setting of rates, tariffs, and equipment and software taxes, should work to make access a reality for all economic groups.

**1.6 Integration with media rights:** Separate laws are not needed to regulate the Internet. The Internet should be regulated by the same laws that already govern other media to ensure compatibility between the laws in different media, and so that citizens and organisations have the same rights across all forms of ICTs (both new and old).

**1.7 Accessibility of public information:** Government at all levels and international organisations must promote transparency by placing all the information they produce and manage in the public domain. They should guarantee that all information online is disseminated using compatible and open formats and is accessible to people using older computers and slower Internet connections.

**1.8 Rights in the workplace:** Access to the Internet in the workplace must be permitted for the purposes of organising, protecting workers' rights, and education.

**1.9 Developmental impact:** Appropriately-developed Internet infrastructure should help create more egalitarian societies, and provide support for education, health, local business development, good governance and poverty eradication. We should not assume that all technological innovation is beneficial. Civil society organisations, governments and regulatory agencies should evaluate advances to Internet and other information and communication technologies for actual and potential positive and negative impact.

## Theme 2: Freedom of expression and information exchange

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: *"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."*

**2.1 Freedom of expression:** The Internet is a medium for both public and private exchange of views and information. People must be able to express opinions and ideas, and share information freely. The potential of the Internet to allow public participation in governance processes, at international, national and local levels, should be utilised to its full. At the same time, there should be public mechanisms to oppose - or in extreme cases, ban - the publication of content that is harmful to women, children and other vulnerable groups, or content that can incite violence and hatred.

**2.2 Freedom from censorship:** The Internet must be protected from all attempts to censor social and political debate, including the imposing of copyright and intellectual property arguments to silence other voices.

**2.3 Freedom to engage in public protest and debate online:** Everyone should be free to use the Internet to organise and engage in public or political protest and debate.

Governments should publicise email addresses and other methods of electronic communication (e.g. online forms) to facilitate interaction and exchange between elected representatives, government officials and citizens.

### **Theme 3: Diversity, ownership and control of content**

**3.1 Diversity of content:** The Internet is an ideal space for the recording and promotion of culturally and politically diverse content. Training in producing online information should be promoted. Any regulation of the Internet should strengthen content diversity and limit the power of government and/or the private sector to monopolise or dictate content production.

**3.2 Linguistic accessibility:** Websites, online tools and software are dominated by Latin script languages. This limits diversity of content, the development of local content in non-Latin languages, and intercultural exchange and collaboration. New technical developments should encourage local and regional linguistic diversity on the Internet.

### **Theme 4: Free/open source software, technology development and intellectual property rights**

**4.1 Free/open source software:** Working with free and open source software (FOSS) is empowering, builds skills, is more sustainable, and it encourages local innovation. We encourage governments to make policy and regulations that encourage the use of FOSS, especially in the public sector.

**4.2 Technological standards:** New technology development should meet the needs of all sections of society especially those who face limitations and obstacles when they go online (such as communities who use non-Latin scripts, people with disabilities, people with older computers).

**4.3 Intellectual property rights:** Intellectual property rights should protect community and traditional indigenous knowledge from exploitation and should not be used by corporations to extract monopolist profits from information resources.

### **Theme 5: Privacy**

**5.1 Data protection:** Public or private organisations that require personal information from citizens should collect only the minimal data necessary for the minimal period of time needed. Collection must follow a transparent privacy policy which allows people to find out what is collected about them and to correct incorrect information. Data collected must be protected from unauthorised disclosure and security errors should be rectified without delay. Citizens should be warned about the potential ICTs have to manage the information they supply in order to prevent the misuse of their data.

**5.2 Freedom from surveillance:** Citizens and institutions should be able to communicate online free from the threat of surveillance and interception.

**5.3 Right to use encryption:** People communicating via the Internet should have the right to use tools which encode messages to ensure secure, private communication.

## Theme 6: Global, regional and national governance of the Internet

**6.1 Setting and implementing technical standards:** The development and implementation of standards related to the control and operation of the Internet increasingly give undue weight to market influences. Standards that permit or enable the limitation of personal freedoms online must be evaluated in a transparent manner.

**6.2 Transparency and accessibility:** All decision-making processes related to the governance and development of the Internet should be open and accessible, at global, regional and national levels.

**6.3 Participation:** Internet governance and standard-setting bodies must be open to participation and scrutiny by all stakeholders, particularly non-commercial stakeholders.

## Theme 7: Awareness, protection and realisation of rights

**7.1 Rights protection, awareness and education:** The rights of citizens as users of the Internet should be protected by national, regional and global human rights declarations and laws. National, regional and global governing bodies must make information about rights and procedures related to ICTs and infrastructures freely available. This involves public education to inform people of their rights when using ICTs and mechanisms to address rights violations.

**7.2 Recourse when rights are violated:** Individuals and organisations need free, public access to effective and accountable mechanisms for addressing violations of rights. People whose security and privacy is threatened by Internet-based content should be able to use the mechanisms to take action against the producers and publishers of such content. ●

APC.org – Internet and ICTs for Social Justice and Development  
APC Internet Rights  
<http://rights.apc.org>

INTERNET RIGHTS  
<http://rights.apc.org>

# Charter on African Media and the Digital Divide

We the participants of the 6th annual Highway Africa conference representing many of the continent's print and electronic media, journalism trainers, media researchers, media-focused NGOs and international colleagues, meeting in Johannesburg on 21-23 August 2002:

*Cognisant* of the growing digital divides between the developed and developing countries as well as within countries themselves along political, economic, geographic, gender, race and class lines;

of the moves to strengthen and link good governance and socio-economic development in Africa through the African Union and NEPAD;

that access to the Internet and other forms of new media can empower African media to play a more meaningful role in promoting democracy, and in explicating and contextualising crucial issues of poverty, the environment and sustainable development;

of the crucial role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in political, economic, social and cultural development in the age of globalisation and the information society, and on the need for Africa to participate fully in creating an equitable global information society;

*Noting* that freedom of expression is a two way process that includes the right to communicate and access to the means of communication;

*Considering* the various initiatives of the international community to assist in the development of the Internet in Africa, but

*Noting* that economic, political and legislative constraints still hinder the use of information technologies in Africa and that Africa has largely been marginalized from the telecommunication revolution;

*Recalling* the series of African documents addressing the need for African media to embrace and harness ICTs, including:

- The 1997 Dakar Declaration on the Internet and African media;
- The 2001 Yaoundé Declaration in which African ministers responsible for telecommunications adopted a joint strategy for bridging the digital divide that separates rural from urban areas;
- The 2001 African Charter on Broadcasting which called, inter alia, for the promotion of universal access and accelerated ICT training for journalists;
- The 2001 NEPAD Lusaka Declaration which called, inter alia, for the effective participation of African countries in global ICT policy-making;
- The 2002 media forum of the Bamako Conference which addressed, inter alia, the role of the media in the development of the information society; and
- The 2002 Accra Declaration of the Conference on Africa and the Development Challenges of the 21st Century, which expressed, inter alia, concern about the widely varying pace of democratisation in different parts of Africa, particularly concerning



opportunities for citizen participation and expression;

*Accordingly declare* that:

ICTs can help to link Africa internally and globally and are a critical component in addressing Africa's problems. Africa's media are central to these processes;

And *recommend* that:

#### **African governments should**

- adopt ICT policies that promote respect for freedom of expression, diversity and the free flow of information and ideas, including affordable access to telephones, email, Internet and other telecommunications systems. These policies should be developed through an open and participatory process, utilising the media to publicise and promote public debate.

#### **African governments and telecommunications regulators should**

- support the use of technologies that increase availability, accessibility and affordability of Information and Communication Technologies, such as Voice Over Internet Protocol, local rate telephone access to Internet, and other low cost Internet usage;
- support the use of open source software to lower costs, promote local software innovation and reduce dependency on external suppliers;
- accelerate the formulation and implementation of policies and legal frameworks in order to facilitate the speedy transformation from analogue to digital technologies in all areas of electronic media;
- reduce or abolish import tariffs on ICT equipment to support ICTs for development;
- avoid contradictory policies and regulations that continue to entrench digital apartheid.

#### **African media should**

- recognise their social responsibility to accurately inform their audiences of local, regional and continental development issues, including the potential of ICTs therein;
- popularise, publicise and promote public debate on the development of national information and communications policies and infrastructure, locating ICT policies and strategies within broader regional and sub-regional policies and strategies that seek to address structural inequalities;
- raise standards of professionalism and to be creative in applying ICTs to showcase journalistic excellence and innovation, thereby promoting the knowledge capital of Africa's media workers;
- exploit the potential of ICTs as advocacy tools for freedom of expression and other human rights;
- promote the dissemination of African content in a wide range of African languages.

#### **Community media should**

- recognise the potential of ICTs to broaden access by communities to the media;
- utilise the opportunity to build community media in partnership with efforts to promote universal access to ICTs;
- recognise the unique role of community media as a tool to enable and promote community participation in their own development and enhance this role by building partnerships with relevant stakeholders such as civic movements, NGOs and local governments.

#### **The African media and technology community should**

- report and inform on the debate on the relative merits of proprietary and open source

- software for African online users;
- commit to developing and deploying flexible, scalable and powerful web tools to ensure affordable online access for African publishers;
- actively debate and advocate for the use of Open Source and free software in the development of African publishing online.

#### **The international community should**

- ensure active representation and a fair environment for the African media and technological community at international meetings and decision making bodies;
- provide financial, practical and logistical support for the African media and technology community in its efforts to develop infrastructure, capacity and opportunity for African publishing;
- facilitate ICT access and increase capacity building and training opportunities for African journalists to learn electronic research and communication skills, without which they will not be able to provide in-depth information and analysis;
- facilitate online publishing abroad when African governments silence critical media.

#### **Research and training institutions should**

- explore wireless and mobile solutions and other emerging technologies of relevance to Africa's media;
- develop online distance education programmes for journalists unable to be absent from the workplace for long periods;
- adopt a collaborative approach to research in areas critical to achieving continental objectives, including connectivity, ICT usage, online content, and policy.

#### **Finally, we appeal to all the above stakeholders to:**

- work together for the greater good of Africa and to forge a future African information society that openly address the hindrances to continental economic, social, political and environmental development;
- promote Africa's contribution to the world through the use of ICTs by African media;
- work together to promote an inclusive Information Society that promotes socio-economic justice, especially through the process of the World Summit on the Information Society;
- media organisations and civil society should use this Charter as a lobbying tool at international, regional and sub-regional level to promote the equitable development of ICTs in Africa.●

# E-Conference Statement

---

## 1.0 Introduction

The African Youth eConference on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held online at [www.yahoogroups.com/group/wsisyouthafrica](http://www.yahoogroups.com/group/wsisyouthafrica) between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2002. It was co-ordinated by Paradigm Initiative Nigeria and ninety-six (96) young Africans from over 13 countries (from Western, Eastern, Central, Northern and Southern Africa) participated in the eConference which sought to strengthen the role of African Youths in the WSIS processes, and the eventual action plans that will be drawn.

## 2.0 Preamble

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is an initiative of the United Nations. It seeks to provide a framework for governments, non-government organizations and associations, companies and others to address the following question: What values and actions do we embrace to ensure that the Information Society becomes a vehicle for democracy, justice, equality, and respect for personal and social development?

The world's youth rose to this challenge (of building a truly democratic and all-involving Information Society) with the establishment of a Youth Caucus, formed at the first preparatory committee meeting of the WSIS held in Geneva between July 1 and 5, 2002. The youth of Africa are actively involved in this task of building a sustainable tomorrow, coming together as an African Youth Caucus, which is the regional extension of the global Youth Caucus.

## 3.0 Participants of the eConference:

### 3.1 Recognising:

- that Africa has a lot to contribute to the Information Society, and a lot to benefit from it too;
- that we have had much of discussions in Africa but need to move on to acting out our recommendations;
- that today's African youth is tomorrow's African leader, policy maker, parent and responsible citizen;
- that Africa's youth are at a strategic position to see to Africa's inclusion and active participation in the Information Society;
- the various efforts taken by Africa's peoples towards bridging Africa's inter- and intra-digital divide, including but not limited to:
  - the Bamako 2002 African preparatory meeting to the WSIS, May 2002,
  - the African Information Society Initiative (AISI),
  - the UNESCO consultation with Civil Society conducted prior to the African WSIS Bamako preparatory meeting, May 2002,
  - the various country-level and sub-regional consultations seeking to help Africa bridge the digital divide,
  - activities of socially responsible businesses that help bridge the digital divide,
  - the "Half Way Proposition" of African ISPs that seeks to drive down the cost of Internet access.

### **3.2 Endorsing:**

- ITU Africa 2001 Youth (Forum) Declaration, Johannesburg, November 2001;
- WSIS Youth Caucus Statement to *PrepCom 1*, Geneva, July 2002;
- The Bamako 2002 Declaration – African preparatory meeting to the WSIS, May 2002.

### **3.3 Made the following recommendations:**

#### **1. EDUCATION & ILLITERACY**

In Africa (and around the world), the challenge of cultivating an educated society is an enormous task and the issue of ICTs for Education is a good development to help facilitate the education of entire societies as well as nations in Africa via its boundless and resourceful nature.

The creation of multimedia learning experience is vital to education and illiteracy too. They help facilitate learning and motivate learning. The creation of local content of educational material must also be encouraged.

The above-mentioned are issues that have to be addressed in Government policies and provision of basic infrastructure, the active social responsibility and participation of the private sector in terms of resources, training and financing ICTs for education, the creation of governing boards through the partnership of the government, private sector and civil society towards educational development.

#### **2. CONTENT & RURAL INCLUSION**

With the help of Information and Communication Technologies, nations have been “rebuilt” and “reprofiled”. It has become imperative for nations, organisations, governments and individuals to be reborn into a new citizenship, as citizens of a global community. The results of such citizenship have far reaching influence than a National passport could give. However, while the stage is being set for opportunities, our Africa seems to be relaxed and not assuming its role as a major contributor to the new community.

Africa must strive to stamp her authority on the Internet, which is presently dominated by “foreign” languages. Ensuring the availability of online local content will help Africa’s people to push their offers to the same platform where they have pulled information. To ensure rural inclusion, online content should be made available offline through the use of compact discs, print media, community radios and other media that can bring information to the rural areas.

#### **3. GENDER & ICTS**

Africa cannot afford to ignore the potential contributions of her women. The Information Society must be gender-sensitive and African women must be empowered and given the opportunity to express their knowledge and expertise without undue discrimination. We believe that young women must be encouraged to see beyond the false mystery of ICTs and pursue their desires while using ICTs as tools to achieve such purposes.

The formation of gender caucuses is encouraged as it will help stimulate the need for women’s involvement at the highest level possible in the emerging Information Society. An equipped generation of young women will surely produce a new generation of mothers who train their kids with ICT tools. Knowing that rural women are the most disadvantaged (but yet can lead an effective revolution in the integration of ICTs into the society), they have to cross the barrier



of not just a new technology but also traditions and culture which has a stronger hold in the rural areas.

#### **4. HEALTH**

Africa has lost enough people to various health problems that could have been prevented if the right information was made available at the right time – and to the right people. Politically motivated expenditure and projects have to be stopped, as a first step to addressing relevant and realistic needs. Priority must be given to access to quality health care delivery systems, and it is necessary to address pressing health issues using the very best of technology associated to health.

HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns have employed the use of ICTs and they have been proven to be effective with evidence of declining prevalence rates in some African countries. It is wise therefore to upgrade the awareness campaign of preventive measures against other pressing health issues on the continent like malaria, polio, etc. All attempts to introduce and sustain the quality that will be achieved through the use of ICTs in health must be evidently accessible in terms of location and cost.

#### **5. BRAIN DRAIN**

The issue of brain drain is very prevalent in developing worlds. This worm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the African nations has to be addressed. It is a menace that has left Africa behind in substantial development with a lot of skilled Africans seeking *refuge* living outside the continent.

Youths must be empowered in entrepreneurship with the availability of relevant mentorship and we must embrace ICT in our educational system, as it is a sure way of reaching the grassroots with globally competitive information. We also cannot leave all the work to the government, we must begin to think of what we can contribute to Africa and not only what we can get from her. If Africa's people, private sector, civil society and governments collaboratively create an enabling environment, the brain drain phenomenon can be reversed, with Africa benefiting from the wealth of her own!

#### **6. WAR & ICTS**

While we do not deny the existence of wars and unpeaceful practices in some countries in Africa, we also acknowledge the role that proper information can play in promoting peace. We believe that at the root of every rivalry is some misunderstanding, which is traceable to information manipulation. If the proper information is made available (using both old and new ICTs) peaceful resolution will be an evident option in conflicts between nations, individuals and groups.

African governments must embrace the potentials of ICTs in order to promote peace and ensure that misinformation does not end in uprisings or unpeaceful practices. From the email announcing the resolution of boundary issues to the town crier's message of peace, both old and new media will help Africa in its battle against wars and hope for peace.

#### **7. ACCESS**

One of the priorities of the WSIS is 'to promote the urgently needed access of all the world's

inhabitants to ICTs for development'. This involves the provision of affordable and appropriate ICT infrastructure. ICTs have the potential of increasing the rate and levels of human development in Africa especially by interconnecting and the rest of the world into a unified society but the uneven distribution of both the ICT tools and ICT skills should be addressed. This uneven distribution is notable between developing nations and the developed world as well within African nations; where the digital divide is apparent between rural and urban areas, based on gender, literacy levels and other factors.

In order to improve access to ICTs in Africa, inclusive ICT policies should be developed in a participatory manner. Governments should subsidise access for the poor and funding for infrastructure must be prioritised, competition between service providers should be encouraged (in order to increase options and lower costs), deliberate attention should be given to rural/marginalised areas of Africa and gender-based barriers to access should be addressed through policy and projects.

## **8. ETHICS & INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS**

Issues of ethics and intellectual property cannot be ignored if development of ICT is to take place in our part of the world. In an environment like Africa, where systems are not in place to combat piracy, it is an uphill struggle for creative minds to enjoy the fruits of their labour. All stakeholders must ensure that the creative works produced by Africans – young or old – are protected against piracy.

While protecting the right of the innovator, ethical balances must be ensured in order not to create unpleasant bondage in the name of protection.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

As young people and true citizens of Africa, we commit to the emergence of the Africa of our dreams one that we can be proud to call home. Based on our discussions, we have decided to:

- continue deliberations on this statement in order to produce a workable plan of action;
- identify, encourage and network existing youth-led initiatives that tie into the objectives of the Information Society;
- partner with existing networks, organisations and agencies in order to realise Information Society-specific objectives as it relates to Africa;
- encourage national-level consultations between youth and government to accelerate Africa's involvement in the WSIS; and
- hold our governments responsible (in such manners as are appropriate) for their duties as the custodians of much of our nations' resources. ●