

HiveColab



**UGANDA NATIONAL INTERNET
GOVERNANCE FORUM 2011 HELD
AT HIVE COLAB, NAKAWA**

*Harnessing Internet Development in
Uganda*

Introduction

This report presents the proceedings and key issues that emerged from the Uganda Internet Governance Forum (UIGF) held on August 10, 2011 at Hive Colab Nakawa, Kampala. The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), in conjunction with Hive Colab and the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), organized the Forum under the theme “Harnessing Internet Development.”

The Uganda IGF is a multi-stakeholder Forum open to representatives from Governments, NGOs, academia, private sector, as well as any other entities and individuals interested in Internet Governance issues. Since its inauguration in 2008, Uganda Internet Governance Forum (IGF) process has brought together participants from various sectors to identify, explore and build consensus around common internet governance issues in the country. To date, four national IGFs have been held in Uganda. Last year, the Ugandan partners organised the regional East African IGF in Kampala, Uganda, which drew hundreds of participants from the region and from the global internet community. This year, the national forum continued to raise awareness on IG issues in Uganda, establish IG issues relevant to Uganda and define new and emerging IG issues in the country.

This report will feed into the 2011 regional East African IGF due to take place in Kigali, Rwanda on August 17^t-18^t, 2011. The idea is to popularise and stir up critical national IG issues on a regional level and then elevate them to the global Internet Governance forum to be held later on in the year.

The National Information Technology Authority (NITA-U) and the Ministry of ICT (MoICT)

In his opening remarks, James Saaka, the Executive Director of the National Information and Technology Authority Uganda (NITA-U), said that the recently established Authority is working hard to ensure that it meets its mandate.

Mr. Saaka said that the Ugandan cyber laws - the Electronic Transactions Act, the Electronic Signatures Act, the Interception of Communications law and the Computer Misuse Act –had been assented to by the President. Copies of these laws are now available for purchase from major bookshops. However, only the Computer Misuse Law is operational while regulations for the others are yet to be developed.

Regarding government projects, it was noted that phase one of the establishment of the District Business Information Centres (DBIC) is complete. The DBICs are one-stop centres intended to provide supply-driven services to the community at large and specific demand-driven services required by the surrounding business community. DBICs have been established in six (6) Districts: Lira, Iganga, Rukungiri, Mityana, Kamwenge and Busia. NITA-U has planned for the rollout of DBICS in three (3) new Districts this financial year.

The rollout of the National Data Transmission Backbone Infrastructure and e-Government Infrastructure Project (NBI/EGI), whose major aims are to connect all major towns within the country onto an Optical Fibre Cable based Network and to connect Ministries and Government Departments onto the e-Government Network, is on going. Phase One of the project saw the laying of 168kms of fibre optic cable to link 5 towns: Mukono, Bombo, Entebbe and Jinja to Kampala. Transmission equipment is in place in all 5 towns. Within Kampala and Entebbe, cable is in place linking 27 ministries and government departments.

Phase Two of the NBI/EGI project is underway and scheduled for completion in September 2011. It involves the laying of 1,477 KM of additional Optical Fibre Cable in the districts of Mbale, Kumi, Soroti, Lira, Gulu, Nimule, Masindi, Hoima, Kyenjojo, Fort Portal, Kasese, Bushenyi, Mbarara, Nakasongola and Luwero. A map detailing the project coverage is now available on the NITA-U website. Mr. Saaka further welcomed feedback from stakeholders, noting that there were high expectations from the body and a repository about government ICT projects was being developed and would be made accessible to the public in due course.

Meanwhile, Gloria Katuuku, an official of the ICT Ministry, acknowledged that the Government of Uganda has identified ICT as one of the main pillars of socioeconomic development. As such, Ms Katuku highlighted the key strategies focusing on IG under development, which she said included the National Information Security Strategy to be implemented by NITA-U; the IPv6 strategy awaiting approval from the ICT Minister and the Dot Ug ccTLD Management strategy, which is available on the Ministry Website www.ict.go.ug for comments.

Understanding the Potential of Cloud Computing in Promoting eCommerce in Uganda

Douglas Onyango of Kampala Mart made the case for cloud computing in Uganda. He described it as the use of a third party service to perform computing needs, such as networks, servers, storage, applications and others. The benefits of cloud computing include agility in provisions; reduced costs; resource pooling; and rapid elasticity. However, there are also limitations such as loss of control and privacy, performance and reliability, and security.

Cloud computing services are in their infant stage in Uganda. Computer Frontiers International (CF) offers some cloud computing facilities and infrastructure. NITA-U has the concept in the works but it is unclear whether once complete, the services will be available on the open market.

The Power of Social Media in Citizen Empowerment

WOUGNET's Maureen Agena presented on the potentials of social media in Uganda and beyond. Acknowledging that many people have been empowered in numerous ways by these new technologies, Ms Agena noted that it is important for citizens to understand the usefulness and positive impact of social media and not simply just jump on the "social media bandwagon". Skills to effectively use mediums such as Facebook, Blogs and Twitter are essential in exploiting the full potential of the combination of people, technology and information. As witnessed during the recent walk-to-work protests¹ and election monitoring initiatives, Ugandans have united through social media in numerous social movements. By virtue of being internet-based, there are numerous risks inherent in social media. As with cloud computing, security and privacy concerns persist. The continued use of social media also has its social and psychological implications; a strong passion for their use could lead into an addiction.

The kind of Internet Needed in Uganda

The advent of the internet has numerous implications for developing countries such as Uganda. In order for the Internet to remain open, innovative and continue to grow, Daniel Stern of HiveColab and Mobile Monday Kampala emphasised the need to rely on established global internet institutions for guidance and direction. These institutions, key to the development Uganda's IG, include the Internet Society, Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). These organizations continue to play a major role in the design and operation of the Internet and would help address Uganda's IG issues such as: Who will help define the Internet's evolution? What role should government and private industry play? How do we provide greater bandwidth and access? What does online privacy mean in the age of Facebook and Wikileaks?

The Ugandan ICT fraternity recognises that the multi-stakeholder process taken by global Internet

¹ The walk-to-work protests aimed at calling for government to reduce fuel and food prices. They were initiated the Activists for Change group, a consortium of politicians and civil society organizations that seeks to effect democratic change of government through mobilizing the masses and setting in motion a process to remove obstacles to free and fair elections by peacefully dismantling the pillars of the authoritarian regime in Uganda and erecting the pillars of democratic rule. The group operates a Facebook groups which has over 5,000 members and allows for members to write and comment any national issue.

institutions, such as ISOC, IETF, IAB, ICANN, W3C, has given us the Internet that we enjoy today. Therefore, in light of recent statements by some international organizations and governments, intimating that they would like to be able to regulate the Internet more directly, we would urge our governments and their relevant authorities to be vigilant to ensure that the above-mentioned established global Internet institutions be supported to provide the leadership for the Internet's continued development, through the multi-stakeholder approach; whereby it will be preserved and protected and thus be enabled to be enhanced and grow to fulfill the hoped for aim of Internet for all.

Issues emerging from the forum

Participants were concerned that the lines of communication between the government and the ICT fraternity remain poor. Information made available was often out of date, trickled down very slowly and/or was often labelled 'classified'. Participants were unanimous in asking the government to adopt new ICT tools and channels for communicating and engaging with all stakeholders on national matters and make information open and free for all to access. Informative and interactive websites was one of the suggestions. The use of social media tools by the government's PR offices was encouraged.

As Uganda's mobile penetration continues to grow and closely associated, mobile internet, the Government was encouraged to address the total cost of ownership (TCO) of mobile handsets. As witnessed in Kenya, the removal of import duties, resulting in lower TCO of handsets led to higher mobile phone penetration. It is believed that the increased availability of mobile phones can drive economic growth and ultimately increase the size of a country's overall tax base. The recent move to ban the importation of used computers was also seen as a huge blow to the education sector, among others.

Participants called for more government participation in ICT fraternity dialogues, workshops and events such as the IGF. These privately organised events are attended by numerous experts eager to volunteer their knowledge and expertise – local and international - to ensure the success of the Government's ICT initiatives. In addition, the events are an excellent platform not only for knowledge sharing and information communication, but also for government to scout for experienced and suitably qualified individuals/organisation either to collaborate with or add to its work force.

Awareness and advocacy on all matters ICT related is crucial. Promoting access and affordability can only go so far if citizens remain ignorant of the power of technology.

Issues arising from the online discussions

- Following on from last year, there was a renewed call for investment in local content development and creating awareness of local content development.
- Broadband internet access in Uganda remains broadly undefined. It is unclear whether the nation reached the 256 Kbit/s mark.
- Call for multi-stakeholder partnerships in the implementation of the recently effected cyber laws. There is a need for all parties to work with authorities to have these laws fully operational. Indeed, there are insufficient human, financial and technological resources to enforce these laws. The enforcement authorities should invest in a digital forensics lab and actively engage academia in cyber security research. Furthermore, the citizenry should be sensitized about the existence of these laws and their implications.
- Mobile phone security remained paramount in the discussions. Whereas some telecommunications providers have embarked on registering mobile phone subscribers with little clarity on the process, it was raised that Sim card registration should be integrated with a functional national ID system. Uganda does not have national IDs.
- There is lack of synergy in databases amongst different government ministries as it is not clear how the different personal data collected by different ministries is used.

Way forward

- The profile of the national IGF needs to be raised beyond just enthusiasts. It was suggested that a Uganda IGF website, newsletter and an IGF handbook detailing key issues, and progress, should be developed. Given that IG issues are at the heart of NITA-U and MoICT, these institutions should contribute to the funding pool to national support IGF processes..
- It should be established whether East African partner IG implementations apply across the region as per the East African Community.
- Remote participation in national, regional and the global IGF forums should be implemented. People, unable to attend would benefit greatly from facilities such as live streaming and java chat windows.