



7th Ministerial Round Table



“Affordable and Equitable
Broadband Access for
Transformative Learning”

Kampala
Uganda
May 28
2014

Communiqué



In conjunction with



eLearning
Africa

Hosted by



the Republic of Uganda

Organised by



Sponsor



In partnership with



Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Dinner Sponsor



Communiqué

This Seventh Ministerial Round Table (MRT) on “Affordable and Equitable Broadband Access for Transformative Learning” was hosted by the Government of Uganda at eLearning Africa in Kampala, Uganda, on 28 May 2014. It was attended by Ministers, Deputy Ministers and ministerial representatives of Basic and Higher Education, ICT, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Post, Telecommunications and ICT from Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Observations:

The Round Table observed the following positive implications of access to broadband in Africa:

- There is a direct correlation between investment in broadband infrastructure and economic growth. Specifically, that a ten per cent increase in investment in broadband infrastructure can guarantee a 1.3 per cent increase in economic growth.
- It was further noted that free access leads to even more growth, thereby generating higher tax revenues.
- ICTs can contribute to a decrease in unemployment.

However, it was also noted that without concerted efforts to ensure inclusivity, the developmental benefits of increased broadband access will go untapped. Ministers stated that:

- Affordable broadband must be accessible to all and not just a selected few.
- There is a need to address digital illiteracy because we cannot afford not to operate in a digital enabled economy.
- Last mile connectivity is not only vital, but practical.
- Affordability is a critical issue which is particularly important for inclusive development.



The Round Table also highlighted some problems facing the development of ICTs in Africa, such as:

- Africa is lagging behind other regions in terms of Internet usage. Factors limiting Internet usage are, among others: high cost, lack of a quality and affordable energy sources and low digital literacy.
- It was pointed out as an anomaly that the lowest income countries in Africa often have the highest bandwidth costs.
- Many African countries are not meeting the development targets set out by the Millennium Development Goals.
- There is a great need to invest in broadband Internet access and other infrastructures across the Continent.

However, Ministers expressed their conviction that there is no choice other than to rise to these challenges; failure is not an option. As one speaker noted, Africa has no need to despair, there is a silver lining to be found. Round Table participants also observed that:

- Africa produced mankind’s very first technologies and now is the time for the Continent to reassert itself as a technology producer.
- Internet usage in Africa is increasing, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Africa is leading in terms of overall Internet growth, with 52 million Facebook users and increasing uptake of mobile and smart phone usage.



Recommendations:

Participants of the MRT made a series of recommendations with regard to priorities and methods for improving infrastructure in Africa:

- ❖ Creating a single ICT and telecommunications market in Africa should be a main strategic objective for all nations. This will require an interconnected broadband structure based on harmonised ICT and telecommunication policies.
- ❖ Efforts should be made to interconnect African countries with a network of terrestrial cables to link the submarine cables that have landed on the coast.
- ❖ Infrastructure sharing should be encouraged between operators and countries through practices such as co-locating with Telcos.
- ❖ More public/private partnerships (PPPs) are necessary to ensure that the best use is made of available resources and that change is sustainable and economical.
- ❖ However, although the private sector has a vital role to play, it is states that should provide backbone infrastructure.
- ❖ Focus on demand-side policies, as well as supply-side.
- ❖ Last mile connectivity through deployment of TV White Spaces technology that should be explored, tested and investigated.

Recommendations were also made with regards to cooperation, content and stakeholder engagement:

- ❖ Proactive and integrated think-thanks should be encouraged.
- ❖ ICT think-tanks should engage all stakeholders in education and ICT sectors.
- ❖ Stakeholders should be engaged to shape policy.



9th International Conference on ICT for
Development, Education & Training
www.elearning-africa.com

7th Ministerial Round Table "Affordable and Equitable Broadband Access for Transformative Learning"

May 28, 2014

Munyonyo Commonwealth Resort, Kampala, Uganda



- ❖ More local and relevant content should be produced by all countries.
- ❖ Governments need to realise that the private sector is the real engine for producing content and more needs to be done to encourage such partnerships.
- ❖ There is no need for pilots that repeat research already completed elsewhere, but there is a need for sustainable projects designed for local contexts within Africa.
- ❖ Need for support for national ICT entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Innovation aimed at developing smart mobile devices for ALL should be strongly supported.
- ❖ IT actors in all sectors must work together to highlight the progress being made in their countries. Knowledge sharing must be encouraged and facilitated.
- ❖ Try to get early wins and communicate the benefits.
- ❖ Ministers were urged to analyse the Common African Position (CAP) of the post-2015 development agenda, especially in the use and implementation of ICTs to promote eLearning in Africa for the implementation of the CAP. They are further urged to establish a close working relationship with the AU in owning the CAP and its priorities, especially with respect the role of ICTs.

Participants highlighted the importance of inclusivity and sustainability, making the following recommendations:

- ❖ More focus is need on inclusivity and connecting the unconnected.
- ❖ More attention should be paid to ensuring that initiatives are scalable and sustainable, as well as being suited to the needs of end-users.
- ❖ ICT policy and initiatives should not be conceived in isolation from wider development discussions, with particular reference made to the Beijing+20 review, which focuses on women's empowerment and gender inclusivity.
- ❖ To ensure that the true benefits of these changes are felt by all, good governance is absolutely vital. Issues of corruption and lack of accountability must be taken seriously and training that makes use of ICTs can be instrumental here.

