



# iConnect Africa

ICTs at work

Volume 1, Issue 2, August 2002

## A Woman's Work is Never Done!.....In The Information Age

*Mme. Marie Koumandial Nanalbaye was a teacher as well as a civil society/women's activist before becoming a Member of Parliament (MP) in the Republic of Chad in 1997. She is currently in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, attending a six-month CISCO/infoDev/ECA residential Networking course at the Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA) and intends to promote ICT issues back in her country upon her return. In this interview with iConnect Africa, Mme. Nanalbaye expresses her views and opinions on how she sees the development of ICTs in her country and access by women to applications and services.*

**ICconnect Africa:** What motivated you to apply for the Cisco course?

**MKN:** I observed both in my professional life and as a women's leader that in this third millennium my knowledge on ICTs was limited. After having been elected to the National Assembly from April 1997 to the present, I have become more aware of the importance of ICTs and became even more convinced that it was a necessity when I participated in an International Conference of Parliamentarians in Stockholm, Sweden, on the theme "The electronic commerce: vision of a parliamentarian" in January 2002. This motivated me to apply for the CISCO course vowing to use whatever knowledge gained to support my fellow women, especially those involved in enterprise as they do not yet have that access.

**ICconnect Africa:** How do you see the development of ICTs in your country, including access by women?

**MKN:** I can say without any hesitation whatsoever that ICTs are not yet fully exploited in Chad. Compared to some other African countries that I have had the chance to visit, Chad lags behind. Computers are a luxury and not anybody can afford them, let alone women, who tend not to have too many resources. As a parliamentarian, I had to decide by myself to learn how to manipulate a computer and that is how I learned about some highly used software. Most of my colleagues are ignorant about all of this. Despite the creation of some private institutions, such as the Chamber of Commerce that train the youth in computer science, there is only one University faculty, producing 20 graduates per year for the whole country. This faculty does not offer specialization in networking, being offered here. With this, I can only let you imagine the significance of this Cisco training programme for me and my country.

Speaking about the role of women in ICTs, I can only say a lot needs to be done. We know that many are in the civil service and in private institutions occupying low-level positions. Even if they are at a higher level, they still don't properly understand the importance of ICTs. For instance, for a long time now in Chad, the scientific field was exclusively the male preserve and this sociocultural attitude has resulted in Chadian women being considered secondary citizens. Furthermore, women, despite their willingness to learn have to face many obstacles including the high costs of training. Therefore, there is need sensitization campaigns with financial assistance to cover the costs of trainings in order to promote women's access to ICTs. While thanking those responsible for having initiated this training for women under the ITCA and Cisco programme, I hereby, call upon them to develop a similar ICT project for Chadian women. I hope with my colleagues and members of the "Reseau des Parlementaires Tchadiens Pour la Population et le Développement (RPTPD)", we will be able to help our Government move in this direction giving ICTs high priority for the sake of the country's development.

**ICconnect Africa:** Are there any ICT policy or plan in Chad? How do you see the role of Parliament in this direction and in supporting the policy process?

**MKN:** As I already mentioned above, ICTs are not yet widespread in Chad. However, my experience here and given my position as a parliamentarian, I can influence certain developments such the

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

**First Preparatory Conference (PrepCom 1) of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held, 1-5 July 2002, Geneva, Switzerland.** Over 800 delegates from 133 countries attended PrepCom 1. Libya, Mali, South Africa and Tunisia, members of the PrepCom 1 Bureau elected Mr. Adama Samassekou, President of the Academy of African Languages (ACALAN) and former Minister of Education of Mali, as its President, which was a recommendation from the Bamako 2002 Declaration. The High-Level Summit Organizing Committee (HLSOC) defined a number of topics for deliberation, including infrastructure, gateways, services and applications, users needs, policies and frameworks, ICTs and education, and ICTs in good governance. Given the limited time in reaching a consensus on these themes, a two to three day meeting is scheduled for autumn this year to finalize the themes. The African Regional Bureau met several times to explore ways and means to implement the Bamako 2002 Declaration as input towards the World Summit. ECA will serve as the secretariat for Africa's participation in WSIS activities and ensuring a common action plan for the continent.

**South African ICT NGO develops an IT training support initiative for Southern African countries.** South Africa's Community Education Computer Society (CECS), a South African based ICT training NGO, is developing an IT training support initiative for countries in Southern Africa. Funded by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, the project works with local organisations in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, and Zambia. The objectives of the programme include delivering accredited IT Literacy programmes in OSISA countries, establishing local centres, which are democratically managed and operated, and delivering train-the-trainer courses for local country centers. Contact person: Arnold Pietersen [cecs@wn.apc.org] Read more: [http://www.icconnectonline.org/base/ic\\_show\\_news?id=1868](http://www.icconnectonline.org/base/ic_show_news?id=1868)

**ECA Team finalists in 2002 World Technology Awards.** In the seventh edition of the PICTA bulletin, ECA's nomination for the World Technology Network Award was mentioned. The PICTA Bulletin is pleased to announce that the ECA team made up of K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary, Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, Director, Development Information Services Division (DISD), and Aida Opoku-Mensah, Promoting ICT for Development Team Leader, were voted official finalists for the 2002 World Technology Awards for Policy. The awards ceremony was held as part of the 2002 World Technology Summit, which brought together approximately, two hundred of the world's most

innovative technology players, including - technologists, entrepreneurs, industrialists, scientists, financiers, journalists, and policy-makers. The last evening of the Summit was capped by a gala ceremony during which the awards were presented to recognize those involved in technology who are taking actions and making decisions with the greatest likely long-term impact on business and society.

**Centre for Connectivity in Africa and an e-Policy Resource Centre to be created.** Canada will contribute \$25 million over three years and the two centres will serve as resources for African institutions. Initial funding will be provided to ECA to establish links among African institutions and serve as a focal point to channel demand from these institutions and individuals, such as policy experts, program managers and legislative drafters seeking expertise in a given subject area. The Centre will be supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and will work with the "Open Knowledge Network", a civil society initiative of the G8 Digital Opportunities Task Force to support the creation of local content and applications in Africa. For more information contact: Richard Fuchs (rfuchs@idrc.ca) or URL <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/e-policy/Canada.htm>.

**Makerere University: Integrating ICT in all the university functions.** The University's End-User Training programme, aimed at equipping all members of the university community with computer skills has started. In addition, the data communication infrastructure on the main campus is complete, with other targeted campuses under this scheme to be completed by the end of 2002. The current major undertaking is the implementation of the four main information systems for the Library, Academic Records, Finance, and Human Resource. Since students are recognized as being at the centre of the process, the University's e-learning sub-project has been given a jump-start, with a training of trainers course already completed. However, the continuing challenge is the very low number of computers available for student use. SIDA/SAREC, NORAD and USAID support this integrated ICT initiative of Makerere. More details available at: <http://www.makerere.ac.ug/makict> and <http://www.makerere.ac.ug/dicts>. Further contacts: Mrs Nora Mulira (nora@dicts.mak.ac.ug), Deputy Director, Directorate for ICT Support (DICTS) Dr. F F Tusbira (Director, DICTS) [tusu@dicts.mak.ac.ug](mailto:tusu@dicts.mak.ac.ug).

**Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) supports AISI Media Awards Programme.** ECA is launching the AISI Media awards aimed at encouraging report-

ing by African journalists on ICT for development issues within the context of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) has made a contribution to the award, which has assisted in kick-starting the process. An announcement was made recently inviting submissions and nominations. For more information visit [www.uneca.org/aisi/mediaaward.htm](http://www.uneca.org/aisi/mediaaward.htm).

**Media and ICT seminar held in Accra as part of follow-up to Bamako 2002 Media Forum.** This event entitled Enlisting the Press as a Partner in promoting ICT in Ghana, brought together approximately sixty-six participants (66). Resources persons and speakers were drawn from the media, government, international development agencies and the private ICT sector. The speakers reiterated calls for Ghanaian journalists to speed up their access to ICTs as well as enhance their reporting skills on the subject matter. Participants at the end of the seminar called on Parliament, NGOs, the Press, the Private Sector and general civil society to join hands in moving the ICT agenda forward in Ghana, whilst noting the pivotal role of the Government. Calls were also made for the President and his cabinet to take clear, definite and pragmatic steps to facilitate low cost access to ICT resources, and the Internet, in the country. In particular, the workshop participants recommended the establishment of Presidential Special ICT Initiative similar to other initiatives for Cassava and Garments. Ghanaian journalist Kwami Ahiabenu II, who attended the pre-conference Media Forum during Bamako 2002, initiated the event. For further details contact, Kwami Ahiabenu II ([kwami@aitecafrica.com](mailto:kwami@aitecafrica.com)).

**Official launch of second Cisco Internet Networking Technology Course for African Women in Addis.** The training course, which follows the established curriculum of the Cisco Networking Academy programme, targets this time 20 francophone African women drawn from 20 countries. The first group of trainees, 26 African women from 16 English-speaking countries, had earlier graduated from ITCA's first ever Cisco Internet Networking Academy, after a six-month training at the ECA. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, DISD Director, stated that the programme, which mainly aims at reversing the current trend of marginalisation of African women's access to and use of new information and communication technologies, would equip trainees with skills that would enrich their professional careers and produce entrepreneurial opportunities too in their countries.

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## SPOTLIGHT: Kenya Information Society (KIS)

Kenya Information Society (KIS) launched its 2002/2003 operational plan in April 2002 to exploit the expanding space of ICT sector reform by the Kenya government to hasten the evolution of the information age says Mr Muriuki Mureithi the Secretary and Coordinator of KIS.

In preparing the operational plan, KIS was guided by the need to build continuity on its experiences in the past three years and from those experiences strengthen the institutional infrastructure of KIS and its capacity as a repository of information and knowledge on information society. In addition, other strategic plans that KIS intends to implement include, to;

- Demonstrate the opportunities offered by the information society through the deployment of more telecentres. One telecentre is already operational.
- Encourage thematic and industry specific debate to catalyse linkages in the information society value-chain
- Stimulate the vision of a future information society through the youth
- Encourage debate to resolve and address societal disparities that the information society may occasion by gender or age
- Create synergistic partnerships to leverage its efforts to deploy increased resources from its supporters and its membership

To achieve the ambitious strategic objectives, KIS has organised a number of activities for the year. One of the largest projects is E-competition, which will benchmark the perception of the youth on the information society. The output will form a basis under which KIS can selectively target the youth and remould or create synergy in their perception to make them builders of the information society and more importantly owners of the process. The pilot project will target secondary schools within Nairobi and will be launched in June 2002. In the coming years, E-competition will progressively roll out to include all secondary schools in the country.

Other projects for the year include;

- Revamp the KIS website ([www.kis.or.ke](http://www.kis.or.ke)) to be reorganised and continuously updated depicting current activities of KIS and be a definitive shop window of information society activities and initiatives.
- Establish an e-centre as resource centre of information society to backstop researchers, analysts and students
- Prepare and present to the Constitution of Kenya Review Committee a paper on the broad issues of information access. As Kenya reviews its 40 year old constitution, KIS is preparing a paper requesting the Review Committee to address information access as a constitutional issue
- Facilitate and establish of a network to support ICT entrepreneurship in the country. In February 2002, KIS and Balancing Act (<http://www.balancingact-africa.com>)

organised a highly successful workshop on ICT entrepreneurship and intends to build from the outcome of the workshop.

- Direct a national stakeholder consortium to study applications of ICTs in education to formulate a national strategy. Already KIS has brought together key stakeholders in education to scope the ICTs scenario in the education sector in secondary and primary schools in Jan 31st 2002. The stakeholders mandated KIS to develop a long-term strategy on the ICTs and education. At present, KIS is working closely with Schoolnet Africa ([www.schoolnet africa.org](http://www.schoolnet africa.org)) to launch Schoolnet Kenya.

The Kenyan initiative draws its inspiration from African Information Society initiative (AISI) and the recognition of the advances in ICTs and the opportunities they offer governments and its citizens to access to education, health, commerce and improved governance for development. KIS recognises the lack of adequate infrastructure, enabling environment and even the capacity to exploit these opportunities in Kenya. KIS therefore takes off from this perspective, firmly grounded on local realities, but learning from best practices in Africa and beyond. KIS is funded with financial and logistic support by the British Council in Kenya.

With the ongoing sector reform in Kenya, ICT infrastructure has expanded rapidly with cellular for example rising from 10 000 customers in June 2000 to 900 000 in June 2002 and expected to exceed a million customers by September 2002. ISPs licensed have increased to 80 though less than 20 are operational, licensing of VSATs for corporate data (international)

public data (national) and finally progressive liberalisation of the customer access. Indeed, the new regime of telecom sector licensing launched by the Communications Commission of Kenya in December 2001 will progressively reduce monopoly on data and broadband access in the market. Challenges however remain in the international segment; KIS believes that this will fall away soon. With the increasing expansion of infrastructure, KIS has now changed focus from infrastructure lobby issues to the exploitation of the infrastructure by building awareness on ICT applications hence the focus on education and ICTs in the current annual plan.

Over and above the ongoing reform in the telecommunications sector, the government has moved fast to internalise ICT in its governance structure. In the current National Development Plan 2002-2007, the government has for the first time dedicated a whole chapter on ICTs recognising ICTs firstly as a tool for efficient management of the government operations and secondly as a cross-cutting infrastructure to aid other economic sectors. This thrust is also entrenched in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. To fully appreciate the present status, the government has launched a two-pronged process - a comprehensive e-readiness survey launched in September 2001 and an e-government tender launched in February 2002.

The outcome of the two projects will set the direction for an e-Kenya and KIS is pleased to exploit the space created by the government and play a role in the process. More info: Muriuki Mureithi ([summit@africanonline.co.ke](mailto:summit@africanonline.co.ke))

## THE QUARTERLY STORY: eBusiness to change the lives of Tanzanian farmers

In Tanzania, a pioneering project seeks to empower farmers and strengthen rural economies through e-business. The Business Information Services (BIS) Project aims to position itself as a reliable source of information of 'business value' to farmers and small and medium-scale enterprises in the rural areas. The Project intends to harness information and communication technologies (ICTs) to narrow the digital divide between urban and rural areas where for example mobile phones - that people in town take for granted - are scarce or non-existent. With support from IICD, Business Information Services is contributing to Tanzania's national effort to reduce poverty, especially in rural areas. The Project noted that in spite of the economic potential of the agricultural sector, the majority of farmers live below the poverty line. This indicates that there are some con-

straints in taking advantage of better product prices, either through lack of information or through bottlenecks in the distribution system. Acknowledging the vital role of the agricultural sector to the country's socio-economic growth, the Project owners hope to contribute significantly towards the national effort to alleviate poverty. According to the Project manager, the lack of ICT is a barrier to development and an obstacle to the alleviation of poverty that pervades much of rural Tanzania. These areas are normally characterised by inadequate communication networks that are critical to stimulating business activity. The Project hopes to rally farmers to form a national product market, in a bid to curtail the activities of profiteering middlemen. Business Information Services, which begun in 2001, believes that by link-

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### **A Woman's Work...**

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widespread use of ICTs in my country. The lack of a national policy does not allow us to see and measure the importance of ICTs. The Parliament should reorient the government to elaborate and implement a national policy with a plan of action in favor of women.

**IConnect Africa:** In what way can policies support women and their role in ICTs? Could you please explain by providing examples?

**MKN:** Women are the backbone of all processes of development, therefore, the politicians should establish an ICT programme by

clearly defining the role of women. In Chad, for example we have a National Policy for the Integration of Women in Development (IFD). We should simply use this framework and integrate it into an ICT programme, so that women in particular can be motivated to use ICTs. With this, I think Chadian women will be able to catch up with other women in the region and participate in global developments if need be.

**IConnect Africa:** How do you think women can influence ICT policymaking and in what ways, using Chad as an example?

**MKN:** Women as actors can influence the ICT policy-formulation process. In Chad,

women have been known to lobby the government, sometimes making it revise its positions on certain issues. An example is the reproductive health law in Chad and the exemption of taxation on pharmaceutical products, which is the result of women and their power to effectively advocate and lobby. Similarly, they can play such a role in the area of ICTs, influencing policy and decision-making if they have the necessary training and information. When I finish this course, I will try to see what I can do to stimulate such action to get women in Chad lobbying on ICTs for development issues, and in so doing, we can fight the prejudice that stops women being active in this field.

### **News Brief...**

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After graduation, the trainees are expected to promote use of ICTs in their respective countries and institutions, especially amongst women's groups. She added that the training programme was being implemented in the context AISI. The training programme is another six-month residential course, from July to December 2002, conducted in French by a team of certified Cisco trainers.

**Radio Nederlands broadcast AISI Radio Programme: Dialogue on Digital Dividends in Africa - ICTs in Mali.** This is one of four programmes commissioned by ECA to promote dialogue on the information society in Africa, produced by veteran Radio Nederlands broadcaster, Veronica Wilson. The programme on Mali was broadcast by the English Language Service of Radio Netherlands, and was a special edition in their weekly development programme, A Good Life. The programme will also be made available through Radio Nederlands' affiliate stations such as World Radio Network (WRN) broadcast

worldwide with specific feeds to National Public Radio (NPR) in North America, SAfm, South Africa, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the Australia Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). In addition, the series is also available through ECA.

**From chalk to ICT: Uganda embraces ICT-supported education strategy.** When talking about information and communication technologies (ICTs) being used to achieve sustainable development in African countries, what normally come to mind are the telecommunications and utility service sectors. In Uganda, the 'ICT-Based Educational Content' project aims to produce ICT-

based teaching resources for teachers and students at Kyambogo University, 10 national teachers' colleges (NTCs) and senior secondary schools. Its sister project, 'ICT Basic Training', aims to equip teacher and trainers with ICT skills they can transmit to their students. The project targets lecturers and students of the University, as well as tutors and students at the 10 NTCs and senior secondary school teachers. The 'ICT-Based Educational Content' project has already embarked on the task of creating teaching resources. More info: [http://www.icconnect-online.org/base/ic\\_show\\_news?sc=107&id=1845](http://www.icconnect-online.org/base/ic_show_news?sc=107&id=1845)

### **The Quarterly Story...**

*Continued from page 3*

ing technology to development, farmers can be empowered and rural economies strengthened. The Project aims to relay timely and accurate price information that will enable producers to make rational decisions based on ascertained market opportunities concerning when to sell, what to sell, where to

sell and at what prices. The Project entails information on sources, prices and availability of farm inputs such as fertilisers, seeds, pesticides and extension services. This will help farmers to improve their livelihoods by reducing production costs as a result of buying inputs from the right source at the right price. More info: [http://www.icconnect-online.org/base/ic\\_show\\_news?id=1844&cat=x](http://www.icconnect-online.org/base/ic_show_news?id=1844&cat=x)

## **About iConnect Africa**

iConnect-Africa is a quarterly web, paper, and email service that aims to raise awareness in the wider African development community regarding the possibilities offered by ICTs in development. It is produced by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD). It reports on activities forming part of the Africa Information Society Initiative "AISII" and building Digital Opportunities programme "BDO". It is funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for International Development Cooperation (DGIS) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

For further information, please contact:



Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah  
Team Leader, ICTs for Development  
Development Information Services Division  
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)  
P. O. Box 3001  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Phone: +251-1-511167  
Fax: +251-1-510512  
E-mail : [aopoku-mensah@uneca.org](mailto:aopoku-mensah@uneca.org)



Mr. Peter Ballantyne  
Team Leader, Knowledge Sharing  
IICD  
P.O Box 11586  
2502 AN The Hague, The Netherlands  
Tel.: 031-70-311-7311  
Fax: 031-70-311-7322  
E-mail: [pballantyne@iicd.org](mailto:pballantyne@iicd.org)

Contributors to this issue:

- Peter Ballantyne
- Muriuki Mureithi
- Aida Opoku-Mensah
- Afework Temtime

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