

African Youth and the Information Society

A Report

on the

Online Discussions

at *www.dgroups.org/groups/aisi-youth-l*
under the auspices of

African Information Society Initiative

of the

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR AFRICA (UNECA)**

Prepared By: 'Gbenga Sesan

Telephone: +234-802-345-60-76

eMail: me@gbengasesan.com

URL: www.gbengasesan.com

Organisation: Paradigm Initiative Nigeria

1.0 PREFACE

Africa has a lot of catching up to do as far as the Information Society is concerned, and in catching up, the continent must learn to look inwards to the vast resource potentials that dot her landscape in form of young people. These young people are the proof of the sustainability of any effort that is put into national development or regional cooperation across the continent.

Young people are the most dynamic users of new technologies, which are at the centre of the Information Society. From the young man in Ibadan who is paying to stay online all through the night to the young lady in Monrovia who is putting final touches to her software project, Africa's youth are continually establishing the fact that they are major players in the Information Society.

When the United Nations concluded plans to hold a World Summit on the Information Society, it released a resolution that stated, "The General Assembly, recognizing the urgent need to harness the potential of knowledge and technology... and to find effective and innovative ways to put this potential at the service of development for all... welcomes the resolution to hold the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at the highest possible level..."

Preparatory meetings, regional meetings and intercessional meetings were scheduled to hold ahead of the two phases of the major summit. In May 2002, Africans gathered in Bamako for the continent's regional meeting and some young people were invited to give input during the round table discussions on bridging Africa's digital divide. Their views were well presented, and the conclusion was that the need to empower and involve Africa's youth in the entire process could not be over emphasized.

The first preparatory meeting of the WSIS that held in July 2002 in Geneva also had some minor youth representation but that would not be an hinderance in the way of the youth who seemed to have their mission clearly defined - getting youth issues into the mainstream of the summit process. Various levels of lobbying were adopted, ranging from securing media support to producing daily newsletters. A Youth Caucus was inaugurated, and with the support of some institutions, the WSIS process was able to enjoy dynamic youth input as experienced through the preparatory committee meetings. But the role of young people in the Information Society does not end at the level of participating in the WSIS. It goes further than that.

Visiting a number of universities in Nigeria, for example, has revealed that with little support, young people can turn out innovative knowledge-driven solutions to some of Africa's problems.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *African Youth and the Information Society* discussions began with welcome messages by UNECA's Thierry H. Amoussougbo and 'Gbenga Sesan, the discussion moderator while Eustache Nguie Sino helped bridge the language divide by providing dual translations between English and French.

With a very deep sense of responsibility, we (the youth of Africa whose future is being polished by this act of goodwill) thanked the entire management and staff of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) for providing the opportunity to discuss the place of the African Youth in the Information Society.

The discussion was created to provide "...a platform for African youth to share experiences and knowledge in order to help develop innovative approaches to their needs and to establish a dialogue with public and other stakeholders in devising and implementing the WSIS action plan at country and regional levels", and through a period of nine weeks, Africa's youth discussed and shared practical experiences (and suggestions) on the topics that were designed to enable a smooth flow of efforts. We discussed Policies/Strategies, Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, and eventually focused on "the way forward" by proposing projects, as will be seen at the end of this report (annex).

Discussions began on the 15th of March – with introductions and welcome messages – and by the 27th of March, the first week was reviewed. Weekly reviews and a brief introduction of the next discussion topic continued until the 15th of May when this report was submitted to the UNECA.

African Youth and the Information Society had been the topic of many discussions, articles, eConferences and personal emails between much of Africa's youth in the past few months. The phrase was discussed mostly by youth who wished to contribute their own quota to the emancipation of Africa from economic incompetence, through the tool of Information and Communication technologies - the driver of the New Economy and the Information Society.

That explains the excitement that greeted the announcement of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) readiness to host this discussion early this year. Even though most of the youth who heard about the discussions do not have consistent access to the web, they were glad to discuss this all-important issue, and were excited that such an highly placed organisation was "interested in our plight afterall".

The second week began with new members joining the list, and the moderator had this to say, "Welcome to today's table, where tomorrow's menu is being discussed. Fortunately, we're the ones that will "cook this meal" that will help feed Africa's ailing economy, through education...". It was followed by a visibly demonstrative week with practical project examples coming from almost all African regions - Burundi, Cameroun, Somalia, South Africa, Benin, Ghana and Nigeria! The discussion brought to the fore, the reality of the impact of ICTs even in the absence of formal education, showing the need and the ongoing exploration of the same.

The following week's discussion built on the practical topics that were before it. From education and employment, the week moved on to the challenge of entrepreneurship. Participants shared practical examples from their countries and regions, and it was a very great way to end the discussions - and move on to practical proposals.

The discussions came as an answer to many African youths' hope of getting high-level support for their efforts towards inclusion in the Information Society, especially on the platform of the ongoing World Summit on the Information Society.

3.0 WEEK 1 DISCUSSIONS

3.1 *Summary*

Discussions for the first week began immediately, with the mailing list comprising 89 registered addresses representing much of Africa's geographical spread (including that of some UNECA staff). Of these, 26 youth were active in the first week, with most of the emails and practical examples coming from West, Central, Eastern and Southern regions of Africa.

Discussants placed emphasis on the need to be practical, and most people expressed their displeasure at the verbal (lacking action) form that most discussions and meetings in Africa seem to follow.

The first week's topic was, "In many countries there are a number of national e-strategies being formulated and implemented. Are the youth aware? What can African governments do to advance the cause of youth in the Information Society? What needs to be done in the area of ICT policy to enable this role? What is being done at the national and regional levels?"

On the issue of awareness on African government strategies, most discussants agree that there is some level of awareness, but that such is limited to a few privileged youth. And in most cases, these youth have discovered these policies not because of being invited, but due to their personal interests - and at times, curiosity.

Most posts dwelt on the need for governments to involve, empower and motivate youth in order to take positive progressive steps. Most discussants believe that if youth are not involved, it only points to the lack of readiness to promote sustainability in all the processes and strategies involved. The need to motivate and recognize outstanding youth was also emphasized. Most of the discussants believe that what the ECA is doing by supporting youth - through this discussion - should be a model for African governments to follow.

The week's discussion came to a close with youth expressing complementing opinions on the need for youth themselves to be proactive, and not waiting for government inclusion before seeking to get involved. This has really set the pace for next week's discussions, which will focus on education.

3.2 *Conclusion*

The discussion comes across as timely. Though the low participation at the beginning may be due to various reasons, recent youth-led online discussions have shown that progressing discussions tend to attract more youth who, having seen the seriousness and possible impact in the discussions, will latch on to the process and provide much flavour and direction.

Going into the second week with a more personal, proactive and decentralised topic, the "African Youth and the Information Society" discussion seems set to help Africa's youth in their pursuit of bridging the digital divide and providing practical solutions that can help Africa in her bid to accelerate development through the use of ICTs.

4.0 WEEK 2 DISCUSSIONS

4.1 *Summary*

Beginning with an introduction from the moderator, which challenged list members to explore the role of education in Africa's Information Society inclusion and supporting the same with location-specific examples, the discussion took an interesting turn all week, even though contributions have still not risen to more than 50% of listed group members.

Taiwo Sobande from Nigeria believes that "... to a large, extent we are at the mercy of Government policy on education. which is why we need to get more involved in real politics". Alfred Friday also believes in this line of thought, which he supported by saying that "...government funding of education in Africa has been inadequate. Inadequate funding of education has been one of the most significant causes of low quality of education offered at all levels of education in Africa". Jama Abdullahi, an ICTs and Youth Activist from Somalia also lent his voice to the discussion by highlighting some other obstacles he's seen in his own country. Hear him. "The basic school are existing throughout the country but, it is limited in the main towns only where UNICEF can reach. The remote/rural areas are ignored and neglected."

As you would expect, the discussions were not only about problems. When Ayo Oguntuase said that, "My personal experience shows that best method of ICT knowledge acquisition is Personal drive of the youth.", group members could not agree less. He also went on to say, "my desire to understand ICT began since my childhood in 1989 but I never had the opportunity until 1997... This initial denial of access to ICT made me make up my mind to train as many African Youths as I can help free of charge at no cost... If it can be done in Nigeria, it can be done anywhere and by anyone willing to do it. Finally bear in mind that when you train a youth you are training a generation." While also supporting self-help, femi Babawande further opined that he is of the opinion that the ICT should be "User Friendly" and not necessarily a tuff for the "technology-hyper-schooled".

In all, everyone restated the importance of education and next week's discussion on employment comes at the best time!

5.0 WEEK 3 DISCUSSIONS

5.1 *Summary*

The week's discussions focused on the topic, "Employment: Education provides the basis for the youth to be ICT-savvy as well as prepares them for the job market. However, for those who have not been given this opportunity through education, how can ICTs serve as a tool to promote and ensure their livelihoods? What kinds of schemes and initiatives need to be established for this purpose?"

Discussions began with a practical example from east Africa, describing how youth are responding to a post-crisis period by empowering themselves in the face of an obvious lack of formal education. This prompted further examples, including vivid descriptions of how youth have been able to beat the odds of lacking formal education coupled with the need to employ the powers of ICTs, the new generation's tool for relevance.

Though the need was stated for government intervention with respect to policies and actionable projects, discussants cited examples of civil society organisations - many of them youth-led - that are already acting in the direction of empowering youth who might have missed the privilege of exposure to formal education.

As the week's discussion drew to a close, it became obvious that all discussants sang with one tone, "youth can get employment and partake in the job market even if they have missed the opportunity of (formal) education".

5.2 *Conclusion*

As would have been noticed in the string of discussions to date, the next topic builds on this week's discussions! Entrepreneurship has been described as the answer to the provision of a middle class, and a practical answer to Africa's economic situation.

6.0 WEEK 4 DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Summary

The week's discussion was a great way to highlight the "stormy weather" that youth face in their entrepreneurial pursuits across the continent. From almost all the regions, we had clear and practical examples on the harsh environment that youth face in their bid to grow their entrepreneurial dreams.

From high interest rates to unfriendly government policies, various bottlenecks were discussed and there was undisputed support for proactive change in attitude from institutions that "stand in the way" of youth expressing their entrepreneurial skills - policy makers, financial institutions, and others.

While discussants had different perceptions on the existence of an "entrepreneurial spirit" in African youth, everyone agreed on the fact that the face of Africa's economy can improve with the empowerment of young people in order that they might express their skills through entrepreneurial efforts, ventures and projects.

7.0 CONCLUSION: Between Discussions and Proposals

It was obvious that majority of discussants were eager to get engaged in activities around youth involvement in the Information Society. This could be seen in the numerous posts that reflected events, projects and research efforts that were ongoing and involved some members of the discussion group.

During this period, various posts, event updates and resource sharing revealed the need to support active youth participation during the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society as it was obvious that people were more familiar with the processes they were physically involved in, rather than participating through online discussions.

The various proposals that were forwarded are being included in this report but there are ongoing efforts to harmonize the proposals with the possibility of presenting a single proposal to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa for possible support.

Of all the proposals, the need to establish an African Youth ICT Day and well-outlined research stand out and seem to have central support.

8.0 ANNEX: Proposals from Discussants

8.1 Proposal 1¹

Author:

Olufemi Oguntuase, joeayo@yahoo.com, ITelligence Foundation

Aim:

The proposed project is to increase African Youth's knowledge of ICT and its applications as a tool for developing their Society.

Methodology:

1. Organization of a regional ICT Quiz Competition among the high school students in all parts of Africa

- a. Objectives
 - To increase the awareness of ICT and its tools among high school students
 - Creation of a forum for healthy competition and creativity among African Youth
 - Reorientation to a knowledge based personality among participants
 - Identification of gifted/ICT oriented Youth for future mentoring
 - Introduction of participants to the knowledge society and potentially an active participation in the global consultative process
- b. Approach
 - The competition will be managed in each country by a designated representative embedded in either the Ministry of Education/Ministry of Science and Technology/Ministry of communication or an independent body
 - The initial stages of the competition will begin at the grassroots/rural level rising progressively through the ranks to the National level. National winners will participate in the Regional Competition to produce the Regional Winner

¹ **Recommendation:** Further development of the proposal for the African Youth ICT Parks could be done in partnership with country SchoolNet's where they exist and the NEPAD e-Schools initiative. This should involve a thorough research on the Model in Bangalore, India.

- The Competition will be bi-annual due to the level of preparation required
 - A syllabus of the area of expectations based on International standard will be developed for participating countries, to facilitate preparation.
 - Each school, recognized by the laws of the country is eligible to participate
- c. Funding
- Funding should be sought from relevant government agencies, private sector or non-governmental organizations.

2. African Youth ICT Parks

- a. Objectives
- To harness team-based multi-dimensional skills and ideas and incubate the same into knowledge for economy growth. These parks will also nurture and produce skilled based ICT entrepreneurs.
 - To foster collaboration on ICT projects among Youths from a varied background
 - The establishment of a knowledge bank for Africans which will serve as a Resource base for nation building.
 - The establishment of a centre for intensive ICT research and development
- b. Benefits
- It will produce knowledge empowered young Africans who will in turn impart the advancing knowledge economy.
 - The ICT parks will provide space for knowledge based businesses, which will help the African to generate multiple streams of income.
- c. Approach
- These ICT parks are initially to be built in the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western parts of Africa. Over time, each country will endeavor to have different centers.

8.2 Proposal 2²

Author:

Kofi Mangesi, Co-ordinator, Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS). P.O.Box AN 10533, Accra-Ghana. Tel: +233 21 7012137/76292. Fax: +233 21 762926

Proposed Projects

African ICT Geek Corps; Research and Development Lab; Local Knowledge Bank; Fund for ICT

- African ICT Geek Corps: To encourage the exchange of computer students in tertiary institutions across Africa, aiding knowledge transfer initiated by Africans for Africa
- Research and Development Lab: Creation of Research & Development labs in various parts of the continent (potentially one in each region: East, North, South and West Africa). In these labs young and bright African computer nerds will be developing ICT solutions that are specific to Africa's needs today and into the future
- Local Knowledge Bank: Our history, present and future (African music, African craft, Street names, Land maps, soil types, Universities, Agriculture), can be digitalized by Youth in their local languages that can be read and accessed by all either using mediums like Compact Discs, or Websites. The need to develop local content is key to ICT appreciation by the people of Africa, especially the rural poor who form the bulk of our population.
- Digital fund for ICT: At WSIS last year, African governments fought in vain to have a digital solidarity fund formed as part of the Plan of Action. This is necessary for the Africa youth needs to develop the ICT base for Africa. A fund that provides support to youth initiatives across the continent should be formed and administered effectively to ensure transparent distribution of resource across the continent. Governments should begin to encourage venture capitalist to finance ICT projects across Africa. Government guarantees should be provided to young African entrepreneur to deploy ICT projects.

Methodology

- Multi-stakeholder approach for the development of the Research and Development Labs.

² **Recommendation:** Feasible project, needs to be further developed. The Local Knowledge Bank is similar to PIN's *Afara* project, www.pin.itgo.com

8.3 *Proposal 3*³

Author: Janet Feldman, kaippg@earthlink.net

Title:

Youth Coalition On Information And Communication Technologies: A Project To Impact Social And Economic Development In Africa

Introduction:

Youth organizations in Africa far outnumber any estimates made by national or international organizations. These organizations work at all levels--within communities, their country, region, and even clear across the continent--and strive to make positive impacts upon current social, economic, and political arenas. Y4A will be a uniting body for these organizations and will enable partnerships and communications between organizations and individuals supporting their efforts from around the world.

GOALS OF Y4A:

- A. Work with youth organizations in Africa to build partnerships and capacity within the continent.
- B. Gain support from organizations located outside of Africa to enhance sustainability.
- C. Build and update a database of youth organizations in Africa.
- D. Advocate and uplift the work of youth organizations in Africa.

Regarding the use of the Internet, it has become an integral part of the work of youth organizations in Africa: a quick reference indicated that there are over 50 youth organizations in Africa whose mission statements involve the increased use and development of ICTs in Africa. In recognizing the vast and growing use of ICTs within youth organizations in Africa, Y4A will serve to coordinate the efforts of these organizations to increase their effectiveness so as to achieve individual and collective mission statements.

The YC/ICT project of Y4A focus on the following areas:

- 1) Economic Growth: Employment and income-generation activities using ICTs.
- 2) Education: The role of ICTs in education and training; uniting school-based projects through ICTs; HIV/AIDS education.
- 3) Environment: Increasing the capacity of environmental activities through ICTs, and using ICTs to enhance sustainability.

³ **Recommendation:** This proposal is very similar to the existing Youth Creating Digital Opportunities (YCDO, www.ycdo.net) with a vibrant African Youth sector

- 4) Gender: Increasing women's participation in ICT use, enhancing life-quality education, skills, and livelihoods with ICTs.
- 5) Governance: Use of ICTs for leadership, accountability, and governance in Africa.
- 6) Health: Use of ICTs in sharing information about diseases and health; use of ICTs in project design, implementation, and evaluation of health based projects.
- 7) Poverty: Use of ICTs for assessment and sustainable development, food security and poverty alleviation.
- 8) Humanitarian Relief: Communication about disasters and coordination of relief activities.
- 9) Rural development: Increased use of ICTs in rural and underserved areas, not only to improve education and livelihoods but also to increase access to health and improve the ability of communities to advocate for their needs.

GOALS OF YC/ICT:

- A. Identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration among the partners, donors, and others.
- B. Create a database of African programs and projects involving ICTs.
- C. Provide training and forums on ICTs and their role in social and economic arenas.

COORDINATION OF Y4A:

Y4A will use multi-faceted approaches in its coordination. Two primary tools to coordinate communication will be the creation of a website and a listserv for routine communications between coalition partners and supporters. Coordination of communications will be done through the organization, ARYI; its regional structure (divided into East, West, North, Central, and Southern Africa) will enhance such coordination of Y4A. In addition, ARYI will provide technical coordination and other coalition founders (as listed above) will take leadership roles to ensure the success of this endeavor.

SUMMARY:

Y4A will be a unique organization in that it will serve to unite the thousands of youth organizations in Africa dedicated to social and economic development. Youth in Africa are eager to be change agents in their communities and in their nations, and Y4A will provide the forum for the building and partnering of youth organizations across the continent.

One project of Y4A recognizes the power of ICTs to create positive change on the continent and beyond. The use of ICTs has become widely recognized around the world as a key tool for development. In Africa, the use of ICTs is growing rapidly and is having a great impact on social and economic developments. However, the gap between the haves and have-nots both in Africa and globally is

a huge challenge that requires all of the tools at our collective disposal, and concerted action to address the many pressing issues on the continent. The YC/ICT project will hopefully serve to unite the growing number of youth organizations in Africa addressing issues of development through the use of ICTs as a tool for empowerment and change.

It is envisioned that Y4A will unite the many youth organizations working on social and economic issues so as to create not only a joint body for addressing the challenges and problems before us, but also to give an effective voice to African youth and recognition of the successes and commitment of African youth to creating a better world for us all.

8.4 *Proposal 4*

Author:

Henri Marcell da Silva

Proposal:

C'est une très bonne initiative quand on sait qu'aujourd'hui l'Information ou les technologies de l'information constituent un outil transversal incontournable pouvant permettre de faire des sauts de développement (belle phrase si les dispositions afférentes ne sont pas prises) surtout lorsqu'elles sont bien appropriées. Ainsi, je pense qu'il faut que nous allions dans le sens de la création de ces clubs. Malheureusement, je voudrais proposer un autre mot car ce dernier (club) me semble un peu trop restrictif. Je souhaiterais plutôt des réseaux de jeunes axés sur les questions de la société de l'information.

Des réseaux conscients des impacts réels de cette société de l'information sur les besoins socio-économiques de nos pays, sur les problèmes des jeunes. Pas les problèmes en tant que tel mais comme réponse ; impacts pouvant garantir un avenir certain, un avenir humain durable dont parle souvent le PNUD.

Je vais donc proposer un schéma classique qui pointe déjà à l'horizon.

- 1- Mettre en place un bureau formé de représentants régionaux des jeunes dans la société de l'information.
- 2- Au niveau des pays, identifier des associations de jeunes ou les promouvoir si elles n'existent pas et mettre en place ce groupe de réflexion ou ce réseau des associations.

On essayera de proposer des actions concrètes à mener par le réseau global et les représentants régionaux dans le bureau seront en charge de développer une vision pour les réseaux au niveau des pays...

Un ami à côté me demande : comment ces réseaux pourront-ils assurer l'intérêt de ses membres ?

Les membres n'étant pas des individus mais des associations ou des structures de jeunes, pourront être sélectionnés sur la base d'appels de projets d'initiative de start-up ou autre qui peuvent favorablement passer grâce à la caution morale qu'on aurait créée à travers les divers bureaux et surtout le réseau global ou les représentants régionaux.

Un partenaire voulant aider , ou appuyer la jeunesse dans une région, s'il est informé de l'existence de réseaux et de leur coordination, de leur sérieux et de

leur efficacité, pourrait solliciter l'avis des bureaux pour prendre une décision... Je dis pourrait car ce n'est pas une fin en soi mais tout dépendra de notre sérieux et de la consistance de nos réflexions.

Les divers bureaux doivent faire beaucoup de plaidoyer et de marketing. Mais ils ne seront écoutés que si nous nous impliquons fortement dans la compréhension des divers programmes tels que les politiques et stratégies TICs, le programme sur les défis du millénaire, la stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté. Donc nous devons commencer par nous former et maîtriser les divers contours de ces grands dossiers...

Les contours maîtrisés grâce à des séances d'information et de vulgarisation internes (avec l'aide de nos aînés), nous allons passer ensuite à l'étape de propositions concrètes. Si nous remarquons qu'il y a des aspects nous concernant qui n'ont pas été bien développés, nous essayerons par les voies très légales mais orientées résultats d'en informer nos aînés.

8.5 *Proposal 5*⁴

Author:

NKURUNZIZA Jean Paul

Proposal:

1. Computer Caravan:

Some youth volunteers who are skilled in computer practice gathered within an association going from one computer centre to another (it can be a formal school or not), spending at least three weeks in each centre to train young people and their lecturers in computer science.

At the end of the training, those trained will form a computer club in their school or centre. The trainers will leave their computer equipments as a gift so that the club continue to function.

Where the trainers could find this material? : Donation of second hand materials can be found through organizations such as World Computer, Computer Exchange, and DIGITAL Link. It is necessary to contact them and seek financial support for logistics.

2. National ITC youth contest:

The structure made up of young volunteers will launch a national appeal to propose an ITC related product, in each country. A jury will be set up to select and classify them. It will be the winning ITC products which would be displayed and exposed during National ITC day which has been discussed in second point

3. African ITC day

It is a matter of organizing in all African countries and every year a national celebration day dedicated to the ITC by youth volunteers gathered within association. They will invite the various decision makers (Political, International Representatives of NGO and UN organizations in each country), and General public. All those would be invited to visit various centres where the ITC are used daily (commercially or not). I am speaking for example about the computer shop, cyber café and other related centres which use digital equipments (business centre, multi-media studio, etc.).

⁴ **Recommendation:** Kenyan Government has recently mandated the last point. Projects that could be linked up are SchoolNet Africa's 1 Million PC campaign, Paradigm Initiative Nigeria's 'What's In the Box?'

This day would be an opportunity to lobby for ITC and also a way of raising everyone awareness on the benefits and services offered by ITC. Moreover, it will increase awareness among political leaders to soften the legal steps in order to attract investment on ITC by young investors.

At the same time, prizes would be given either for the best implementation or use of ITC to a young creator. The winner will be chosen after the competition organized by the youth organizing committee in charge of the event.

4. Weekly Radio and Television broadcast on ITC.

These broadcasts will aim at increasing awareness to the masses on the ITC challenges by using more traditional media in each African country. That must be done in the national languages.

The young volunteers prepare these broadcasts with the assistance of journalists. They would invite to the studio an ITC professional who answers the questions of young people on line about his field. Moreover, this broadcast must contain questions to be posed by listeners on line. The best listener will receive small prizes when they answer to the questions correctly.

5. ITC related community centers for Youth.

They are centres sponsored by one of the organizations which supports youth initiative, these centres will aim at training of more youth on ITC outside formal school, give them access to Internet, etc., and provide all these services at a lower price in order to guarantee their sustainability. We have already seen some projects in French-speaking countries financed by the 'Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie called PAJE: "Access Point to Information Highway".

I do not know if similar initiatives exist in other country. But it is necessary to have bigger centres where you will have more than 6 computers in order to take care of more people at once. Indeed, the experience shows us that there are always scuffles at the doors centres.

The following should be our Governments responsibility:

1. Training:

To set up and add "Computer" department in the vocational schools, and faculties of computer science in the universities. In each country, these institutions would make it possible to have well-trained personnel in

Information technologies. Our governments should create research centres on ITC. Without delaying, the Ministries of Education should provide grants so that African can go abroad to learn and come back with knowledge in order to develop countries on ITC fields.

2. Inciting legal measures for the ITC.

To reduce or even remove any tax on importation of computer equipments as well as on supplying services on computer fields.

8.6 *Proposal 6*⁵

Author:

Femi Babawande, Founder, Nigeria Painting Tour

Introduction:

With respect to a concrete, workable and sustainable system in youth ICT training, employment and entrepreneurship, it is necessary to consider setting apart a day for the evaluation of existing projects.

1. THE AFRICAN YOUTH ICT DAY (AYICTD)

Apart from lectures, symposia and other forms of campaign, this will also be a useful avenue of launching youth lead projects and sustaining existing ones. Primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions will be actively involved.

These involvements will be in the form of:

- a. Art Competition (For Primary schools). At this formative stage, children are affected by psychomotor activities. Topics such as "Design a poster that shows how you can use the computer to change the world" will be fielded.
- b. Essay Writting (For Secondary schools). This will afford the youngsters the opportunity to interact with global ITC developmental issues
- c. Web Designing/Software-Hardware Design contests (Tertiary Institutions).
- d. A regional summit for youth ICT activists, civil societies and other stakeholders.

Project Coordination: This project is best coordinated regionally.

The Need for an African Youth ICT Day

- a. Attention: In a place like Africa where many things crave attention all at the same time, it is expedient to design a system that makes it possible to re-establish commitment to youth ICT development.-Awareness:
- b. Exchange of Ideas: This will afford the opportunity for exchange of ideas and concepts and help solve the problem of insufficient resource persons within the region.
- c. Action: These events will gear-up the government and other policy making bodies into sustainable actions.

⁵ **Recommendation:** The call for an African Youth ICT days has been proposed thrice by participants in this list.

2. Student Exchange Programme on Information Communication Technology (SEPICT)

This project is to be driven extensively by secondary school leavers who are given short term training and released to existing centres in their region where they will influence their peers on the ICT basics.

The choice of this class of people for this training is informed by the following:

- The young school leavers are best able to reach their peers
- This will solve the challenge of human resources and man power in ICT training
- Sustainability is guaranteed by the continual in-flow and outflow of basically skilled youth instructors.
- It would form a cultural base after a season of continual application.

BASIC NEEDS

1. Adult Instructors- These will train the school leavers in what looks like a "BOOT CAMP" for two weeks. It is assumed that these school leavers already have basic ICT knowledge.
2. A camp- This could be called "Computer village" or any other name that depicts a down-to-earth environment of learning and practical sessions. A boarding school could be used for this purpose.
3. Administration- Since this setting is outside the regular school setting and intended for a continual basis, it requires a management board which should include youths already involved in Civil Societies and youth ICT related causes, educators and parents.

MODE OF OPERATION

- Recruitment: This shall not be a compulsory boot camp but shall be made to be enticing for interested school leavers. Certificates from the boot camp and service in the SEPICT programme could be an additional advantage for admission into higher schools. It is advised however that a measure of screening be necessary to get the best crop of school leavers.

- Motivation: Volunteering should be the basis of the recruitment with emphasis on what the young people stands to gain. Knowledge is a great motivation for young folks. National pride and role modeling is another motivation. All needed kits (Computers, printers, internet connectivity, stationery etc) will be made available by the Administrators.

3. Peer Training Program (PTP)

This is the time the trained youngsters are released to schools within their region to administer the skills learnt while at the camp. The period for this time of peer-to-peer influence is one month. The youth instructors are seen as role models among the students and there is an unconscious motivation in them to become another Youth ICT Instructor.

EVALUATION

Since this is going to be a continual, cyclical process, it is expected that the project will soon attract the sponsorship interests of corporate bodies and international developmental organizations. The culture of the young person is gradually affected at a prime stage and those youth role model ICT teachers will grow up to a respectable and confident user of the ICT.

8.7 *Proposal 7*

Author:

Gbanhoun Gilletta

PROJET : FORMATION DE 500 JEUNES SUR LES NOTIONS DE BASE EN TIC ET SENSIBILISATION SUR LES OBJECTIFS DU ICT4D

Durant nos discussions en ligne, il est apparu que les jeunes formés à l'utilisation des TIC augmentent leurs chances d'accès à l'emploi et à l'information utile; nous avons également convenu qu'en Afrique, peu de jeunes ont l'opportunité de se former pour des questions de moyens essentiellement; il serait donc opportun de repousser les limites de l'analphabétisme en TIC en formant, sur une année, au moins 500 jeunes; priorité sera donnée aux diplômés sans emplois et aux employés de zones rurales ou suburbaines. Il est important que les capacités des jeunes soient renforcées dans le but de donner une chance à la réduction du fossé numérique entre jeunes urbains et ruraux, entre riches et pauvres, et entre garçons et filles.

Ceci serait également une occasion pour parler de la société mondiale de l'information et amorcer la prise de conscience par les jeunes de la nécessité d'utiliser les TIC pour le développement.

Objectifs:

- Renforcer les capacités des jeunes en matière de Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication - Sensibiliser sur les politiques et stratégies TIC définies pour le pays
- Informer sur les opportunités pour les jeunes et leur nécessaire contribution pour le développement

Résultats attendus:

A la fin de la formation,

- les jeunes ont renforcé leurs capacités en matière de TIC
- les jeunes ont compris l'enjeu et sont motivés pour participer au développement par l'utilisation des TIC

Durée:

2 semaines par session et par groupe de 25 participants.

Catégories de jeunes cibles:

- Jeunes de 18 à 40 ans n'ayant jamais eu l'opportunité d'utiliser ou de communiquer avec les outils TIC;
- Jeunes diplômés sans emplois des villes et campagnes;
- Jeunes employés des campagnes et zones périurbaines;
- Jeunes filles toutes catégories.

Sujets probables ou thèmes à aborder:

- Sensibilisation sur les TIC et les Systèmes d'Information ;
- Présentation des Stratégies et Plans TIC pour le pays
- Rôle du jeune et sa contribution à faire du ICT4D une réalité ?
- La création de réseaux; une nécessité de nos jours;
- Internet et Communication ;
- Utilisation de logiciels de base;
- Exercices pratiques;
- Evaluation et fin.

Remise de certificats:

Après l'évaluation des participants et des formateurs, des certificats seront remis en présence des représentants du gouvernement et des partenaires initiateurs.

Budget:

Le budget comprendra essentiellement les frais d'organisation et d'échanges avec les divers partenaires du projet. Au Bénin par exemple, nous pouvons solliciter pour réduire les coûts, l'appui de l'Agence pour la Gestion des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication afin qu'elle offre des facilités logistiques, comme elle le fait souvent aux jeunes et à l'occasion de la fête de l'Internet au Bénin; Merci.

8.8 Proposal 8

Author:

'Gbenga Sesan, Paradigm Initiative Nigeria, me@gbengasesan.com

Title:

'Think globally, Act Locally'

We need a research effort with a global outlook but that focuses on Africa's development through the use of ICTs, along with local action led by youth and aimed at equipping a new generation of young Africans with IT skills and a strong Information Society consciousness.

1. GLOBAL THOUGHT

A focused research carried out by youth in different regions - and supported by the academia, government agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, international development organizations and the media - will help Africa build staying power while local action bridges today's evident divides.

A strategic research that seeks to answer the following questions through data collation, information search and focused discussions would produce explosive results:

- 1- What are ICTs doing for world economies, especially developed economies?
- 2- What realities are on ground in Africa?
- 3- What can be done to make ICTs work in Africa?
- 4- What are governments, civil society, academia and private sector already doing?
- 5- What are youth doing now, to help bridge Africa's digital divide?
- 6- What is the connection between youth efforts and other efforts?
- 7- How best can these efforts be integrated?
- 8- What are the expected outcomes of the effective use of ICTs in Africa?
- 9- What must be done, and how best can it be done?
- 10- Who will do what, and by what time must it be done?
- 11- How do we measure progress on these efforts?
- 12- What can be done to move the efforts forward, having evaluated the process?

This would help us move forward in our quest of bringing Africa to the mainstream of the information society.

2. LOCAL ACTION

“Information Society Clubs for African Youth (ISCAY)”

1. Purpose:

- To raise a new generation of Information Society-conscious African youth. We can only be as involved as our thoughts and expectations. As it is said, a man’s life would only move in the direction of his most dominant thought. If we get a whole generation conscious of the benefits of IS inclusion for Africa, we may as well acknowledge our journey to the desired destination. Malaysia, India and Japan began with conscious efforts, and so should we;
- Create a forum for IS literacy for students. They would also have the opportunity to discuss trends, activities and opportunities among themselves, and with volunteers who are active in Africa’s IS-inclusion process;
- Create a forum for youth who’ve been active and engaged in IS-related projects to volunteer as mentors to clubs, helping them with learning and awareness.

2. Target:

- Youth in underserved secondary schools (ages 10 through 18)

3. Need:

- Interested, inspired and informed school teacher to coordinate club
- Inspired volunteers (I believe that we have many in this group, and other discussion groups that focus on African Youth and the Information Society)
- School Operating Agreement to be signed by school head, to ensure continuity even if there’s a change in leadership
- Computers running Linux, to reduce cost of operations and open Operating System and platform options
- Backup electrical power supply (some schools may not have electrical power supply)

4. Sustainability Plan:

- We need to get computers donated
- Volunteers may contribute funds to purchase mini generators for students’ use
- Clubs may engage in the provision of at-cost services (such as word processing for fellow students or teachers, printing, graphic designs, computer literacy sessions, software development, website designs, club dues and/or other activities that would not tilt the balance between integrity, their academic endeavor and community involvements)

5. Operations:

- The club will operate like other school clubs and societies, having regular meetings and overall approval from the school
- Teacher adviser will work closely with students, especially to advise on interplay between schoolwork and club activities
- Volunteers will work closely with the club to determine the frequency of their involvement, but volunteers must encourage students (maybe the club leader) to produce quarterly reports on activities
- The club must have a management plan for at least one year at every time. This would be done with the assistance of the teacher adviser and volunteers