



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Report to the Tenth SRO-SA Meeting of ICE
Lusaka, 3-5 May 2004

National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) Plans
In Southern Africa

1. E-strategy Framework in Africa: the African Information Society Initiative

In the global networked economy, information and knowledge have become strategic resources, based on which governments, corporations and the public at large make their decisions. The countries which have created an enabling environment are experiencing revolutionary effects especially in the governance, education, health and business sectors, as its citizens are now more empowered, change the equilibrium of power and start creating choices and opportunities for themselves. Yet, there are countries in Africa where people are not able to make informed decisions on their daily lives because of lack of access to ICTs, information and knowledge.

As a response to these realities, the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in May 1995, adopted the Africa Information Society Initiative (AISI)¹. Driven by critical development imperatives, AISI focuses on priority strategies, programmes and projects, which can assist in building African information societies. A key component of the AISI is the development of national e-strategies, or the National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) plans.

On a continental basis, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) framework has identified a number of projects and initiatives for ICT development, which will also speed up sub-regional and regional connectivity and inter-connectivity plans at the same time. NEPAD insists on strengthening the role of the Regional Economic Communities (REC) that should be coordinating national efforts and aiming at harmonizing national regulatory frameworks across the sub-regions. AISI serves as the framework for co-ordination of the support that UN agencies provide to the NEPAD.

Furthermore, AISI recommends that ICTs be mainstreamed in other sectors that are judged potentially important for Africa's development, and these include: job creation, culture, trade and commerce, and governance, which was added to the list during subsequent assessment exercises of the AISI in the African Development Forum (ADF)'99 and Bamako 2002.

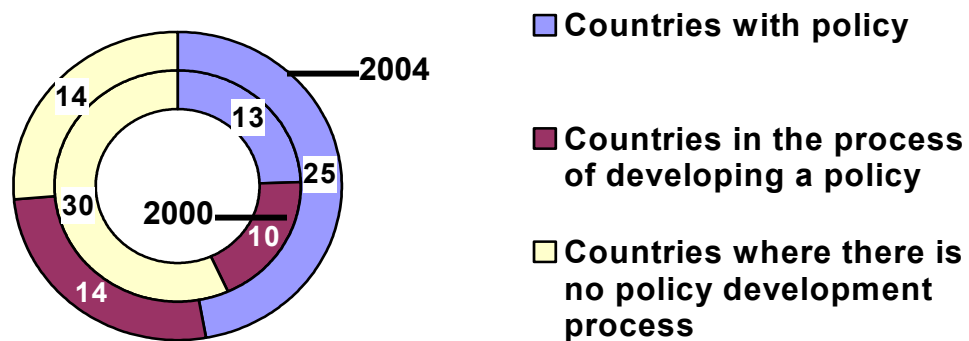
This report assesses progress made in national ICT policies, plans and strategies in Southern Africa, focusing on the role of ECA. It also highlights lessons learned from the e-strategy development process.

2. National E-strategies in Africa

ECA has been assisting member states in their endeavors to initiate, formulate and implement national e-strategies with a view to achieving their development goals. The success is evident in the fact that the number of countries with ICT policies increased from 13 in 2000 to 25 in 2004, while countries in the process of developing a policy jumped from 10 in 2000 to 14 in 2004. Thus, the number of countries without a plan was reduced from 30 to 14 in 2004.

¹ <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/>

Development of National ICT Policy



This progress has been a result of increased awareness on the importance of ICT policies and plans among decision and policy makers and key stakeholders, which is also reflected in the inclusion and emphasis, placed in various international and regional agendas. For example, the NEPAD framework identifies ICT policies and regulations as a priority area. The formulation of national policies, strategies and legislation has been highlighted as the foundation for the ICT development in the member countries as well as in the region. A number of countries have already stepped up to the next phase of the plan implementation. A comprehensive list of NICI countries is attached as Annex.

3. SADC NICI countries in process of policy formulation

ECA is working with countries on the sub region to formulate NICI policies in collaboration with various Partners.

Consultations are also underway With SADC to develop joint regional information and Communication activities.

Lesotho

A request was received by ECA in the framework of e-PolNet, to undertake e-readiness survey and develop an ICT policy for the country.

A consultation mission is planned in the next three months.

Malawi

After a slow-down in policy formulation for two years, Malawi recently began a fresh initiative to develop an ICT policy under the leadership of the Director of the Government Public IT Services. It has established an ICT policy taskforce and a technical working group on information and communication technology policy.

UNDP and ECA are providing technical and financial assistance for ICT policy development. Following a needs assessment by a consultant, a national ICT policy document was developed and submitted to the Government in July 2003.

Mozambique

The Government adopted the national ICT policy in December 2000 and the implementation strategy was launched in September 2002. The Commission on Information and Communication Technologies was established to coordinate development and implementation of the plan. The ICT policy identifies six priority areas: education; human resources development; health; universal access; infrastructure; and governance. To address the challenges faced in each of these areas, the implementation strategy contains 37 priority projects, some of which are already being implemented.

Zambia

In 2000, Zambia, with support from ECA, engaged two local consultants to produce a draft ICT Policy Working Document for discussion at a consultative meeting that was held in March 2001.

The NICI development process has been revived during 2003, and a Draft of the National Information and Communication Technology Policy has been developed.

4. Lessons Learned and regional cooperation and integration

A number of lessons have been learnt over the past years in the development of national ICT plans and summarised below:

- Need for increased awareness
- Importance of the high level leadership
- The NICI process could be more participatory
- Need for learning from experiences of others – best practices
- Transition from ideas and concepts to concrete action plans
- Need for increased attention to sectoral policies and strategies
- Human and institutional capacity must be strengthened
- Prioritisation of external assistance
- Increasing regional cooperation and integration

After the successful formulation of NICI plans, the countries have been requesting further assistance from ECA in sector-specific areas. Services required range from development of an implementation strategy to examination of the work programmes, to resource mobilization, development of sectoral strategies and monitoring of the implementation plan. This underlines the

importance of ECA's role in providing assistance for the formulation and piloting of sectoral policies and strategies. Special attention is being paid to e-governance, democratizing access, private sector development and content development to meet AISI and MDG objectives. In addition, ECA is proposing a new dimension of village information and communications infrastructure (VICI) plans to the existing process to extend policy-making and implementation. ECA will also place more emphasis on the expedited participation of the countries currently without a national ICT policy in the global knowledge society.

However, from ECA's perspective, national e-strategies as part of the AISI goals will increasingly be geared towards addressing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) so that ICTs can assist in the reduction of poverty, improve healthcare delivery, provide education opportunities for all, particularly the girl-child, create employment opportunities as well as food security.

In addition, even though governments need to take the lead in the development of national strategies, other key stakeholders should be encouraged to play their part in both the formulation and implementation process. This is partly the reason why ECA places a great deal of emphasis on the NICI consultation process ensuring that stakeholders' needs and interest are reflected and accommodated in the policy documents. Given the importance of various actors in enabling the implementation of national strategies, ECA has also embarked awareness raising through extensive outreach and communication activities targeted at Members of Parliament, civil society groups (particularly women's groups), academia, the media, as well as the diaspora. The policy process should be flexible to incorporate other thematic and emerging issues emerging both at the national and regional levels that have relevance to countries.

Annex: National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) Strategies

Country	Existence of a national strategy	Implementation status
<i>Algeria</i>	Has a National Policy and a National strategy	Several sectoral implementation strategies are being developed
<i>Angola</i>	A plan known as "Strategy for The Development of Information technology 2000-2010" has been elaborated.	The Government of Angola created a National Commission for Information Technology by Decree no. 6/2002 of 4 April 2002.
<i>Benin</i>	The Communication and Information Infrastructure Development Plan of Benin: 2000-2004 was approved in 2000.	The implementation has started with the creation of an agency that promotes ICT. A work programme has also been developed in 2001 and updated in 2002.
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	An Information and Communication Infrastructure Development Plan of Burkina Faso: 2000-2004 was approved in October 2000.	Implementation has started. Several sectoral implementation strategies are being developed. Interministerial committees have been created for follow-up
<i>Burundi</i>	The Cabinet adopted the National strategy for the development of information and communication technologies in Burundi in 2002.	The document is being circulated for wide dissemination and consultations before implementation.
<i>Cape Verde</i>	The NICI plan development process was finalized in October 2000. A National Information and Communication Technologies Infrastructure Development Plan was the product of the process.	The implementation has started.
<i>Cameroon</i>	The draft NICI plan was finalized in October 2001	The draft NICI Plan will be reviewed and circulated for wide consultations before its submission to Cabinet
<i>Central African Republic</i>	The process of the elaboration of the National Strategy has started in January 2002. A baseline study was undertaken in June/July 2002.	Due to political instability the process is stalled but will resume as soon as possible.
<i>Cote d'Ivoire</i>	The NICI Plan was approved by the Council of Ministers in July 2000.	A Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies has been created to implement the NICI Plan. Priority projects were identified for implementation, however due to political instability the process is stalled
<i>Djibouti</i>	A draft strategy was developed in February 2003	The document is being circulated to partners for implementation
<i>Egypt</i>	Egypt launched its National Information Highway programme to support and energize its socio-economic development as early as 1994.	Implementation of many projects for the development of ICT industries and the advent of universal access. The establishment of the Ministry for Telecommunications and Information in 1999.

Country	Existence of a national strategy	Implementation status
<i>Ethiopia</i>	The Draft National ICT Policy document initially drafted in July 2001 is now adopted by the Council of Ministers.	The first cycle of the implementation plan covering the period 2003 - mid 2008 is ready. A national ICT Coordinating Office is being established to manage the implementation process, monitoring and evaluation.
<i>Gabon</i>	A Development Plan based on the network for sustainable development was finalized in 2000.	Infrastructure development is the main focus of the plan
<i>Gambia</i>	A draft National Policy on information and communication issued in 1999	The Telecom sector is growing considerably. An e-government strategy is being developed
<i>Ghana</i>	The policy entitled ' <i>The Ghana ICT for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) Policy</i> ', was published in December 2003 with a forward by the President of Ghana. The policy was subsequently discussed and approved by Parliament in early February 2004.	The Government wants to put a mid and long-term strategy for ICT development in place. Plans are in place for supporting the NICI presentation to potential donors.
<i>Guinea</i>	The NICI plan was completed in February 2002	Implementation structures are being put in place
<i>Kenya</i>	The process of an comprehensive national strategy based on a broad national consultation has started in 2001.	A Local Experts Team has been created to draft the document on National Strategy
<i>Lesotho</i>	A National Information and Communication Policy was prepared in 2002.	Development of a NICI plan is planned for 2003
<i>Malawi</i>	The process of developing a national strategy has started in 2002	The ICT Policy framework for was finalized in May 2002. The NICI Plan is being finalized
<i>Mali</i>	The process of developing a national strategy has started in 2002	The Government has created "la Mission de l'Informatique et des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information" to implement the Government Policy and to promote ICT. The NICI plan is being prepared
<i>Mauritania</i>	National Information and Communication Infrastructure Development Plan: 1999–2002	The Government has created "le Secrétariat d'Etat aux Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication" to review the NICI plan and to promote ICT
<i>Mauritius</i>	The National IT strategic plan of 1998.	A number of projects in policy formulation, ICT awareness, human resources development, government computerization and standard setting were launched following the National IT strategic plan in 1998.
<i>Morocco</i>	A national IT policy 1999-2003 was elaborated and approved in 1999 by the government for implementation. The e-Moroc strategy adopted in 2001, is in the implementation phase.	Several implementation strategies, programmes and projects have been put in place

Country	Existence of a national strategy	Implementation status
<i>Mozambique</i>	A national strategy was developed and adopted in July 2002.	The Commission on Information and Communication Technologies has been put in place to coordinate the development and implementation of the plan.
<i>Namibia</i>	A revised draft policy proposal on Information and Communication Technology Policy for the Republic of Namibia was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting in March 2002.	Adoption by the Cabinet is expected during the first half of 2003
<i>Niger</i>	The NICI policy was approved in December 2003.	The "Centre de coordination de l'Informatique et des NTIC" has been put in place to promote ICT and to coordinate the development of the NICI plan
<i>Nigeria</i>	The Nigerian Information and Communication Technology Agency (NICTA) formulated a "Nigerian National Policy for Information Technology (IT)" after consultation with stakeholders that took place in 2000. The process of developing the NICI plan will start in June 2003	A Development Agency for ICT is put in place to coordinate the development of a National Strategy and the promotion of ICTs
<i>Rwanda</i>	The NICI plan was adopted in 2002 by the Cabinet and Parliament	The Cabinet officially launched the NICI Plan, NICI 2005, in January 2002. The proposed implementation structure has been created. It consists of the National Information Technology Commission (NITC), the NITC Working Group and the Rwandan Information Technology Authority (RITA.)
<i>Senegal</i>	The National ICT Plan was adopted in 2000.	The Government has put in place, under the Office of the President, the regulatory and administrative tools necessary for the promotion of competition and the implementation of e-government
<i>Seychelles</i>	A National Strategy on ICT has been put in place	The implementation started on many sectors linked to trade and capacity building
<i>Sierra Leone</i>	Plans are underway to launch the NICI process in May 2004.	
<i>South Africa</i>	The South Africa IT Strategy Project (SAITIS) was developed by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Communication, in consultation with the private sector and other stakeholders.	The implementation has started and covers all sectors. A Presidential Advisory Committee was put in place to oversee implementation and ensure coordination
<i>Sudan</i>	Preparations were underway in 1999 to elaborate the national information and communication plans for Sudan. Since then a national ICT strategy has been formulated.	The National Information Centre was put in place in 2002 to implement and promote ICT in the Government departments.

Country	Existence of a national strategy	Implementation status
<i>Swaziland</i>	The first national workshop on ICT policy that was organized by the UNDP, UNESCO, ECA and the Swaziland National Association of Journalists (SNAJ) took place in November 2000.	The national Policy will be oriented towards the media, telecommunication and ICT industries
<i>Tanzania</i>	The ICT Task Force produced the first order draft of the National ICT Policy of Tanzania in April 2002.	Development of the implementation strategy is expected to take place in 2003.
<i>Tunisia</i>	There is a National Policy and a strategy of implementation as of 1997.	The implementation has started and the regulatory and institutional tools have been put in place to promote ICT for development
<i>Uganda</i>	A draft national policy – Strategy for Developing a National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy for Uganda - was completed in September 2002.	The NICI plan is being developed. Meanwhile the competition is kept and the ICT sector is developing.
<i>Zambia</i>	A draft national policy was completed in 2002	The approval of the National Policy is expected in 2003