



2004 PICTA Annual Meeting - Mauritius

PICTA Bulletin is a monthly publication that provides information on activities of members in the partnership, as well as offers news on ICT-related activities in Africa. This bulletin is also available at: <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/picta/PICTAbulletin>



The PICTA annual meeting took place from 10th to 11th September 2004 in Port Louis (St Georges Hotel), Mauritius. A total of 22 participants representing 17 organizations (Acacia, AITEC Africa, APC, Bellanet, CATIA, Connectivity Africa, DFID, ECA, Gamos, ICANN, IDRC, IICD, Industry Canada, OSIWA, SPINTRACK, UNDP, and UNESCO) actively took part in the meeting. The Chairperson of the Ghana Planning Committee for the African Regional WSIS Preparatory Conference was also present. The following items were on the agenda:

- Implementation of PICTA action plan
- Strengthening the partnership mechanism
- WSIS Africa regional conference
- PICTA member's activities & upcoming events
- WSIS Africa Regional Conference

Implementation of PICTA action plan

Overview of Tunis Action Plan and its implementation:

The Tunis Action Plan came out of an Open Space meeting held in Tunis between 16 and 17 October 2003. ECA presented the main elements of the Tunis Action Plan and stated that six priority areas were identified. These were:

- Scoping ICT needs and priorities in Africa
- Better Co-ordination within PICTA
- Supporting Knowledge Sharing Communities

- Local Government Capacity Building for ICT use
- Creating Awareness of ICT in Africa
- Bandwidth for Higher Education in Africa

Supporting Knowledge sharing communities workshop report:

Bellanet presented a project proposal on the development of a PICTA Collaborative Knowledge Sharing Consortium. The aims of the initiative include: Building collaborative process expertise; strengthening existing networks and collaborations in Africa (including capacity building); Increasing awareness and understanding of the value and use of collaborative approaches.

Local Government capacity building report and ICT Publication:

IDRC advised that the report on Local Government capacity building is being prepared by the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD) and will be published shortly.

Bandwidth for Higher Education in Africa:

IDRC is facilitating the development of a Pan African Research and Education Network (PAREN, ex-AUBC). The project will launch two studies:

Study I has the following goals:

- to better understand the current key actors that are engaged in research and education networking within and with Africa;

- to draw on the lessons that can be learned from research and education networks elsewhere in the developing world; and,
- to assess the resources required and propose a number of detailed scenarios in which PAREN might emerge

Study II aims at carrying out a technical study for establishing a bandwidth-purchasing consortium for African research and educational institutions. The study will determine the availability and costs of the required bandwidth on the continent, and the cost savings that can be achieved through bulk purchasing and negotiating for discounted bandwidth on behalf of the education and research sectors.

Strengthening the PICTA Mechanism

Summary of PICTA 2003 Discussions:

ECA reported that PICTA's accomplishments have included enabling different networks to increase their support in ICT4D in Africa and served as a vehicle for collaboration between key partners of the network.

Members felt that in future, PICTA should explore:

- Becoming a node for a number of ICT-related consultations, common planning, partnership building currently taking place through separate mechanisms
- Organising separate sessions for donors and non-donors considered at PICTA meetings
- Developing PICTA labeled activities where each of the partners can add value to a common programme / activity
- Working on products such as a roster of consultants, an ICT Job Fair and bridging other African regional groups working in ICT4D
- Tackling thematic areas and initiate evaluation processes from external analysts
- Becoming a venue where ICT donors in Africa seek advice and input into their programs from different stakeholders on a regular basis

PICTA Membership:

The existing PICTA Membership criteria were reviewed and participants agreed on the following:

- Informal nature of PICTA needs to be preserved;
- A quasi charter will be produced on what PICTA is about;
- GKP be invited to become a member;
- An outreach group (including ECA) will be established to develop a strategy;

- A Co-ordination Committee to be set-up and includes: IDRC, ECA, APC and others are invited;
- Organize open space forums for thematic discussions leading to collaboration among partners;
- Organize site visits for ICT project in places where meetings are held;

Next PICTA Meeting:

- It was proposed that a short informal consultation be organized during the Africa Regional WSIS Preparatory Conference, Accra, 2-4 February 2005
- A full scale meeting is scheduled for around 9 September 2005, to coincide with the Highway Africa Conference in Grahamstown, South Africa, based on an Open Space format.
- It is also proposed that an Annual Seminar be held on emerging issues and trends in ICTs to keep members abreast of developments.

WSIS Africa regional conference

A new video produced by ECA and GTZ on Africa's participation in WSIS I was shown, generally covering statements made by African leaders supporting the development of ICTs on the continent.

Africa and the WSIS:

ECA reported on the WSIS process starting with the WSIS I events and went on to cover the WSIS II process leading to the Tunis Conference in November 2005.

African Regional WSIS Prepcom Conference, Accra, 2-4 February 2005:

The Chairperson of the Ghana Planning Committee for the African Regional WSIS Preparatory Conference presented the progress made in the preparation of the Conference. He stated that the Conference would begin with Pre-Conference Workshops between 29 January- 1 February 2005.

PICTA Members' Activity Reports

Catalysing Access to ICT in Africa (CATIA) Programme:

The CATIA Programme is delivering on 6 components as follows:

- Low-cost satellite Internet access widely available across Africa (led by TRASA, WATRA, GVF)
- Robust African Internet backbone with exchange points at the core and strong African ISP Associations (by AfrISPA)

- Well-informed, lively and inclusive policy debates across Africa (APC)
- An African-led network of institutions, actively strengthening African expertise involved in setting ICT related policy (NetTel@Africa, hosted at Makerere)
- Increased capacity for African countries to participate in international ICT decision-making
- Low-cost computer and open source software being developed and tailored to the African market

The other three CATIA components are:

- Positive policy environments for radio broadcasting across Africa – led by Panos in partnership with AMARC Africa
- Stronger network of community radio, FM and public service radio stations across Africa, offering good pro-poor radio programmes – led by AMARC Africa in partnership with Panos and OneWorld
- A thriving African-based Open Knowledge Network (OKN), catalysing the creation and exchange of local content led by OneWorld

IDRC:

The activities of ACACIA and Connectivity Africa were outlined.

A list of projects undertaken by IDRC was given and it included:

- Gender and ICT
- PDA in Health and Information Systems (the objective is to check costs and benefits)
- AVOIR (African Virtual Open Initiative Resource)- an open source university programme for content management.
- KARIANET
- Localization –help to develop tools for content management
- Curriculum development (how to setup WIFI)
- GSM roaming in West Africa
- Mobile applications for development

ECA:

There was an AISI update on ECA's current status on NICIs with an assessment planned. In addition, this included:

- Assistance to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to develop Regional Information and Communication Infrastructure (RICI) plans, as well as working on sectoral plans even at the local level.
- ePolNet-Africa (<http://www.epolafrica.org/>) as a web resource, however, the project

was aimed at supporting African countries in the implementation of their national e-strategies.

- Forthcoming African Development Forum (ADF4) to be held from 11 – 15 October 2004 in Addis Ababa. The ADF 4 theme is 'Governance for a Progressing Africa'. There would be an ICT Focus Group meeting on Governance to which PICTA members were invited.
- An on-line discussion was currently underway with African stakeholders on the status of e-government on the continent.

Bellanet:

Bellanet had developed a database called "ICT4D Africa Scan – A Snapshot of Institutions, Programs and Partners". The objective of this activity was:

- To create an inventory of the key organizations involved in ICT4D in Africa;
- To map the major ICT4D programs and initiatives at the country, sub-regional and regional levels;
- To explore possibilities for the incorporation of additional value-added information.

The initial database was available at <http://open.bellanet.org/afscan> and it contained representative activities of development institutions, including PICTA members, broken down by: theme, region, country, Institution, etc. Most of the activity records were down loaded from websites of the concerned institution. The database was not exhaustive; it gives a quick picture of members' activities in the promotion of collaboration. The database currently had information on 55 development institutions. It was a dynamic database (written in PHP) and distributed access could easily be provided to individual institutions.

ePol-Net/ Industry Canada:

ePol-Net brings together partners from national governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society, all interested in sharing the common goal to further the development, implementation and maintenance of national e-strategies and policies. Accordingly ePol-Net, cooperation mechanism between PICTA members can include:

- Keeping each other regularly informed of developments in respective initiatives to promote synergy, collaboration and a co-ordinated response to African priorities;
- Providing access to information resources, developing and supporting the

dissemination of these resources, where appropriate, as a joint activity;

- Facilitating access to quality and affordable ICT policy expertise through their respective networks (African, domestic or international);
- Co-funding, sponsoring, planning and organizing joint seminars and workshops in response to African demand in the area of ICT policies and strategies.
- Jointly offering personalized support, e.g.; joint missions in catalyzing policy and regulatory reform and building managerial and technical capacity;
- Supporting communication and marketing efforts to promote the availability of resources and expertise, targeting national regulators and policy makers, advocacy groups and individuals from the private sector, consumer groups and civil society and the media.

OSIWA

OSIWA reported on its programme areas, which included: support for ICT policy, Access and connectivity, enhancing localized capacities and ICT toolsets. Some of their projects included: community radio (CR) and community multimedia centre (CMC) initiatives, ICT Policy, Electronic Information for Libraries, ICTs and Local Government. OSIWA expressed readiness in working with UNESCO in areas of common interest.

UNESCO

UNESCO presented an update of its activities covering: ICT Policy (Kenya Policy), training/Capacity building (Greenstone Digitalization workshop), CMC pilots (CMC networking in Uganda, Benin, etc) and Information access (networking of public libraries in Swaziland). Other UNESCO's groundbreaking activities included: the CMC upscale project to be implemented in Mali, Mozambique and Senegal; the African e-Campus initiative together with related activities on Virtual Multimedia Academies and Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and the development of an Online Course on Electronic Local Governance.

Concluding Remarks

Participants raised additional issues, which required PICTA's emphasis during the forthcoming Africa WSIS Preparatory Conference in Accra. These were:

- Regulatory issues
- Position on open source/proprietary software

- Emphasis on e-government, e-learning and e-commerce
- Importance of African content development
- Internet governance
- ICTs for disabled persons
- Use of ICTs in HIV education and prevention.

PICTA Field Trip

Visit to Cybercity

A site visit to Cybercity was organized for PICTA members. This is a 12-story building equipped with ultra modern ICT infrastructure with various facilities including video conferencing, conference hall, 24/7 restaurant and banks. For more information visit: <http://www.e-cybercity.mu/cybertower/>

PICTA Bulletin is a monthly information sharing service designed to keep members informed of each other's activities in the area of ICTs in Africa.

Please send relevant information, stories or exchanges you may want to share with other members to atemtime@uneca.org for inclusion in subsequent issues of the PICTA Bulletin. If you have any comments and/or suggestions, please contact:

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