

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)

Support to NEPAD

Period of Report: August 2005 to August 2006

Between August 2005 and August 2006, ITU's support to NEPAD continued to be guided by Resolution 124 of the Plenipotentiary Conference (Marrakesh 2002), and the Strategic Development Plan for 2003-2006 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) (Istanbul, 2002) which dovetails with the NEPAD objectives as well as the UN Millennium Declaration and the Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developing Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. It has to be noted, though, that future support to NEPAD beyond 2006 will be defined within the framework of a new Strategic Development Plan for 2008-2011 adopted at the WTDC (Doha, 2006).

Support to areas relevant to the implementation of NEPAD

Support for a Study on Broadband Infrastructure for Central, North and West Africa

As part of its broader ICT development objectives for Africa, the NEPAD e-Africa Commission and ITU undertook a study for identification, integration and rationalization of terrestrial telecommunication infrastructure development projects within the West, Central and North Africa regions with the following objectives:

- To achieve cost-effective and reliable broadband networks;
- To ensure that all known terrestrial telecommunication infrastructure development initiatives and projects are planned to meet Africa's needs, as well as optimizing them to deliver efficient network solutions;
- To equip the e-Africa Commission with relevant information to play a leadership role in organizing multi-stakeholder dialogue for rationalization of information and communications infrastructure.

To achieve the above objectives, ITU engaged experts to conduct a survey of existing and planned infrastructure in the sub-region irrespective of ownership, as well as an overview of regulatory frameworks. The survey, therefore, also included non-telecommunication service providers, such as electricity companies, oil pipelines and railways who may own telecommunication infrastructures. The outcome of this survey was presented in a workshop involving all stakeholders, and fed into a Final Report on *Broadband Infrastructures in Central, North and West Africa*. The conclusions of this report have been used as inputs to various strategy documents, particularly the "*Partnership Framework for ICT Infrastructure Development in Africa*".

Support to the NEPAD e-school project

Led by the eAfrica Commission, the eSchools Initiative is a multi-country, multi-stakeholder, continental initiative, which intends to impart ICT skills to young Africans in primary and secondary schools and to use ICT to improve the provision of education and healthcare in schools. The project aims at achieving the following objectives to bring the continent closer to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

- To provide ICT skills and knowledge to primary and secondary school students, which will enable them to function in the emerging Information Society and Knowledge Economy;
- To make every learner health literate;
- To provide teachers with ICT skills to enable them to use ICT as tools to enhance teaching and learning;
- To provide school managers with ICT skills so as to facilitate the efficient management and administration in the schools.

During the demonstration phase, which is until the end of 2006, the project will be implemented in 96 schools in 16 countries. These schools will be equipped with suitable IT equipment, be connected to the Internet, and will have access to appropriate digital content for education and health. In addition, school teachers and managers will receive training programmes encompassing basic ICT skills, integration of ICT into the curriculum and first line maintenance.

ITU contributed to this initiative in various ways, including:

- Support in organizing a workshop in 2005;
- Provision of fellowships for the country liaison persons to meet with partners to detail in-country roll-out plans;
- Funding recruitment and travel of some experts for in-country launches;
- Support for the production of a promotional video of the initiative for the WSIS;
- Participation in a parallel workshop for the NEPAD e-Schools initiative during the WSIS;
- Funding an expert for 3 months to assist the NEPAD e-Africa Commission in developing a framework for ICT teacher training in line with the objectives of the NEPAD e-Schools initiative.

Innovative approaches

The ITU and its partners, mainly the e-Africa Commission, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and respective member states in the three sub-regions, adopted a collaborative approach in order to optimize resources needed to develop broad band networks and in ensuring optimum utilization of existing networks. The benefits in this approach will go a long way in supporting development efforts in this region by providing a reliable and cost effective network for various ICT applications. Use of experts from within the region will also contribute to the success of this approach as local

expertise is better equipped to address specific local need.

Challenges and constraints

The main challenges faced include:

- Inability to exchange and share information, even among UN agencies, leading to “competition” in providing support;
- Lack of common objectives which inhibits collective efforts in engaging international donors and providing effective support;
- Inflexible regulatory regimes which do not encourage foreign investments;
- Hostile and unstable political situation in some countries.

Advocacy and awareness-raising

ITU, through its Bureau for Telecommunication Development (BDT), continued to raise awareness of its support for NEPAD within the framework of the NEPAD Preliminary Assistance Project and its mandate of promoting Telecommunication/ICT development to support overall social and economic development. The report "*Partnership Framework for ICT Infrastructure Development in Africa*" was adopted by the African Ministers in charge of telecommunications and ICT in Abuja last year as a reference document for collaboration and action for ICT infrastructure development in Africa. This report achieved two main goals:

- Provided all stakeholders with a global vision document on ICT development that has not existed since the PANAFTTEL days of the 1980s. By doing so, the report has added a unique value to the existing situation and it is precisely due to this fact that the Report was adopted as a reference document for partnership in ICT infrastructure development in Africa;
- Created and strengthened an all-inclusive dialogue amongst the main regional and international stakeholders (UNECA, eAfrica Commission, AU, ATU, AfDB, URTNA and the RECs) through the core partners meeting and their association with the Report.

The report has been circulated to all African countries and development agencies promoting ICTs in Africa. This awareness was further communicated through various ITU events such as:

- seminars, workshops and symposia;
- support to Centres of Excellency based in Nairobi & Dakar; and
- Direct project support at local, national and regional levels.