

Junior I-Network Uganda launched

By Vincent Waiswa

As information and communication technologies or ICTs are embraced, many organizations have been established to facilitate the growth and development of ICTs in Uganda. I-Network, an IICD sponsored organization and Femrite, an association of Uganda female writers, organized a one-day workshop at Kyambogo University aimed at sensitizing the youth on the use and benefits of ICTs in development, especially in education.

In line with the theme of knowledge and information sharing, I-Network, which is an association of organizations rallied around the theme ICTs for development, was launching one of their nodes called Junior I-Network. Lucy Banda the coordinator of Global Teenager Project leads Junior I-Network. She made a presentation on the use of the Internet in education. Hon. Johnson Nkuuhe, Member of Parliament and one of the coordinators of the I-Network, presided over the workshop that was attended by 40 students from upcountry schools and schools around Kampala.

The enthusiastic group learnt how ICTs have facilitated education through effective research, development and knowledge. Dr. Nkuuhe on his part urged the students to embrace the new technologies if they are to be competitive in whatever they do. He also emphasized that by promoting efficiency and effectiveness, ICTs stimulate development in all sectors namely; educa-



Professor John Ruganda instructing youths during a creative writing workshop organised by Uganda Women Writers' Association (Femrite) at the National Theatre in Kampala, Uganda.

tion, health, environmental and natural resource, financial services and business in general. He stressed the fact that ICTs facilitate the exchange of information through communication between different sources and that for this information to be effective, it should be results-oriented.

Ms Lucy Banda stressed that it is easy for a student to have all these facilities and instead misuse them. She stressed that their aim as the Global Teenager Project is to ensure that students do not misuse ICT facilities, especially since the Internet has got a lot of unnecessary information that may be dan-

gerous to the students. The students also had a hands-on session where they learnt how to use search engines on the Internet. They searched for websites dedicated to African literature, African poetry and African writing in general.

One female student, who was rather shy, thanked on behalf of other students, the organizers of the Internet-aided writing session. She commented, "We are not Oliver Twist, but if I-Network Uganda and Femrite ever wanted to organize another seminar, we are always ready. In fact, we want one as early as tomorrow."

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Editorial the new publication policy

We welcome I-Network back on the newsletter stands, after months of recess. This is a quarterly newsletter of I-Network, and we at I-Network sincerely apologise for this period of recess. The newsletter will now be produced regularly—in other words, on time every three months.

We can say this with confidence because of our new publication policy and as a result of re-invigorating our media node.

The new publications policy is under development, and input from membership is being sought on key issues of this policy. Essential elements include: producing three main publications, namely the newsletter (paper copy), the website and an online newsletter. The newsletter and website are under production, and the online newsletter is being developed.

Discussion (D-)groups

In order to foster a spirit of openness and to get the views of members, I-Network has initiated Discussion Groups. Any topic is open to discussion, and issues agreed upon in these D-groups will contribute to content for our publications. All who join I-Network and have operational e-mail addresses are added to the D-groups.

Editorial Board

This consist of members selected on the basis of their proficiency and experience in the fields of newspaper, newsletter production, journalism, and publishing in general. Presently, the members are Johnson Nkuuhe, Vincent Waiswa, Isaac Omoding, Vincent Mugabi and Bernard Amwine.

The editorial board is there for the purpose of ensuring that publications come on time and are of good quality and acceptable standard. The board is encouraged to be as open and consult with members of I-Network all the time.

Target audience

All publications must have target audiences, and I-Network newsletter is no exception. The newsletter focuses on the needs and concerns of the target audience. The primary target audience consists of I-Network members, IICD project holders and beneficiaries, practitioners who use ICT to promote development and poverty eradication in these sectors – education, agriculture, health, local and central government. As the newsletter matures, the target audience expands.

Frequency

The newsletter is a quarterly. For 2003, this timetable has been agreed upon: Volume 1-was produced last year. Only one issue was published. Publication deadlines for the 4 issues of Volume 2 are April 4th, July 4th, October 3rd and December 12th, 2003. By December 2003, the publications deadlines for 2004 will be known. A deadline refers to the date when the newsletter should leave the printers.

Soliciting stories

The success of the newsletter will depend on the quality of its content (substance) primarily and how this content is put together into a publication (style). We need ideas on how stories will keep coming to the editorial desk.

Distribution policy

This is evolving, and input will come from the membership of I-Network, to the Editorial Board. However, copies of the newsletter should always be available at events organised by I-Network or its partners, such as the monthly seminar, upcountry events, special events, and promotional seminars. A distribution list is available, and copies should also be sent to public libraries, I-Network partners, IICD project holders, members in the private and public sectors and in civil society.

Online newsletter

This is not yet in print, and therefore its policy is yet to develop. The idea is that as the hard copy of the newsletter gets well established, a sister online rapid newsletter will be published once a month. This issue will be determined by the I-Network members and the Editorial Board.

Website

This is published by a separate organisation, but is subject to some editorial policy since content is what matters in publishing industry, including and especially web publishing. Therefore an editorial policy for www.i-network.or.ug will be published soon.

Themes

Each issue of the newsletter will have a particular theme or focus, which will also be close to the topics being discussed in the monthly I-Network seminars. This issue focuses on reports from monthly seminars, accumulated during the period when the newsletter was not being published. Welcome, and good reading.

Open source software the alternative for Africa

By Mar jorie Kasozi and Vincent Waiswa

At the monthly I-Network Uganda seminar held at Martyrs University Nkozi, 100 kilometers southwest of Kampala open source software was agreed upon as the alternative for Africa. The seminar that hosted 46 attendants was attended by Hon. Patrick Amuriat and Hon. Mugambe Joseph from the Parliament of Uganda, the Director Institute of Computer Science Dr. Baryamureeba and Sergeant Kasozi from the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), Bombo, among many others.

Professor Victor van Reyswoud, of Nkozi University described open source software as the alternative for Africa, saying it can solve many problems that developing countries especially in Africa have been facing for such a long time. Contrary to closed software, which is not open for any one to improve upon, the open source software is easily accessible and can be improved on. Open source has gained momentum with a market share of approximately 66% with about 30% of the computers connected to the Internet running Linux. He concluded by saying that open source software, was more secure than all others.

Another presenter, James Lunghabo took the seminar participants through a user's perspective of the open source software. Defining the advantages of open source, he said it places no restrictions on any party to sell or distribute the software. It is accompanied by a source code that enables users to improve the software according to their needs. With no discrimination, any party for commercial or non-commercial purposes can freely use it. Lunghabo gave examples of open source software as Free BSD, Open BSD, Net BSD, Free Dos, Apache, Send Mail, Perl, and Bind. Among all these, however, Linux is the most commonly used.

Members stressed the need to address the question of compatibility that may be the stumbling block for the adoption and wide use of open source software. Lunghabo said that Linux is designed with compatibility in mind and the need for compatibility is being addressed. He gave reasons why open source should be adopted widely in Uganda. It has got educational benefits, is affordable both in the public and private sectors, it produces better products in less time, offers Least Developing Countries (LDCs) an opportunity to leap frog into the information age and it is an enabler for new markets and business opportunities.

All in all, open source software is open for users to use and improve upon.

According to George William Lule, open source has got another side to it. The presenter said that open source has not got a zero cost of acquisition. Its installation does not mark the end of the journey and it does not incur ISP related costs.

Fourth Generation (4G) mobiles coming to Uganda?

By Mar jorie Kasozi

At the monthly I-Network seminar, Dorothy Okello a researcher and lecturer at the Faculty of Technology, Makerere University, and PhD student at McGill University, Canada, presented a paper of future generation wireless networks where she pointed out the coming of the fourth generation (4G) wireless networks. Noting that the first systems were for voice and complementing the fixed line system, she elaborated on the present technologies and what should be expected in the future.

Okello noted that the wireless network subscription has and will continue to increase due to continuous development in technology, expansion of service areas, increased popularity of mobile communication and the introduction of independent communication systems, which have caused an increase in data transmission.

In 1980 the first generation networks were developed based on analogue transmission technologies. These were then upgraded in 1991 to second generation (2G) using GSM that is widely accepted in Africa and CDMA and the TDMA that are common in the US and North America. These increased the capacity and lowered the cost of operations.

Although third generation (3G) networks are in place, they are not widely used. She explained that it is a wireless network with capacities of up to 2 megabits per second (Mbps).

The 4G assumptions include the idea of telepresence, an application that creates virtual meetings between individuals and provides full stimulation of senses required. It further shows how there will be an

By Harry Hare and Simbo Ntiro

On 19th March 2003, the Tanzania Global Development Learning Centre (TGDLC) was the Tanzanian end of a first videoconference that brought together more than 50 people to discuss e-Learning opportunities and challenges in Africa.

Supported by IICD, the event was a partnership between Tanzania's SWOPNet (Sharing With Other People Network) and I-Network Uganda. The 50 participants were hosted at the Global Development Learning Centre at Uganda Management Institute, Nakawa.

I-Network Uganda provided two excellent resource persons who presented e-Learning in theory and practice. The experience of SchoolNet Uganda in installing the first school-based VSAT network in Africa was especially stimulating. In his presentation Mr. Daniel Kakinda, took the participants through the implementation process of e-Learning, its impact on the community and the benefits thereof. "Ours is a network of schools and we have 49 sites in both rural and urban Uganda," Mr. Kakinda said. The network uses a combination of satellite-based technologies including C-Band, Ku-Band and Microwave connections. The Schoolnet Uganda approach has recently moved from face-to-face training to e-Learning. In other words this is a shift from the "lecture method" of education to activity-based learning centred on the student, whereby the teacher becomes a mentor.

However, Mr. Kakinda said even with their state-of-the-art network, they still face cultural and technological problems. "We have a completion rate of 40-60% due to technological down-time and student isolation," he said. To attract more people and retain its students, the network has moved from the lecture method of content delivery to an activity-based method where the learner is the centre of any e-learning activity. Peer support and online mentoring have also been introduced to help those who feel isolated when taking e-Learning courses.

The videoconference was very well attended with nearly 40 Tanzanian participants including practitioners in the education sector. The feedback was excellent and very many practical lessons and real obstacles towards introducing e-Learning were learnt by all.

Following the success of the videoconference, SWOPNet promised to 'host' a similar event in May 2003 with the content coming from Tanzania.



Ugandan ICT practitioners after sharing ICT-related experience

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intermachine communication. She cited a cooker informing the fuel station that it has ran out of gas and so much more.

Patrick Mwesigwa, the technical manager at Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) expressed concern about the fact that the 3G systems have not yet been adopted in developed economies and why there was a rush move to the fourth generation.

Lugalambi, a member of I-Network Uganda further inquired whether there was a plan to converge all cellular digital networks, that is to say; the GSM, CDMA and DTMA so that if one went to Europe or USA,

they would not find any problem using their mobile handsets from Uganda.

Members argued that for the technology to be useful, there is need to create local content in order for the communities to understand and learn to use it in everyday business transactions. However, packaging this information is useless if there are no personalities that are trained to go down to the rural areas and adapt the technology to the needs of the masses. Many other views from the audience were that the training is not enough without identifying the personalities and their needs and what information they would like to hear and applications to solve their daily needs.

iNetwork Uganda takes ICT upcountry

By Vincent Waiswa and Johnson Nkuuhe

Under the theme “ICTs for Rural Development” the Kamuli workshop was one of the first attempts of I-Network Uganda to meet its objective of spreading ICT awareness to upcountry areas. The event was held on 30th October 2002 at Malamu Centre in Kamuli town, some 150 kilometres east of Kampala. It was well attended by 42 people who included district leaders, headteachers, church leaders, NGO representatives, and local council members among others. The success of the seminar was as a result of Uganda Development Services (UDS) presence in Kamuli District. This local non-governmental organization (NGO) provides information services to the people of Kamuli. I-Network Uganda held the workshop in partnership with UDS. Being locally based, it was easy for UDS to mobilize the large audience that attended the workshop.

Two key presentations

Two presentations were made one by Rita Mijumbi, Acting Programme Manager, UDS on the topic *What are ICTs and the current status in Uganda*. The other presentation was by Emmanuel Dhikusooka, Systems Administrator/ Database Specialist, Uganda Wildlife Authority, who handled the topic *The Importance of ICTs in Rural Areas*.

These two presentations were well received by the audience. One of the 10 ladies attending commented, “Do you realize how much we are missing by not embracing ICTs?” Many delegates lamented that they travel all the way to Kampala, 150 kilometres away, just to check their e-mails simply because this and other services are not available in Kamuli.

Kamuli District leadership embraces ICT

One major observation was the keen interest of embracing ICTs by the district leadership. In fact the district leadership at the seminar included the Deputy District Chairperson and the Deputy Resident District Commissioner. For a start, they were planning to develop a website for the district to inform and encourage the people of Kamuli and Ugandans in the Diaspora to invest in Kamuli’s social and economic development.

A number of questions were asked and all indications were that there is need for further sensitisation. This

was probably the first ICT seminar to be held in Kamuli. A CD-ROM of how rural women can generate revenue using the little they have was demonstrated and it gave more confidence to the delegates of the potential of ICTs to transform lives.

Rural electrification to enhance ICT use

Among the delegates was one of the authors (Hon. Dr. Johnson Nkuuhe), “wearing one of his many hats” - as an MP who promotes ICT in parliament and Uganda in general, and a member of I-Network Uganda.

Hon. Alleluya Rosette Ikote, former Woman MP for Pallisa, and Engineer Emmanuel Buringuriza who represented the Private Sector Foundation Rural Electrification Project. He was there to observe how his project could support such rural electrification and rural ICT efforts aimed at poverty eradication.

Lessons learned and way forward

I-Network Uganda has among its plans to spread ICT awareness and use beyond Kampala, Uganda’s capital. This was the first such effort.

Four lessons were learned:

- ◆ Upcountry events should be held in partnership with others. A local partner is vital, for local ownership and mobilization.
- ◆ Adequate planning is important. This planning should include meeting local leaders and partners, looking at the venue or venues, and plans for publicity.
- ◆ Publicity should include local radios, newspapers, and banners. All these tend to create hype for the event.

I-Network Uganda should now start plans for upcountry events in partnership with UNDP, Private Sector Foundation, and DistrictNet project partners. DistrictNet is a project in the Ministry of Local Government, supported by IICD and DfID and the Government of Uganda. Districts participating in DistrictNet project include Lira in northern, Mbale for eastern, Kayunga for central and Mbarara for western Uganda. DistrictNet partners will provide the local partnership, so vital to continuity and sustainability.

ICT benefits to go to rural schools

By Dennis Gaf fa

The Uganda Minister of Works, Housing and Communication, Hon. John Nasasira has urged the people in rural areas to try and learn how to use computers in order to fit in the present competitive world of science and technology.

Hon. Nasasira was speaking during the official closure and awarding of certificates to teachers from Isingiro South Constituency who completed a 10-day computer-training course at the Chrichton Communication Centre at Ntare School in Mbarara district of western Uganda. Ntare School has a modern ICT facility supported by parents, old boys of the school and Schoolnet Uganda. Schoolnet is a project supported by the World bank. I-Network, a Uganda information-sharing network supported by the Dutch government agency called International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), sponsored the course.

Minister Nasasira added that very soon, people who have not acquired computers, credit cards and mobile phones would remain illiterate, as Uganda becomes part of the global village. He thanked the area member of parliament Dr. Johnson Nkuuhe who had organized the course for his initiative to equip the people of Isingiro South with information and communication skills.

On his part, Dr. Nkuuhe thanked the participants for their good performance in acquiring computer knowledge and computer-aides learning skills, which he said, would reach all his people soon. "If you want to give knowledge to a community, you begin with the teacher" Nkuuhe said. "If you want to build on an air force on limited budget, you start by training pilots before you buy fighter planes" Nkuuhe said. He urged teachers to improve their teaching through finding information on the Internet, which is a global collection of information and knowledge. He urged teachers to learn skills such as word processing, spreadsheets and

databases to prepare their work and manage student marks and school records.

Dr. Nkuuhe thanked Ntare school leadership and praised the partnership between Schoolnet Uganda and I-Network Uganda that had made it possible to bring ICT knowledge to rural schools.

Minister Nasasira added that very soon, people who have not acquired computers, credit cards and mobile phones would remain illiterate, as Uganda becomes part of the global village.

He assured the minister and guests that he would train more teachers from the same region, who will in turn train more pupils from their schools, and in this way improve the standard of education.

Present were Mbarara parliamentarians who included Hon Nathan Byanyima and Hon Muzoora, district political leadership led by the LC5 Chairperson, Mr Fred Kamugira, his ministers in the district government, councillors and head of departments from Mbarara District. Mbarara Municipality Member of Parliament, Hon. Winnie Byanyima assured participants of her support towards the development of ICT.

"If you want to give knowledge to a community, you begin with the teacher" Nkuuhe said. "If you want to build on an air force on a limited budget, you start by training pilots before you buy fighter planes"

iNetwork Uganda develops a vision of the future

By J. Nkuuhe, V. Waiswa and E. Wasukira

An envisioning retreat for I-Network Uganda was held at Hotel Triangle, in the historic source of the Nile town of Jinja, 80 kilometres east of Uganda's capital Kampala from Friday 31st Jan To Sunday 2nd February 2003. The retreat was planned as part of an envisioning process for network activities for the year, and for the next 5 years. It was a follow-up activity of the annual general meeting of December 2002 that had instructed the coordination team and a few members to meet and draw a master plan to guide I-Network operations.

The eight attendees ranged from IICD project partners, I-Network coordinators, members from the private sector and some from civil society. Jane Hitimana of Rank Consult (U) Ltd provided logistical support to the retreat.

The retreat had a long agenda, but apart from developing a work plan and budget, members spent much time looking at the mission and vision of the Network and core values, and objectives to achieve the vision. The revised versions of these are shown below.

Mission Statement: I-Network Uganda (I-Network in brief) is a national network of individuals and organizations, that acts as a platform for sharing knowledge and information on applying ICTs for equitable national development.

Vision 2007: I-Network envisions a Uganda where at least 50% of the people are able to equitably tap the socio-economical benefits of the information age through the use information and communication technologies or ICTs.

Core values: Sharing, transparency, fairness, people-centered, cooperation, and honesty

Objectives: *Main objective:* The core objective of I-Network Uganda is to catalyse equitable socio-economic development through the sharing of knowledge and experiences where ICT has stimulated development. *Specific objectives:* The platform focuses on ICT for human development. In this regard, the network focus is;

1. To market and publicise I-Network Uganda through the media (radio talk shows, jingles), visits to institutions, mail and other publicity materials.

2. To recruit members through visits schools, colleges, and club; also through use of media and promotional materials.
3. To facilitate and encourage learning and sharing information about new opportunities of ICT to contribute to human development through seminars in Kampala and upcountry, through the newsletter, website and special interest nodes.
4. To advocate and lobby for policies and programmes that promote ICT for development through lobbying of key policy makers in public and private sector, and by participating in policy formulation fora.
5. To promote partnerships that support content development, research and innovation in ICTs for equitable development.
6. To identify ICT capacity needs of I-Network members, and post training materials on the I-Network website.
7. To develop and update sustainability plans.
8. To develop a planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures.
9. Engage in and promote activities that result in the growth of I-Network (organisational development).

Content and fear of failure: Members at the retreat noted that ICTs were tools promoting the sharing of knowledge for development. It was pointed out that ICT projects badly planned tend to end in failure. To avoid failure the retreat noted a need for I-Network to have a focus, and to look for a niche and concentrate on it. It was agreed that emphasis should be put on technology as a tool, a means to an end and not an end.

Content, especially local content in local languages was seen to be key in the promotion of widespread use of ICTs, and radio and TV as appropriate ICT dissemination tools for mass communication. Members also cited the low training budgets for organizations and the minimal subscription to the Internet, which in essence could not make sufficient social change.

Policy makers were seen as key targets and that they should in a way concentrate on the new technologies. Members recommended partnership building, and Uganda Development Gateway was recommended. Partnering with universities, such as Makerere University to create think tanks was seen as essential.

iNetwork Uganda Plan for April to June 2003

MONTH	DATE	ACTIVITY	REMARKS
April	1	First Quarter Report to IICD	To be compiled and sent.
	14	Support for similar activities	Start of initiative by UgaByte to compile a directory of national ICT initiatives and projects focusing on ICT for development. Exercise to last 4 months.
	16	Monthly seminar	The two national (communication) service providers are offering free Internet access to users of their telephone services. How will this affect other ISPs in Uganda?
	25	Parliamentarians' seminar	Half-day seminar at Nile Conference Centre during the AITEC show. Theme: <i>ICTs for Good Governance</i>
May	2	Up country event	ICT awareness seminar for district local government officials of districts neighboring Kayunga District, to be held in Kayunga.
	9	Up country event	ICT awareness seminar for District Local Government officials of districts neighboring Mbarara District, to be held in Mbarara
	14	Monthly seminar	Virtual Reality - 3D Real-Time Interactive Simulations: VR as a solution for delivering development & educational content to the literate and illiterate communities-by SchoolNet Uganda.
	17	Special General Meeting	To review I-Network five-year plan
June	6	Media Node	Workshop for journalists (details to be worked out)
	11	Monthly seminar	ICT for Development: Is it a myth or reality?
	18	Special Event	Video conference with Tanzania and Ghana. (Tentative date, topic to be decided)
	27 - 29	Ministers' workshop	Tentative day subject to confirmation by the Minister of Public Service.