



African Research and Education Networking today

From Philadelphia to Philadelphia: the Journey of African Research and Education Networking (2005 – 2012)

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OUTLINE

- Why this session
- About the AAU
- REN development in Africa - Milestones
- Lessons learned and Main challenges
- Opportunities and way forward



Why this session?

- September 2005: Internet2 FMM in Philadelphia with a full-day session on African REN'g
- I2 2005 FMM was preceded by:
 - AAU General Conference in Cape Town in Feb. with a PAREN session
 - 3rd Open Access Conference in Maputo in may 2005
- ... and followed by:
 - Intl Workshop on African REN in Geneva in Sep 2005
 - Workshop on African REN in Tunis in Nov. 2005 as side event of the WSIS
 - Birth of the UbuntuNet Alliance
- Back to Philadelphia, where are we today?



About the AAU

- Apex organization for African higher education
- ≈300 members (HEIs) in 46 African countries
- Various programmes and services for African HEIs, including programme on ICT (focus on R&E)
- Established a REN Unit in 2005 (following mandate by 2005 General Conference)
- Main activities of REN Unit:
 - Advocacy (HEI leaders, governments, private sector, etc.)
 - Support to REN initiatives (policy dialogue, “political” support)
 - Establishment of strategic partnerships
 - Capacity building



African REN dev. – Milestones

- Tremendous momentum in 2005
 - Cape Town, Maputo, Philadelphia, Geneva, Tunis (see first slide)
- Establishment of the UbuntuNet Alliance in 2005 (membership has grown from the founding 5 NRENs to 14 to-date)
- Establishment of the AAU REN Unit in 2006
- Establishment of WACREN (West and Central African Research and Education Network) in 2010
 - Process started in 2006
 - 8 NRENs established in the WACREN region since 2010
- Establishment of ASREN (Arab States Research and Education Network) in 2011
- AfREN 2012 in The Gambia (discussion on interconn.)



Lessons learned and Challenges

- Some of the lessons learned:
 - Trust building is key for success
 - Start small, be open to future entrants and scale up
 - Identify and support champions; involve end-users
 - Involve telecom regulators and operators from the beginning
 - Showcase to convince actors, policy and decision makers
- Some of the main challenges:
 - Inadequate telecommunications regulatory environment in most countries
 - Mis-understanding by telecom operators of what REN traffic is, in comparison to commodity Internet traffic; see NRENs as competitors rather than as partners
 - Human resources (capacity building and staff retention)
 - Sustainable power supply



Opportunities and Way forward

- Opportunities
 - Increased awareness of policy and decision makers
 - Same for telecom regulators and telecom operators (more and more partnerships are being built)
 - Increasing interest from governments as well as from development partners
 - Support from international REN community
- Way forward
 - Strengthening of existing RENs (at national and regional levels) and support for establishment of new NRENs
 - REN cross-border connectivity
 - Interconnection of the 3 regional RENs covering Africa (discussions already underway)
 - Establishment of new links to the global REN
 - Successful implementation of AfricaConnect



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- African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)
- African Network Operators Group (AfNOG)
- African Union Commission (AUC)
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- European Union Commission (EUC)
- Ford Foundation
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
- Network Startup Resource Centre (NSRC)
- Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA)
- Regional Registry for Africa (AfrinIC)
- Rockefeller Foundation
- The REN Community (DANTE, Internet2, RedClara, various NRENs)
- And many others... (especially at national and regional levels)



THANK YOU

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