

NIGERIA'S SECOND REPORT BY MEMBER STATES TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE ON MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE PROMOTION AND USE OF MULTILINGUALISM AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO CYBERSPACE

DEVELOPMENT OF MULTILINGUAL CONTENT AND SYSTEMS

Nigeria is committed to ensuring that the use of indigenous languages does not go extinct. Pursuant to this, government came out with a policy to promote the use and teaching of indigenous languages. Indigenous language is now the medium of instruction for the first three years of school.

Nigeria is also encouraging the development of local content information resources for universal access through the establishment of Virtual Libraries. The National Library of Nigeria is digitizing newspapers and government documents, although the contents are in English Language. Few newspapers are published in the local languages.

The radio and television are the main sources of information in the indigenous languages. The effort to establish Community Multimedia Centers in Nigeria with assistance from UNESCO is commended as these would be a veritable tool for disseminating information in the local languages.

FACILITATING ACCESS TO NETWORK AND SERVICES

POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Nigerian National Telecommunication Policy was formulated and adopted in 2000 with the aim of achieving modernization and rapid expansion of the telecommunication network and service. The main objectives are to:

- Enhance national economic and social development and to integrate Nigeria into global telecommunications environment; and
- Make telecommunication services efficient, affordable, reliable and available.

The Policy had short term and medium term network development objectives to exceed the minimum teledensity of 1 - 100 telephones within three years and to promote widespread access to communications technologies and services and the promotion of competition through the liberalization of the telecommunication market.

The Communication Act of 2003 addresses regulatory issues which includes licensing, general competition principles, investigations and appeals, dispute resolution, interconnection and access to facilities, universal services spectrum management, numbering and technical standards.

FIXED TELEPHONY

The year 1996 saw the licensing of private owned telecommunication operators (PTOs) to compete with the state owned operator NITEL in providing fixed telephone services. Fixed wireless Access license was also issued on State to State basis although a company could be issued license to operate in several States.

MOBILE TELEPHONY

Three GSM operators were licensed in July, 2001. They are ECONET, MTN and MTEL Ltd. Globacom was licensed in 2002. The entrant of these mobile operators changed the face of the Nigerian telephone market. Since those early years, more mobile telephone operators have entered the market helping to bring down the cost of acquisition of telephone lines. However Nigerians are still asking that the operators bring down their call charges and rates.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Galaxy Backbone Plc, a Federal Government Public enterprise through the National Information Communication and Education Programme (NICEP) has the primary responsibility of setting up and operating a Unified Information and Communication Technology (UICT) infrastructure platform that will address the issues of connectivity, transversal and other technology imperatives of the Virtual Library system.

UNIVERSAL SERVICE

The Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) was established under the Nigerian Communications Acts 2003 and commenced operation in 2006. It was set up to facilitate the achievement of national policy goals for universal service and universal access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in rural, unserved and underserved areas in Nigeria. It pursues its goals of advancing universal access by building partnerships with and providing incentives to other interested organizations. The USP is funded from the parliamentary appropriation, a portion of the annual fees from licenses and aid.

NITDA

The Nigerian Information Technology Development Agency was established in 2001 to serve as a clearing house for IT projects in the public sector. It is mandated to operate and implement the National IT policy and to achieve the provisions by the National Information Technology Development Acts of 2007. The Act compels major institutions and organizations including banks, Insurance, and telecommunication operators among Information and Communication Technology (ICT) entities to devote a percent of their profit before tax for national IT development. The agency is also committed to bring government and its services closer to the people through IT. It supervises the measurement of the country code top level domain as a national resource.

Some of NITDA's projects since inception include Public Service Network (PsNet) to network the various States and Local Government Areas through a virtual private network, development of Rural Technology Centers (RITCs) across Nigeria and Capacity Building programmes.

NICOMSAT

The Nigerian Communication Satellite was incorporated in 2006 and responsible for the management of Nigerian Communication Satellites. It launched NigCOMSAT-1 in 2007. The Satellites payload offer services that provide optimal and cost effective voice, data, video, internet and global positioning and navigational services applications as well as solutions.

FIBRE OPTIC CABLE NETWORK

The fibre optic cable network technology which is expected to revolutionize ICT in Nigeria took off recently. The technology will provide international video conferencing.

CHALLENGES:

Nigeria is pursuing its mandate of facilitating universal access to cyberspace with greater vigour and determination despite the absence of constant electricity power supply in most rural areas. This has been a major hindrance to the smooth implementation of the programme, though majority of the Youth are now ICT compliant.