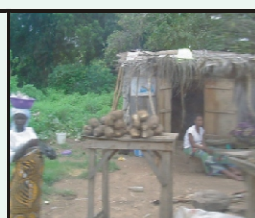# Global Process, Local Reality

Nigerian Youth Lead Action In The Information Society

Edited by
'Gbenga Sesan

Featuring:
Edward Popoola, Tope Soremi
Kola Osinowo, Ayo Oladejo
Ayobami Olutuase, Adeolu Ashaye
Nwanneka Akabuike

Global Process, Local Reality

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Paradigm Initiative
NIGERIA

Adeolu Ashaye, Ayo Oladejo,
Ayobami Olutuase, Edward Popoola,
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FOREWORD

'Gbenga Sesan and Edward Popoola

"...young people are the future workforce and leading creators and earliest adopters of ICTs. They must therefore be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers"
WSIS Declaration of Principles

From Nigeria to India, the Philippines to Australia, and Brazil to Canada, young people have taken the WSIS message to rural communities, actively engaged other youth around the world, and proved the possibility of achieving developmental goals only if young people are given a proper platform of expression. The Nigerian Information Society space has not been spared by the positive energies that her youth radiate. These passionate young men and women have held National Youth Information Society Campaigns from one corner of the country to the other.

Through the campaign process, numerous reports and feedback have been documented. These results will remain as definite proof of the action taken by young Nigerians in their bid to move from words to action. Chronicling these results showcases amazing contributions from the people that can best tell the story of Nigerian youth's involvement in the WSIS process.

Are you interested in knowing about *The Policy Train*? Curious about how Nigeria's youth are *Extending the Perimeter*? Would you be glad to join us in *Measuring the Impact*? How about the opportunity of *Reconnecting in Berlin* or the popular journey *From Bamako to Accra*? We are also going to share with you on the task of *Exporting the Influence*, and announce *The Birth of N.Y.I.N.* You would enjoy our story of *The Road to Geneva* and join us in answering *The Quo Vadis Question*. We explained how we're *Combating the Big Threat!*

The book also reveals *The Power of Information* and explores *The Role of Young Women*. It predicts that Nigerian youth engagement with ICT public policy is *History in the Making*. Already, *People are Talking*... and not to worry, we'll leave you with some *Notes on Contributors*. *Global Process, Local Reality* is a celebration of how young Nigerians have maximized the WSIS process, and an expression of their resolve to partner with relevant stakeholders towards building a people-centred and development-focused Information Society for Nigeria, Africa and the world.

The Policy Train

'Tope Soremi

"We realise that the future of Nigeria and its relevance in the Information Society depend on the commitment of all stakeholders in the present; and in recognition of this, we commit our resources to the accelerated involvement of our nation in the global Information Society. We invite all to do the same."[1]

The National Youth Consultations on the WSIS process took place in Nigeria between 2002 and 2005, over two phases. The aim of the policy campaigns was to choose to lend our voice to the emergence and conscious establishment of an equitable Information Society that focuses on people and development above technology and profit. Tagged the "WSIS Youth Nigeria Policy Train", efforts began in November 2002, in three regions across Nigeria (East, North and West). Working with young participants in three representative cities, critical inputs were made to Nigeria's position on issues emerging in the Information Society. This also provided opportunity to showcase various works and efforts that young Nigerians are making around ICTs in the country.

A debate on the existing National Information Technology Policy and discussions on what it should contain and how the policy should be implemented particularly in schools, were also focus points. Practical sessions included on-site training in English and local languages on basics of computing, the Information Society and its potentials. Over four hundred (400) youths participated directly in the consultative process and results obtained from surveys, questionnaires and discussions packaged into a Nigerian Youth Declaration on the WSIS was made available to the Nigerian government and circulated in both print and electronic media.

WSIS Phase II Campaigns

As WSIS Phase II began globally, we were interested in pursuing rural projects with the goal of observing the know-how present in these localities while introducing new technologies and its life-changing capabilities to the communities.

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[1] Nigerian Youth Declaration on the World Summit on the Information Society

This was based in the emerging intra-country divide that saw urban cities exposed to ICTs and rural communities lacking access to technology, as well as personnel to train people and develop their skills. The need to develop rural ICT4D initiatives with proper implementation to provide technology solutions to problems faced by rural communities in Nigeria was our driving force.

The promotion of ICTs in secondary-level and tertiary institutions, as showcased by various local language initiatives, was an offshoot of the campaigns with young Nigerians using the e-Nigeria 2003, 2004 and 2005 conference platforms to bring their works to national focus. We wish to thank all those who supported us in the execution of this project for their continued support up to the second phase of the project tagged the *Rural National Youth Information Society Campaigns* (RYNICs).

A shortlist of all participating organisations, support partners and facilitators for the first phase of the campaign is below:

Participating Organisations
- West African Non-Governmental Network
- Fantsuam Foundation
- Knowledge House Africa
- YIELD Infotechnologies
- Nigerian Association of Computer Science Students
- International Young Professional Foundation
- Paradigm Initiative Nigeria
- Junior Achievement of Nigeria/Lagos Digital Village

Support Partners
- TakingITGlobal, Canada
- WSIS Youth Caucus
- British Council, Lagos and Kano
- Digital Peers International, Abuja
- Anpez Centre for Development, Port Harcourt
- Centre for Information Technology and Development, Kano
- National Information Technology Development Agency

- Human Rights Information Network

Facilitators
- Chris Uwaje
- Tokunbo Fagbamigbe
- Titilayo Akinsanmi
- Babatope Soremi
- 'Gbenga Sesan
- Zaura Babba Community Leaders
- Ago Are Community Leaders
- Garba Mohammed

Extending the Perimeter

Ayo Olutuase

The Rural Youth National Information Society Campaigns (RYNICs) come as a natural follow-up to the "Policy Train" sessions that held in different cities across Nigeria during the preparation for the Phase 1 of the World Summit on the Information Society. The RYNICs empowered rural youth to apply ICTs for development in their daily tasks, and also provided an avenue for them to contribute to the global process of creating a people-centred and development-focused Information Society.

RYNICs were designed to be implemented in six states of Nigeria namely, Katsina, Kano, Enugu, Lagos, Anambra and Oyo States. These states cover various regions in Nigeria. Eventually, campaigns were held in additional states (Imo, Kaduna) and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). The project implementation took place over a period of ten months and will be presented during the coming second phase of the WSIS coming up in Tunis by November 2005.

This chapter highlights campaign activities in four states, lessons encountered, sustainability challenges, and recommendation of rural youths, for input into policy processes.

Campaign Activities

A team of volunteers from Paradigm Initiative Nigeria arrived in Kano (northern Nigeria) very early on Saturday, May 21, 2005 and spent the day holding a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with the National Youth Service Corps members (Corpers) serving in Kano State, who work in schools and other state owned businesses. These were people based in Kano town and her surrounding villages and working with young people in the schools. Our goal was to observe how members of the next generation (primary and secondary school students) were being taught and prepared for active participation in the technology sphere in the coming years. A number of salient issues were highlighted during the FGD as factors in the effective transfer of knowledge to students and the use of technology at that level of the education within the state[2].

These include language, culture, curriculum content, inadequate equipment, low teacher-to-student ratio, poor knowledge amongst

teachers, high teacher turnover rate, and unclear state policy on ICT at the basic or intermediate level. Our visit to Kano and interaction with knowledge trainers and teachers was quite enriching. Based on initial discussions, we hope to do a more detailed work using their various villages as case studies. The challenges we faced in our rural-area focused efforts are clear: content in local languages and the use of community based personnel to help address technology issues are imperative. No move to see knowledge transfer occur will succeed without the whole community and its leadership committed to the process hence we must advocate and convince leaders in these places of the need for ICTs.

As part of the RYNICs, a National ICT Empowerment Conference was held in the northern region of Nigeria on the 27th of June 2005. It was organized by KnowledgeHouseAfrica (led by Olutuase Oluwafemi and Akanni Kayode) and hosted by the Information Technology Corps (National Youth Service Corps) of Katsina State. In attendance were one of the advisers to the State Governor; the Territorial Manager of Nigeria Telecommunications Limited, Engr M.I Sokoto and a host of other dignitaries. The conference introduced over 300 participants to the WSIS, RYNICs and the digital opportunities that abound in the ICT industry through youth-based ICT initiatives. We also discussed youth empowerment in job creation and employment, Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and telecommunications.

On Tuesday, the 28th of June, a team of ten young volunteers were in Mashi village, which is a few kilometers from Daura, the origin of the Hausa/Fulani race. We set up our computers in the open square of the market where groups of villagers trouped out to attend the RYNICs event, which lasted from 3pm to 8pm. Many of them where shown how to use the computer while the older teenagers were given RYNICs questionnaires to complete and were interviewed (audio and video) to find out their perspectives on the inclusion of ICTs into their everyday life in the village. A total of about 103 villagers participated in the campaign.

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[2] This chapter was supported by campaign reports written by Tope Soremi and Theophilus Ekpon

The one-day rural campaign in Enugu was in three phases. The first phase was a parley session with youths in Enugu town. The town meeting started with a presentation on the overview of the World Summit on the Information Society by Theophilus Ekpon of Young Initiators of Nigeria, and was followed by a detailed presentation on the aims and objectives of the Rural Youth National Information Society Campaigns by 'Gbenga Sesan. Some of the key questions raised were on how young people can get involved in these processes and platforms for continuity.

The second phase involved a visit to ICT4D project sites and some of those sites visited include ELRC (a joint ICT4D project between the United Kingdom and the Enugu State Government), Enugu Community Resource Centre, Industrial Development Centre, Apex Digital Communications, among others. Consequently, the campaign team (Paradigm Initiative Nigeria and Young Initiators Nigeria) visited *Ugwaji* village, were ICTs were taught to the locales in both English and their indigenous language (Ibo). It also involved a one-on-one training on the operation and handling of the computer. The rural workshop which was facilitated by 'Gbenga Sesan got to it's peak when the villagers found out that their photographs could be viewed within seconds of its being taken, on the computer.

In spite of the heavy downpour, the *Igwe (*local word for community leader*) of ESUT*, the headmistress of Ugwaji Community Primary School and other villagers turned up for the workshop. The *Igwe of ESUT* and the headmistress on behalf of the village promised their total support for a possible resource centre project, and future collaboration. The volunteer team donated the sum of one thousand naira to the school towards their developmental projects.

KnowledgeHouseAfrica visited Wesere village in Badagry (Lagos State) for a three-day *Rural Youth Rugged* program which took place from Friday August 19, 2005 to Sunday August 21, 2005. The program was held in collaboration with the Lagos State Chapter of the National Christian Corpers' Fellowship (NCCF) and the Nigerian Christian Conference of Medical and Dental Students (NCCMDS) of the Lagos State University. More than 145 young people participated in the program.

KnowledgeHouseAfrica came with some computers and electronic

gadgets to introduce the young villagers to the Information Society and how they can participate in the process. WSIS was also discussed at the RYNICs forum after which the village youths highlighted the following needs:

(a) Provision of stable electricity so as to aid adequate transmission of information to the rural dwellers in order to increase the standard of living in the rural areas;

(b) Introduction and development of Internet-connected Computer Center or Computer School to facilitate learning in the rural communities.

We also set up a booth at the African Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), which took place from July 1 - 4, 2005. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) program was hosted by the Nigerian Government through the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC). We showcased the past RYNICs activities and also introduced WSIS Youth Award to those who visited the booth.

Lessons Learnt

The following are lessons learnt during the RYNICs process:

1. The rigorous process involved in policy formulation and implementation of issues that affect the society;
2. How to adequately empower the youths living in the rural regions using ICT as a tool for self-sustainability;
3. How to interact with people from different ethnic groups and presenting the truth about the realization of their potential, through the opportunity that lies in the digital industry, in a language they can understand without being unduly complicated in the message delivery.

Partnership with Other Stakeholders

The various stakeholders that we partnered with include the *InfoTech Corps* of the National Youth Service Corps. These young people are in various states of the federation and they are located in several rural areas of the society. Incidentally, Olutuase O.A started the first *InfoTech Corp* group in 2002. Along with other volunteers, he implemented the project in Lagos State, and handed

the vision over to subsequent group members who took the project to other regions of Nigeria. The *InfoTech Corps* really assisted us in North Central and South Western regions of Nigeria. The Young Initiators of Nigeria also played a very active role in the implementation of the project especially in the South Eastern region of Nigeria. The National Information Technology Development Agency of Nigeria and the Nigeria Communication Commission also gave us inspiring support, having allowed us to showcase the RYNICs at the African Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Telecom Development Conference which took place in Abuja, Nigeria from the 1st to the 3rd of July, 2005.

Challenges for Campaign's Sustainability and Replication

Funding remains a great challenge for the sustainability of the RYNICs project. Nigeria has more than 120 million people and over seventy percent of these people reside in the rural areas (and are mostly youth). Due to mismanagement of finances, among other reasons, some governments find it difficult to provide essential amenities for these teeming youths. Thus, there is a huge need for funds to provide adequate information resources for the rural youth.

Inadequate education is also a very serious issue in the sustainability of the RYNICs project. We discovered that the best way to train people in the rural area is to train some young people and then show them how to train their own people. Unfortunately the high rate of illiteracy among the villagers makes it difficult to quicken the learning process. Therefore we had to start from the basics of education for them to even grasp basic concepts of the Information Society.

The concepts of Internet Governance, Financial Mechanism and the Information Society are not fully understood by the average Nigerian urban youth, talk less the rural youths. Therefore, extra efforts are being taken to intimate the youth who can replicate this project anywhere.

Recommendation

Rural youth are very eager to really participate in the emerging Information Society. They asked for the provision of basic

infrastructure to enable them have access to the Information Super-highway. Many of them were introduced to the Internet for the first time in their life during the RYNICs project. They therefore asked for the following through multistakeholder support (especially government and private sector):

(a) Subsidy in the amount paid in browsing the Internet and learning about computers;

(b) Provision of computer training and Internet centers in every local government area of Nigeria;

(c) Implementation of favorable government policy to enable them have access to relevant information;

(d) Inclusion of gifted and talented young people in the policy processes especially at the grassroots.

Conclusion

The Rural Youth National Information Society Campaign is therefore a very effective initiative to adequately empower the rural youth to lend a voice to the ongoing WSIS process and beyond. The governance of the Information Society also affects the rural youth who also wish to participate in policy formulation for the entire WSIS process that will eventually affect the day to day activities of the rural youth regarding his access to information.

Nigerian youths living in rural areas are also concerned about the amount of money paid to access information, which is often located quite some distance from where they reside. Thus, the hope and dream of both urban and rural youth include being adequately empowered so that they can be able to take their rightful place in the emerging Information Society which derives its power from the budding knowledge economy so they can rise to the challenge of bridging the digital divide.

Nigerian Youths Trailblazing with FOSS

The darkness of ignorance covers the horizon from the East to the West / Encroaching like a lad clad with big blanket wrapped round the waist / Suddenly the darkness was pierced with a light brighter than the noonday sun / A Light that heralded the Dawn of a new

season, a new day and a new source / A Source that propagates Freedom and promulgates decisive openness / An Openness that enables many to browse effortlessly through the pages of life / A life so energized with the power of Free and Open Source Software / The Software codes many African youths danced to its rhythm song:

From Abuja to Akure, access with Apache
From Gombe to Gusau, guide the people with GPL
From Lagos to Lokoja, link the digital divide with Linux
From Maiduguri to Minna, mould ideas with MySql
From Makurdi to Mutube, make with Mozilla
From Ondo to Onitsha, open with OpenOffice.org
From Potiskum to Port-Harcourt, pen with PHP
From Sapele to Sagamu, serve with Samba

From Kigali to Khartoum, keep with KDE
From Kinshasa to Kampala, conquer with Konqueror
From Lusaka to Luanda, lead with LILO
From Pretoria to Porto Novo, pave with Pear Language
From River Congo to River Nile, reign with RedHat
From Soweto to Somalia, celebrate with Software Freedom Day
From Tripoli to Tunis, trailblazing with Thunderbird
From Windhoek to Warri, win with WebMin

Measuring the Impact

Kola Osinowo

The purpose of the two-phased WSIS National Youth Consultations was to reach out to young people from every corner of the country to get informed, empowered, developed, and for them to deliberate on issues toward the building of a sustainable Information Society in Nigeria.

The WSIS Policy Train was a follow-up to the concept adapted by the WSIS Youth Caucus during the preparatory meetings for the World Summit on the Information Society Phase 1 in Geneva. The concept required every member country of the WSIS Youth Caucus to implement a National Youth Information Society Campaign with the aim of contributing youth input to national and international policy-making through bottom-up consultations and deliberations. It also helped to strengthen youth-led efforts to create digital opportunities nationally, and to connect youth-led organizations involved in ICT for Development (ICT4D) projects.

The WSIS Youth Consultations moved around the country, reaching out to youths in Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Enugu, Ago Are, Kaduna, Owerri, Katsina, Anambra, Kano, Enugu, and Abuja. During the Policy Train, young people were enlightened on issues about ICTs for Development and the emerging Information Society. The feedback we got from these campaigns is reflected in the questionnaire distributed at the end of the Policy train in all the cities visited.

We sought to know the opinion of Nigerian youths about various issues relating to ICTs for Development, the National IT Policy, the global WSIS process and the role of the youths in policy formulation and implementation.

Feedback from various young people who responded through the questionnaires reveals that about 67% of young people in Nigeria believe that they do not have a conducive and enabling environment for developing their potentials in the Information Society. 57% are not even aware that there is a National IT policy document; 78% have never seen it, even when they believe it exists; and 60% of the youths in Nigeria have never read the National IT Policy document. After enlightening them on some of the contents of the National IT Policy document, 44.5% opined that the policy

addresses issues that matter most in the Information Society. 66% also feel that young people themselves are not actively involved in ICT for development activities in Nigeria.

When asked about the issues they felt that the National Information Technology (IT) Policy should address, these were the responses:

- Promote youth involvement in IT Policy Making;
- Making IT a right of every child;
- Government should promote IT penetration in rural areas;
- IT should form a critical part of Nation Building;
- Creating awareness about the IT policy itself and also implementing the policy as much as possible;
- Provision of specialized ICT centers of learning, especially in rural areas;
- Providing adequate funding for ICT projects;
- Incorporating ICT into every sector the economy;
- Provision of enabling environment for the growth of ICT in Nigeria;
- The Policy should encourage and promote Research and Development (R&D) around ICT issues;
- ICT should be incorporated into the Universal Basic Education programme;
- Legislation on the use of Internet resources by under-aged children;
- The policy should incorporate cyber-crime laws and legislation on Internet fraud;
- Making ICT education compulsory in schools;
- Internet connection points (or ports) should be part of the design of new buildings;
- Provision of a National ICT Infrastructure.

66.4% of interviewed youth had never heard about the WSIS process before attending the consultation sessions. 85% of them believe that the WSIS process addresses issues that concern us as young people; but only 38% believe that the WSIS process addresses the issues facing Africa to some extent, while 30% think that the WSIS addresses issues confronting Nigeria in the Information Society. 57% also believe that the level of participation

in the WSIS Process by Nigeria is adequate.

On further research, we found out that 71.2% of Nigerian youths had never heard about the WSIS Youth Caucus prior to the WSIS Youth Consultations. 73% also said they never knew about the WSIS Nigeria Youth Caucus before the consultations.

We also asked respondents about what they think should be done to increase youth participation in ICT for Development efforts in Nigeria, and these were the responses:

- Establish ICT Education Centers;
- Create Awareness about ICTs;
- The cost of ICTs should be brought down to the affordable level;
- Provide adequate facilities and necessary infrastructure for the development of ICTs in Nigeria;
- Information dissemination should be increased;
- Access to ICTs should be promoted;
- Encourage youth participation in policy making;
- Create partnerships and community buy-in in ICT4D efforts;
- Provide adequate funding for youth initiatives in ICTs;
- ICTs should be promoted in the rural areas and the youths should be properly engaged;
- More NGOs and CBOs should get involved in ICT4D issues and projects;
- ICT Centers should be created in schools to promote skills acquisition;
- Young people should start creating innovative ICT projects for the benefit of their communities;
- The inclusion of ICT education in the schools' curriculum should be made compulsory.

These are also some of the thoughts, ideas and suggestions of young people on the WSIS Youth Consultations, ICT for Development efforts and Information Society engagement in Nigeria:

- "The WSIS Policy train should be encouraged and be revisited as a National priority for development"
- "The Programme has made us to be aware that Nigeria has a National IT Policy document"
- "It has increased our awareness of the WSIS issues and how the youths can be involved"
- "Youths should be involved in the formulation and implementation of the National IT policy"
- "Young people should be empowered with adequate ICT skills so as to remain globally competitive"
- "Computers should be made affordable; this will increase youth access to ICT knowledge"
- "I think the WSIS Programme will increase development and sustainability of democratic governance"
- "Opportunities for ICT entrepreneurship should be provided"
- "Human capital development using ICTs should be encouraged"
- "Government should provide adequate and necessary ICT Infrastructures at the National, State and Local Government levels"
- "I think the youths themselves should not relent in their efforts; they should acquire skills and knowledge to create solutions for their communities"
- "ICT development in Nigeria requires a lot of commitment from the government in terms of providing the infrastructure that would make advancements in ICTs possible. Such as uninterrupted power supply, affordable communications and effective transportation systems, this will impact heavily on the nation's ability to progress"
- "ICTs should be encouraged in the rural areas through multi stakeholder partnerships"
- "We should play with IT, that's how we can get used to IT. We should present easy and simple ways for the carpenters and "okada" (commercial motor cycle) riders to understand and use IT"
- "Children should be encouraged with IT toys at an early age"
- "I see the WSIS process as a giant step and Nigeria's participation as a sign of good things to come"

- "Many government services are yet to be computerized; I think the IT policy implementation should address this"
- "Most women are not so vast with ICTs. Their level of knowledge is very low and so is the participation, it should be gender sensitive; more women should be involved and encouraged."

As you can see, the people have spoken!

Reconnecting in Berlin

'Gbenga Sesan

It is interesting to note that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process has had its highs and lows, but refreshing to acknowledge that this has been the first opportunity for many participants to network with other actors within their own domain. For Nigeria and the rest of the developing world, it has been an opportunity for us to discuss what we intend to contribute to, or benefit from the global Information Society. For young people, it has been an extremely rewarding opportunity to showcase the best of youth efforts both within and outside the summit process.

At the end of the entire WSIS process, it is hoped that the big issue of the "digital divide" the widening gap between *haves* and *have-nots* due to technology exposure (or the lack of it) will be reversed, and on the path to being totally bridged. The process presents unique opportunities for nation states of the United Nations, Civil Society and Businesses to activate a people-centred and development-focused Information Society.

Beginning with the Bamako African Regional Conference to the Preparatory Committee meetings, and finally to the December 2003 summit, Africa (especially the civil society) employed various means of having its voice heard. The Digital Solidarity Fund, championed by an African Head of State, stands as a witness to Africa's participation in the process. The African Civil Society for the Information Society (ACSIS) emerged during the first phase of the summit for the purpose of strengthening African civil society participation in the second phase, and possibly providing a platform for the delivery of WSIS promises.

Nigeria's participation was coordinated by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and while the agency convened several local meetings to further the objectives and feel the pulse of the Nigerian populace with respect to the Information Society, Nigeria's presence was not duly felt during the first phase.

Here comes an opportunity for us to correct that impression building on the momentum of the WSIS outcomes to implement the National Policy on Information Technology, rather than build the entire Nigerian Information Society around events, people and documents.

Policy Train Comes To Town

In line with the objectives of the WSIS process, the Nigerian Youth Coalition on Information and Communication Technologies (an informal network of youth-led and organizations working around ICT issues) conducted a nationwide (representative) study on the thoughts of young Nigerians with respect to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the global Information Society in October 2003.

The process was tagged the WSIS Nigeria Policy Train ("Policy Train") and it served the purpose of delivering a Nigerian Youth Statement on the WSIS, along with the opportunity of creating awareness on the process among Nigerian youth. The Policy Train started a process that we envisage would continue.

The African Regional preparatory meeting (Accra, February 2005) was a great opportunity for young people from different African countries to showcase what they had been able to build within the WSIS framework; share best practices/challenges; and discuss proactive steps towards the inclusion of their respective nations in the Information Society.

The need to secure Nigeria's future through appropriate and strategic positioning within the sphere of the Information Society informed the need to host decentralized (but appropriately networked) WSIS Youth Consultations in different states of the federation, led by youth who are "champions" of ICT for Development (ICT4D) efforts.

To date (and quite early in the process), youth leaders have volunteered and led the Policy Train in over 10 states and Abuja which represent all the 6 geo-political zones. These youth leaders were updated on present developments, informed of the process' progress and empowered with the possibility of active participation either by getting more involved online/offline, or by taking action in their local communities in line with the WSIS Plan of Action.

At each location, each Policy Train Coordinator and their team introduce participants to ICT Policy and the emerging Information

Society; discuss the World Summit on the Information Society process and update them on the role of young people through the Youth Caucus; distribute Quick Fact Sheets which were designed for after-event consultation and feedback; administer a prepared questionnaire helped filter their thoughts on the WSIS and the role of young people within the Information Society; feature experience-sharing sessions by individuals or organisations that have revealed best practices within the WSIS process; discuss the likelihood of "carving" a roadmap for young people in that state or region with respect to their roles in the Information Society, while inviting them to join the Nigerian Youth caucus; and document activity and discussions through provided questionnaires, pictures and video recording.

New Thinking in Berlin

There may not be a better way to start this than to thank the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Nigeria and Berlin offices) for facilitating my participation at the Global Forum of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force meeting, which held between the 17th and 20th of November, 2004. It was indeed an opportunity to reconnect with the WSIS process, and to think up new strategies for participation and delivery.

Discussions at the various discussions held by the civil society groups represented centered on the role of civil society within the second phase of the WSIS process, and its role in also translating the words from the pages of the documents to action in different countries and regions. The participants agreed that "WSIS is a laboratory for new multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms [and that] the question now is how to build on what is achieved in the WSIS and consolidating what we are experimenting [here] to help transform the international system which includes innovative use of electronic tools by civil society[3]".

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[3] Key points out of the Civil Society strategic meeting on November 18, 2004

The meeting was also a great opportunity to beam civil society light on the major tracks of the WSIS process the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms (TFFM), Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG), Group of Friends of the Chair (GFC) and the Preparatory Committee meetings.

Task Force on Financial Mechanism

A new Task Force on Financial Mechanisms was launched on 4 October 2004 at the United Nations Headquarters. It assessed existing financial mechanisms in meeting the challenges related to promoting investment in and the use of information technologies to enhance development in developing countries.

The establishment of the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms was requested last December by the World Summit on the Information Society. Member States felt that, while all existing financial mechanisms should be fully utilized to bring the benefits of information and communication technologies (ICT) to developing countries, a review of their adequacy in meeting the challenges of ICT for development should be completed by the end of December 2004.

This review was entrusted to a Task Force under the auspices of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The report is to be submitted to the World Summit's second phase, to be held in Tunis from 16 to 19 November 2005. The Secretary-General asked the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to lead the Task Force, in collaboration with key partners including the World Bank and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The chair of the Task Force is UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown[4].

Working Group on Internet Governance

The first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in December 2003 agreed to pursue the

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[4] Culled from www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/pi1616.doc.htm

dialogue on Internet Governance with a view to preparing the ground for a decision at the second phase of the WSIS in Tunis in November 2005. To this end it requested the United Nations Secretary-General to establish a Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG).

The two documents adopted in Geneva set the parameters for the WGIG and contain its Terms of Reference. The main activity of the WGIG will be to investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of Internet by 2005. The WGIG was asked to present the result of its work in a report for consideration and appropriate action for the second phase of the WSIS in Tunis 2005[5]. It was asked to deal with the following issues:

(i) Develop a working definition of Internet Governance;
(ii) Identify the public policy issues that are relevant to Internet Governance;
(iii) Develop a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of governments, existing international organizations and other forums as well as the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries.

Group of Friends of the Chair

Prepcom 1 decided that "a group of friends of the President of the PrepCom of the Tunis Phase, with the assistance of the WSIS Executive Secretariat and in consultation with regional groups, will prepare a document to serve as a basis for negotiations in PrepCom-2, taking into account, as appropriate, the outcomes of relevant thematic, regional and other WSIS-related meetings".

The Group of Friends of the Chair (GFC) held regular sessions and special sessions in preparation for PrepCom-2. Regular sessions are open to members of the GFC (up to 30 Government delegations, plus 8 ex-officio members) and to observers from Governments. Special sessions were also open to observers from International Organizations, ITU sector members, and WSIS-

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[5] Culled from www.itu.int/wsis/wgig/index.html

Accredited NGOs, civil society and business sector entities[6].

Preparatory Committee

The General Assembly of the United Nations on 21 December 2001 adopted Resolution 56/183 concerning the organization of a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). That Resolution recommended creating an intergovernmental Preparatory Committee (PrepCom), which would be responsible for the preparations for WSIS. Its tasks included drawing up an agenda for the Summit, finalizing a draft declaration and a draft action plan, and deciding on the arrangements for participation by other stakeholders[7].

The second and third PrepComs for WSIS phase II held in February and September 2005 in Geneva (with the first having held in Hammamet, Tunisia in June 2004), ahead of the major summit in November in Tunis. Africa held her own regional preparatory meeting between the 2nd and 4th of February 2005 in Ghana and the forum was an opportunity for Africa to review the first phase and strengthen African participation in the second phase of the summit, which is being hosted on our continent. There were also parallel workshops on Financing the Information Society, Access and Infrastructure, and Internet Governance.

Other Sub-Processes

Within the WSIS process, it was also instructive for any stakeholder to stay connected to the following sub-processes:

(a) WSIS Stocktaking:

The first Preparatory Meeting (PrepCom-1) of the Tunis Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in 24-26 June 2004, confirmed that one of the three areas of focus of the Tunis Phase would be "Follow-up and implementation of the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action by

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[6] Culled from www.itu.int/wsis/gfc/index.html
[7] Culled from www.itu.int/wsis/basic/preparatory.html

Stakeholders at national, regional and international levels, with Particular attention to the challenges facing the Least Developed

Countries" (Document WSIS-II/PC-1/DOC/5). This will involve undertaking a stocktaking of the implementation by governments and all other WSIS stakeholders of the WSIS Plan of Action.

As part of this stocktaking exercise of WSIS-related activities, especially regarding implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action, the Secretary-General of ITU sent out a letter and a questionnaire to all stakeholders inviting them to inform the WSIS Executive Secretariat about their implementation activities and projects. The information collated from the WSIS Stocktaking questionnaire is archived in the database of WSIS Stocktaking activities. The deadline for submissions was 15 December 2004.[8]

(b) Regional conferences:

Each region organizes WSIS-specific conferences to align regional efforts with the global process. At Africa's first regional meeting in Bamako (2002), the major questions was, "What can Africa take to the global Information Society, and what can Africa get from the global Information Society?" The African Regional Preparatory Conference for the WSIS, in Accra, with the theme "Access Africa's key to an inclusive Information Society" prepared Africa for an effective participation in the second phase of the WSIS to ensure a strategic and interdependent digital partnership that will promote economic growth and human development of the continent.

The conference brought together all stakeholders, ranging from Government to civil society, the private sector and academia, parliamentarians, local authorities, African regional institutions, development partners and international organizations.

(c) Thematic meetings:

Thematic meetings, along with related WSIS events, feed into the process through meetings with specific themes which are in tune

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[8] Culled from www.itu.int/wsis/stocktaking/index.html

with the debates of the WSIS process. The second phase witnessed the following thematic meetings:

(I) International Telecommunications Union (ITU): Workshop on Internet Governance, 26-27 February 2004, Geneva, Switzerland;
(ii) ITU: WSIS Thematic Meeting on Countering Spam, 7-9 July 2004, Geneva, Switzerland;
(iii) Government of the Republic of Belarus/UNESCO/ UN/UNDP Office in the Republic of Belarus: "Information Technologies and Law", 28-29 October 2004 , Minsk, Republic of Belarus;
(iv) International Council for Science's Committee on Data for Science and Technology (ICSU/CODATA): WSIS Session, 10 November 2004, Berlin, Germany.

There were also regional thematic meetings, and a complete list of thematic meetings and related events for the second phase is at www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory2/thematic.html, as maintained by the WSIS Executive Secretariat.

Youth played a major role during the rest of the WSIS process, as the global Youth Caucus (with new facilitators and headquartered in SchoolNet Africa) prepared to engage youth energy in maximizing the opportunities that the second phase will provide. The Berlin UN ICT Task Force Global Forum/civil society meetings also highlighted the need for African civil society participation in the second phase.

Much of the first phase saw low participation of African civil society actors owing to funding issues but organizations such as the Heinrich Böll Foundation did Africa and Nigeria (and indeed the world) a lot of good by helping to ensure civil society participation in the final phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Quo Vadis?

There are many questions waiting to be answered as far as the WSIS process is concerned but its best we ask ourselves   as Nigerians and organizations working within the Nigeria civil society space   the question of which direction we need to follow with respect to the WSIS process.

Based on my participation, trends and some obvious needs, I wish to propose the following as possible direction points for Nigeria's active participation in the WSIS process, and action beyond the process. These are also replicable in many situations, and even for organizations and individuals.

(a) We need to support existing best practice initiatives. We may not need to reinvent the wheel by starting new projects where this is not necessary. There are existing projects that ensure community buy-in, sustainability and multi-stakeholder participation. I believe that there are efforts that exemplify bridging the digital divide (and seek to meet the objectives of WSIS), such as the Lagos Digital Village among many others. Supporting these efforts will send positive signals to all tiers of community representation about our commitment to the objectives of this loud process.

(b) We must ensure that WSIS documents (especially the Plan of Action, along with the Statement of Principles) are translated into action. Honestly, Africa and Nigeria do not lack brilliant documents, what we need is a strong bridge between plans and action. We can maximize the opportunities of the WSIS process to reverse the ugly trend of paper tigers in the polity.

(c) Continued youth empowerment and inclusion cannot be over-emphasized. We must commend various stakeholders for the obvious change we have seen in the last 3 years as far as youth inclusion is concerned. It has been shown that the bridge between today and tomorrow are young people, and I strongly believe that they are the missing piece within the Nigerian developmental puzzle. This process affords us the opportunity to empower and involve youth today so they can ensure sustainability of the plans and action without Nigeria (and other nations) suffering from a generational divide.

(d) The lack of political will has been responsible for much of failed policies within the continent. We must make WSIS a national, state, local government, and ward priority. All political office holders must be aware of the dangers of Nigeria being left behind in the Information Society equation. We missed out on the industrial age and ended up in the "Third World" club. It could be worse if we miss

out on the Information Revolution because it is obvious that we do not lack the resources required to be front liners in the process.

These are not all that should be done to make WSIS a successful experience for Nigeria and all actors within the social space, but they will help build a solid foundation for the days and months after the 2005 Tunis WSIS summit. What would Nigeria have done with the whole WSIS experience by 2010 during a possible WSIS+5 review process? You and I can decide that ahead.

Conclusion

The need for Nigeria (and other developing economies) to benefit maximally from the WSIS process is expensive and time-consuming, but it's worth every bit of that. Final decisions, opportunities to network with similar efforts and having a say in the unwritten agenda of the global Information Society are just few of the benefits.

It is my thinking that governments, civil society, businesses and young people (especially for their active role in the process and their relevance as the bridge between today and tomorrow) should get as much support as possible for this worthy process.

While the global and African Youth Caucus enjoy support from organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, it is imperative that supporting institutions should rise to the need for young ICT champions at the national level to get actively involved in the global process that may define the way they will spend the rest of their lives.

The New Economy has changed the indices of livelihood and it is only fair for us to prepare the next generation for the coming challenge.

From Bamako to Accra

'Gbenga Sesan

Africa held the first Regional Meeting Preparatory to the World Summit on the Information Society at the *Palais des Congrès* in Bamako, Republic of Mali from 28 to 30 May 2002 and the conference had representatives from 51 African countries, delegates from many other countries and representatives of African and global entities, the private sector and civil society.

The meeting had five young people (among others) sponsored by the Telecommunications Development Bureau (TDB) of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for the purpose of driving youth input into the process. These young people lobbied and recorded major success as one of the major roundtable discussions threw a lot of support behind the clamour for youth empowerment and inclusion. Eventually, one of the major outcomes of the conference, the Bamako 2002 Declaration, requested, "that African States should actively involve the youth in national and regional ICT activities"[9].

Building on this momentum and other fortunate networks, Africa (and Nigeria in particular) was duly represented when eight young people from 5 continents met in Geneva in July 2002 to kick-start the process of global youth involvement in the WSIS. They started the Youth Caucus and made clear its objectives even at the first preparatory committee meeting of the WSIS. The WSIS Youth Caucus, then led by Nick Moraitis of TakingITGlobal, is now anchored by a team of three young people with Titilayo Akinsanmi as the Global Facilitator.

From the Bamako meting, through the preparatory committee meetings, December 2003 summit, and side events; to local, national, regional and international WSIS-related meetings, young Africans have remained active in the process. At the times when visas and funding problems would not allow us attend the meetings physically, we took to the World Wide Web for help.

The African Youth eConference on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held online at www.yahoogrups.com/group/wsisyouthafrica between the

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[9] Bamako 2002 Declaration, African Regional Meeting Preparatory to the World Summit on the Information Society.

20th and 30th of November 2002. It was coordinated by Paradigm Initiative Nigeria, and ninety-six (96) young Africans from over 13 countries (from Western, Eastern, Central, Northern and Southern Africa) participated in the eConference which sought to strengthen the role of African Youths in the WSIS processes, and the eventual action plans that will be drawn[10].

Sincerely, Youth is not a thematic issue within the WSIS process, and the need to involve and empower Africa's youth is not just another conference statement's bullet point. It is imperative that young Africans participate in the process, and are empowered to translate words and thoughts into action. We are the proof of sustainability, and the bridge between today and tomorrow.

With this fact accepted, Africa's development process utilizing Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be accelerated. You just need to see the passion in the blood of the empowered African youth within the WSIS process and the action they have been able to place on the discussion table to appreciate the song this piece seeks to sing!

One very obvious outcome of African youth involvement in the WSIS process is the National Information Society Youth Campaign. The official website of the WSIS Youth Caucus[11] reports that, "During the second half of 2003, young people in 21 countries worldwide mobilized around Information Society issues through *National Information Society Youth Campaigns*… young people implemented a vibrant series of workshops, prime-time radio programs, media outreach, video conferences, websites and more.

"They held meetings in community halls, visited schools, published newsletters, trained other youth in technology skills at Internet cafes, talked with decision-makers, and implemented concrete local projects"[12] Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt and Sierra Leone were the 4 African countries that led National Information Society Youth

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[10] Final eConference Statement from the African Youth eConference on the World Summit on the Information Society. 20 30 November 2002.
[11] www.wsisyouth.org
[12] wsisyouth.takingitglobal.org/phase1-natcampaigns.php

Campaigns (NISYC) during the first phase.

Nigeria's NISYC, tagged "Policy Train", stopped in three representative cities in the northern, eastern and western regions of the country. On the 11th of October 2003, young Nigerians met in Port Harcourt to discuss youth involvement in the WSIS process, and the role of youth in acting out the outcome of the summit. The train proceeded to Kano on the 18th of October and the final phase of the consultation held in Lagos on the 22nd of the same month[13].

With the commencement of the second phase of the WSIS, Policy Train II has taken off with a decentralized system coordinated by Paradigm Initiative Nigeria and seeking more active participation from Nigeria's youth.

Fortunately, Accra 2005 provided an opportunity for Africa to evaluate how we have been able to build enduring processes within the framework of the WSIS. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (one of Africa's youth's best friends as far as development is concerned), along with her partners in progress hosted pre-conference workshops, which included a strong focus on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs).

During the MSP breakout sessions, young Africans were given the opportunity to address the all-important theme, "Empowering Youth in the Information Society"[14]. This built on the brilliant participation that Africa's youth recorded in a virtual community set up earlier by the ECA. The online group, "African Youth in the Information Society"[15], has been discussing relevant Information Society issues to date and has even gone ahead to propose concrete action towards Africa's accelerated development. Accra 2005 is an opportunity for the group to consolidate and give Africa a 2005 "New Year gift" the African Youth ICT4D Network (AYIN).

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[13] www.ydco.net/policy/wsis-nigeria
[14] www.wsisaccra2005.gov.gh/preconf.htm
[15] www.dgroups.org/group/aisi-youth-l

With the emergence of this all-important network, the onus lies on the entire African community and her friends to support the value- and demand-driven initiative. We accept that as told in the story of the proverbial bird in the hand of a young child, whether the "bird" lives or dies, we decide. But just as another African proverb says, "a child who lifts his hands will get the support of his mother". We lift our hands and ask for support. Support not for individuals or selfish interests, but for the future of our continent.

We have moved around in circles long enough, its time to join forces and weave a new continent we can be proud to call home. No longer shall we just tend the gardens of others, our own flowers will blossom. It is Africa's time to reveal to the world that the pyramids of Egypt and mineral resources of Nigeria are not accidents but gifts planted ahead of a day of celebration today!

It is time for action, and support. Relay the message of the network to other young people, publish the emerging items in your local media outlets, advice the network's youth, make resources available for the ambitious but necessary work, and hold us accountable for our promises.

We believe in *positive peer pressure* and will enjoy a healthy competition on the track of development. Fortunately, the fifth African Development Forum has its theme as "Youth and Leadership in the 21st Century" and we believe that it comes at a great time for us in order to weave these efforts into one fine matrix. From Bamako to Accra, Africa's youth have toiled.

In the words of David Diop, "the blood of your sweat / the sweat of your work / ... / That is your Africa / springing up anew / springing up patiently obstinately / Whose fruit bit by bit acquire / The bitter taste of liberty"[16]. Here comes liberty, and it is time to support these efforts and network with other stakeholders to announce the birth of a New Africa, one riding on the wings of information and

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[16] AFRICA. David Diop - www.bowwave.org/AfricanWriters/David%20Diop.htm

Communication Technologies for accelerated development. Viva Africa.

Exporting the Influence

'Gbenga Sesan

Selected from a pool of applicants, twenty young Nigerian women and men were sponsored by Heinrich Böll Foundation to the second African regional meeting for the World Summit on the Information Society. The few days spent in Accra were literally full of impact, and the best words that may describe what these young women and men did in Accra are: advocacy, presence, networking, fun, action, dedication and experiences.

Bearing national symbols around their necks and waists and nation building on their minds young Nigerians led discussions, facilitated meetings, produced newsletters, met with dignitaries, resolved issues, matched words with action, stayed up late... in order to help meet Africa's Information Society needs.

Outside the pan-African youth network's formation and other youth side events, the summit was in itself a major opportunity for Africa to look backwards (to Bamako 2002 its first regional WSIS meeting) and inwards (the many ongoing processes within nation states) in order to formulate an African Regional Action Plan for the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE), which is Africa's platform of input into the WSIS process.

From what Accra revealed, Africa may no longer be missing the last chance that ICTs and Youth Energy (engagement) have to offer these may just be the moment we've dreamt of as young and concerned Africans; when Africans (regardless of age and location) will together weave the New Africa.

African Youth and the Information Society

It is no longer news that Africa needs to hook up with the new opportunities that are being presented by Information and Communication Technologies. The WSIS process helped highlight the significant networks, processes, people and efforts that had remained unacknowledged till the summit's commencement.

A major discovery during the first phase of the summit was the role of young people in Africa's desire for her rightful place in the Information Society. Youth are not only tomorrow's leaders, but today's leaders. We shape the efforts, will deliver the policies and

may as well help Africa arrive at the desired destination within the boundaries of the Information Society. The second phase of the summit presented a unique opportunity to consolidate the efforts of young people during the first phase, while also presenting an opportunity for us to continue the projects that they started. These include, but are not limited to, national campaigns, networks and new initiatives.

Africa's regional meeting for the second phase was a one-time opportunity for Africa to understand, appreciate and support the role of her youth in the process of bridging Africa's digital divide. During the regional meeting in Accra, young people from every corner of the continent gathered to discuss high-end and mutual issues surrounding their various roles in the Information Society.

What can youth bring to Africa's table in her bid to hook up to the fast-moving Information Society train? What more does Africa need to do in order to get the best of her youth? These are questions that were answered at the end of the Youth Sessions (pre-events, workshops and launching of the African Youth ICT4D Network - AYIN). A major attraction at the youth input into the regional meeting was the launching of the pan-African and all-inclusive network that will help young Africans connect with each other along our path of contributing to Africa's inclusion in the Information Society.

Between the last days of January and the fifth day of February 2005, Africa's young ICT leaders met in Accra, Ghana, to provide assurance and momentum for Africa's efforts towards active participation within the Information Society. We agreed to work together, hence the emergence of the African Youth ICT4D Network (AYIN), a veritable platform for African youth input to the WSIS process.

The African Youth ICT4D Network

The African Youth Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) Network AYIN is a pan-African and all-inclusive platform for African Youth input into the African Information Society agenda. With a vision of, "a networked

generation of young Africans empowering themselves and contributing to the continent's active participation in the Information Society", the network is set to move youth inclusion to the next level, as far as the Information Society is concerned.

AYIN was launched on the 4th of February 2005 at the second African Regional meeting for the World Summit on the Information Society (Accra 2005), but the network is a product of time and efforts. Beginning with a fortunate crystallization of youth advocacy efforts which were later supported by the Economic Commission for Africa (through a mailing list), young Africans discussed their role and expectations around the Information Society.

These discussions led to the emergence of concrete proposals on the path to follow in order to move in the direction of progress. With the support of numerous organizations, youth gathered at Accra 2005 and came up with action-laden recommendations including the setting up of the African Youth ICT4D Network through which they promised to lead action within the Information Society.

Our aim is to identify, complement and support other youth-led ICT4D efforts and sub-networks as possible avenues through which Africa's dream can be realized. In the course of delivering our Plan of Action, the network will liaise with individuals, organizations, institutions, people groups and others in engaging sustainable and efficient mechanisms that can accelerate Africa's wholesome development through the instrumentality of Information and Communication Technologies Africa's password to leadership in the New Economy.

The African Youth ICT4D Network involves organizations that are led by youth, or work around youth issues. All young Africans regardless of location, sex, language or creed own this network. Experts, *newbies* and enthusiasts will join hands to build the Africa of our dreams, especially as it relates to the role that ICTs can play in such processes. The network set up a coordinating team, the AYIN Bureau, to lead organizational strategies. The bureau acts in line with the constitution, and helps lead the implementation of the Plan of Action. The network has also nominated an 11-man bureau, representing all the five regions of the continent and the Diaspora.

Upon leaving Accra, the network registered two domain names www.ayinetwork.org and its French equivalent, www.reseauaji.org. These online platforms will help provide a one-stop centre for information on the network, its people, activities, opportunities and successes! While the online home of the network is being set up, you may get more information by sending an email to info@ayinetwork.org.

You are one of the many wonderful people who can participate in the activities of the network, support its programs or advise the bureau. You can help promote AYIN efforts in your local community village, school, community, town, state, country or sub-region. Please direct all requests, or offer of support to info@ayinetwork.org.

Conclusion: African Youth Resolutions

In the framework of the Information Society, the African Youth ICT4D Network,

Aware that the Information Society should be about people and development;

Considering the United Nations Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Millennium Declaration, the Bamako Declaration, the African Youth Declaration on the WSIS and the NEPAD;

Convinced that Africa's youth have and should play a key role in bridging the digital divide;

Reaffirming our common desire to establish an Information Society that focuses on people and development over profit and technology;

Has agreed as follows:

1. We invite all youth-led or youth-oriented organizations from all African regions including the Diaspora to adhere to this declaration;

2. To launch the African Youth Information and Communications Technology for Development Network (AYIN);

3. That we, as youth, will lead action within the Information Society and ensure sustainability and efficiency of the African Youth ICT4D Network;

4. That Governments should commit resources and political will towards the translation of past recommendations into visible and sustainable action;

5. That Governments should provide an enabling environment for youth input and empowerment, e.g. through the provision of tax incentives for youth-led Information and Communication Technologies business start-ups;

6. That International Organizations should support the implementation of the African Youth ICT4D Network's (AYIN) action plan;

7. That the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) will establish a youth desk to manage the activities of the network, and facilitate youth participation in relevant regional meetings such as the Africa/Arab WSIS Meeting and the Fifth African Development Forum (ADF V);

8. That the Committee on Development Information (CODI) will integrate youth views into its work plan, and facilitate the involvement of youth at the CODI IV meeting on the Information Economy;

9. That we endorse and support the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) as one of the financial mechanisms to tackle the digital divide, and request for youth representation on the DSF council;

10. That relevant stakeholders (women, media, academia, private sector, civil society, African youth in Diaspora, etc) will support the action plan and work of the African Youth ICT4D Network.

The Birth of N.Y.I.N.

Edward Popoola

When the WSIS process started in 2002 in Bamako, Mali, with the first African Regional Preparatory meeting, not many people thought it would transform into a process that would ignite the passion in the lives of a group of young Nigerians. At that meeting, mostly attended by government delegates, there were only two young people from Nigeria.

Since Bamako, however, more Nigerian youths have come to know more about the process and its impact on the future of the country. Today, local action, national mobilization, regional cooperation and global relevance have led to the birth of the Nigerian Youth ICT4D network.

After Bamako

Arising from the *PrepComs* during the first phase of the WSIS, young Nigerians came together to associate with the common vision the WSIS proclaims. They sat together to analyze the documents and resolutions. After weeks of serious brainwork and jaw-jawing, the idea of a Nigerian Youth Declaration on the WSIS came up.

The goal of the declaration was to give the WSIS an African Youth component, such that the final plan of action would proffer practical means of achieving an all inclusive Information Society, even in a country like Nigeria.

With support from the civil society, young Nigerians volunteered, offering their time and energy to take the WSIS gospel to the nooks and crannies of the country. The Nigerian Youth Coalition on ICTs[17] then moved north, south, east and west of Nigeria, sampling opinions and engaging other youths in issues surrounding the Information society.

These efforts produced the Nigerian Youth Declaration on the WSIS. This document was published in the Nigerian dailies as well as on the Internet. The Final draft was handed over to the

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[17] The Nigerian Youth Coalition in ICTs was made up of The Paradigm Initiative Nigeria, West African NGO network (WANGONET), Nigerian Association of Computer Science Student (NACOSS), IYPF Nigeria, Yield Infotechnologies.

Nigerian government during the eNigeria[18] 2004 ICT conference.

A 60 minute documentary on *Youth @ WSIS* compiled by *TakingITGlobal* also featured the activities of the Nigerian Youth.

Growing Interest...

After the success of the Nation wide consultative forum, the number of young Nigerians that have the goals of WSIS written on their minds have doubled. The WSIS Nigeria Youth mailing lists swelled, young people asked questions and many people simply do things. More people volunteered to help raise the awareness about using the ICTs for economic empowerment. Thus when Nigerian Youths set out in August of 2004 to go to *Ago Are*[19], the enthusiasm was high.

Ago Are is in one of the remote parts of Nigeria. As at that time, Ago Are had not been blessed with Internet access, neither had it gotten mobile phone penetration. Thus making it one of the many Nigerian towns cut off from the larger Information Society space.

A group of ICT4D youth-led initiatives, led by Paradigm Initiative Nigeria went to Ago Are to educate the youths on the relevance of the ICTs to their economic development. IT resources were also donated to the single (3 computer powered) Information center serving the whole community.

Also across the country, ICT4D youth-led initiatives sprang up as more people raised the banner of youth inclusion in policy making processes. It was therefore not surprising when over 20 young Nigerians stormed Accra, Ghana for the African Regional Preparatory meeting towards the second phase of the WSIS.

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[18] eNigeria is an annual event organized by the Nigerian Government, bringing together stakeholders (including the Youth) to discuss the IT development plan for the country.
[19] A rural community located in Oyo State of Nigeria

The Launch of the AYIN, the Birth of NYIN

The story of Nigerian Youth in ICT4D terrain will not be complete if the Ghana experience is not shared. At the second Africa *PrepCom*, young Africans who had been actively involved in their countries and local communities along with other African Information Society enthusiasts and professionals met to discuss the African Information Society.

At this meeting, one was convinced beyond any reasonable doubt that Africa has a future in these young people who so passionately discussed the African Information Society of their dreams. As discussions peaked, there was a need to harmonize all the local and regional efforts in order to achieve this Information society common goal. In Accra, AYIN the African ICT4D Youth Network was formed.

The African Youth Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) Network AYIN is a pan-African and all-inclusive platform for African Youth input into the African Information Society agenda.

With a vision of, "a networked generation of young Africans empowering themselves and contributing to the continent's active participation in the Information Society", the network is set to move youth inclusion to the next level, as far as the Information Society is concerned.

In order then to bring this regional network down to the country level, such that its impact will be felt by young people in the communities across the continent, it was decided that each country should coordinate its local efforts, bringing young community-level ICT4D advocates together and creating a platform for knowledge sharing and best practices appraisal.

Young Nigerians bought into this idea and left Accra with a common goal of creating a country level ICT4D network. This led to the creation of the Nigerian Youth ICT4D network (NYIN).

Since its launch, the NYIN has been active back home in Nigeria.

NYIN was actively involved in discussions for the carving out of a policy for the Nigerian country level domain. NYIN also worked with the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to host a successful youth forum for the African Regional Preparatory meeting towards the World Telecommunications Development Conference (WTDC).

NYIN and the Future

One of the objectives of this chapter and entire book is to challenge all the stakeholders that have been a part of the WSIS process from the first phase into taking action on the words that has been spoken.

As young people, we believe this is a task we have before us, to match words with action, such that in the next few years when the next generation prepares to take the center stage, we would make bold to say that during our time, we not only talked, we also took action. We invite other stakeholders to do same.

It is in this regard that the NYIN has decided on which course it would take to transform these documents into concrete actions.

Coordination

The Nigerian ICT4D youth Network (NYIN), after the WSIS would tap into the goal of the AYIN to form a networked generation of young Nigerians empowering themselves and contributing to the country's active participation in the Information Society.

Through an Internet Web Portal, NYIN would facilitate the efforts of youth led ICT4D initiatives across the country. It would be a point of call for training resources, ICT4D best practices, WSIS documents, local content resources and support for grass root projects.

NYIN, as its name implies, will serve as an hub for youth-led efforts within the Information Society space, including student groups at all levels that represent this ideal. For example, present involvements with the National Association of Computer Science Students (NACOSS) will be extended to other student groups with

interest in ICT4D efforts even up to the lower levels of education.

By extending the perimeters of NYIN's operations and inclusion, we are sure that the network will help empower the next generation of ICT4D youth leaders that will take Nigeria to the next level in the Information Society. As the days and years go by, the network will produce policy makers and shapers of the nation's Information Society agenda.

The Road to Geneva

'Gbenga Sesan

Participating in the second *PrepCom* of the WSIS (February 17 25 2005) brought the thought of translating global thoughts into local benefits to the fore. During the meeting, which focused mostly on Internet Governance, Financial Mechanisms and setting the agenda for the Tunis meeting, tons of promises were made and countless proposals discussed. In all these, would the average Nigerian youth see any change in his livelihood? From Akure to Zaria, how can the WSIS change the lives of the girl child or the rural settlers?

The good news from my participation is that the Youth Caucus is strongly considering this "translation" the great need to translate the global process to local realities. The civil society and some government representatives also share the same passion.

The road to Geneva was paved with hope and challenges. I must thank Dr. Axel Sievers for his support and advice on handling the challenges; and the Heinrich Böll Foundation for the opportunity to participate. Ultimately, the objectives of my hopeful participation was largely realized and Nigeria left the meeting with smiles from the approval of the Digital Solidarity Fund, the small grant for the second phase of the National Youth WSIS Campaign (which focuses on rural youth) and the opportunity to stay engaged in the all-inclusive process.

Participation and Activities

The reality of international meetings (especially this WSIS process) is that intending delegates must plan their activity involvements ahead as multitudes of side events keep being added to the list, with countless emails calling for your attention. The "opportunity" I had in arriving a few days into the meeting was that I had followed the process online and could "predict" which directions I needed to follow in order to benefit maximally from some sessions while also having a "fair share" of outcomes of others. This I could also have done by preparing way ahead of the conference dates an opportunity I did not have due to efforts towards the WSIS Regional meeting that held in Accra few days before the Geneva meeting.

Daily Youth meetings

Each day, the Youth Caucus met to discuss the previous day's activities and its possible relation to our work, which revolves around translating "words into action". We also worked on series of newsletters that were produced daily and with contributions from other members of the Youth Caucus who were not in Geneva but followed the process online.

A major highlight from our meetings was the meeting with blogging Andy Carvin, who has archived the meeting details at *www.andycarvin.com/archives/2005/02/podcast_getting.html*

Civil Society Briefings

The Civil Society met at 9am each day in the popular Room XXII (second only to the main plenary hall) to discuss the entire WSIS II PrepCom II process. Government deliberations, civil society-planned interventions, debates and other proposals were considered. At the end of the process, it appeared civil society came out with a challenge to learn more about Internet Governance which appears to have moved slower than the discussions on Financial Mechanisms.

Main Plenary

The government delegates and observers met daily in the main plenary hall. Discussions focused mostly on Internet Governance, Financial Mechanisms and agenda for the Tunis summit. While there was obvious agreement (following lobbying between African states and the European Union) on the Digital Solidarity Fund (considered the major "bottleneck" for the Financial Mechanism debates), much of the discussions on Internet Governance were not conclusive.

The chair presented the compilation of comments on the Political Chapeau, Chapter One of the Operational Part (Implementation Mechanism) and Chapter Two of the Operational Part (Financial Mechanisms). The WSIS secretariat also presented a draft proposed format of the Tunis phase of the WSIS.

Meeting with Nigerian Delegation

At the PrepCom, 2 officials of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and 1 official of the Ministry of Communications represented Nigeria. I had informal meetings with the 2 officials of NITDA quite often and met with the entire delegation once. Much of our meetings discussed the possible role of young Nigerians in implementing the Nigerian ICT Agenda.

The acting Director General of NITDA asked for a meeting, which will hold at the instance of NITDA. The meeting will also discuss the need to get political support for the ongoing work on establishing a Nigerian Youth ICT4D Network.

High Points

High points during the meeting include the launching of the World Summit Youth Awards (collaboration between the International Centre for New Media and the Youth Caucus); World Summit Youth Awards radio (platform for continued broadcasting of news on youth involvement in the WSIS process); and the second phase of the National WSIS Youth Campaigns. Nigeria was selected as one of the 8 countries that would benefit from the Rural Youth National Information Society Campaigns (RYNICs) grant.

I also consider as high points of the meeting, my blogs (at http://events.takingitglobal.org/wsis2prepcom2/blog); the launching of the book on Internet Governance by DiPLO Foundation and GKP; and the article I wrote for HBF, at www.worldsummit2003.de/en/web/731.htm -- titled, "Quo Vadis: Where do we go from Geneva?"

The Quo Vadis Question

'Gbenga Sesan

The WSIS process has been a long journey. The first phase having ended, all eyes are on the possible outcomes of the second phase. Every family, caucus, delegation and interest group keep flying different colours - all towards the major objective of an all-inclusive Information Society.

The Digital Solidarity Fund (which has been described as one of the major *wins* for developing nations in this process) sailed through *multiple readings* and was agreed on. Well, the text relating to the fund was agreed on and the hope of all is that the funds will also keep being *agreed upon*. The various streams of the WSIS process in phase II - especially the debates on Internet Governance, Financial Mechanisms and the Political Chapeau - are ongoing at varying speeds and would have reached an *agreed* stage in Tunis.

So, where do we go from here? The answer will vary for different people but if you may allow the thoughts of a passionate stakeholder who believes that we owe ourselves a better society especially building on the WSIS process, the next few lines would interest you.

It is the duty of Government delegations to return to their respective countries and deliberately broadcast the outcomes of the process (to date) to their respective national stakeholders. This is also true for regional representatives and their sub-regional counterparts. We have come to appreciate the place of inclusion in national processes and while some nations, sub-regions or regions may not be able to boast of bottom-up consultations leading to the WSIS, this would be a great time to do so.

At the end of the WSIS process, each nation would need to answer the question from her citizens - what do we benefit from the process? Many people in rural Nigeria are not bothered about the sub-section of chapter 1 or 4 that may be of immense interest to certain people; their question (and they have a right to ask) is, "*where does my next meal come from and how do you (yes, you) explain why you have spent from my uncle's tax (since I'm not employed and my aunt is under-employed) to finance national input into the WSIS process?*"

The Civil Society occupies a major space that is dear to the heart of many citizens. Will each civil society organisation be able to translate the *chapeau* into visible action for the average citizen? Will the networks that the civil society has been able to create survive the process and find meaningful expression, and be available as a platform for progress? The civil society has made multiple requests and has expressed diverse possibilities, would development be visible if these are engaged?

Would the DSF (among other outcomes of the WSIS process) empower civil society organisations? Would the outcome of the financial mechanisms debate also help increase support for these actors? The question on the mind of civil society organisations who have benefited from the process through networks and new ideas would be how to replicate this same success back at home - especially for those who work with communities that care less about Internet *governance* and more about livelihood.

The Private Sector, International Organisations, United Nations agencies and all other stakeholders within the process have the moral right to support this global opportunity of building an all-inclusive society that focuses on people and development over profit and technology.

For young people, it is time to prove that our energies can help propel development. We discovered a best-practice effort during the first phase, the National Information Society Youth Campaigns.

21 countries, 5 continents, 20 regional and national conferences, over 200 workshops, over 40 radio programs, 5 video conferences, over 100,000 brochures, over 50 media stories... the impact speaks for itself. You should have been there to see the faces of some rural youth literally glow when they learnt of the role of ICTs and had the opportunity of being taught in their own local language! Have you seen the Youth Caucus movie from phase 1? You need to; it speaks for the impact and possibilities of youth energy.

The campaigns have also held in various countries for Phase 2, and during the February 2005 PrepCom 2, some eight (8) countries were announced as recipients of small grants for campaigns

focusing on rural youth. Read the reports, enjoy the multimedia outcomes... but beyond all these, the second phase campaigns helped connect rural youth to the process.

Many of them had never touched a computer and may not do so very soon if there's no intervention to highlight the need to "wade through the waters of life" in order to get access to one. In Africa, where rural youth account for majority of the population, it is hoped that the campaign will help build a bridge across hydra-headed divides. The African Youth ICT4D Network, which was launched during the African Regional WSIS meeting in Accra, has a responsibility in this direction - and they will surely stand up to it.

Where do we go from here? Meetings will keep being held and documents will be produced but the true indices of growth within the Information Society would be the possibility of linking these processes with true and appropriate action.

Combating the Big Threat!

Ayo Oladejo

Many developing countries have abundance of natural resources like petroleum, diamond and gold, yet they are very poor and their citizens languish in poverty. The reason is very simple the wealth of a country can no longer be measured by the abundance of its natural resources but by the quality of its citizenry. We can only get quality citizens in a nation where there is a free flow of communication and easy access to information. Gone are the days when abundance of petroleum and diamond deposits determine the level of development; we are now in the Information Age where only nations with informed and quality citizenry can stand tall and walk high.

As expected, a good level of development is noticed in the countries that have positively harnessed the potentials of ICT for development; this confirms that socio-economic powers as well as ICT walk together. It is no longer news that there is a very wide digital divide that separates the developed and the under-developed (and developing) countries of the world, and anyone who attempts an immediate and complete bridging of the gap carves the image of trying out a white elephant project. But the fact is that through ICTs, the gap can be reduced. Introducing ICTs properly to the developing world will ensure a very fast convergence process in development.

The world is now a global digital village; through the use of technology, the remotest village in Rwanda could be linked to the rest of the world via satellite, and what this means is that we can now share information at a much faster and efficient rate.

There is a popular saying that youths are the future of a nation. I have always disagreed with this and I strongly believe that youths are the present most important factor in the development of a nation. A country that fails to develop its youths is paving way for a bad society and a worse future. The most active and productive age group in the labour market is that of youths they are the strongest, smartest and the most resourceful set of workers. The ICT sector in any part of the world will testify to the fact that the greatest percentage of their core workers, are young people. It will be very hard to see old people who could put up with the tasking ICT jobs; hence you will always find youths engaged in different ICT sectors

ranging from Software, Hardware, Telecommunications, etc.

Any nation serious enough to embrace ICT knows that the youths are the major players in learning and deploying ICT solutions to change the way we do things. Having identified youths as very key players in ICT development, it is also a shocking revelation that the most dangerous threat to the development of ICT is unarguably linked to young people. That threat is cybercrime.

Cybercrime: The Big Threat

Cybercrime involves such crimes as fraud, gambling, pornography, ID theft, cyber-squatting, and more. Cybercrime is a very contentious topic because of the borderless nature of the domain where it is perpetrated the Internet. The relevance of the Internet is no more in question. The growing awareness of the social, economic and political impact of the Internet on society has brought its relevance into sharper focus. As of early 2005, the Internet threw up the following statistics:

> An estimated 750 million users worldwide;
> At least $1 billion electronic commerce turnover which is projected to rise rapidly;
> The Internet has a major social impact in many fields of human endeavor including education, health, governance and others.[20]

The Internet is also taking over some conventional technologies like telephony Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is gradually taking over from the conventional telephony system. As laudable as the Internet is, the various misuses and abuses it is exposed to are great sources of worry and a threat to its intents and purposes.

In the United States alone, numerous cases of credit, debit and ATM card fraud, telemarketing fraud, and copyright piracy have caused significant losses for US individual and corporate victims. The FBI estimates that the cost of electronic crime exceeds ten billion dollars

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[20] Internet Governance: Issues, Actors and Divides by Eduardo Gelbstein and Jovan Kurbalija

per year. Finally, the Internet has greatly facilitated communication among criminal and terrorist organizations and physical-world crimes such as murder, stalking, bomb threats, extortion, and narcotics trafficking. In short, if left unchallenged, cyber-crime poses a serious threat to the safety of the world, and may stifle the Internet's power as a tool to communicate, engage in commerce, and expand people's educational opportunities around the globe.[21]

The global trend is that young people are the main perpetrators of cyber crime and it is also believed that most of these crimes originate from Nigeria, especially online scams. In Nigeria, cyber crime has taken a very ugly shape. An average Nigerian youth is perceived as a cyber criminal and this is damaging to the country's image. This is not healthy for Nigeria, and the bug is eating deep into other African countries.

Walking into an average Nigerian cyber café could be a very degrading situation nowadays, especially if you don't practice cyber crime. The scourge of Internet crime is a very embarrassing one because it seems to be the newest money-spinning trade of some Nigerian youth staying in the cities. The scams take many forms, but most of them are well organized.

The perpetrators are called *Yahoo! Boys* and their age range is mostly between 12 and 28 years. Most of them are either in secondary school or trying to gain admission into higher institutions. The usual trend is that they are getting discouraged from furthering their studies because of the kind of money they believe they can make from these crimes. There are different methods used by these people to swindle the unsuspecting victim. Some are described further here:

(a) Credit Cards*:*
They use search engines to generate credit card numbers, and most times, they come up with so many numbers and they try

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[21] Frequently asked questions and answers council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime

them out. They use these cards to purchase things on the Internet and are shipped by courier companies like UPS, DHL and FedEx. But after some time, the online shops stopped selling to anybody with a Nigerian address, and it was time for the Yahoo boys to think of a way out of their new predicament. Their solution was to invade chat rooms, especially the *Yahoo!* chat rooms to find new foreign friends online. They pretend to be girls and after establishing some sort of rapport with the foreigner, they send pictures of beautiful black ladies, especially actresses.

When the foreigners began to suspect foul play, the scammers started looking for foreigners who are also dubious characters. They share the booties and the collaborator sends the agreed percentage to Nigeria. The law enforcement agencies that are normally at the airport or seaport to monitor goods coming into the country with the help of *InterPol* had a success rate of arresting some of the criminals at the point of collection, but this soon faded away when the officers started sharing in the booties.

(b) Fake Cheques*:*
Another level reached by the *Yahoo! Boy* is a rather alarming one. This one is more sophisticated and organized. The first step they take is to find the account numbers of merchant accounts of credit card users. Once they get the account numbers, the next step is to identify their accomplices in the targeted countries; usually United States and United Kingdom. They print fake cheques and then post to the United States and UK as applicable to their accomplices. The accomplice gets into the bank and cashes the cheque, which he then transfers to the happy *Yahoo! Boy* using western union money transfer. The success rate of this method is high because it is a relatively new method.

(c) Cyber 419*:*
This method is outdated and whoever still falls for this old trick is a very greedy individual. You get an email from a fictitious General Abacha's son claiming his father starched a huge amount of money in a foreign bank and the only way he could retrieve the money is if you cooperate with him. He asks you to help him with just $7,000 to get the money out, promising you $120,000 as your own share. It has been said that this is a useless old trick that *only the very*

foolish still fall for.

(d) Juicy Government Contracts*:*
This method has been used to dupe many foreigners. I believe so much that the victims of this particular cyber crime are very greedy people. Imagine someone posing as the Minister of works in Nigeria and proposing to support you in buying the Third Mainland bridge or the Aviation Minister who is ready to sell the international airport to you. Many foreigners including foreign banks have fallen for these tricks and the number is still growing.

(e) Foreign Job Placements*:*
This is also relatively new and is enjoying patronage because of the high unemployment rate in the country, and the bad economic condition. A very typical way these people operate is to advertise in newspapers or by email inviting applications from suitably qualified candidates to work for foreign companies. They claim to be consultants for the foreign companies, most of who claim to be in the oil and gas sector. Naturally, many people apply because of the chance to become expatriates and the promise of earning up to $100,000 in a year. They usually invite many of the applicants to a test or interview; and a few weeks later, offer them the job. The condition they usually offer is that to process traveling documents, a fee has to be paid. This fee ranges from $1,000 to $2,000. They will convince the victim that he will be reimbursed by the company immediately he resumes. This particular cyber crime is gaining ground in Nigeria and has to be stopped.

And the Elite Just Joined...

When online scams started in Nigeria, it started with the *Yahoo! Boys* described above but the trend has changed, and the scam business has moved into our higher institutions. Some university students are now active participants in scams and they may be recording high success rates. This is of very big concern to the nation, considering the fact that the university is supposed to be the breeding ground for Nigeria's future and if we are breeding criminals, then the future looks very bleak. The ethics and pride that used to accompany being a university student may gradually diminish and the big concern is that by the time these students

graduate, they would not be able to get jobs with incomes commensurate with what they are earning from scams. That also raises a fear of another generation of corrupt leaders in the making, who can never survive on their salary alone.

Many of us have been unjustly treated and embarrassed at embassies in our own country while trying to get legitimate visas to foreign countries. The look one gets when you tell it to the world that you are a Nigerian can be very embarrassing; everyone stands at alert from that moment, and they think they are no longer safe around you. When you are in a chat room just trying to make innocent friends and you mention being a Nigerian, the chat ends there. In the eye of the international community, an average Nigerian is a swindler and innocent Nigerians have been embarrassed at airports just because they are Nigerians. Recently, the British High Commission in Nigeria suspended visa applications from Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 30 years. Could this just be a coincidence? I doubt it!

For a lasting solution to this ugly trend, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed; which should involve Government, Civil Society, Private Sector and even individuals. People should be informed about the negative effect of cyber crime on the socio-economic condition of our country. There should be conscious efforts by governments of respective countries to evolve legislations to fight cyber criminals. There might be a need for new laws or the amendments of existing laws to suit the complex nature of cyber crimes.

The Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Cyber crime Working Group (NCWG) to evolve cyber crime laws as well as work towards fighting it. The NCWG has forwarded the cyber crime bill to the National Assembly and the President is optimistic that it would be signed to law before the end of 2005. This will be a positive step in the right direction because most perpetrators of cyber crime know that there are no appropriate legislations to lock them away in prison. There are also efforts from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The war will be more effective if there is effective synergy amongst all the relevant stakeholders government and non-government. Individuals also

have big roles to play in solving this debacle.

Apart from fighting this scourge using legislative means, a very important way to reduce or eradicate cyber crime is by providing alternative means of livelihood by using ICTs. Most youths who engage in Internet scam touched the computer for the first time in a cyber café; a friend just took them to learn the art of scamming. Most of these young people would not have embraced this crime if they knew that there are many clean ways of making money through ICT. For meaningful ICT development to be recorded in Africa, the proper use of ICT tools must be encouraged. The Government must be proactive in its effort to direct youthful energy into productive utilization of ICT skills. The establishment of Digital Villages in every local government is a very desirable project; a good example is the Lagos Digital Village where underserved youths in Ebute Metta and environs are taught ICT skills free of charge.

Young people in African countries should also be encouraged to work towards the emergence of *Silicon Valleys* in their respective countries. Governments should start ICT parks that are not only meant to teach basic ICT skills to young people but deep computing subjects, especially software development. African youths are very brilliant and creative, if they only have access to the relevant materials like books, computers and software; the sky will be the starting point for them. Then, we will be moving towards what India is doing, earning a lot of foreign exchange through software development. Another way ICT skills will help youths in Africa is in outsourcing. Many companies in the US and the UK are outsourcing ICT-related jobs to India because it makes economic sense and due to the high level of ICT expertise among Indian youths.

The threat is real but young Nigerians are increasingly taking the bull by the horns. The Nigerian Anti-Scam Network (www.cybercrime.org.ng) synergises efforts with other stakeholders, and represents the resolve of Nigeria's youth in combating the big threat. The days of silence are over!

The Power of Information

Adeolu Ashaye

"Information is power. Providing information to everyone takes the power away from the few. And we are seeing this [dynamic] occurring across much of Africa today. We are seeing the emergence of a new middle class..."
– Leonard Waverman

While reading an issue of Ebony[22], I stumbled upon the term, "Information Super Highway". This must have been sometime during the early '90s. My thinking then was that it was the new name for a really expansive 6-lane expressway being built that would be bigger that the ones I'd seen at that time: the Lagos-Ibadan and Shagamu-Benin Expressways (both of them 2-lane roads in both directions). That was my introduction.

Over these past 10 odd years, I've had the opportunity to learn about the Internet and the multiple lanes on it that bring information from around the globe, and beyond, right to where you are. But before the Internet came, we had access to information, though not as quickly and in real time as we do now. Aided by the combination of 24-hour news channels, the Internet and mobile telephones, we are better equipped to take timely action, make better decisions and respond faster.

Today, in much of Nigeria (and other developing economies of Africa), we are witnessing the unfolding of the Information Age. In this new age, the emphasis of our productive capacity is being shifted from heavy reliance on the mineral resources beneath the ground, to the human resources above it; the critical mass of which are young people. Knowledge is a key differentiator between the quality levels of human output and information is the key driver that the engine of this economy rides on.

It determines the quality of our decisions. However, the quality of those decisions that we make, and need to on a continuous basis, does not rely entirely on the sources of information (though they still play a strong role). We need to go beyond and look into the system that produces such information. A key part of these are the issues that bother on the quality and effectiveness of our education and learning systems.

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[22] Ebony is an African-American monthly magazine

Access to ICT infrastructure without the commensurate access to improvement in literacy only leads to a "square peg in a round hole" solution.

Governments, the donors and private sector organizations need to match spending on the much touted infrastructure with that of the backbone on which all of this rides: quality education. An example from South-East Asia is helpful here. According to Leonard Waverman, a professor of Economics at the London Business School, there is a strong link between increase in ICT infrastructure (particularly the extensive use of mobile phones) and boost in GDP growth.

He gives the example of Indonesia (9 phones per 100 people) and Philippines (27 phones per 100 people), and points out that long-run growth in the Philippines could be a percentage point higher than in Indonesia if this gap is maintained. But if Indonesia closed that gap, its growth rate would match the Philippines'.

But here is an interesting point in his findings: "*there is a large education gap between the two countries*". His model predicts that bridging this divide would boost Indonesia's growth rate even more than closing the mobile gap. "*Mobile phones are important, but so is education and health care. A lot of things are required for growth.*"[23]

Information has the power to transform; change and place individuals, organizations and communities ahead of competition, and importantly, make sure that they remain active players in their realms. It has been defined as "the facts told, heard or discovered about something".

It is also a derivative of processed data. However, for information to become meaningful, it needs to make the transition into the realm of knowledge.

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[23] The Economist, *Calling across the divide*. March 12,2005. p78

Moving from the Information Society to the Knowledge Society

The WSIS process has created a good platform for the discourse on how the Internet and other forms of electronic information distribution can truly empower the voiceless and contribute to building prosperous *knowledge societies*.

However, most of the signatories to the WSIS *Declaration of Principles* are still obstructing access to the free flow of information through the new outlets of the Internet, mobile telephony as well as the more traditional forms: the print media, television and radio.

The World Summit on the Information Society has declared its faith as well as strengthened our conviction in the power of information and knowledge to radically change societies, and has hopefully laid a lasting foundation for our collective future as citizens. We need to do all that is necessary to protect this foundation and build structures that will stand the test of time.

Without any doubt, the WSIS process has signaled the beginning of serious endeavors to close not only the famous digital divide but also the moral divide which is just as instrumental in preventing hundreds of millions of our fellow humans from having their share of the peace and prosperity to which we all aspire.

The construction of Knowledge Societies, which go beyond the concept of the Information Society by recognizing the multilevel strands of knowledge that contribute to the making of the world is something that all of us must support. The concept of the Knowledge Society encourages the growth of capacity building so that information can be identified, gathered, analyzed, distributed and then used as knowledge that drives human and social, development.

Information, communication and knowledge are at the core of human progress, endeavor and well being. Along with the Knowledge Society comes this recognition that all societies are innovative in the face of challenges and can make meaningful contributions to the processing of knowledge in our world. Knowledge Societies also give us a broad vision along with a well-

defined development-oriented viewpoint that captures the complexity and dynamism of the changes taking place in our world.

Knowledge is Power

Information in its basic form is nothing more than potential energy. But if we all truly recognize its role as the working capital of this new knowledge economy in which we must take one of the twin options of either leading or lagging behind, then we can truly turn this potential into the kinetic energy and power that will propel our people, companies and nation into the promised land of boundless growth and opportunity.

As that well used phrase goes: "Knowledge is power". But the hidden dynamo behind that power is information. For us to generate adequate power that will translate into meaningful change, governments, donors, the private sector, civil society and other key players must ensure that adequate funding and energy goes into capacity building for young people who form the bulk of the productive sector of any economy.

Increasing the amounts budgeted for education; health, infrastructure development and utilities beyond paying of mere lip service will go a very long way. That doesn't sound like rocket science at all. Don't you think so?

The Role of Young Women

Nwanneka Akabuike

Nigerian youth participation in the Information Society has experienced a huge success over the last few years. Since the inception of the World Summit on the Information Society process, Nigerian youth in their bid to be part of an all-inclusive Information Society, and task of bridging gender digital divide have organized series of National Information Society Youth Campaigns and Rural Youth National Information Society Campaigns in various regions of the country.

These campaigns have created so much awareness on the need for young people to prove that our energies can help propel development. However, we still have so much to do to achieve an all-inclusive Information Society: we will not be able to count our successes without bridging gender digital divide. The question then, is, "who is a young woman?"

Looking at it from the context of Nigerian youth's involvement in the Information Society, I would like to classify young women into four: young women who have completed their secondary education, the undergraduates, graduates, and the young women in service (employed). Then, we must not forget the young women in urban and rural areas.

Role of Young Women

The possible roles of young women in the Information Society are endless, but permit me to share a few with you:

Participation

First and foremost, the very way or method that could give young women the opportunity they deserve to play a significant role in Information Society is participation. Young women must understand that to be able to contribute to the growth of ICTs, there is a strong need for us to get involved. Getting involved includes attending ICT-related meetings, accessing relevant information, and running with the set goals and objective among others.

Young women that have completed their secondary education should begin to get involved by dealing with the *worm* known as

Techno-phobia by studying courses that are IT- related or science based, which would go along way in building an all-inclusive Information Society.

Young graduates and women in-service should get involved no matter the courses studied by attending training programs that are IT-related and browsing the Internet in order to familiarize themselves with new technologies.

Networking

A woman by nature has the capacity to bring people together for a common goal. Since Nigerian youths are working towards an inclusive Information Society, networking for effectiveness is very important. The Information Society is people oriented, hence, women can effectively network urban and rural youths for national and sustainable development.

In Nigeria, there are some states in which men cannot do much on their own because of culture, and traditions of the people. Women provide a rare opportunity for reaching out to the people in such areas.

Publicity

Adequate awareness must be evident if young people must make the needed change and enhance development. People tend to accept and see sense of responsibility and attach importance when women are involved. Penetration and acceptance become a lot easier when there are young women involved with such tasks.

Research

Women can carry out research on the best way to expand the reach of efforts at the various locations on the existing methods, how effective it has been, the necessary modification using ICT4D (in areas like healthcare, education, and agriculture). It will help in discovering and empowering youth to be able to face the challenges.

Design

Women can design training tools to be deployed to various regions like local content, multi-language and customized software to meet specific local needs.

I would say that women are very great assets to the Nigerian youth in respect of our engagement within the Information Society space.

History in the Making

'Gbenga Sesan

"Keep quiet! What do young men know beyond music and girls?" That was the response an innocent young man got when he sought to air his views during an early IT Policy meeting in Lagos. But he wouldn't be held down. He expressed himself and got some amazing support on the need to involve youth in policy processes to ensure sustainability and efficacy of planned efforts.

That was then back in the days. The story is very much different now, in Nigeria and other countries. Almost every stakeholder has now come to see the need to include young people in processes that must endure the test of time and energy. Young people do not only ensure sustainability, they energize processes and are the major drivers of technology extending the perimeters of innovation.

The year was 2000; and the place, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The event was a small meeting of young men and women meeting under the banner of the Electronic Club, and the topic of the day was centred on how young people can latch on to emerging technologies and ride on the wings of such to participate actively in the New Economy. Mr. Kanmi Adewara spoke extensively on the topic, and introduced participants to Philip Emeagwali someone he described as a phenomenon.

Ripples of the discussions went on to drive that year's annual departmental week of the Electronic and Electrical Engineering Students' Society at the Obafemi Awolowo University, with then controversial theme, "The Future of Nigeria". Justice was done to the theme by Dr. Chris Uwaje, who had been introduced to the leader of the group by none other than Philip Emeagwali after he was contacted by the young chairman of the Electronic Club.

Following these strings of opportunities, a group of young people moved online to float a mailing list then known as "Black Pioneers", and enjoyed dynamic Internet opportunities that were available on campus. During the holidays, young men and women would stay back on campus in holy romance with their new-found love the Internet! It was a series of innocent efforts and expressions, but the events of that year along with many other parallel efforts from various quarters (and some even dating back to earlier times) gave

birth to a dynamic youth movement around ICT issues in Nigeria.

WANTED: Mentors

Mentorship is a major factor for young people. Everyone is mostly a product of the mentors they are exposed to, coupled with the direction they choose by themselves which is also somewhat based on exposure to role models or mentors. Most of the young men and women who have taken *scam* as a daily assignment had their *Introduction to the Internet & World Wide Web course* with crooks whose seeming flashy lifestyles and continued hope for financial harvest becomes *enviable*. But amidst all the rot, there are many experts that have mentored young Nigerians positively, helping to prepare them for the New Economy, but I will share my personal encounters with these tall citizens of the Information Society here. The mentions are in no way exhaustive and Aaron Ukodie's book, Icons of ICT, has done a better job at listing these mentors.

Can I share my story? In the year that I needed to complete the compulsory 6-month industrial attachment, I met Dr. J. O. Sotomi (of blessed memory). At that time (1999), I had no idea how much Information Technology would make my life tick but *Doctor* (as he was fondly called by all) did. He exposed me and other young people who worked with him to concepts that sounded strange (I remember his continued campaign for N*eural Networks* that sounded like Greek to me to that time), and believed that Nigeria was ready to deploy the high-level IT competencies that he had seen in the UK (from where he relocated to Nigeria with his family to start Neural Technologies Limited). My 6 months plus with Dr. Sotomi were months of grooming on *eCommerce and Nigeria's IT need*. My industrial attachment turned into Information Society apprenticeship.

On completing the industrial attachment program, I returned to school to contest for the position of Electronic Club chairman in order to *relay* the things I had learnt to as many other students as possible. It was then that I and Ogemdi Ike started with the *WPD 2000* idea. Tagged, *Web Page Design 2000*, we trained fellow students on website designs and were better for it. Multimedia

designs followed, along with Tope Soremi, and things got better as the lines of the future received thicker marks. Those were the days that led to the chance online meeting with Dr. Emeagwali who in turn introduced me to Dr. Chris Uwaje. Those were early days of youth empowerment, including through the provision of a speaking platform for a young person at the Information Technology Association of Nigeria International Expo from December 6 to 9, 2000.

Within this same youth empowerment window, the pioneer Director General of the Nigerian National IT Development Agency, Prof. G. O. Ajayi (then a lecturer at the Obafemi Awolowo University) threw a challenge during one of his lectures seeking a young person who could write a competitive essay on Youth and ICTs. The person who met this challenge was selected as Nigeria's representative at the International Telecommunications Union Africa 2001 event in South Africa. This was happening at the same time when The Executive Cyberschuul was in search of a young Nigerian who would be Nigeria's first Information Technology Youth Ambassador. Participating in the Johannesburg event did lend a lot of energy to youth involvement moving from personal development and nation building to regional cooperation.

Engr. Titi Omo Ettu, CEO of The Executive Cyberschuul, had been working with young people for a while. In 2001, he felt it was time to take it to the next level, with the possibility of showcasing a young man or woman who could compete with his/her peers globally, and represent their interest at any public event or policy making process. With an interesting number of entries, including those from young Nigerians in the Diaspora, the competition was climaxed on October 1, 2001, with the announcement of the winner of the Youth Development competition Nigeria's first Information Technology Youth Ambassador.

Youth Interventions!

Building on the existing framework of youth empowerment opportunities most especially among organized student groups and under the auspices of the IT Youth Ambassador's office, a series of youth empowerment sessions were organized in various

schools. Beginning with the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta in November 2001 (with a 2-part presentation titled "Introduction to Web Development and Applications") and growing into other regions (of the nation and the continent), the train of Youth ICT empowerment and advocacy reached 32 people-groups and meetings including the Senate Committee on Science and Technology by September 2003. The idea of a National Youth Service Corps Information Technology Community Development Group (InfoTech Corps) that also started within this period has gone ahead to become a popular success story in many states of Nigeria.

These engagements brought networking opportunities, as youth teamed up to meet the ICT challenges of the time. Beginning with the eNigeria 2003 event, a Youth Caucus was born. The Youth Caucus also derived energy from the young people who had been (and are still) involved with the ongoing World Summit on the Information Society. With some support from a non-profit organisation in Lagos, West African NGO Network, we started what was then known as the Nigerian Youth Coalition on ICTs (NYC-ICTs). The coalition implemented the National WSIS Youth Campaign and brought more visibility to the role of Nigerian Youth in the Information Society, especially as the coalition boasted of numerous networks including the Nigerian Association of Computer Science Students. Tope Oketunji was then the president of NACOSS and his dynamic inputs have been sustained to date and improved upon by Olutayo Cyrus (the present NACOSS President and an advocate in his own right). The network was also blessed with the presence of a dynamic student who was to later become the second Nigerian IT Youth Ambassador Edward Popoola.

Exporting Success

The gradual growth from the humble efforts of Paradigm Initiative Nigeria met with less friction as the work around Youth and ICTs became more popular. It wasn't particularly about youth, ICTs or the young people who were blessed to be right in the middle of the happenings it was the emergence of an idea whose time had come. It was time for young Nigerians to export the values that they had proved worthy at home. In 2002, Paradigm Initiative Nigeria

had teamed up with 2 youth-led efforts in Ghana to start the African Youth Initiative which helped kick-start the Youth and ICTs revolution in Ghana.

In January 2005, we had a chance meeting with the director of the Heinrich Boll Foundation in Nigeria, Dr. Axel Sievers. I was invited by the Policy and Development Centre (led by Mrs. Kristie Iyoha, formerly of DevNet) to make a presentation on the WSIS, and I attended the meeting with a few members of the network. During my presentation, I discussed the need to have visible Nigerian (youth) presence at the then upcoming African Regional WSIS meeting, and it was met with a favourable response from Dr. Sievers. During lunch break, the modalities of getting twenty (20) young people to Accra was finalized, and that was the beginning of another peak in the story of Nigerian youths' involvement in the Information Society.

We arrived in Accra with a *twin-vision* in mind soak in all the knowledge we can at the pan-African meeting, and give our best as young Nigerians at the preparatory meeting. And we did! It was reported that, *"Bearing national symbols (flags made from a local fabric) around their necks and waists and nation building on their minds young Nigerians led discussions, facilitated meetings, produced newsletters, met with dignitaries, resolved issues, matched words with action, stayed up late... in order to help meet Africa's Information Society needs"*. The African Youth ICT4D Network was launched at the Accra meeting, with young Nigerians playing prominent roles to date. Leaving Accra was not without drama, as the Togolese border was closed due to the loss of their President just after the WSIS Africa meeting. *"How would these national heroes get back home?"* was about the most popular question. With a few phone calls and physical follow-up, the Federal Government came to the aid of the stranded youth (and others) through a military aircraft.

The Accra outing was so impressive that the Ministry of Communications invited us to help coordinate a similar Youth Workshop at the African Preparatory Meeting for the World Telecommunications Development Conference (WTDC) from July 1 3 2005 in Abuja. That was another successful outing that hosted

94 youth from 10 African countries. This meeting also had some little end-drama of its own as a young person from another African country was apprehended for taking *sensitive* pictures at a *sensitive* location (which to him was just about capturing the beautiful scenery of Nigeria's landscape). The WTDC Youth Forum also discussed and set the tone for work on the emerging Nigerian Youth ICT4D Network, which we hope would be a climax of all networking efforts among young Nigerians to date.

Light Houses

In life, there are landmarks that reveal to us the strength of the past, staying power of the present and possible glory for the future. In themselves, these landmarks (or light houses) are not successful. Their success derives from their ability to engage other stakeholders in order to bring alive the principles and values that drive their own operations. When telling the story of Nigeria's Youth and the Information Society, one cannot but mention a few Light Houses that have stood over time as symbols of excellence, or simply tell the same story, today. Permit me to mention a few that I know personally (and I can bet my previous meal on the fact that there are tons of such efforts that I am yet to discover).

Paradigm Initiative Nigeria started with a discussion between friends. Concerned about the obvious rate of illiteracy and lack of involvement of youth in Information Society processes, the initiative sought to fill the existing gap by equipping youth with appropriate Information and Communication Technology skills while also linking them with opportunities to develop themselves, join in the task of nation building, give expression to their talents towards the need for regional cooperation, and ensure global participation. Paradigm Initiative Nigeria is volunteer-based, youth-led, flexible, online-driven and practical in its approach. This initiative has, since 2001, moved in the direction of this ambitious task. Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (PIN) seeks to equip young people, tomorrow's leaders and decision makers, with appropriate Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills to carve out a better future for all.

PIN's vision is to contribute to the building of a new generation of

Information and Communication Technology literate youths in Nigeria, who are appropriately positioned for personal development, nation building, regional cooperation and global participation. We believe that in the next five years, other efforts and ours will be weaved into a fine matrix in order to produce a sustainable youth inclusion and empowerment drive that will help fulfill Nigeria's dream of active participation in the Information Society. These combined efforts will give wings to our collective dream of a New Nigeria, one that is built on the labours of our past heroes, hewn out of the debris of the present waste and engineered by the strength of Nigeria's youth! Paradigm Initiative Nigeria's volunteers, though active in their respective organisations, remain committed to the ideals and values of our collective effort, and hold dear the dream of a New Nigeria.

The **Lagos Digital Village**, located at the New Library Building in Ebute Metta (Lagos, Nigeria), is an Information Technology training and opportunity centre for Nigeria's youth. The vision of the village is to raise "a new generation of Nigerian youth who are well equipped with appropriate Information Technology skills and are well positioned for personal development, nation building and global participation." The project is key to bridging the digital divide and it will open doors for many underserved young Nigerians, improve their values and quality of life, and help them to attain greatest heights in the educational and job markets in which they would otherwise have never had the opportunity. The project is a multi-stakeholder partnership between Junior Achievement of Nigeria (www.janigeria.org), Microsoft (www.microsoft.com) and the Lagos State Government (www.lagosstate.gov.ng), and it enjoys support from volunteer tutors and the Lagos Mainland Local Government.

The project was commissioned on the 28th of May 2004 by the Executive Governor of Lagos State, *Asiwaju* Bola Ahmed Tinubu and project delivery took off with the provision of a Lagos State-sponsored cyber café. The café houses 39 computers and enjoys high-speed Internet access through a grant provided by the United States government through the Nigeria-America Information Initiative (www.nitda.gov.ng/naii). Training courses at the village (which students complete in stages) include First Steps (Computer

Appreciation); Intricate Details (How to build your own Computer); Work Better (Office Productivity Tools); and Great Leap (Internet and the World Wide Web).

The **Nigerian Anti-Scam Network** ("NAN" and formerly referred to as *Naija vs* Scam Network, and the Informal Working Group on Cybercrime), is non-profit, multidisciplinary, independent and youth-led. The network has since taken a first step through the development of a 100% anti-scam portal, *www.cybercrime.org.ng,* and will work together with other actors (government agencies, civil society organisations, research institutions, media, professional organisations, private organisations, and special interest groups) towards the vision of a new nation where our youth shun online vices and embrace other alternative ways that can enhance their economic profile without compromising integrity and the common good. Ayo Oladejo is the team leader of NAN.

If this chapter were a book on its own, I would spend more time writing about CowBlock (the student network that is changing the face of ICT opportunities at the Obafemi Awolowo University, and led by Tim Akinbo); ClickITNigeria (a student outreach led by Nigeria's IT Youth Ambassador, Edward Popoola); Knowledge House Africa (a youth-led effort championing the cause of Free and Open Source Software and youth/women empowerment, led by Ayobami Olutuase); Young Initiators Nigeria (an Enugu-based youth-led effort serving as a launching pad for ICT/Youth operations in that region, led by Theophilus Ekpon); BaseNet Africa (another youth-led effort connecting rural youth to the entire process, led by Ugochukwu Nwosu). How about Roland Ukor, Deji Aladejebi and Tim Akinbo, the young men I will always refer to as *IT-Preneurs par excellence*. Nigeria is blessed, Nigeria truly rocks!

GENERATIONext

As I look into the mirror (and my diary) each day, I am beginning to realize the strong need and obvious challenge of building Nigeria's Next IT Generation! The work of Digital Peers International (led by the indefatigable Mrs. Odusote) helps with the thought of sustainability, as they continue raising the next generation of young IT leaders for Nigeria along with other efforts doing similar work.

And this may be the best place (at the juicy end of this story) to give a glowing tribute to the Nigerian media... what could we have done without the support of the media. We call them our *"egbon"* (*Yoruba* word for elders) because that is what they have been always there to make our little successes news worthy of being read often over and above true but sad stories of what some other young Nigerians are doing. All stakeholders must come together to equip youth or risk Nigeria's inability to play in the New Economy, and it is instructive to dare say at this point that if we can't compete in the Information Age, we'll be dinosaurs in the Conceptual Age!

People are Talking...

Compiled by 'Gbenga Sesan

NIGERIA: Our future is solidly in our hands
by Titilayo Akinsanmi
Global Facilitator, WSIS Youth Caucus and Program Manager, GTP,
SchoolNet Africa, South Africa

I dream BIG! But my dreams remain naught if all I have is "I"...
Mere thoughts...
      Mere minds...
            Mere beings...
One desire
      Impact
One focus
      Our Generation
Our space
      NIGERIA...
The road has been rough as said by uncle Tai Solarin; the path
rugged with some falling...
Words escape me but these few;
      We are not done with NIGERIA neither is she done with us.

Thank you to all who have and will be a part of this fulfillment.
NIGERIA... Our future is solidly in our hands.

Staking the Future: ICTs and Youths in Nigeria
by Y. Z. Ya'u
Executive Director of the Centre for Information Technology and
Development (CITAD), Kano

The first time Tope Soremi called me, I got an impression of a
determined person. We had never seen nor even spoken before but
he wanted me to assist in hosting, and organization, of the Kano
phase of the IT Policy Train. I was not even sure I had heard of the IT
Train before then. He did not allow me time to consider the request
as he went along to add more requests! It seemed to me he wanted
to put in as much as he could, hoping that at least I could not reject
all. Before I could ask him how he came by my name and phone
number, he volunteered that he was working together with 'Gbenga
Sesan.

Before meeting 'Gbenga in 2003 or thereabout, we had exchanged emails. I had followed his progress as the first Nigerian IT Ambassador. One of the exchanges that I recall had to do with a protest letter on behalf of Prof. Habib Sy of Senegal (with whom I was collaborating on a book on ICTs in Africa). Sy's passport was seized at the Dakar Airport on his way to attend a Prepcom in Paris. I thought this act was condemnable, especially coming from a country whose president was the leading advocate of the Digital Solidarity Fund. How could his government stop an ICT scholar and activist from attending the same event at which he needed the support of all other Africans?

I fired an email to a number of contacts including Sesan asking them to join in the protest. Sesan was one of the first to add his voice on the protest and Sy got back his passport. For this I was happy with this young man. I could not imagine declining a request from someone who only needed encouragement to do great things.

I obliged Tope and drew up a list of about 100 youth groups around Kano. I managed also to get the British Council in Kano, with whom we had an Internet training partnership for members of the Kano Community, to allow us the use of their hall for the event. I arranged accommodation for the team. I also got across to the community leaders of Zaura Babba, a small village about 20km away from Kano to agree to a public meeting in the village for the team to address.

Somehow hoverer I could not be around when the IT Policy training eventually came to Kano as I had to attend a pre-convention Governing Council Meeting of the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), on whose Board I was serving, and whose meeting date happened to be the same as that of the IT Train. GSM technology however allowed me almost an hour-to-hour progress report of the event until they moved to Zaura Babba where there was no GSM coverage at the time.

I recall that for many people at Zaura Babba that was the first time they had ever encountered a computer. They were bemused and amazed by the power of the Internet. The pictures taken of the community on the spot were quickly uploaded onto the Internet,

and 'Gbenga, with the entire team, did a one-page website for the community. Today, people in Zaura Babba with a sense of history introduce themselves as coming from the first community in Kano State to register its presence on the Internet. My next encounter with this group of dedicated young people was at the eNigeria 2004. By then I had known 'Gbenga fairly well, though, through his work rather.

I had also followed a lot of the work the youths for ICTs were doing. Somehow on the first day, I missed the stand of the youths at the exhibition arena. On the second day, Dr. M. Nabate, the Director, Information Technology, Kano State, came hurriedly and told me that my people were looking for me. I did not understand what he meant by my people, even after he added the bit about Zaura Babba because in reality I did not know anyone from Zaura Babba who could have been at the eNigeria.

Dr. Nabate was excited by the pictures of the Zaura Babba community he saw at the stand of the youth. Coming from Kano he was rather curious to know how they got the pictures, and one of them told him about the IT Policy Train and CITAD's role in the event. I tagged along and at the stand, a young tall slender fellow introduced himself as Edward Popoola, the then current IT Ambassador who took over from 'Gbenga Sesan. I had had email correspondences with Edward before this time. In one of the emails, typically of this group, he had asked me to tell him who I was. I did not know how to answer him, given that I was not used to introducing myself. Nevertheless I let him know that I was a teacher and that explains my passion for working with young people.

When I received an invitation from Akanni Kayode for the Rural National information Society Campaigns (RYNICs) event at Mashi, I was excited. ICT infrastructure is so far concentrated in our urban centers, with limited accessibly in rural areas. This was thus one opportunity to let people in the rural areas know what they can do with ICTs and sensitize them to demand that they be included in the national cyberspace.

And what a choice of a day: the event was staged on the local market day, ensuring that not only people form Mashi, but also

from surrounding villages and other communities had an opportunity to witness the event. Perhaps one of the fallouts of this campaign is the dusting up of the rural Internet access scheme of the government.

My encounters with these young men and women who traversed this country simultaneously enlightening and mobilizing youths to take up IT issues more seriously made me to resolved to work even more with young people on ICT issues. I am convinced that the future of this country belongs to the youth who are empowered by IT skills.

Since then, I have worked on a series of youth-focused ICT projects including training programmes for out-of-school youth both at the level Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD), and in collaboration with the Kano State Government in its Youth Empowerment scheme (YES). The joint CITAD and NYSC Volunteers in IT Education (VITES) initiative, the IT Camps for students (including the one by Digital Peers International) and the various IT career talks for students of secondary schools are other examples.

The work of Nigerian Youth ICT4D Network (NYIN), and through it, the AYIN, has been very important in sensitizing Nigerian youths to the power of IT. It has provided a voice for the youth in ICT policy issues. It has also opened up new possibilities and challenges. A lot however needs to be done.

Many of the critical impediments to providing access to IT skills for youths, especially in the rural areas have already been identified by the various discussions that the IT Policy Train had across the country. They need to be addressed in a systematic way by all stakeholders, including government, the private sector and civil society.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of the NYIN initiative is how to work to ensure the outcome of the WSIS process, especially as they relate to youths, are wholeheartedly implemented in Nigeria. NYIN would then be the catalyst of the transformation of Nigeria into an IT power and a prosperous economy, and through this, turn it into a democratic and just society. This is my dream for our youths.

In this, they need the encouragement and support of everyone, not the least, that of the government which has the responsibility to create the necessary and conducive conditions for nurturing our youths for greatness.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Adeolu Ashaye

Adeolu Ashaye is an Accounting graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. But beyond crunching numbers, he is passionate about promoting innovative means of managing information gathering, analysis and distribution processes. He also believes that ICTs are an imperative for helping individuals, organizations and communities become more productive; and as such, need to be deployed for optimal advantage. His pursuit of these passions have become for him a lifetime commitment. And this has led to his involvement in advocacy and enlightenment campaigns especially among young people in different parts of Nigeria and even beyond.

He also leverages on his management consulting work experience at VIP CONSULTING, Lagos to boost the operational efficiency of the groupings with whom he volunteers. Over the past 3 years, he has also taken serious interest in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process, and participated in the African Regional Meeting in Ghana. He is a firm believer in a better Nigeria and puts words to action as an avid volunteer with the African Youth ICT4D Network (AYIN), the Nigerian Anti Scam Network www.cybercrime.org.ng as well as with Oasis, a group which has began teaching ICT skills to Police Officers in North-east Nigeria.

Ayo Oladejo

Oladejo Ayobami Abiodun is a graduate of Mathematics from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. He has been known to promote the use of ICT as a veritable tool for development right from his University days as the president of his departmental society. He bought his association's first computer system and became one of the first departmental societies in his University to be connected to the Internet; that was in the year 2000.

Ayobami presently works in the Engineering Group of Vmobile. He is an ICT professional with a relatively broad spectrum including Web

Development, Database Designs, Network Administration and Security, Windows and Linux Systems Administration, Programming, e.t.c. He is a consultant to private companies and also government institutions especially in ICT policy research. Ayobami is a volunteer at the Lagos Digital Village where he teaches and mentors young people. He designed the center's website (www.lagosdigitalvillage.org.ng) and is also involved in many other ICT for development initiatives. A creative thinker and business developer, Ayobami envisioned and produced the OAU Interactive Multimedia CD in the year 2002. Together with other young people of like minds, Ayobami conceived the idea of the Nigerian Anti-Scam Network and has not looked back since then. His main aim is to participate actively in the emergence of a New Nigeria that we can all be proud of.

Ayobami Olutuase

Olutuase, Oluwafemi Ayobami is a go-getter in every situation. He believes he can achieve anything he lays his hands on. He is a graduate of Computer Science, University of Ibadan. He served as the Editor-in Chief of National Association of Computer Science Students Press Organisation (NPO), University of Ibadan Chapter and made a landmark by being the first Editor-in-Chief in the history of his Department to produce an ICT magazine tagged "IT.COM".

While he was a student, he liased with Liberty International, an NGO, to train about 100 youth in ICT free of charge after which (in 2001) he mobilized about 30 of his school friends to lend their computers and volunteer themselves and assist in the free training of over 400 undergraduates and high school students in ICTs. He was the founding president of InfoTech Corps, a community development group, which had produced over 300 youth corps members in Nigeria, all of them determined to learn as much as possible on ICT with the mission to freely train others who will in turn train others and so on. The group is the first of its kind, under the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme since its inception in 1973 and the first team to bring corp members who are interested in ICT to come together to impact their generation with the positive influence of ICT. Their slogan is "To bring information to the fingertips of the masses".

He currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of a Nigeria-based NGO called the KnowledgeHouseAfrica of ITelligence Foundation (www.knowledgehouseafrica.org). He also serves as Africa Focal Point on the International Board of the Software Freedom International that organises the Software Freedom Day. He is a Nigerian Co-Cordinator of the Rural Youth National Campaign on the Information Society organised by the WSIS Youth Caucus.

Edward Popoola

Edward Popoola is a young man whose passion lies in advocacy for young people. He is Nigeria's Information Technology youth Ambassador. As a youth ambassador, one of his responsibilities is to spread the news about Information Technology among young people in Nigeria. He does this by honoring speaking invitations in Universities, Polytechnics and colleges of Technology.

He is a member of the WSIS Youth Caucus international and in Nigeria. He has attended meetings that are geared towards promoting youth inclusion in policy making processes. In such meetings he has either spoken the minds of the youth he represents or has added his voice to that of other youths. In May 2004, he led the youth delegation to present the Nigerian Youth Declaration on the WSIS at the eNigeria International ICT conference in Abuja Nigeria. He also spoke at the 2005 edition, highlighting the role of youth in grass root ICT deployment. Edward has worked as a volunteer partner with the World Summit Youth Awards Radio, where he reports on the Nigerian Youth Situation and the ICTs. He is a member of the Nigerian World Summit Awards Advisory board under the e-Learning Category and also among the jurors for the World Summit Youth Award, 2005.

He is presently with clickITnigeria and Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (PIN), both volunteer level based ICT4D youth led initiatives. While he is the webmaster for PIN, he leads the clickITnigeria team to raise a new generation of youths equipped with IT skills, informed about the emerging information society and armed with the tools and resources to face the challenges this new society brings. ClickITnigeria has been reaching out to university undergraduates.

'Gbenga Sesan

'Gbenga Sesan is an Information Society researcher, and was Nigeria's first Information Technology Youth Ambassador. His interest and work is built around "Youth Bridging the Digital Divide" and he is quick to express his strong belief in the potentials that ICTs hold for Nigeria and Africa. He has been an active participant at national, regional and international discussions on the need for Africa's inclusion in the Information Society and has consulted widely for numerous organisations, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. 'Gbenga is Vice Chair of the African Technical Advisory Committee, and is with the African Youth ICT4D Network as a Coordinating Bureau member.

In recognition of his dynamic efforts, 'Gbenga was a recipient of the "Frontier of Technology in Nigeria" award and the International Telecommunication Union's Africa 2001 Youth fellowship award, among others. He was also honoured as one of the "Ten Outstanding Young Persons in Nigeria" and profiled as one of the 35 "Icons of ICT" in Nigeria. 'Gbenga is presently completing his postgraduate study in ICT Policy and Regulation, and is Program Manager of Lagos Digital Village, a multistakeholder partnership project that provides training and mentorship opportunities for underserved youth in Nigeria.

'Gbenga's writing efforts have helped produce two books. Wh@t's Next? The Future of the Information Society - A Youth Perspective was edited by Youth for Intergenerational Justice and Sustainability, and TakingITGlobal. Featuring young authors from every continent, the book describes what young people are doing with ICTs today, and attempts to describe the direction of the Information Society. 'Gbenga also contributed towards the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's Africa Networking: Development Information, ICTs and Governance. He wrote the chapter titled, "African Youth in the Information Society". Outside numerous volunteer efforts (including his role as Team Leader of Paradigm Initiative Nigeria), 'Gbenga Sesan maintains a personal website, www.gbengasesan.com, a blog (Òrò: *Gbenga Sesan lets out the words*) at www.gbengasesan.com/blog, and continues to spend time discussing with people-groups on the effective use of Information and Communication Technologies for development.

Kola Osinowo

Kola Osinowo is an Information Systems Consultant and Certified Trainer. He holds a Bachelors Degree in Electronics/Computer Engineering from the Lagos State University, Certificate in Oracle Applications Development from the Oracle University and JCI University PRIME and LEAD Courses. He has been involved in issues relating to the Information Society and ICT4D Initiatives through his participation in National, Regional and International discussions and Projects. He currently volunteers as National Director of Training and ICT Consultant to Junior Chamber International Nigeria. He is also the CEO of oneX Technologies, a Global ICT Solutions Consultancy based in Lagos, Nigeria.

Nwanneka Akabuike

Nwanneka was born in Maiduguri (northern Nigeria) and is the Gender Coordinator for KnowledgeHouseAfrica. She is a graduate of Electrical/Electronics Engineering from the University of Maiduguri. She works with Interconnect Clearing House Nigeria Limited as the Network Engineer in the Switching and Transmission section. She is also a database administrator and people are her greatest asset. She therefore values people, and has a visible passion for women empowerment. She believes that women need to be given equal access in life and opportunities as their male counterparts. She has the vision to empower 1000 young women with knowledge and skills using ICT as a tool before the end of 2006.
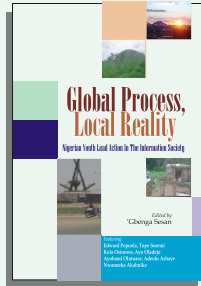
'Tope Soremi

Born September 23 1977, Tope Soremi was raised by his parents and spent his formative years in various suburbs of Lagos, Nigeria. He obtained his B.Sc (Zoology) from OAU, Ile-Ife, and while in his final year, Tope saw the potentials of the Information age and started his technology journey hoping to equip himself and explore opportunities that ICTs will provide. Since his graduation in 2001, he has been actively involved in ICT4D efforts nationally, regionally and globally working through the African Civil Society and WSIS youth caucus platforms to influence ICT policy and promote positive

use of technology to address social needs and provide solutions. He has a strong passion for social development and believes that non-profits in Nigeria (and Africa) can produce better outputs with optimum use of resources and has also worked in the public and private sectors. He has project management interests and seeks to add an MBA to his qualifications (and perhaps, a doctorate degree within the next 4-5 years).

Although, he is from a biological science background, Tope has developed strong web design and development, database management, content management and network support skills. These, he has used in developing web components for various development projects while also managing different web portals. With a keen analytical mind, Tope conducts periodic regular research on a wide range of issues with a portfolio of efforts in web optimization and usability, ICT Policy, Cyber crime, Non-profit funding and SME opportunities in Nigeria. He has written and publicized a number of papers presenting them both within and outside Nigeria.

Presently, Tope is the Content and Website Manager for the Nigerianet project (www.nigerianet.org), a joint start-up project of the European Union (EU) and British Council (BC) between 2002 and 2004. The project is now managed by a foundation, Foundation Nigerianet, seeking to further extend the project's mandate to foster information rights in Nigeria and create platforms for non-profits to showcase their works. Tope is also a very avid sports person and is interested in ICT4D issues and its use as a development tool for the emergence of a better Nigerian and African Society. A voracious reader of fiction and non-fiction books, Tope seeks to add a positive edge to his world and his generation with a view to ensuring that tomorrow turns out better than today.

about the book

Global Process, Local Reality is a celebration of how young Nigerians have maximized the WSIS process, and is an expression of their resolve to partner with relevant stakeholders towards building a people-centered and development-focused Information Society for Nigeria, Africa and the world...the book showcases amazing contributions from the people that can best tell the story of Nigerian youth's involvement in the WSIS process.

about the contributors

All contributors are active volunteers with the WSIS Nigeria Youth Caucus. Even as young professionals with diverse backgrounds, the contributors continue to stand by the principle of translating words into action, and making global processes have local realities.

about HEINRICH BÖLL FOUNDATION
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HBF is a non-governmental organisation affiliated to the German Green Party. It operates its Nigeria office in Lagos since 2002. HBF conducts and supports civic educational activities in the fields of human, social and political rights, gender democracy, conflict resolution, and good governance.

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