

## **Catalysing Access to ICTs in Africa (CATIA)**

CATIA was a major programme across Africa which increased access to communications technology for local communities, and put in place structures that can sustain change. APC coordinated the policy advocacy component of CATIA, but this case study will look at the programme as a whole. CATIA was not so much focused on integrating ICTs into development, as on integrating development into ICT policy and infrastructure development.

### Project Background:

DFID has a key remit to alleviate poverty around the world. It established Catalysing Access to ICTs in Africa (CATIA) – a three-year, £9 million programme - to enable communities in Africa to gain maximum benefit from ICTs, ranging from the internet to community radio.

CATIA's key objectives were to improve affordability of and extend access to ICTs across sub-Saharan Africa, where the high cost of services made ICTs inaccessible to most people and where 90% of the communications infrastructure was limited to capital cities and secondary towns.

Comprising nine projects, CATIA focused on reforming ICT policy and regulation at regional and national level, along with a number of strategic practical interventions. DFID contracted out the management of this large and complex programme to Atos Consulting. The programme was implemented by a strong, predominantly African team.

### Implementation Activities:

There was a six-month inception phase to design the programme. The team established measures of success and identified how these could be achieved, including detailed objectives, timescales and an analysis of key stakeholders.

The team facilitated processes to get stakeholders working together, engaging and providing support to a wide range of African partners. The team developed capacity in Africa through training, mentoring and technical support for policy makers, educators, operators and others.

The team also focused on:

- creating advocacy for policy reform

- developing policies and regulation regionally and nationally, and providing support for their implementation

- engaging with other donors and players across Africa to create a more coordinated approach at all levels

- building sustainable networks of stakeholders to take forward the activities initiated through CATIA

- providing research and tools to fill gaps in the body of resources available in the technology sector across Africa

- technical implementations.

### Success factors and challenges:

At the start of the programme, the size and complexity of the challenges facing the team were immense.

*Scale and diversity.* The programme spanned 34 countries in West, Central, South and East Africa, encompassing many languages and cultures. In each country, technical, cultural, social and logistical challenges were different.

*Numbers of stakeholders.* There was a huge range of stakeholders, each with their own agenda. With the key focus on regulatory and policy reform, there were many players seeking to influence this, including government, donors, regulators, civil society, private sector, the media and educational institutions.

*Volatile political environment.* The team had to work in a political environment where most factors were out of its control and governments changed regularly. Simple cause and effect could never be predicted.

#### *Working with stakeholders in a new way*

The team took care to involve the range stakeholders at every stage and create shared goals. The team designed communications and interventions that were tailored to the needs of each country and each stakeholder. Private sector companies worked alongside civil society. Governments engaged with operators and with community groups.

The team facilitated well-informed, lively and inclusive policy debates across Africa which shaped the local policy environment. By bringing together stakeholders, the team established and supported multi-stakeholder advocacy networks.

#### *Tailoring the approach*

The fact that there were nine separate projects made the programme particularly challenging to manage. Flexibility to tailor the design of each project was vital in such a large and complex group of countries. At the same time, establishing synergies was critical if programme objectives were to be met.

#### How the Objectives were Met:

The team achieved increased affordability, access and use of ICTs in Africa. The programme's achievements are widely recognised, receiving a positive mention in the progress report for Africa that was input to the G8 discussions in July 2005.

Other feedback includes:

"The CATIA project, its development partners and the personal commitment from the CATIA Secretariat has left a unique imprint in the African continent's policy and regulatory reform in bringing accelerated deployment of wireless technology." Isidoro da Silva, Executive Secretary, Communications Regulators Association of Southern Africa

"At the start of CATIA, I would have been pleased if just half of the components (in what was, essentially, an experimental programme) were successful and had a real impact. We have come in well above this level."  
*David Woolnough, CATIA Programme Manager, DFID*

"These outputs [of CATIA] have led to a contribution to policy making processes and to provision of communication services."  
*CATIA independent evaluators*

Just some of the specific achievements are highlighted here.

#### *Developing an internet backbone in Africa*

CATIA significantly increased the number of Internet Exchange Points and Internet Service Provider Associations in Africa. Both are vital components to a functioning internet across the continent. As a result, there has been significant growth in local internet traffic. For example the Internet Exchange Point in Kenya has seen local traffic grow by 78% in 2004/2005 and 138% in 2005/2006.

These increases offer opportunities for local businesses and organisations. For example, the Kenyan Revenue Authority moved towards collecting taxes electronically and saw a 7% increase in tax revenue in 2006. The Kenya Central Bank is now considering using the internet for automated clearing.

Internet Service Provider Associations have successfully influenced policy and regulation in ways which reduce cost and increase access to ICTs. For instance:

In Kenya internet backbone prices have reduced by more than 60% after successful lobbying for the liberalisation of international gateways and subsequent licensing of six additional providers, offering intense competition.

Internet costs in Ghana have reduced significantly after successful negotiation of reduced tariffs (a 50% reduction in Sat-3 tariffs).

#### *Increasing low-cost satellite and wireless access*

Wireless technologies make the exchange of information faster and cheaper, and bring phone and internet access to remote rural areas. The team facilitated the increase of low-cost satellite and wireless internet access across Africa, with policy and regulatory reform in at least seven countries. During the last two years licensing for satellite terminals has become simpler and cheaper in over 15 countries, leading to more service providers and rapid growth in the number of satellite terminals. For instance:

In 2005, Afsat (an operator in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Nigeria) saw growth of 67%.

The number of authorised satellite data networks in Ghana grew from 96 in 2003 to 162 in 2005.

The satellite terminal licence fee in one country dropped from \$35k to \$5k and monthly costs in another fell by a factor of 15.

#### *Establishing advocacy networks (coordinated by APC)*

The team established a model for a multi-stakeholder advocacy process and network which can be replicated in other regions or countries. One example is the Kenya ICT Action Network. The Network collaborated closely with the government in formulating the Kenya ICT Policy which was approved by Cabinet in January 2006 and is working closely with the government on the draft ICT bill. Its advocacy played a direct role in the liberalisation by the regulator of voice services delivered over the internet. This has lowered international calling prices by nearly 80%.

#### *Policy making and regulation*

The team built a lasting capacity for developing policy and regulation through a network of universities, regulators and policy makers across Africa – NetTel@Africa. There are now 20 universities participating in the development of courses on ICT policy and regulation. 22 countries have benefited from peer-to-peer activities, which have increased their capacity on specific policy and regulatory issues.