



Conclusions of the AU-ECOWAS Regional Internet Exchange Point (RIXP) and Regional Internet Carrier (RIC) Workshop 16-20 June 2014

1. Regional Internet Carriers

Under the facilitation of the workshop facilitators the participants examined the description of the Regional Internet Carriers, policy considerations to develop regional interconnection, and Regional Internet Carrier best practices. The following proposals were made;

1.1 Description of the Regional Internet Carrier under the AXIS Project

The proposed description of a Regional Internet carrier is “***an Internet Service Provider that spans across at least one national IXP in the region and having a point of presence (for connecting to the local IXP) in more than one country within the region.***”

1.2 Policy Framework Recommendations

During the workshop, it was observed that there are a large number of policies identified for regional interconnection. However, it is necessary to be pragmatic and focus on the most important policies to identify some quick and immediately achievable policy wins. The following policies were considered as necessary priorities to improve regional interconnection;

1. Reduce dominance by incumbents and discrimination against new entrants => create a more competitive environment - issue more operator licenses, including wholesale/carrier licenses, at same time introduce Significant Market Power controls on essential facilities of incumbents
2. Increase access to passive infrastructure ==> mandate dig-once policies and ducts or cable on all new roads/rail/energy links, along with infrastructure sharing policies, including on masts
3. Reduce difficulty of obtaining rights of way and permits, especially for crossing borders

4. Address deficiencies in national backbones ==> increase private financing by improving regulatory environment and top up with public finance for remote and rural areas where needed
5. Address low demand ==> a) increase investment in e-services, b) address content related legislative needs, c) institute e-literacy campaigns
6. Address low supply; improve spectrum management and promote availability
7. Provide overall direction through adoption or updating of national and regional broadband policies, this includes establishing multistakeholder/multisectoral information sharing and coordinating mechanisms
8. Eliminate restrictions on international gateways which limit them to incumbents and mobile
9. Government owned backbones and public alternative infrastructure networks should sell conditional indefeasible rights of use (IRUs) and dark fibre
10. Allow existing alternative infrastructure operators with fibre to provide wholesale services to others
11. Provide capacity building on interconnection for policy makers and regulators
12. Publish tariff and service level comparisons to measure progress and adapt strategies
13. Open access policies on essential facilities such as; submarine cable landing stations, terrestrial and backbone infrastructure
14. Non-discriminatory access to services across borders
15. Ease licensing requirements for out of country service providers that do not sell local services for instance only want to peer or transit
16. Ease of access to wireless spectrum
17. Permissive legal environment for the development and hosting of content locally.
18. Establish business conducive environment by having suppliers for infrastructural components in-country is critical to ensure active competition and quality of service that relate to service delivery
19. Standardised processes and guidelines for performing cross border interconnections in an open and transparent manner
20. Advocate for stiffer penalties to address the issue of vandalism to protect telecommunications infrastructure
21. Universal Service Funds need to be used to address network infrastructure and energy supply deficiencies
22. Encourage secure environments for the function of IXPs (cybersecurity)

External Consultations

The following proposals will require external consultations with the relevant ministries in region but not limited to the below;

1. Digital taxation policies should be flexible, transparent and innovative to spur growth of e-business which will have further on-going benefit.
2. Put in place mechanisms that facilitate the movement of human resources from one country to another

1.3 Establishing the Policy Framework Committee

During the workshop, the stakeholders/participants agreed to build on existing structures and ensure that the Policy framework committee will develop the Policy Framework that will facilitate regional interconnection. The main responsibilities of the Policy Framework Committee will include (but not limited to) the following:

- Identify the policy priorities that will facilitate regional interconnection
- Formulate a regional cross-border interconnection policy framework based on the identified priorities to be implemented by all member states in the region
- Formulate an Action Plan
- Identify the national and regional policy and regulation gaps
- Develop a mechanism to evaluate the outcomes of the recommendations

The Policy Framework Committee will consist of representatives from the following organizations to ensure continuity; Ministry representative, Regional Regulatory Association, Regional Representative of the Private Sector with ECOWAS and the African Union as the Chair and Coordinator respectively.

1.4 The guiding Criteria for Selecting ISPs that meet the definition of a regional Internet Carrier to be considered for the mentorship and capacity building program

The proposed guiding criteria for selecting the ISPs to be considered for the mentorship and capacity building plan are as follows;

1. The ISP must demonstrate a growing business for the last 3 financial years and submit operational report and audited financial statements for the last 3 years
2. The ISP must be licensed as per the member states regulatory requirements
3. The ISP must provide a strategic development plan demonstrating its plans grow to other regions/countries
4. The ISP should demonstrate that it has the internal capacity to cater for and grow organically beyond its environment. For instance, it should have existing scalable business systems and practices in place.

2. Regional Internet Exchange Points (RIXPs)

2.1 Description of the Regional Internet Exchange Point as agreed during the African Union – ECOWAS Workshop;

The proposed description of the West African Regional Internet Exchange Point is **“A regional IXP is an open access IXP located in the region, where traffic from at least two additional west African countries is exchanged via public or private peering.”**

2.2 Proposal on the support required for National IXPs to grow into Regional IXPs

Many IXPs in Africa are still in their formative stages. In most cases IXP managers have never experienced a large-scale IXP operation. For this reason, it is proposed that a mentorship and capacity building is needed for the National IXPs to support them to grow into Regional IXPs.

Some of the objectives of the support to grow National IXPs to grow into Regional IXPs will be to;

1. Provide practical experience and understanding in large IXP day-to-day operations
2. Develop understanding of the business models of large IXP
3. Enable them to develop a strategic plan to become a regional IXP
4. Identify their resource requirements to grow and become a regional IXP
5. Develop benchmarks for successful regional IXPs implementation

2.3 Guiding Criteria for selecting IXPs to be supported to grow into Regional IXPs.

IXPs interested in applying for the grant support will need to demonstrate that;

1. The IXP is operational and with at least 3 peering members
2. The IXP has sustainable business model
3. The IXP has staff that is part-time and/or full time for day-to-day operations
4. The IXP has a functional website that provides basic information on members, statistics, policy, and contact information
5. The IXP upholds its constitutional mandate on governance
6. The IXP has the support of both local public and local private sector stakeholders