

## **Reflections on an ICT Capacity Building Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa**

A programme supporting the achievement of the Agenda 2030 goals while promoting trade and increased cooperation – that is what the “ICT Regulation – Policy and Practice” programme is about.

Starting in 2015, The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER) together with the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS) is running a Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) financed capacity building programme in information and communication technology (ICT) in Sub-Saharan Africa. The programme now involves almost 20 participating countries in three regions – East Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa.

The programme has so far been successful. The success lies in the setup of the programme where different stakeholders play important parts - which complement each other. Sida funds the program, SPIDER and PTS run it, and Swedish stakeholders such as Ericsson support it. Regional organisations provide practical project advice and national agencies implements their strategic projects into national policies.

The sections below provide an overview of the programme’s participants, key content, governance, and initial results.

### **The Programme’s Purpose**

The “ICT Regulation - Policy and Practice” Programme supports regulatory development activity in targeted countries by providing tools and discussion on how policy making and regulatory practice can meet an ever-changing ICT future. New, diverse and constantly evolving technologies make it important for policy makers and sector regulators to find new ways to achieve good policy

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Swedish Post and Telecom Authority

Box 5398  
SE-102 49 Stockholm  
Sweden

Visiting address:  
Valhallavägen 117 A  
[www.pts.se](http://www.pts.se)

Telephone: +46 8 678 55 00  
Telefax: +46 8 678 55 05  
[pts@pts.se](mailto:pts@pts.se)

making and regulatory practices to safeguard good service and the interest of consumers and authorities.

### **Builds on Two Approaches to Capacity Building**

The programme builds capacity in two ways:

- 1) it provides training and support for participants in management positions at ICT regulatory authorities and policy makers at ministries to implement a change initiative in line with the organisation's strategical direction.
- 2) it trains representatives from regional regulatory organisation to support participants when implementing their change initiatives, and channels the change initiative work into regional working groups to harmonise efforts regionally, strengthen regional coordination and sustain results.

### **Participants and Participation**

The programme is designed for persons qualified to participate in reform processes of importance on different levels and holds a position in home organisations with mandate to run change processes. It offers support to strengthen, adapt and maintain capacity over time in order for the participating organisations to define and achieve goals in both the short and long term.

A participant will take part in the latest development in the subject area of work supervised by skilled Swedish colleagues and experts develop a network of colleagues from other countries and enhance knowledge in new working methods.

The methodology used is based on the assumption that participating organisations wish to carry out changes and are willing to invest own resources to achieve these changes.

### **Change Initiatives Core of the Programme**

Change initiatives are the corner stone of the programme. A change initiative is a project which the participating organisations perceive to be in line with their and the country's strategic direction and priorities for regulatory policymaking and practice.

The change initiatives need to be well established in the organisations as well as having the full support of the immediate superiors of the participants in the programme.

SPIDER signs a MoU with each organisation in order to highlight the importance of the change initiatives and sufficient time for participants to implement the change initiatives.

The programme utilizes various pedagogical methods to stimulate and optimize learning, including lectures, group discussions, study visits and coaching. The participatory design of the programme requires active participation. There is a limit of 25 participants per round to allow for a close working relationship between participants, lecturers and regional support team.

### **How to Qualify for the Programme and its Setup**

During phase one of the program, participants are selected by their organisations. Members of the Programme Team, consisting of SPIDER and PTS staff, will make initial visits to invited countries, or meet with senior management at international summits arranged by e.g. ITU. The organisations identify relevant change initiatives and participants for the programme round.

During phase two, the training in Sweden will provide the subject knowledge required for the participants to succeed with their change initiative formulation. The bulk of the expertise will come from PTS. The participants will also be trained in project management and gender equality, and will make relevant study visits.

After the training phase in Sweden, participants start working on phase three: their change initiatives in their home countries with support from the regional regulatory organisations.

During phase four - regional follow-up - meetings in the region take place to discuss the progress of the change initiatives and provide further training. This is followed by implementation of the change initiatives with continued support provided by regional regulatory organisations (phase five). Participants will need time provided within their regular work duties to implement the change initiative in phase three and five.

Finally, during phase six an evaluation of the round with assessment of potential further developments of change initiatives within the programme is carried out.

Programme topics will be tailored to meet the needs of participating organisations. These topics include institutional and legal framework, competition regulation, secure communications, consumer protection and transparency, spectrum management and future regulatory issues.

### **The Governance Structure of the Program**

The programme is coordinated by SPIDER with PTS as a collaborating partner in planning and providing expertise. Together SPIDER and PTS staff make up the Programme Team. The Programme Advisory Board provides strategic support, with members from stakeholders such as Ericsson and the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation in Sweden.

The programme, partly policy based but also technical, requires wide ICT technical expertise, ranging from spectrum management models to regulation of mobile markets. Carrying out such an extensive programme requires expertise in project management and training.

The collaboration between SPIDER and PTS as joint implementers of the programme has been very successful and essential to the success of the programme. Being two Swedish Authorities, SPIDER and PTS has been able to focus on their respective key competences in the programme, and through the Programme Team structure this has been aligned.

### **Combining Strengths**

SPIDER has extensive experience from project and event coordination and management, as well as pedagogical skills in planning and implementing an in-service training curriculum. PTS is well positioned to discuss and give advice on the role of an independent and successful regulator, both in terms of best practices as well as in lessons learned from mistakes and challenges.

In acknowledging and drawing on each other's strengths, PTS and SPIDER are able to co-design and develop the programme to tailor to the needs of participants.

As a result emanating from the successful collaboration is the detailed joint discussions with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) on possible extension of the programme, and preparations for applications for EU-funding of twinning projects building on the same governance model, which can be a model for other areas than just ICT.

The collaboration with important stakeholders from the private sector, such as Ericsson, has complemented the input from PTS by providing industrial views on regulatory matters and discussions on how trends in the telecom market can be regulated, or not regulated. Ericsson with its global presence is particularly valuable for the participants.

To further strengthen the implementation of the program, regional African regulatory bodies are engaged helping the participants and its members to better implement policies. The programme has shown that regional cooperation, where stronger countries helping countries in need of more support, often creates a situation where all countries benefit.

### **The Programme and Agenda 2030**

Out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one explicitly focuses on ICT's role in development work. In SDG 9 "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation", target 9c states: "Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020". This goal has high

relevance to ICT regulatory policy making and practice as regulations create the market conditions for universal and affordable broadband and mobile access.

The real significance of ICT for the SDGs is likely to be found in the supporting and helping to achieve other targets, such as target 3.9 on achieving universal health coverage, target 5b on promoting women's empowerment, or target 10c on reducing the transmission costs of migrant remittances. For these and other areas of application of ICTs, regulation plays an important role in both safeguarding a level playing field for businesses, e.g. between the old incumbent and new telecom operators, as well as safeguarding consumer and worker interests.

### **Programme Results**

The collaboration with the Regional Regulatory Organisations (RROs) in the three African regions has provided good results at several levels. For the Programme Team, the advice of the RROs regarding member countries to invite, and the facilitation in arranging meetings with the national regulators, has provided credibility for the programme and help in the selection process. Also, the RROs have provided excellent support for the participants in the programme by providing access to regional studies on various topics as well as facilitating the sustainability and generalizability of the projects within the established regional setting of working groups and committees.

Strengthening the RROs is important, not only for the implementation but for continuous of the national regulators over time. A regional structure and regional cooperation is key to the long-term development in individual countries and NRAs.

In addition to capacity building of organisations and individuals the programme has led to concrete achievements in several areas of regulation. Many **change initiatives** are still ongoing whilst several others have successfully been completed and implemented. For example:

- a change initiative that is under implementation and which will have a positive impact on the society is the deployment of broadband services in rural Kenya. The change initiative is characterized by innovating methods of overcoming resistance by operators to move into what is often perceived as non-profitable areas. A toolbox consisting of various forms of incentives such as direct subsidies, waiver of license fees, collaboration with government agencies to provide access to sites and electricity, cooperation with local entrepreneurs as well as time limited exclusivity to protect investment has been developed. So far more than 70 sites have been deployed and implementation of the project continues.
- another initiative that successfully has been implemented and is up and running is the protection of underground infrastructure in Uganda. In

many countries, the problem with damaged infrastructure when digging is common and often leads to high costs for both society and telecommunications operators. With input from the web based planning service for diggers “Ledningskollen” in Sweden and benchmarking with many other countries a system adapted to local conditions in Uganda was developed. All major stakeholders such as roads departments, suppliers of water and electricity and telecommunications operators have joined the initiative. The impact of the project is still to be seen but when the Swedish system was introduced damages to infrastructure was reduced by around 70%. For information on the project, please see <https://www.ucc.co.ug/uccinfrastructure/>

- a third change initiative is the introduction of regulations in the field of competition in Namibia. This initiative is likely to have a positive impact on the society and increase benefits for consumers and operators in the communications industry. Increased competition is a healthy component of any well-functioning industry and a major step forward in creating a vibrant telecommunication industry has now been taken. The initiative was well prepared and supported by management of the regulatory authority before it was further developed in the programme. New regulations are now in force and will assist the regulatory authority to steer the industry in the right direction.

All above change initiative were developed in collaboration with PTS and supported by the SPIDER team.