

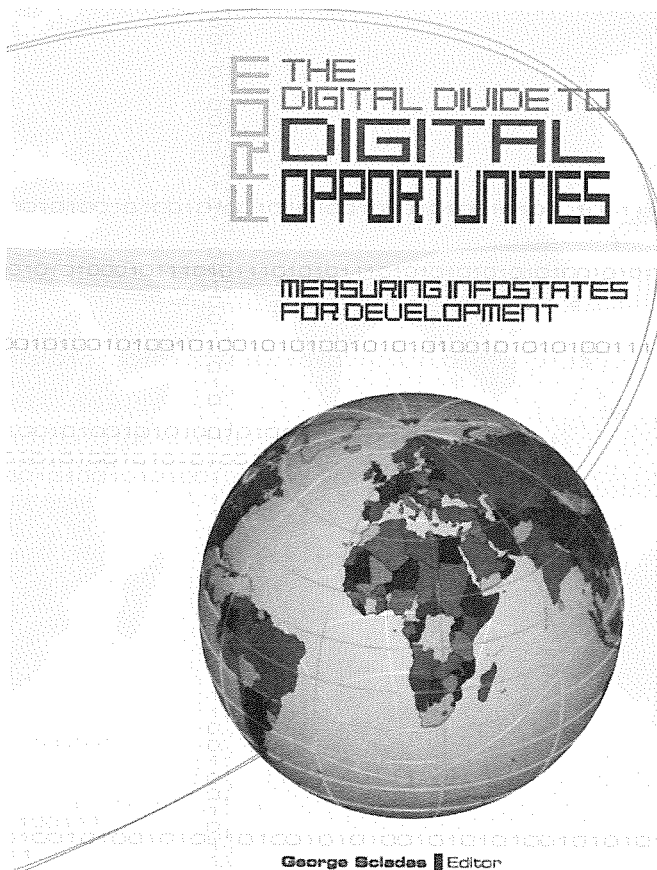
A Global Cooperative Endeavour in Direct Response to the WSIS Action Plan

Orbicom is officially releasing this new publication as a contribution to the international community in the context of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 16-18 November 2005).

This joint ITU-Orbicom ICT Opportunity Index was made possible with the collaboration of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), L'Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (AIF) and United Nations organizations such as UNESCO and UNCTAD. It was initiated in the aftermath of the 2003 Geneva phase of WSIS to build on the enthusiastic reception by the international community of *Orbicom's Monitoring the Digital Divide... and Beyond* report.

The catalytic role of ICTs in creating digital opportunities conducive to development and the danger posed by the Digital Divide have been well documented in recent years. In this context, a reliable monitoring instrument is indispensable. Based on the Info state conceptual framework and model, it incorporates measurements of ICT capital and labour stocks, indicative of a country's productive capacity, and ICT consumption flows, indispensable to function in an Information Society.

The large-scale empirical application measures ICT networks, skills, uptake and intensity of use based on 21 reliable, tested and publicly available indicators. Measurements of networks are offered for 192 countries representing 98% of the global population, and of overall Infostates for 139 countries, accounting for 94% of the global population. The results extend over the 1995-2003 period, providing the perspective of almost a decade of evolution. Unique features include:



- a cohesive conceptual framework, which goes beyond connectivity measures and logically incorporates skills, and offers rich analytical linkages

- explicit measurements both across countries at a given point in time and within countries over time, such that comparisons are not reduced to changing rankings

- policy-relevant results on a component-by-component basis

- immediate and intuitive benchmarking against the average of all countries (Hypothetica) and the planet as a whole (Planetia)

- use of existing and reliable data sets with a rigorous and transparent statistical methodology

An early finding of the empirical application is that the magnitude of the Digital Divide remains huge. Infostate gaps between countries continue to be enormous, with values ranging from a high of 255 to a low of 8... Thus, literally, have and have-not countries

are worlds apart, separated by many decades of development. Countries with the least developed Infostates are heavily concentrated in Africa, with some Asian countries as well.

Infostates for all countries increased over the 1995-2003 period. Many countries made significant improvements, others more modest. The countries with the highest growth were those with the lowest Infostates, a typical pattern in analyses of digital divides, whether across or within countries, and largely the product of the initial values. However, this does not indicate a closing divide. The Digital Divide is a relative concept and its evolution cannot be subjected to blanket generalizations. Detailed analysis reveals that:

- While it is true that the Digital Divide is closing in a general sense, this is so because countries in the middle - and especially the upper-middle - of the Infostate scale made good progress against countries at the top.

- The progress made by countries with low Infostates was not sufficient to close the gap and they were outpaced by most countries - except for those at the top with whom they are separated by huge gaps. Thus, the digital divide between countries with the lowest Infostates and most others is widening. This happens despite the undeniable progress made in cell phones and other ICTs.

Relative movements of individual countries over the period also prove revealing: some started with similar Infostates and ended up far apart - or the other way round. Extensive analysis documents which countries made progress, when, how fast and through what ICTs. The analytical potential of the model was further exploited by going beyond the numbers to answer the all-important why questions. What macro environments, government policies, regulations and business strategies are moving the numbers? This work was carried out by researchers in the South, for several countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. A wealth of findings has emerged to feed constructive debate.

Econometric work found a strong relationship between ICTs and economic growth. Infodensity is highly correlated with per capita GDP, and this gets stronger at higher levels of ICTs - although the relation is complex, indicating that many factors are at work. The impact of ICTs is large: on average, a 1% increase in Infodensity results in 0.9% increase in per capita GDP, but such an impact is unequal among countries at different stages of development. Countries with comparable levels of GDP and Infodensity shares benefit more than the poorest countries, which points to the need of a critical threshold of ICTs for serious growth to occur.

Based on the compilation of the best possible dataset on ICTs by gender, a quantitative analysis of the gender digital divide finds women at a disadvantage. Access, location of use, patterns of use, frequency, intensity and type of use are all areas of concern. As well, gaps in ICT literacy, education and training pose specific challenges for women. A qualitative report presents detailed information from fieldwork, case studies and anecdotal evidence to begin assessing the outcomes and impacts of ICTs in the working and social lives of women, particularly in developing regions. The study also found that while the gender divide tends to be generally smaller in countries with high Infostates, its relationship with the overall digital divide is at best tenuous. This provides credence to the need for policies designed specifically for women rather than to rely on generic e-strategies.

Considering the ongoing debate on the potential role of free and open source software in development, the report also offers an objective account of its pros and cons.

A project of this magnitude would not have been possible without the collective competence and dedicated efforts of many individuals and organisations. More of a dozen teams were at work across all continents, with 50 to 60 people working directly on the project and many more contributing indirectly through extended networks.

The Editor

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La Conferencia General adopta la Convención sobre la Protección y Promoción de la Diversidad de las Expresiones Culturales

La Conferencia General de la UNESCO, reunida en París del 3 al 21 de octubre, aprobó hoy (148 votos a favor, dos en contra y cuatro abstenciones) la Convención sobre la Protección y Promoción de la Diversidad de las Expresiones Culturales*, un instrumento jurídico internacional que entrará en vigor tres meses después de su ratificación por 30 Estados. Fruto de un amplio proceso de maduración y de dos años de intensas negociaciones jalonados por numerosas reuniones de expertos independientes y gubernamentales, este texto, que reviste la forma de un instrumento jurídico internacional, refuerza la idea, que figuraba ya en la Declaración Universal de la UNESCO sobre la Diversidad Cultural **, adoptada por unanimidad en 2001, de que la diversidad cultural debe considerarse como "patrimonio común de la humanidad" y su "defensa como un imperativo ético, inseparable del respeto de la dignidad de la persona humana". En 2003, los Estados Miembros pidieron a la Organización que continuara su acción normativa para defender la creatividad humana, un componente muy importante de la Declaración enunciado en sus artículos 8 a 11.

La Convención se propone reafirmar los vínculos que unen cultura, desarrollo y diálogo y crear una plataforma innovadora de cooperación cultural internacional. Con este fin, el texto reafirma el derecho soberano de los Estados a elaborar políticas culturales con miras a "proteger y promover la diversidad de las expresiones culturales", por una parte, y a "crear las condiciones para que las culturas puedan prosperar y mantener interacciones libremente de forma mutuamente provechosa" por otra parte (Artículo 1).

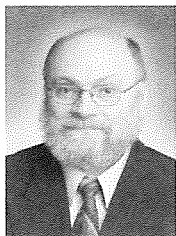
De este modo, una serie de principios (Artículo 2) garantizan que ninguna medida destinada a proteger y promover la diversidad de las expresiones culturales atente contra los derechos humanos y libertades fundamentales "como la libertad de expresión, información y comunicación, así como la posibilidad de que los individuos [las] elijan". Además, el "principio de apertura y equilibrio" garantiza que, cuando los Estados adopten medidas para favorecer la libertad de las expresiones culturales, "procurarán promover de manera adecuada la apertura a otras culturas del mundo".

Las Partes, al reconocer el papel fundamental de la sociedad civil, se esforzarán por crear un entorno que incite a los individuos y grupos sociales a "crear, producir, difundir y distribuir sus propias expresiones culturales, y tener acceso a ellas, prestando la debida atención a las circunstancias y necesidades especiales de las mujeres y de distintos grupos sociales, en particular las personas pertenecientes a minorías y los pueblos autóctonos" y a que "se reconozca la importante contribución de los artistas, otras personas participantes en el proceso creativo, las comunidades culturales y las organizaciones que los apoyan en su trabajo, así como su papel fundamental de alimentar la diversidad de las expresiones culturales".

Source: UNESCO

<http://portal.unesco.org/es>

Orbicom's Online General Assembly of Members 13 - 27 February 2006



I have the pleasure to inform all Orbicom members that the AGM has been reconvened for 13 February - 27 February 2006. As for previous years, we will need to cover a substantial agenda. I ask for your support and cooperation to make it as productive as possible.

Once again, the membership will be requested to endorse the recommendations for the appointments of new directors for a two-year term. This is a difficult exercise as much attention must be paid to a balanced representation on the Board of Directors (gender, geographic, chairholders and associate members).

The Marrakech Conference of November 2004 was been a good opportunity for Orbicom chairholders and associates who were able to travel to Morocco to meet with their colleagues and to participate in the discussion that led to the adoption, by consensus and in the context of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), of the Marrakech Declaration on freedom of expression in the information society.

On 17 November, at the Tunis phase of WSIS, Orbicom is launching and presenting its two newest publications: *Digital Review of Asia Pacific 2005/2006*, and *From the Digital Divide to Digital Opportunities: Measuring Infostates for Development*. I hope that a good number of Orbicom members will have travelled to Tunis to participate in the panels that will follow the presentations and also to take part in the UNITWIN-UNESCO Round Table on the role of the UNESCO Chairs in the development of knowledge societies, on 18 November.

I look forward to engaging again in a constructive dialogue with all of you during the AGM, in February.

Claude-Yves Charron
Secretary General of Orbicom

Draft Agenda

I. Word of the President

II. Approval of the Agenda

III. Approval of the Minutes of AGM Sept. 2004

IV. Report of the Board of Directors

4.1. Report of the President

4.2. Report of the Treasurer

4.3. Approval of the Certified Financial Statements (2004-2005)

4.4. Nomination of the Financial Controllers (2005-2006)

V. The Secretary General's Report

5.1. Status Report of the Action Plan

5.2. Future of Orbicom / Marrakech Roadmap

5.1. New Chairs, New Associate Members

VI. The Chairs' Programmes and Activities

VII. Board of Directors

7.1. Motion of Appreciation for the Out-going Board Members

7.2. Endorsement of the New Board Members

VIII. Varia

La Conférence générale confirme le rôle majeur de l'UNESCO dans le SMSI

Le rôle actif de l'UNESCO dans le processus du Sommet mondial sur la société de l'information (SMSI) et l'importance accordée aux sociétés du savoir ont reçu un soutien unanime lors de la réunion qui s'est tenue hier à Paris dans le cadre de la 33e session de la Conférence générale de l'Organisation. La Conférence générale a adopté une résolution donnant mandat au Directeur général pour que l'UNESCO participe aux mécanismes de mise en œuvre après le SMSI et pour développer un mécanisme de coordination du suivi afin de mobiliser les partenaires et les ressources.

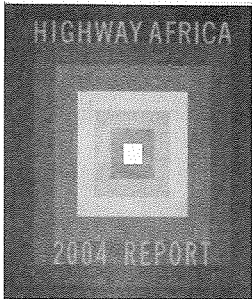
Les Etats membres ont en particulier approuvé le mandat et la compétence de l'UNESCO en tant que promoteur de la mise en œuvre des grandes orientations suivantes : « L'accès à l'information et au savoir », « Le renforcement des capacités », « Télé-enseignement et Cyberscience » (dans « Les applications TIC »), « Diversité et identité culturelles, diversité linguistique et contenus locaux », « Médias » et « Dimensions éthiques de la société de l'information ».

Les Etats membres ont également souligné le rôle majeur de l'UNESCO et de l'UIT dans la coordination de la mise en œuvre du Plan d'action du SMSI, aussi bien pour les grandes orientations qu'au niveau du processus de coordination et/ou de la coopération interinstitutionnelle au sein des Nations Unies. Ce soutien s'inscrit dans la ligne des résultats du Sommet de Tunis, en accord avec les décisions prises par les Etats membres lors de ce Forum.

Source: UNESCO
<http://portal.unesco.org/fr>

Publications

Highway Africa 2004 Report



As a permanent fixture on the African calendar, the Highway Africa conference marked its eighth anniversary in 2004. This year's event also represented the fifth year that SABC and Rhodes Uni-

versity have collaborated as co-hosts of this prestigious and influential occasion. It was also the fifth year in a row that the Department of Communications has been officially associated with Highway Africa.

What has now been confirmed beyond doubt is that Highway Africa is the undisputed premier annual gathering of the continent's journalists. This status is underlined by the unmatched numbers of participants who come together for the event, and also by the spread of countries, media and training institutions who, once again, were represented at the event in 2004.

The key to this achievement is the combination each year of high-powered speakers and trainers, a vibrant social programme, and a definite purpose i.e. producing a powerful declaration for use in training, education and lobbying. The year's theme of Media Making the Information Society proved to be a strong draw-card and point of focus for the conference, capitalising as it did on the outcomes of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) the Geneva phase and on the forthcoming Tunis phase in November 2005.

Increasingly, and as evidenced by the 2004 conference, a range of organisations and sponsors are finding the Highway Africa conference to be an invaluable time and place for them. Further, the conference continues to show itself to be an effective springboard for many other ongoing activities, and particularly now around the Information Society issues.

To sum up, Highway Africa 2004 gave renewed impetus to the continental media movement that is evolving around it. The result is that there is growing expertise and influence - amongst African journalists about the complex field of ICT policy, technology and content-related issues.

Foreword by Chris Kabwato
<http://www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za>

XII Encuentro latinoamericano de Facultades de Comunicación social

El Encuentro Latinoamericano de Facultades de Comunicación Social es el principal evento académico de la Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social "FELAFACS", que se realiza cada tres años en un país diferente de América Latina. Para el año 2006, la sede oficial del XII Encuentro de FELAFACS será la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá, Colombia. En esta oportunidad la temática central del Encuentro abordará las relaciones entre la comunicación y la incertidumbre, en una época caracterizada no sólo por la pérdida de confianza en las utopías modernas que han pretendido domesticar los miedos humanos a la naturaleza, asegurar el futuro y controlar la violencia, la miseria y el desamparo, sino por el protagonismo que hoy adquieren la subjetividad, el cuerpo y la tecnología como fuentes de novedosas posibilidades y también de nuevas inseguridades. En este contexto, se deben repensar las nociones mismas de lo que somos y deseamos ser y los modos en los cuales la comunicación se ha convertido en lugar estratégico de la política, la subjetividad y la (in)seguridad.

En las sociedades modernas, la búsqueda de la certidumbre como respuesta a la inseguridad producida por la guerra, el desarraigo y la indefensión ante las fuerzas de la naturaleza, implicó la creación de instituciones sociales, tales como la ciencia, la política, la democracia y la sociedad del trabajo, entre otras como proyectos emancipadores para "anticiparse" al futuro, asegurar la integración simbólica de la sociedad y conjurar los miedos a una vida sin sentido. Es decir, se trata de nuevas formas de imaginación e intervención humana para responder a la violencia, las supersticiones y la naturaleza, de modo que los hombres y las mujeres no sólo pudieran convertirse en los propios "amos" de la sociedad, sino elegir, por su cuenta y riesgo, distintos horizontes de lo posible: ser, hacer, sentir y pensar.

FELAFACS XII
"Ciudadanías de la incertidumbre,
Comunicación, poder y subjetividad"
25-28 de septiembre de 2006
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá
<http://www.felafacs.org>

Conferences

ICT for all

15-19 November 2005
Kram Exhibition and Conference Centre, Tunis, Tunisia
<http://www.ict4all-tunis.org>

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Sommet mondial sur la société de l'information (SMSI)

16-18 November 2005
Tunis, Tunisia
<http://www.itu.int/wsis>

"Age of Connectivity" Caring Communities for the 21st Century: Imagining the Possible, International Conference and ICT Student Design Finalists Exhibition

10 February 2006
Organizer:
United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA
<http://www.international-iccc.org>

IX International Scientific Conference "Balkan image: historical and communicational approaches"

19-20 May 2006
Sofia, Bulgaria
<http://www.aubg.edu>

XII Encuentro Latinoamericano de Facultades de Comunicación social (FELAFACS)

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