



# Advancing Access to Affordable Broadband in Ghana



MEETING NOTES & REPORT  
| 23 August 2018

# Key Highlights: Speech by Minister of Communications, Hon Ursula Owusu Ekuful



Mr Kwasi Agyei Tabi Director of Finance and Administration of MoC delivering a speech on behalf of the Minister

- Ministry is working with the NCA to ensure another auction of the 800mhz spectrum sees greater development
- Ministry is focussed on last mile connectivity options
- Government will provide enabling environment to attract more broadband infrastructure providers

# GIFEC : New Opportunities and Progress

## Highlights of Presentation by Mr. Kofi Asante, Administrator

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- GIFEC continues to roll out projects in unserved and underserved areas
- The Universal Service fund influenced by A4AI's advocacy and advice moved from providing 2G (voice only) to 3G data services for public access solutions
- Has acquired a Satellite Hub in 2016 based at the Kofi Annan ICT Centre of Excellence in Accra to facilitate systems management of the Community Information Centres (CICs)
- Addressing tax issue especially to influence affordability of handsets
- GIFEC is taking partnership with the private sector seriously and has created a role of a partnerships and sustainability desk reporting to the Administrator
- Increase in engagement of women is crucial . Skills training workshops must show at least 60% women participants before roll out.

# Feedback Notes on GIFEC presentation



Mr Kofi Asante. Administrator of GIFEC

- Highlighted need for a turnaround program for digital Centres as many are down. Reported that 36 CICs have been renovated.
- Interest in the monitoring and evaluation of the CICs is crucial
- GIFEC needs to show transparency and share the outcomes of its evaluation of projects
- District assemblies don't have capacity to maintain CIC ; it's important to add a private sector component for revenue development to ensure sustainability.





## Working Group Lightning Talks

# Working Group Lightning Talks

## Consumer Advocacy & Pricing Transparency

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- Need to convince government to view access to the Internet as a basic utility like electricity and water
- Consider a subsidized internet subscription rate for lower income groups
- Develop standards for digital access for people with disabilities.
- Transparency in bonus credit for data and related issues regarding expiration of bonus credits.



# Working Group Lightning Talks

## Data & Research Working Group

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- Prioritising the inclusion of ICT focused survey questions in the upcoming Ghana National Census through Ghana Statistical Service
- Need for data segregation including, but not limited to, Income Status, Gender, Cost & Access
- Use infographic of research and data stakeholders for broader community engagement

# Working Group Lightning Talks

## Infrastructure Sharing & Open Access

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- Shrinking and tough ICT market from operator perspective
- Public-Private Partnerships vs Private-Private mergers. challenged by lack of data transparency due to privacy concerns
- Hosting a roundtable discussion to enable a deep dive into the Infrastructure study recommendations outdoored in 2017 to push for implementation
- Working group continues to address the lack of clear policy to encourage infrastructure sharing policy and guidelines.
- A new champion for the working group has been recruited and was welcomed; there's a need to expand membership



# Working Group Lightning Talks

## Taxation & Fiscal Issues

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- Still reviewing existing and potential taxes such as Surcharge/ surtax on Incoming International traffic (SIIT); Tax on Mobile Money; Tax on CST, NFSL; 20% Import Duty (Devices)
- Impact of adjustments in local taxes has resulted in 4-5% VAT increases for some operators with potential impact on broadband affordability
- Consumer taxes still create barrier to affordability
- Government needs to consider widely recognized taxation principles

# Fireside Chat | New Technologies & Innovative Infrastructure for Universal Access



## Estelle Akofio-Sowah, CSquared

- ProjectLink – an experiment wholesale Fibre project started by Google; also involved in wholesale WiFi in Uganda.
- Utility networks – Cost of fibre deployment is still a challenge. Some areas can only have aerial fibre and that partnership needs to be developed further as recommended in the Ghana infrastructure study
- Lack of trust among operators prevents effective collaboration & possibility for cost-efficient sharing.

## Kojo Boakye, Facebook

- Mobile technologies still have a huge role to play
- The challenge is finding a role for legacy technologies (especially those with 2G only signal) to expand access to Internet.
- Opportunities exist in fibre, WiFi technology, high altitude platform providers aka drones (providing backhaul in remote areas), Satellites, etc.
- Desire to connect people in the shortest amount of time regardless of technology should be the primary focus addressed by policy

# Fireside Chat | Advancing Affordable Access through New Technologies & Innovative Infrastructure Management

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Dr. Bello Musa, Huawei

- Challenges – lack of infrastructure and high cost of deployment due to lack of power, skills & accessibility.
- Use of solar to address electricity challenge for towers is an opportunity that needs to be explored
- Old technologies are still relevant. Rural Star is an example which used old technology to address current challenges
- Trust is central to building sustaining partnerships

# Panel Discussion & Feedback



- Business struggle and competitive environment affects ability to collaborate;
- **lack of data and trust** among operators is needs to be overcome to enable sharing.
- There's a need to develop **standards** between legacy and emerging technologies
- Need to identify opportunities for expansion and/or coordination with **GIFEC plans** for greater impact
- There's a need to develop **incentives for infrastructure sharing** beyond towers
- Utility services need to greater involvement in the partnering of existing ICT providers to ensure affordable access
- The **role of government and regulator is key** to ensure policies are up to date. An infrastructure sharing guidelines for all forms not just towers till speed up the process
- There is a **existing model of collaboration** between the Telcos and road construction agencies that saw the construction of utility duct along the *Accra Pokuase Highway* . This model needs to be replicated to save civil works cost that make up more than 60% of fibre roll out costs.



# Reports from Working Group Breakout Sessions



# Working Group Reports |

## Consumer Advocacy & Pricing Transparency

### *Actions to pursue*

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- Need for alignment of Ghana domestic policies to the “1 for 2” Affordability Target
- Advocate for adoption of universal access as an essential human right
- Advocate for basic connectivity to be defined as a *stable connection, accessible, affordable and quality* Internet.
- Step up advocacy and awareness of universal access to include peri-urban areas in addition to rural areas; regulator should be required to enforce quality of connection to broadband especially in these areas.
- Pricing transparency – adhere to a continuous monitoring report on service providers to keep operators on their toes

# Working Group Reports | Taxation

## *Actions to pursue*

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1. Mobile Money: Address its taxation
2. Provide an alternative for government that can equally drive developmental agenda, e.g., digitizing collection of property taxes.
3. Policies imposed must have positive impact on overall economy
4. Focus on strategic government relationships to advance dialogue and adoption of recommendations
5. Keep an eye on social media tax blowing across the continent



- Positioning for an opportunity to collect data on thematic areas such as income, gender, connectivity and cost through the upcoming **Ghana national census**
- Develop and marshal relevant questions to fit A4AI Ghana's focus, e.g., **1 for 2 Affordability Target** and how it's filtering down to the masses
- Continue engaging with GIFEC and other stakeholders specifically focusing on how researchers can have **access to data through open data principles.**
- Recommendations for NCA to **improve quality of data**, including to but not limited to, gender segregation/ disaggregation

- Develop **schedule for engaging with upcoming Policy Reviews** through the Ministry of Communications and other government stakeholders, e.g., GIFEC's upcoming new strategy , NITA's possible regulations review and Ministry of Communication's Digital development Policy etc.
- Develop **thematic position papers** to provide timely inputs to the upcoming policy reviews.

# Thank you



*Stakeholders at the 23rd August Coalition meeting.*