



New Study from Internet Society and Analysys Mason Examines Factors Hindering Development of Internet Access in Africa

Research explores impact of telecom infrastructure investments and corresponding improvements to Internet access and service

[Washington, D.C. and Geneva, Switzerland – 08 May 2013] – The Internet Society today published a new study, 'Lifting barriers to Internet development in Africa: suggestions for improving connectivity,' which examines the factors hindering Internet development in Africa and explores possible remedies.

The research, conducted by Analysys Mason and commissioned by the Internet Society, found that despite investments resulting in significant improvements to Africa's telecom infrastructure in the past five years, these investments have in some cases not translated into lowered prices or increased quality of services for Internet users. These investments have focused on undersea cable to improve international connectivity and terrestrial fibre networks between countries.

The study shows that in many countries the development of Internet access is hampered by constraints on terrestrial connectivity between the submarine cables, the Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), last mile access infrastructures, and Internet Service Providers that deliver access to end-users in Africa. The report sets forth an Internet development approach focused on removing regulatory roadblocks and promoting Internet-specific investments, supported by a high-level policy environment to result in greater Internet availability and empowerment in Africa.

"This study is significant as it identifies some of the last barriers for the development of Internet infrastructure in Africa," noted Dawit Bekele, Regional Bureau Director for Africa, Internet Society. "It pinpoints the issues that all stakeholders and more particularly African governments and telecommunication regulators need to address to ensure that the massive infrastructural development that we have seen in Africa in the last few years results in bringing Internet to all Africans at an affordable price."

Jane Coffin, Director for Development Strategy at the Internet Society, added, "We hope that this study will spark a national and regional debate in Africa that impacts future Internet development. There is so much that stakeholders can do to close infrastructure gaps by working together through creative public-private partnerships and by taking bold steps to allow change to happen by breaking down traditional barriers and allowing market entrants greater ease in network deployment."

"For us, the variation between regions in retail price of Internet traffic was revealing, with some ISPs offering access at USD 10 per gigabyte of traffic, and others charging up to ten times more than that. East Africa appears to offer best value, particularly for low-volume users who tend to have lower incomes," commented one of the report's authors, Robert Schumann.

Michael Kende, Partner at Analysys Mason, noted that in many countries, the regulatory reform of the telecoms sector is not yet complete. “African Internet ecosystems grow strongest when a wide range of operators can offer service and exchange traffic, but in many countries regulatory and practical barriers remain to private investment.”

This new report follows an Analysys Mason study commissioned by the Internet Society on the impact of IXPs in Kenya and Nigeria, which found that IXPs improve the quality of Internet services and save African operators millions of dollars annually in connectivity fees. The IXP study shows that a key factor in the success of IXPs is the availability of low-cost, widely-accessible connectivity, both domestically and across borders and oceans, and the study was commissioned to help address those gaps.

The study is available for download: www.internetsociety.org/liftingbarriers

About the Internet Society (www.internetsociety.org)

The Internet Society is the trusted independent source for Internet information and thought leadership from around the world. With its principled vision and substantial technological foundation, the Internet Society promotes open dialogue on Internet policy, technology and future development among users, companies, governments, and other organizations. Working with its members and Chapters around the world, the Internet Society enables the continued evolution and growth of the Internet for everyone.

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About Analysys Mason (www.analysismason.com)

Analysys Mason is a global consultancy and research company specialising in telecoms, media and technology (TMT). Our clients in the TMT sectors operate in dynamic markets where change is constant. We help shape their understanding of the future so they can thrive in these demanding conditions. To do that, our consultants have developed rigorous methodologies that deliver real-world results for clients around the world. Our headquarters are in London and we have a presence in Cambridge, Dubai, Dublin, Edinburgh, Johannesburg, Madrid, Manchester, Milan, New Delhi, Paris, Singapore and Boston.