



# Visibility: towards a Communication Strategy for UbuntuNet Alliance

Rose CHISOWA & Tiwonge Msulira BANDA

*UbuntuNet Alliance*

[rose.chisowa@ubuntunet.net](mailto:rose.chisowa@ubuntunet.net)

[tiwonge.banda@ubuntunet.net](mailto:tiwonge.banda@ubuntunet.net)

*www.ubuntunet.net*

# Outline

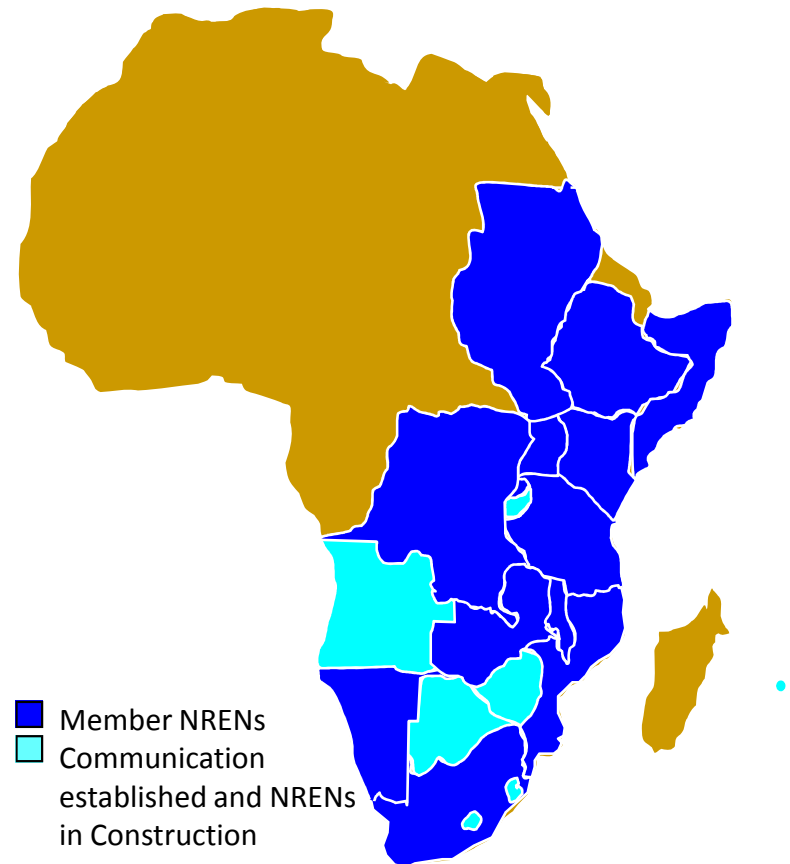
- 1. What is UbuntuNet Alliance**
- 2. Why a Communication Strategy**
- 3. Current communication tools**
- 4. Challenges faced and Gaps identified**
- 5. Communication Strategy**
- 6. Lessons for NRENs**
- 7. Conclusion and Way forward**

# 1. What is UbuntuNet Alliance

- The Regional Research and Education Network for East and Southern Africa
- Aim is to interconnect all NRENs in the region and connect them to other regional RENS of the world
- Registered as a not for profit Association of NRENs in 2006
- Five founding NRENs in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa
- Today, membership has grown to 13 NRENs, most recent one being Xnet of Namibia
- Secretariat in Lilongwe, Malawi, CEO Kampala- based
- We participate in EU FP7 projects: GLOBAL, ERINA4Africa, CHAIN

# 1. What is UbuntuNet Alliance

- Eb@le – DRC
- EthERNet - Ethiopia
- KENET – Kenya
- MAREN – Malawi
- MoRENet – Mozambique
- RENU – Uganda
- RwEdNet – Rwanda
- SomaliREN – Somalia
- SudREN – Sudan (*now without South Sudan*)
- TENET – South Africa
- TERNET – Tanzania
- Xnet – Namibia
- ZAMREN – Zambia



## 2. Why a Communication Strategy?

- UbuntuNet Alliance posits communication, dissemination and outreach as important tools for its development as well as for the general understanding of academic networking in Africa.
- Effective and strategic use of such tools has the potential to enhance the impact of UbuntuNet Alliance's activities and image among all stakeholders.
- Since the establishment of the Alliance in 2005, a significant amount of effort has been put into achieving and maintaining a well informed community.
  - Mailing list (nrens, community, board)
  - Website ([www.ubuntunet.net](http://www.ubuntunet.net))
  - NUANCE ([www.ubuntunet.net/nuance](http://www.ubuntunet.net/nuance))

## 2. Why a Communication Strategy?

- However, it has been observed that there is a low level of understanding of general research and education activities among
  - prospective infrastructure users,
  - policy makers,
  - regulators and
  - telecom providers in the region.
- There is an increase in activities in UbuntuNet Alliance as the organisation increases its operations and more services are delivered to the community.
- *A well informed community of stakeholders is a key to the success of the Alliance*

## 2. Why a Communication Strategy... UbuntuNet and the member NRENs

- UbuntuNet Alliance as a regional organisation
  - aims at providing regional connectivity for the research and education community in eastern and southern Africa through NRENs and value added services
- The NRENs coordinate research and education networking activities at national level in their respective countries
  - They relate directly with the user community – the **researchers, lecturers and students** – *who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the Alliance*

## 2. Why a Communication Strategy...

- The regional nature means that it must interact with different players - all in different environments
  - telecommunication and connectivity providers,
  - governments,
  - regulators,
  - ...and many other stakeholders
- They all must have a clear understanding of the role of the Alliance in facilitating communications for scientific and research collaboration.



## **2. Why a Communication Strategy...**

### **Who is our Audience?**

- Until now, the Alliance has maintained a well-informed community of NRENs
- Contact with Regulators and Government is also vital.
- As the network rolls out and services become available it is crucial that both end-users and all other stakeholders know what UbuntuNet Alliance does

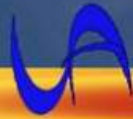
# 3. Current Communication Tools

## 1. Mailing lists

- Launched in 2005; Currently there are 5: Board, CEOs, CTOs, NREN community, and NUANCE

## 2. The Website

- Launched in March 2006 and now receives an average of 2000 visits a month
- Updated regularly and is used to reach out to the general audience.
- It provides current information about the Alliance, events and activities and is a repository of relevant documents



# UbuntuNet Alliance

## for Research and Education Networking

- [Home](#)
- [About Us](#)
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## NUANCE

Read NUANCE, the UbuntuNet Alliance Monthly e-Bulletin to be updated with news on Research and Education Networking in Africa - October 2011  
[English](#) | [Français](#)

### UbuntuNet AUP

To view the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) of the

## Enabling global collaboration in research and education over world class networks



### Message from the chairperson, Professor Zimani Kadzamira

UbuntuNet Alliance is the Regional Research and Education Network for Eastern and Southern Africa. It capitalises on the emergence of optical fibre and other terrestrial infrastructure opportunities to establish a high speed research and education backbone, which interconnects all National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in the region. Tertiary education and research institutions throughout the rest of the world are connected to the Internet and to each other using fast low-cost fibre connections. This gives them a huge research and learning bonus as they are able to share resources across locations easily. [Read more>>](#)



The AfricaConnect project aims to establish a high-capacity Internet network for research and education in Southern and Eastern Africa to provide the region with a gateway to global research collaboration. The project will last four years and will consist of two phases, the first of which will be to plan and procure the network and is expected to last up to twelve months. [Read more>>](#)

## UbuntuNet CONNECT 2011

[Register now!](#)

### What's New

- Press Release: [Africa-Europe research collaboration to be transformed by EC-funded research infrastructure](#)
- [The Case for Research and Education Networking](#)
- [ERINA4Africa Final Event Press Release](#)
- [Fibre Opportunities in Africa: Intra-Africa Optical Fibre Network](#)

### Upcoming Events

## 3 Current communication tools

### 3. NUANCE- the monthly e-newsletter started in May 2008

It carries articles from and about African NRENs; from other regions and general research and education networking

- Sent to about 1500 recipients by email and many more access the web version
- French version launched in April 2011 back- dated till September 2010 - analytics indicate that about one-third of web readers read the French NUANCE

# NUANCE – e-newsletter



The screenshot shows the UbuntuNet Alliance website. The header features the logo and the text "UbuntuNet Alliance for Research and Education Networking". A navigation menu includes links for Home, About Us, Resources, Membership, Events, News, Development Partners, and Projects. On the left, there is a search bar and a "FOLLOW ME ON twitter" button. The main content area displays the current issue: "Volume 4: Issue 6: October 2011 - French". A language selector shows "English". The "NUANCE:" logo is prominently displayed, followed by the subtitle "Newsletter of UbuntuNet Alliance: Networks, Collaboration, Education". Under the heading "Dans cette publication", a list of articles is provided, including topics like research promotion, UbuntuNet-Connect 2011, and open-source tools. The page also includes an "A l'avenir" section.

Search this site:

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Home About Us Resources Membership Events News Development Partners Projects

Home

Volume 4: Issue 6: October 2011 - French

English

**NUANCE:**  
Newsletter of UbuntuNet Alliance: Networks, Collaboration, Education

Dans cette publication

- La promotion de recherche et réseaux d'éducation en utilisant une communication stratégique
- Karibu Kenya! Un programme excitant arrangé pour UbuntuNet-Connect 2011 - et beaucoup plus!
- Afrique-UE initiative de partenariat stratégique ouvert aux universités en Afrique
- Connaissance sans frontières: Réseaux de recherche Européen en 2020
- L'Internet des choses
- Communauté vibrante autour d'outils open-source de NOC
- TNC2012 appel à communications

A l'avenir

NUANCE Archive

- Vol 4: Issue 6: Oct 2011
- Vol 4: Issue 5: Sept 2011
- Vol 4: Issue 4: Aug 2011
- Vol 4: Issue 3: July 2011
- Vol 4: Issue 2: Jun 2011
- Vol 4: Issue 1: May 2011
- Vol 3: Issue 12: Apr 2011
- Vol 3: Issue 11: Mar 2011
- Vol 3: Issue 10: Feb 2011
- Vol 3: Issue 9: Jan 2011
- Vol 3: Issue 8: Dec 2010
- Vol 3: Issue 7: Nov 2010
- Vol 3: Issue 6: Oct 2010
- Vol 3: Issue 5: Sep 2010

## 3. Current Communications Tools...

### 4. **Fliers, brochures and posters;**

- used to disseminate quick information
- Proved to be very useful at conferences and meetings
- These tools are updated regularly whenever there is an event

### 5. **Word of mouth**

- stands out and shows commitment

# 3. Current Communications Tools...

## 6. Presentations

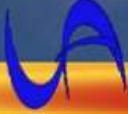
- Given at conferences and meetings

## 7. Media and Mass media

- A number of articles have appeared in print as well as online media.
- NUANCE articles are picked by other recognised online news services such as Balancing-Act Africa.

The media section of the website contains video materials and these are being expanded right now!

Additional plugins are required to display all the media on this page. Install Missing Plugins...



# UbuntuNet Alliance

for Research and Education Networking

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[Papers & Presentations](#)  
["How-to" Toolkits for NRENs](#)  
[Intra Africa Fibre Map](#)  
[Media Library](#)

[Home](#)

## Media Library

### elinfrastructures in Africa


This video talks about the elInfrastructure landscape in Africa and the presentation was delivered by Tiwonge Msulira Banda of UbuntuNet Alliance for Research and Education Networking



Click here to download plugin.

### Dr Francis Tusubira - Chief Executive Officer - UbuntuNet Alliance

The video presentation centers on "Research and Education Connectivity - Unlocking the Intellectual Potential of Africa Based Researchers" and it happened on the 12-13 July 2011 in Rabat Morocco



### GLOBAL

This video explains the GLOBAL (Global Linkage Over Broadband Links). This was an EU FP7



## 4 Challenges faced and Gaps identified

- NUANCE: one of its aims has been to showcase what member NRENs are doing as a way of increasing awareness.
- To achieve this, regular input from the NRENs is required: however this has not been easy as NRENs may not perceive their critical role
- To grow to the readership of NUANCE, as indicated earlier on, NUANCE is distributed by email to about 1500 readers.
- This number has been reached primarily through conferences and meetings. It is not easy to grow readers and keep them happy with good content.

## 4 Challenges and Gaps identified...contd

- Three major gaps have been identified while carrying out communication and dissemination activities for UbuntuNet Alliance.
  - ***Awareness*** : some quarters that still do not know about research and education networking, NRENs and the Alliance.
  - ***Diversity of Stakeholders*** : a broad range of stakeholders that the Alliance must address and each has different needs.
  - ***Dynamic environment*** : the landscape is changing as social networking tools become more prominent

# 5 Towards a Communication Strategy

- Started early in 2011.
- Aims at increasing awareness and knowledge about UbuntuNet Alliance among all stakeholders.
- Should enhance understanding of research and education networking and its associated activities among all stakeholders starting with students on to the policy maker in the region.
- **Anticipated outcomes of the Communication Strategy**
  - Profile raised and maintained in Africa and beyond;
  - UbuntuNet Alliance perceived as a competent and trusted regional research and education network that effectively supports and adds value to NRENs without competing with them;
  - Enhanced understanding of and support for research and education networking activities among stakeholders.

## 5 Communication Strategy

# Target Audiences

- It is of paramount importance to identify those audiences with whom you need to communicate to achieve your organisational objectives.
  - Member NREN personnel
  - Researchers in research and higher education institutions
  - Professor and lecturers
  - Students
  - Administrator of Universities and Research Centre
  - Member NREN personnel
  - Government Ministries : Finance, ICT, Education.....
  - Development partners
  - National Communications Regulators
  - Telecommunication companies
  - Reporters in Media houses
  - Regional economic bodies
  - Broader (Global ) REN community

# 5 Communication Strategy

## The tools of communication

- The Communication Strategy lists eleven tools that will be used to disseminate information to the target audiences.
  - Newsletter (NUANCE)
  - Fliers
  - Posters
  - Press releases
  - Brochures
  - Reports
  - Maps
  - Case studies
  - Presentations
  - Mailing list
  - Website and Social media

# 5 Communication Strategy

## Channels of communication

- Mailing list
- Social networks ( Picasa, Twitter, Facebook, etc)
- Website
- TV and Radio
- Conferences
- Face to face meetings
- Newspapers(print and electronic)

## 5 Communication Strategy

### Feedback, monitoring and evaluation

- The Communication Strategy recognises the role of feedback in the process of communication and dissemination.
- Feedback received from the audience will be processed and allowed back into the communications cycle as input.
- The various tools and channels will be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness.
- The key messages will be vetted properly before release.

## 6 Lessons for NRENs

- A brief analysis of the NRENs in terms of communication shows that more could be done to address the knowledge gaps that exist between them and their respective communities at national level.
- This could explain why there are still many people even in universities who are not aware of their local NREN, UbuntuNet Alliance and general research and education networking.



# 6 Lessons for NRENs

NREN	Website	Active	Newsletter	Twitter	Facebook
<a href="#">Eb@le</a>	Yes	yes	no	not sure	not sure
KENET	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
MAREN	Yes	no	no	no	no
MoRENet	Yes	no	no	not sure	not sure
RENU	Yes	no	no	Not sure	yes
SomaliREN	Yes	no	yes	Not sure	no
SudREN	Yes	no	not sure	Not sure	no
TENET	Yes	yes	yes	no	no
<a href="#">TERNET</a>	Yes	yes	yes	no	no
EthERNet	No	no	no	no	no
<a href="#">X-net</a>	No	no	no	no	no
ZAMREN	No	no	no	no	no
RwEdNet	yes	no	no	no	no

## 6 Lessons for NRENs

- NRENs should position Communication and Dissemination as part of their core activities.
- NRENs should embrace social media
- NRENs should establish good relations with the media houses within their countries
- Improved visibility will assist with getting the vital support from Government and Policy Makers

## 6 Lessons for NRENs

- Maria-Jose Lopez, the Public Relations and Communications Manager for CLARA shared with UbuntuNet Alliance that Latin American NRENs have each a person responsible for PR and Communications.
- These PR people have a network in the framework of CLARA where they share experiences and keep their stakeholders informed at all times.

# Conclusion and way forward

- It is important for organizations to streamline communication and dissemination within their activities.
- For the UbuntuNet Alliance, the success of the communication strategy will depend on the NRENs.
- There is mutual benefit for the NRENs and the Alliance in ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of research and education networking activities.

Have **YOU** signed up for the NUANCE e- mailing  
list?

*Thank you*