

# Annual Report 2008



Covering period from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008



*for Research and Education Networking*

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(Covering period from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008)

[www.ubuntunet.net](http://www.ubuntunet.net)

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## Acronyms

AAU	Association of African Universities
BWC	Bandwidth Consortium
FRENIA	Fostering Research and Education Networking for Africa
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
INASP	International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications
IEEAF	Internet Educational Equal Access Foundation
IRU	Indefeasible Rights of Use
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
NREN	National Research and Education Network
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
OSI	Open Society Institute
PHEA	Partnership for Higher Education in Africa
VREN	Virtual Research and Education Network
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Foreword by the Chairperson

Professor Zimani D. Kadzamira

The Alliance continues to forge ahead in its mission to facilitate the establishment of sufficient and affordable connectivity between the member NRENs in Africa, and also connecting them to other NRENs worldwide. What was achieved during the 2008 calendar year is reflected in this Report that also covers the Alliance's vision, mission, governance structure, the strategic goals and the specific strategic objectives.

During the year the Board held its quarterly meetings, and its members were actively engaged in the review of the Strategic Plan and related workshops and conferences. The long awaited SEACOM submarine cable on the East African coast was literally in sight by the end of the year and has energized the Alliance to seize the opportunities that will arise in the wake of this new frontier in research and education networking for the members.

The track record to date demonstrates not only the uniqueness of the Alliance as a non-profit organization but also its potential for catalyzing greater unity and collaboration on our continent. Its enduring strength lies in the fact that the Alliance is not deterred by political, geographical or linguistic boundaries: its members' language profile includes English, French, Swahili, Arabic and Portuguese in addition to the many other African languages.



Since its inception the Alliance has continued to depend heavily on the support of well-wishers and sponsors. We recognize however that we need to increasingly depend on our internal resources for sustaining the organization and the value we bring to NRENs. This includes both human resources and funds (membership and annual fees, and later fees for services). Our immediate challenge is to resolve imminent financial gaps in the full knowledge that the foundation of the Alliance is now fully set with a functional Secretariat and growing awareness among stakeholders about the noble objectives. We all face the challenge to build on that foundation.

Professor Zimani David Kadzamira  
*Chairperson, UbuntuNet Alliance*

# Introduction

## Legal Status

UbuntuNet Alliance was incorporated on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2006 as a private non-profit Association of NRENs in Africa in the Trade Registrar of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Amsterdam. The Dossier number is 34245390. TERENA kindly permitted the use of their address in The Hague as a physical one in the Netherlands was required. Presently, the Alliance is working towards getting a local registration in Malawi.

## Purpose of UbuntuNet Alliance

The purpose of the Alliance is to secure high bandwidth connections among African NRENs and to other NRENs worldwide as well as the Internet generally at affordable prices.

The objectives of UbuntuNet Alliance are to, on a non-profit basis:

- Develop and improve the interconnectivity between research and education networking (REN) participants in Africa and their connectivity with research and education networks worldwide and with the Internet generally;
- Develop the knowledge and skills of ICT practitioners in these institutions; and
- Provide related auxiliary services to research and education networking (REN) Participants



*UbuntuNet Directors having a chat at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi during Open Access Conference*

## Governance

UbuntuNet Alliance has a governance structure consisting of the Council of Members and the Management Board. The Association of African Universities is empowered, by the UbuntuNet Alliance Articles of Association, to nominate the Chairperson whose appointment automatically lapses after 36 months. The incumbent, Professor Zimani David Kadzamira (who is the Vice chancellor of the University of Malawi) was appointed in January 2007 ahead of the 1st Council of Members Meeting.

### Council of Members

The strength of UbuntuNet Alliance lies in its members, who are represented by representatives at the Council of Members. The Council of Members consists of Representative Members (from participating NRENs) and Observer Members (from non-member NRENs) in the membership region. The Council of Members meets annually.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Members Meeting was held in Nairobi on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> was held in Lusaka, Zambia on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Members was composed of the following representative members:

Table 1: Representative Members as at 2nd Council of Members Meeting, Lusaka, Zambia

<b>Representative Member</b>	<b>NREN</b>	<b>Country</b>
Prof Henry Thairu	KENET	Kenya
Prof. Leonard Kamwanja	MAREN	Malawi
Dr Americo Muchanga	MoRENet	Mozambique
Prof Dieudonne Sebashongore	RWEDNET	Rwanda
Prof. Clement Mwabila	Eb@le	DRC
Dr Iman Maaly Abdelrahman	SUIN	Sudan
Dr Duncan Martin	TENET	South Africa
Prof. Stephen Simukanga	ZAMREN	Zambia
Dr Jabiri Bakari	TERNET	Tanzania
Prof. Stephen Noll	RENU	Uganda

Table 2: Observer Members as at 2nd Council of Members Meeting, Lusaka, Zambia

<b>Observer Member</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Country</b>
Dr Ado Dan-Issa	Nigerian ICT Forum	Nigeria
Dr Boubakar Barry	AAU	Ghana
Ms Thandikile Mbvundula	OSISA	South Africa
Prof. Mutale Musonda	Copperbelt University	Zambia
Prof. Rehabeam Auala	University of Namibia	Namibia
Mr Ratskela Mooketsi	University of Botswana	Botswana
Mr Yoseph Abate	Addis Ababa University	Ethiopia
Mr Tom Munyasya	UNDP	Somalia
Dr Martin Belcher	INASP	UK

## **Management Board**

The Management Board is composed of 9 Directors, including the Chairperson and the CEO as ex officio Directors. The incumbent Management Board, which replaced the Founding Board of Directors, was elected at the 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Members Meeting in Nairobi on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007. The appointment is for 2 years. The following are the elected Directors for the 2007-2009 term:

- Mr Victor Kyalo
- Mrs Margaret Ngwira
- Dr Americo Muchanga
- Mr Albert Nsengiyumva
- Dr Duncan Martin
- Eng Dr Francis Tsubira
- Dr Jameson Mbale

The Directors represent the Alliance as a whole and not their respective countries. During the course of 2008, the Board met 4 times.

## Administration

The Secretariat handles the administrative functions of the Alliance. It has since establishment of the Alliance been hosted at Kamuzu College of Nursing, a constituent college of the University of Malawi in Lilongwe. The College has been very supportive to UbuntuNet Alliance, and indeed the Principal of Kamuzu College of Nursing has been the signatory for all Grant Agreements. However, recognizing the growing demands, the Secretariat moved during October 2008 to rented premises in the vicinity. The University of Malawi nevertheless still handles the financial and banking services.

The Secretariat is headed by the CEO. Following the appointment of the Acting CEO, the 8<sup>th</sup> Management Board Meeting held in Lilongwe, Malawi in February 2008 recommended a distributed structure of the Secretariat. The current Chief Executive Officer is thus based in Kampala, Uganda and works seamlessly with the team at the Secretariat in Lilongwe.

A Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Malawi is being drawn up. The Technical and User support services will be competitively outsourced to NRENS.

Core personnel at the Secretariat are shown in Table 3.

The Alliance had hoped that the CEO position would be regularised as a full time three year contract. However, the funding situation has not yet made that attainable. The Alliance appreciates the willingness of Eng Dr Tusubira to continue giving outstanding service based on a series of short-term contracts.

Table 3: Secretariat Staff

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Term of Appointment</b>
Eng Dr. F.F. Tusubira	Ag Chief Executive Officer	Full time
Margaret Ngwira	Project Leader	Part time
Tiwonge Msulira Banda	Project Officer	Full time
Beatrice Ng'ambi	Office Administrator	Part time
Diana Msapato	Accounts Officer	College Staff

## Funding and Sustainability

While the Alliance works towards achieving a sustainable business model in the medium term, it still relies on support from development partners for the major part of its budget. The Alliance enjoys confidence from a number of development partners. Within the year 2008, UbuntuNet Alliance received grants from IDRC, OSISA, FRENIA, and USAID.

At the beginning of the year IDRC supported the Alliance in hiring consultancy services of Dr F.F. Tusubira to develop a strategy for the integration of the Bandwidth Consortium into the Alliance. Then for the rest of the year IDRC supported CORENA Phase 1. Details are given later in the report.

OSISA supported the Alliance with a grant that was initially meant to facilitate the relocation of the Secretariat to Nairobi as was the plan at the time of the development of the proposal. When the Board decided on Lilongwe as the secretariat, the funds were used (with the consent of OSISA) at the Secretariat in Lilongwe and part of it was contribution towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Members Meeting which was held in Lusaka.

The first 7 months of the year were supported by FRENIA in a 1 year project (August 2007 –July 2008). FRENIA also supported the end Council of Members Meeting in Lusaka as well as the Strategic Planning Review Workshop in Dar es Salaam.

USAID, through the University of Washington, supported the technical workshop to Design the East cluster Network. The grant was managed by the University of Washington.

Table 1 summarises the grants and research funding received from various development partners during the year.

The Alliance has also started building up its own stream of income through membership and agency fees as approved by the second Council of Members meeting. A total of USD22,948.64 was collected during the year 2008 (details in the Audited Accounts). This is still far below what is needed to sustain the recurrent costs of the Alliance: the figure is projected to grow and be sufficient within the next three years.

Table 4: Grants received during the year 2008

<b>Development Partner</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
FRENIA	US\$112,000.00	Secretariat overheads and recurrent costs (up to July 2008)
FRENIA	US\$48,500.00	2 <sup>nd</sup> Council of Members Meeting
FRENIA	US\$36,640.00	Strategic Planning Review Workshop
OSISA	US\$60,000.00	Secretariat relocation
IDRC	US\$68,015.00	Integration of the Bandwidth Consortium into UbuntuNet Alliance
IDRC	US\$236,037.87	CORENA Phase 1
USAID	In kind	East Cluster Network Design Workshop
EC	€60,000.00	GLOBAL Project (EU FP7 Research Project)
CISCO Systems	US\$55,000.00	CISCO Router at London Hub

## Progress on the Zomba Strategic Plan

The Zomba Strategic Plan was developed in the last quarter of 2006 on Zomba Plateau in Malawi. At the time the Alliance needed a strategic direction towards the realization of the backbone network amidst the dynamic environment in which it operated. The 3 year Strategic Plan centered on network infrastructure which presented an opportunistic approach to the development of the backbone network through two initial clusters: UbuntuNet East and UbuntuNet South.

The Strategic Plan was founded on the following four goals:

1. High speed UbuntuNet backbone
2. Foster/stimulate/support NREN development
3. Collaboration in capacity building and research across NRENs
4. Partnership building – regional and international



Reporting in this Annual Report follows the structure of the Zomba Strategic Plan in line with the above four strategic goals.

### **Review of the Zomba Strategic Plan and Development of Dar es Salaam Rolling Strategic Plan 2009 - 2012**

Towards the end of 2007, a review identified gaps in the Strategic Plan. These, combined with the rapid changes in the environment and a growth in membership, necessitated a review.

A review workshop was held in Dar es Salaam from 10-12<sup>th</sup> September 2008. The workshop which was facilitated by Professor Beatus Kundi of University of Dar es Salaam, drew together representatives from all the 10 UbuntuNet NREN members, Board members, and other stakeholders. The resulting Dar es Salaam Rolling Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> is founded on the following 6 Strategic Outcomes:

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<sup>1</sup> See Document UA 001: UbuntuNet Alliance Strategic Plan

1. Strengthened development and capacity building for NRENs
2. Improved speed and affordability of connectivity for Africa
3. Strengthened institutional sustainability
4. Improved policy and regulatory environment that enables REN activities
5. Increased interconnections within Africa and globally
6. Strengthened support for content and research networks

Implementation of the Dar es Salaam Rolling Strategic Plan starts January 2009. The plan will be reviewed every two years.



## High Speed UbuntuNet Backbone

Network Infrastructure and the capacity to manage it is the core business of the Alliance. A huge amount of time and effort have been put into designing and detailing the planned UbuntuNet backbone network. The cluster approach laid out in the Zomba Strategic Plan was the first step in realizing the network. During 2008, details of the clusters were developed including, including provision for international connections to the London Hub where UbuntuNet connects to GEANT2.

### ***Infrastructure Developments: London Hub and the Connection to GEANT2***

The year 2008 started on a high note in terms of infrastructure for the Alliance. In January 2008 the London Hub was commissioned. The Alliance thanks Cisco for the donation of the router and to DANTE for hosting the Hub. The London Hub has 1Gbps connection to GÉANT2 (announced by DANTE on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008) and is also connected through two ISPs to the commercial internet cloud. The Hub is managed by TENET on behalf of the Alliance. TENET was the first NREN to connect to the London Hub, almost immediately in January 2008, followed by KENET about 4 months later in April 2008. TENET connects through fibre via the SAT3 cable and KENET connects via satellite and tunneling through the commercial internet cloud: KENET set an example of how VSAT connected NRENS may connect to the London Hub using their existing contracts. Traffic statistics indicate that both the router and the GEANT2 connection are underutilized, which calls for more NRENS to get connected.

Fig 1 illustrates UbuntuNet infrastructure in 2008, with developments in Southern Africa. The Johannesburg router is also managed by TENET.

### ***Regional Network Design***

In September 2008, the Acting CEO hosted a mini retreat in Kampala where a team of experts comprising of Mr Victor Kyalo, Dr Duncan Martin, Dr Lishan Adams and the Acting CEO himself (Dr F.F. Tusubira) worked on key documents of the Alliance. A major item on the agenda was the review and detailing of the UbuntuNet Clusters and the development of an implementation strategy. Details of these are captured in document UA 002: The UbuntuNet Alliance Policy, Strategy and Implementation Master Plan.([www.ubuntunet.net/documents](http://www.ubuntunet.net/documents)).

Figure 2 shows the revised and detailed UbuntuNet Backbone with both Clusters interlinked. As is seen on the network diagram, the UbuntuNet backbone will have about 23 cross border links, all in different regulatory environments.

The AI-Wave is a critical part of the regional backbone that is provided via submarine cable. Since current AU protocols provide for access for landlocked countries to the landing point, the AI-wave provides a regulation neutral environment for realizing virtual cross-border connectivity.

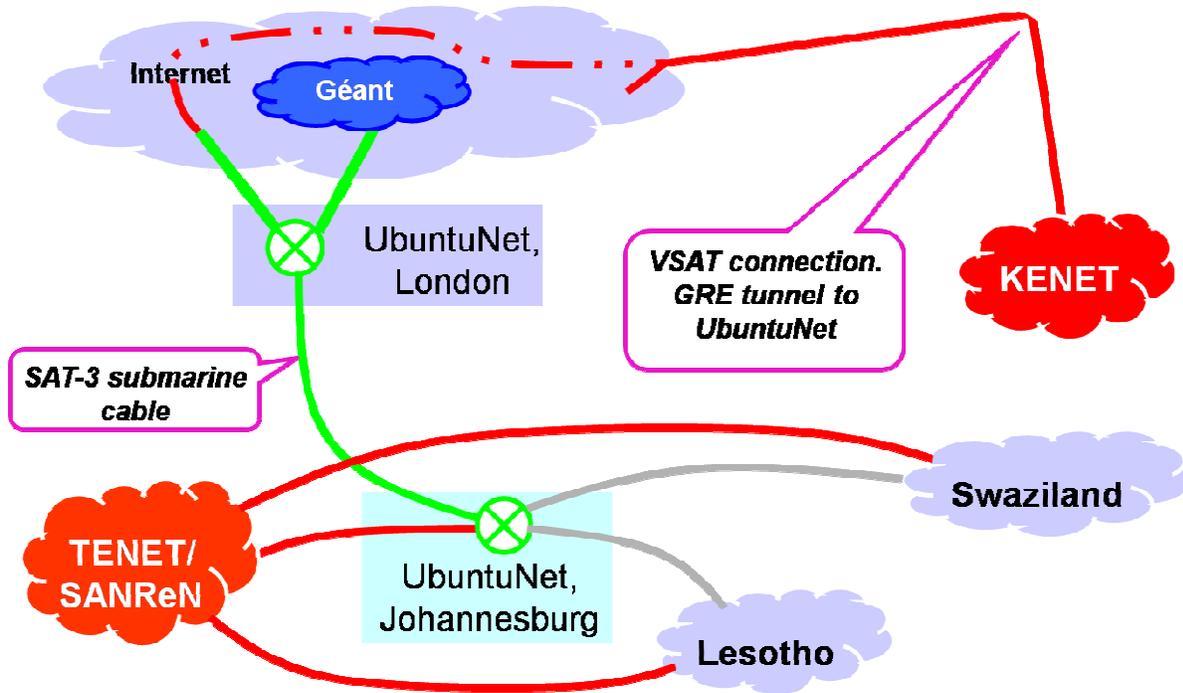


Figure 1: UbuntuNet Infrastructure, 2008

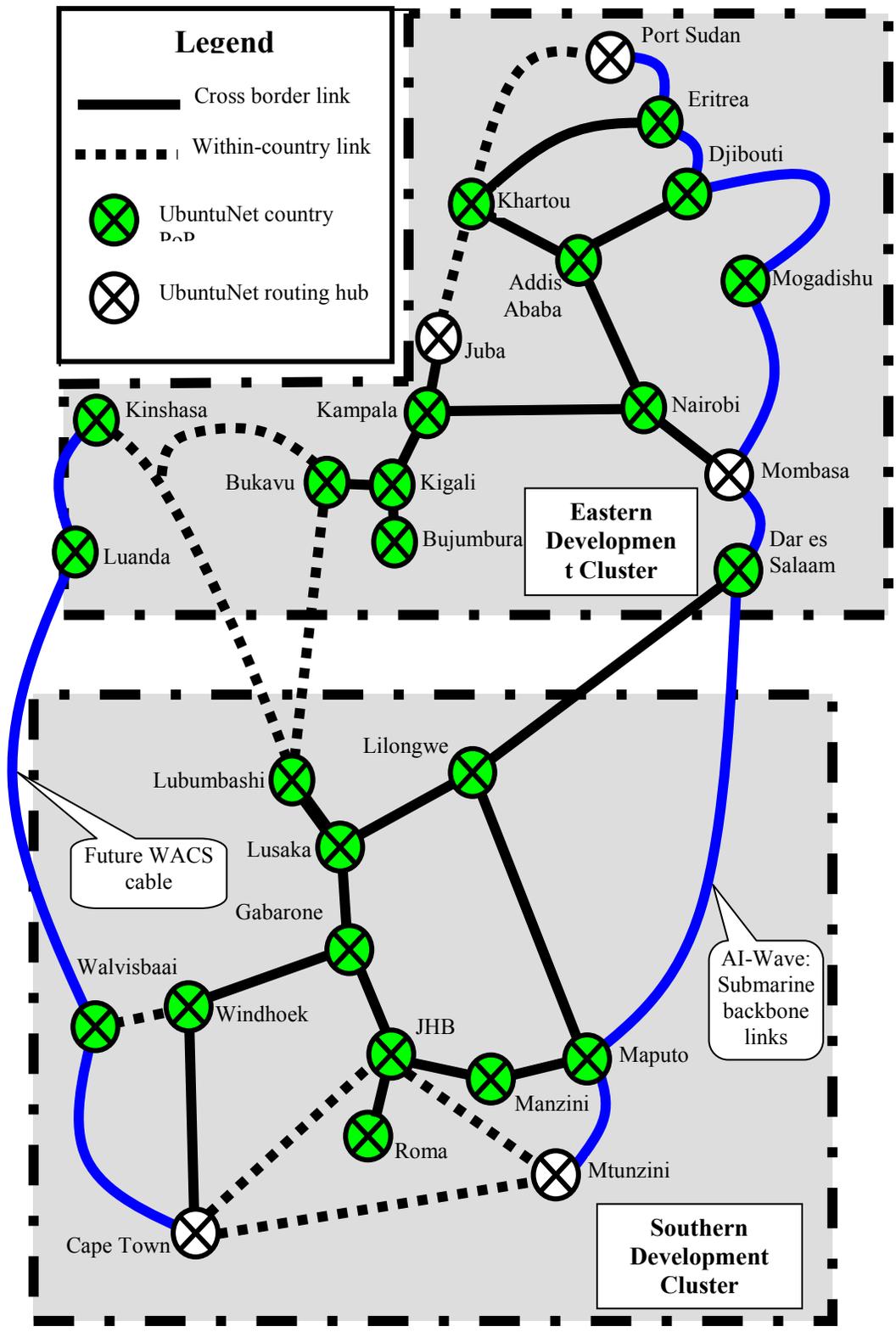


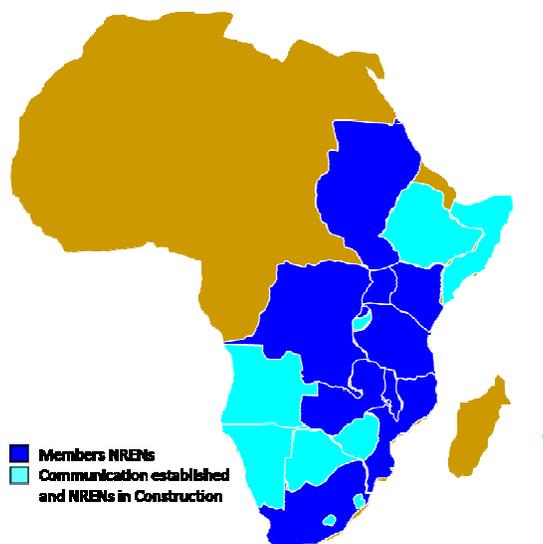
Figure 2: UbuntuNet Backbone with both Clusters interlinked

## Foster/Stimulate/Support NREN Development

NRENs are the building blocks of the Alliance, and the strength of the Alliance lies in the strength of the NRENs. The Alliance has played a proactive role in stimulating and supporting the growth of NRENs to the extent where there is now activity at different stages in the entire membership region. The support of both the AAU REN Unit through provision of contacts, and FRENIA through funding in-country activities is acknowledged with thanks.

### ***Membership Expansion***

Membership of UbuntuNet Alliance grew from 6 to 10 in 2008. The new members are Eb@le (DRC), RENU (Uganda), TERNET (Tanzania) and ZAMREN (Zambia). The four NRENs were officially welcomed into the Alliance by the Chairperson of the Alliance Professor Zimani Kadzamira at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Members Meeting in Lusaka in 18<sup>th</sup> April 2008.



Communication has continued with the rest of the countries in the membership region. The following NRENs are upcoming: Namibia, Ethiopia, Burundi and Somalia. By the end of 2008, efforts were made to reach Angola through the University of Namibia.

### ***Launching NRENs***

During 2008 the Alliance facilitated and participated in the launch of 2 NRENs – Zambian Research and Education Network (ZAMREN), and Tanzanian Education and Research Network (TERNET) in April and September respectively. Both launches were financially supported by FRENIA. The launch of ZAMREN preceded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of

Members Meeting in Lusaka while that of TERNET preceded the UbuntuNet Alliance Strategic Plan Review Workshop. Both events presented an opportunity for the Alliance to network with the NREN teams and stakeholders such as Telecommunication companies and Regulators.

### ***UbuntuNet-Connect 2008***

UbuntuNet-Connect is the annual conference of the Alliance. The first one, UbuntuNet-Connect 2008, was hosted by MAREN in Lilongwe, Malawi on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008, attracting participation from NRENs, NRENs- in- construction, regulators, academics, telecom companies, development partners and cable owners. The theme of the conference was “*Driving Effective Research and Education Networking in Africa*”.

The conference also presented an opportunity for Professor Bjorn Pehrson and the other members of EU feasibility study team (FEAST) to meet with the Alliance and the NRENs and work on a questionnaire that will provide the information needed for the EU Africa-Connect project to assist in REN interconnectivity in Africa

### ***Special Interest Group on GRID Computing***

The Alliance hosted the first Grid Computing tutorials in east and southern Africa in Lilongwe, Malawi at the 6<sup>th</sup> Open Access Conference in November. The tutorials were run by trainers from GILDA (Grid INFN Laboratory for Dissemination Activities) through the EELA Project (E-infrastructure Shared between Europe and Latin America). About 25 people from the Alliance membership region participated in the tutorials. As a major output of the tutorials, a Special Interest Group on Grid Computing was formed and Dr Patrick Mangheni of RENU was appointed to chair it.



*Participants at the Grid Computing Workshop*

There is already growing interest in Grid computing and research activities in the region that will benefit from the Grid are running in Rwanda and Malawi.

# **Collaboration in Capacity Building and Research across NRENs**

It is generally observed across Africa, especially in east and southern Africa that there is a problem of lack of human capacity in internetworking. A number of activities were carried out in the year to promote collaboration in capacity building and research at regional level.

## ***Nairobi East Cluster Network Design workshop***

CEOs and Network Administrators from NRENs in the UbuntuNet East Cluster came together in Nairobi, Kenya in early October at a Network Design Workshop. The aim of the workshop was to build capacity in network design among core NREN staff and to help NRENs design or improve the design of their networks. The workshop was technically supported by the University of Washington with financial support from USAID. The workshop drew together teams from: KENET, TERNET, SUIN, Eb@le, RENU, RwEdNet and MAREN. Outputs from the workshop were network maps for NRENs, including regional interconnection plans. The country designs will feed into the broader regional network.

## ***Bandwidth Management and Optimisation Strategic Planning Workshop***

INASP, the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publication (INASP), in conjunction with the Alliance, Aptivate and KENET organized a workshop in Nairobi, Kenya in April 2008 to develop a Strategic Plan for Bandwidth Management and Optimisation. UbuntuNet Alliance coordinated the participation of NRENs at the workshop. The workshop came up with recommendations on the approach to bandwidth management and optimization in the region. KENET, TERNET, TENET, MAREN, RENU and RwEdNet participated in the two day workshop.

## ***ASNs and IP Renumbering***

As a first step for NRENs to effectively participate in the global research and education networking community, they need to have their own Autonomous System numbers as well as independent IP addresses. FRENIA has made available funds for NRENs to pay for ASNs and IP address blocks from AfriNIC. The funds will be managed by the AAU REN Unit.

## **Partnership Building – Regional and International**

Partnerships are essential as the Alliance grows and establishes itself. In 2008 partnerships were strengthened and new frontiers were pursued. The footprint of the Alliance has extended as more organisations seek to partner with the Alliance in projects, most of these currently in EU FP7.

### ***Signing of MOUs***

Collaborations at Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) level were sought and reached in 2008 with the Internet Education Equal Access Foundation (IEEAF) and the Association of African Universities (AAU). In both cases, the parties agree to work together to promote research and education networking in Africa based on optical fibre and any alternative access technology. The MOUs have helped facilitate ties with the collaborating organisations.

### ***Working with Development Partners***

The current financial meltdown has impacted the plans and funding levels of most development partners. UbuntuNet Alliance appreciates the continuing commitment of development partners despite the challenges. During the year, the Alliance interacted with a number of Development Partners at different levels as follows:

FRENIA – FRENIA has been very supportive to the Alliance since the early times of establishment. In 2008, FRENIA continued to support the recurrent costs at the Secretariat up to July. FRENIA also supported the 2nd Council of Members Meeting in April and the Strategic Planning Review Workshop in Dar es Salaam in September.

European Union – The EC commissioned the Feasibility Study for African – European Research and Education Network Interconnection (FEAST). The major objective of FEAST is to work with key stakeholders to provide the EC with recommendations about the implementation of a sustainable and extensible regional backbone network dedicated to NRENs in sub-Saharan Africa. UbuntuNet Alliance and its membership are stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project. The EUC has committed €16 million to regional networking. This will fill in key components of the UbuntuNet regional backbone. The EC and the FEAST Team participated in the Development Partners Forum, in Lilongwe in November 2008 where Carmen Mena-Abela represented the Commission, DG INFSO.

- *Carnegie Corporation of New York* – The Alliance submitted a proposal to support the second phase of CORENA. A conditional approval of \$999, 520 was been given

and for a period of three years starting 2009. This is mainly for capacity building, conferences and dissemination, occasional consultants, and salaries. Andrea Johnston of the Carnegie Corporation participated in the Development Partners Forum in Lilongwe in November 2008<sup>2</sup>.

- *Sida* – Sida has given an approval to SEK8 million<sup>3</sup> over three years, starting with SEK1 million during 2009. This will be focused on equipping the secretariat (computers/ laptops and furniture); content networks; NOC set up; and other items as agreed with the Dar es Salaam office. The Acting CEO was invited to Sida Headquarters in September to brief them about the progress and plans of the Alliance. Sida was a key player at the Development Partners Forum.
- *IDRC* – IDRC continued as a crucial partner of the Alliance. Throughout 2008, they have supported CORENA Phase 1 under a CAD296,932 grant, of which CAD129,932 was disbursed during 2008. They have indicated a possible commitment of CAD 300,000 – 500,000 for 2009 for monitoring and evaluation, capacity building, and research/dissemination related activities. IDRC, represented by Khaled Fourati participated in the Development Partners Forum.
- *OSISA* – OSISA, one of the original funders of the Alliance, has also been supportive. They gave a grant of US60,000 to support the Secretariat at the beginning of the year. Part of the funding was contribution towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Members Meeting in Lusaka. A proposal for support for 2009 was submitted and they would examine their funding levels before making new commitments. Thandikile Mbvundula represented OSISA at the Development Partners Forum.
- *USAID* – USAID and IEEAF have signed an MOU for the support of REN activity in Africa. Their support will go to both infrastructure and capacity building. Don Riley represented IEEAF at the Development Partners Forum.

### ***Development Partners Forum, Lilongwe, Malawi***

Towards the end of the year, in November 2008, the Alliance organised a meeting with development partners. The Development Partners Forum was held a day before UbuntuNet-Connect 2008 at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi. The Board members participated in this successful forum and interacted with representatives from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, IDRC, Sida, OSISA and the EC. Also present

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<sup>2</sup> The condition was that one other development partner commits a similar amount. Sida had made a commitment, but the challenges of the global financial meltdown and internal restructuring meant that Sida could not formalize the offer in time. At the time of reporting, the Carnegie offer has been withdrawn, but a window remains open to approach them again if similar funding is confirmed from another source.

<sup>3</sup> This offer has not been formalised at the time of reporting. See also footnote 1.

were representatives from AAU, DANTE, DFN, and IEEAF. The forum revealed to most of our partners the cohesiveness, capacity and commitment of UbuntuNet; the progress of our plans; and the opportunities for REN activities in Africa.



*Participants at the Development Partners Forum, Lilongwe, Malawi, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2009. Working together for a thriving UbuntuNet Alliance*

As a major output to the forum, Sida pledged to join the Carnegie Corporation in supporting of the second phase of the implementation of CORENA.

### ***The Nigerian ICT Forum and the Bandwidth Consortium***

Following a series of consultations with stakeholders of the Bandwidth Consortium in Nairobi and later in Abuja during early 2008, the stakeholders agreed that the Bandwidth Consortium would be hosted by the Nigerian ICT Forum. At the same meeting, the Alliance was tasked with the responsibility of coordinating continent wide fibre activities in relation to research and education networking. Since then, the Alliance has seen the Nigerian ICT Forum as a key player. To this effect the Nigerian ICT Forum was invited as an observer at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Members Meeting in Lusaka; and also attended UbuntuNet-Connect 2008 in Lilongwe.

### ***CORENA Phase 1***

Consolidating Research and Education Networking in Africa (CORENA) is a major undertaking of the Alliance that was developed towards the end of 2007. The broad objective of CORENA is to create equality (in terms of volume and cost) to the global information infrastructure for Africa based researchers and academics in order to enable their greater contribution to the international intellectual property pool as well as and national development. Phase 1 of CORENA was a 1 year research project funded by IDRC to conduct various background research studies and to develop the planning knowledge base, and to start developing the systems and organisational structure of UbuntuNet.

Implementation of CORENA Phase 1 started on 1st May 2008 and by the end of the year the Master Plan and a number of key documents were in the final stages of development.

The following are key output documents of CORENA Phase 1:

- i. The UbuntuNet Alliance Strategic Plan;
- ii. The UbuntuNet Alliance Policy and Master Plan (also includes the Business Plan);
- iii. The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy;
- iv. The Finance Manual;
- v. The Human Resource Manual;
- vi. The UbuntuNet Alliance Acceptable Use Policy;
- vii. “How To” Toolkits for NREs.

### **GLOBAL EU FP7 Project**

UbuntuNet is partner in a Consortium of 7 organisations in Europe, Africa and South America, implementing an EU FP7 project, GLOBAL – Global Linkage over Broadband Links, led by ZSI of Austria ([www.global-project.eu](http://www.global-project.eu)). The Aim of the project is to facilitate research projects to disseminate their results and training events to a wider audience located in multiple geographical locations through the organization of virtual conferences with value added services such as Virtual Corridor and Virtual Events Repository. E-Infrastructure, E- Health and E-Learning projects are the primary targets. The other partners are: Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM) of Spain, Agora Systems S.A. (ASSA) of Spain, Cooperación Latino Americana de Redes Avanzadas (CLARA) of Uruguay, University College London (UCL) of the UK, and Jozef Stefan Institute (JSI) of Slovenia. The video conferencing software ISABEL is used. The Alliance participation permits evaluation of participation over narrow bandwidth and modification to meet the challenges such as echo cancellation from slow speed VSAT transmission. The project which started on 1 May 2008 runs for a period of 30 months



*UbuntuNet Alliance participated in the plenary session of the TNC2008 in Brugge from the Secretariat in Lilongwe*

Within 2008, GLOBAL has been successful in broadcasting and organising remote participation during the TERENA Networking Conference in Brugge in May 2008 with UbuntuNet Alliance as one of the remote sites participating. The fact that remotely located African audiences have high visibility at such events is appreciated both by the Alliance and the European Commission.

## **Dissemination**

Marketing and ensuring high visibility is vital for any dynamic organization. For UbuntuNet Alliance, various strategies are in place:

### ***Website redesign***

The website of the Alliance went through a major upgrade in 2008 from static, to a database-driven dynamic one. The new website is running on Drupal, an Open Source Content Management System. The new design offers more flexibility and functionality as it can now handle newsletters, events, and many more functions.

Web analytics (by Google) indicate that the site receives visitors from all over the world, with most visits from North America, followed by Sub-Sahara Africa and the Scandinavian region.

### ***NUANCE, the Monthly e-bulletin***

One of the outputs of CORENA was an Alliance Newsletter. Awareness of UbuntuNet Alliance, its membership and activities has gone another mile in 2008 with the commencement of the release of the monthly e-bulletin, NUANCE: Newsletter of UbuntuNet Alliance: Networks, Collaboration, and Education. The e-bulletin has a growing subscription across the world and it carries news from NRENs, from the Alliance and other related research and education networking innovation and information. The first issue was released in May 2008 and 8 issues were released during 2008 ([www.ubuntunet.net/nuance](http://www.ubuntunet.net/nuance)).

## **External Events**

*AFREN Morocco, May 2008:* The Alliance was represented by the Chair, Professor Z D Kadzamira, Dr Duncan Martin and Mrs M E Ngwira. Professor Kadzamira chaired the closing session and Dr Martin and Mrs Ngwira presented papers.

*Internet2 Fall Meeting, New Orleans, October 2008:* UbuntuNet Alliance was represented by Dr Duncan Martin and Dr. F.F. Tusubira at the 2008 Internet2 Fall Meeting in New Orleans in October 2008 as part of an African team that include Dr

Boubakar Barry of the AAU Research and Education Networking Unit. They all presented papers during a session on Research and Education Networking in Africa.

*IST-Africa Conference and Exhibition 2008, Windhoek, 7-9<sup>th</sup> May 2008:* Ms Margaret Ngwira presented a paper on UbuntuNet Alliance at IST African Conference in Windhoek. The Alliance in conjunction with DANTE organised a parallel session on Building a Research Infrastructure Network. The Alliance was represented by Dr F.F. Tusubira, Dr Jameson Mbale, Ms Margaret Ngwira, and Mr Tiwonge Banda.

*Open Access 2008, Lilongwe, 12-14<sup>th</sup> November 2008:* The Acting CEO, Dr F.F. Tusubira gave a presentation on the Alliance at the 6<sup>th</sup> International conference on Open Access in Lilongwe in October. In addition Mrs Ngwira presented a paper on the GLOBAL project. The Development Partners Forum and UbuntuNet-Connect 2008 preceded this conference. The Alliance organised a full day parallel session on Grid Computing facilitated by EELA Team.

## Proactive Assessment

The Alliance has achieved most of its planned objectives for the year, the only notable exception being a lower number of training events than had been planned. This was mainly due to funding limitations.

The three greatest positive aspects that point to a strong and successful future are:

- a) The development and adoption of key foundation documents which are critical for planned implementation and engagement of development partners. These include the Strategic Plan; the Policy and Master Plan; the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy; and the Acceptable Use Policy.
- b) The high build up of awareness of the Alliance and its role on the African continent that are rapidly making it a preferred point of contact for issues or activities related to research and education networking.
- c) The increasing recognition by major cable providers of the Alliance that while we might not have specific organizational experience or track-record, we have the kind of direction and commitment that makes us a reliable entity to deal with from a business perspective. This has been reinforced by the willingness of major players like the EU to work with us.

We recognize the major risks introduced by the global financial meltdown, and will increasingly focus on multi-lateral development partners who have a higher level of resilience in such circumstances. There will be an inevitable slow-down in some of our plans, but we are committed to success regardless of such setbacks.