

## The Impact of WSIS on Tanzania's ICT4D Landscape

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In Tanzania, WSIS has served as a global lens through which to appreciate, and hopefully transform, the local ICT4D landscape. While the Summit has given fresh momentum to ongoing ICT4D efforts, it has also clarified some of the obstacles faced in the creation of a Tanzanian information society. The aims and objectives of the Summit, and the way in which it was conducted, have helped Tanzanian ICT4D actors to assess the local situation better, while looking to the future. Tanzania's journey to WSIS illustrates ICT4D challenges common in developing countries, and shows how these were addressed.

### ***A unique global opportunity***

The ICT 4 All exhibition at WSIS Tunis offered a unique opportunity to showcase Tanzania's ICT4D activities to a global audience. The ICT 4 All Exhibition was the largest event ever held in ICT4D with 70,000 visits, 330 exhibitors, 70 country pavilions, and 120 workshops. Tanzania had a National Pavilion, a High Level Panel, and a Tanzania Day of thematic workshops, which concluded with a national reception and multimedia theatre performance. Guided by the WSIS agenda, the National ICT Policy was the conceptual framework for the display of local ICT projects and partnerships. The selection of projects was underlined by the development dimension of ICT, as reflected in the National ICT Policy, which in itself is informed by Tanzania's National Development Vision 2025. The overarching philosophy was "***The Impact of ICT on Tanzanian Livelihoods***", and this was imbued in all projects and their stakeholders.



### ***A multi-dimensional preparatory process***

Reflecting the WSIS process, inclusive multi-stakeholder consultations played an important role in Tanzania's process of preparation. The planning was undertaken in consultation with a Steering Committee composed of prominent ICT4D actors from government, the private sector, and civil society. Stakeholder consultative meetings were also arranged with actors from

various sectors, to explain the philosophy behind, and discuss the aims and objectives of, Tanzania's participation. An e-mail discussion list was created to facilitate communication and interaction between participating projects, and a Web site created for WSIS Geneva was revived and updated regularly with information on Tanzania's participation in WSIS Tunis.

### ***It was not "plain sailing"***

One of the first challenges to be overcome in Tanzania's preparations for WSIS was the institutional mismatch for ICT4D. WSIS was the mandate of the Ministry of Communications and Transport. Unfortunately, the office responsible was too stretched to coordinate national ICT efforts. This institutional set up had already had serious consequences on the ICT4D landscape in Tanzania. In the case of WSIS, it hindered the coordinated participation of local ICT4D actors within a national framework.

In order to bypass this institutional problem, a deliberate separation was made between Tanzania's participation in the Summit, and in the exhibition. While the Ministry of Communications and Transport remained responsible for Tanzania's official participation in the Summit, it was agreed that all activities related to the ICT 4 All exhibition were to be managed by a project team at the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH). With its hands-on extensive experience of local ICT projects, COSTECH is a well-established and widely respected ICT4D actor. Nonetheless, rather than acting on behalf of its parent Ministry (the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education), COSTECH participated in the name of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, thus emphasising the national, rather than institutional, perspective.

### ***Funding and support were significant challenges***

Finding suitable partners to sponsor Tanzania's participation proved to be a significant challenge. Seed funding for the preparations was provided by Sida, one of the earliest supporters of ICT4D in Tanzania. Unfortunately, it soon became clear that most international development partners had no idea of the relevance of ICT4D or WSIS, nor did they consider it particularly important. Even though UNDP played an important global role in the WSIS process, the local UNDP office did not provide assistance to Tanzania's preparations. The only other international development partner to provide some support was IDRC.

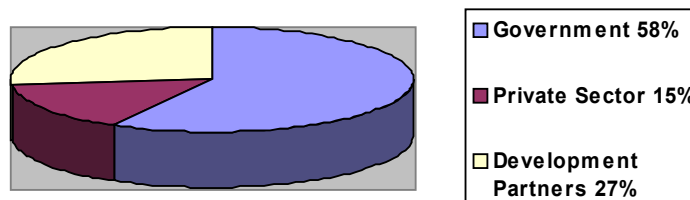
Fund raising with ministries and government agencies proved to be a more successful, albeit time-consuming endeavour. In each instance, a great deal of time and effort went into explaining WSIS, and the potential benefits of Tanzania's participation. The various agencies' own ICT activities were also analyzed from the perspective of national ICT4D ambitions, within the framework of Tanzania's development plans. Through this process a great deal of interest was generated among government actors.

Private sector sponsorship proved to be equally time consuming. Although commercial actors quickly grasped the value of participating in WSIS, they were rather slow in coming through with sponsorship.

The difficulties faced in fund raising illustrate that the number and variety of partners present at WSIS is not replicated at national levels. Awareness of ICT4D is still low and few development actors see the strategic importance of ICT4D. A great deal of awareness raising remains to be done to ensure the participation and commitment of stakeholders from different sectors.

Nonetheless, fundraising for WSIS did create a basis for future partnerships, involving government, the private sector and development partners. In the end, the bulk of the funding came from the Tanzanian government, illustrating a commitment to ICT4D that bodes well for future efforts.

### **Funding Partners for Tanzania’s National Display at WSIS Tunis**



#### ***What benefits?***

Tanzania’s philosophy meant that the pavilion was people-centred, with projects demonstrated by their owners, including rural development projects. There was intense interest in the pavilion, great participation in the workshops, significant media coverage of Tanzania Day at WSIS and unexpectedly intense media coverage “back home”. Since WSIS, a number of projects have benefited from increased or expanded support, and new projects are emerging with new partnerships. Tanzania has thus received tangible and measurable benefits accruing from its participation in WSIS Tunis.

#### ***Spurring local activities***

Building on the experiences of WSIS, Tanzania’s focus has now shifted to local activities. The WSIS Exhibition project team envisages a nationwide road show to exhibit ICT4D projects to local audiences throughout the country. The idea is to raise awareness of the relevance and value of ICT for local and national development efforts. The road show will also be used to garner increased commitment and support from key development actors, and to forge strategic partnerships for future ICT4D efforts.

Post-WSIS activities will also be geared towards mainstreaming ICT in all local and national development efforts. For this to happen, it will be important to establish an institutional framework that can strengthen local ICT4D efforts, while optimizing synergistic partnerships and cross-sectoral collaboration. The institutional adjustments made in preparation for WSIS will hopefully provide some guidance in this process, as indicated by the country’s new administration.

#### ***What next?***

Although it is far too early to see to what extent Tanzania will succeed in its ICT4D efforts, it is clear that WSIS will continue to play an influential role. By placing ICT on the international development agenda, the Summit has created a window of opportunity to push forward the local ICT4D agenda. Translating a global consensus into local action is of course a great challenge, especially in the context of one of Africa’s poorest countries. But the WSIS process offers valuable experiences that can guide, stimulate and inform local ICT4D actors in their efforts to create and nurture a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society in Tanzania.