

SOMALIREN CONNECTS TO THE UBUNTUNET NETWORK UNDER AFRICA CONNECT2

The UbuntuNet Alliance is pleased to announce that it has successfully connected SomaliREN to the UbuntuNet network. The connectivity to the regional backbone follows the award of a 10 year contract to the telecom network provider SomCast Networks LLC to provide an STM 1 circuit from the UbuntuNet Alliance's PoPs between Dar es Salaam and Mogadishu.

The UbuntuNet Alliance is the regional Research and Education Networking organisation for Eastern and Southern Africa. It operates UbuntuNet, the data communications network that connects member NRENs in the region to other Regional Research and Education Networks worldwide and to the general internet.

“We are pleased that SomaliREN is finally connected to the UbuntuNet Alliance regional backbone. It is a dream come true for our NREN as well as the Somali higher education and research community and institutions. This marks the beginning of the realisation of a grand vision to connect all our research and education institutions to each other and to their global partners.”

Abdullahi Bihi Hussein,
CEO of SomaliREN.



Find out more at:
www.somaliren.org
<https://ubuntunet.net/>

TERNET OVERCOMES BARRIERS TO GLOBAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

The challenge of a local university operating globally

What does a modern teaching and learning facility, which is part of a global institution of higher learning, need to have to stay in touch with its partner campuses in other parts of the world? The internet of course; no prizes for guessing! But if you were to ask officials at Aga Khan University (AKU) of Tanzania, it is not just the internet, but what matters is the source of the service.

Making the difference

Since 2012 when AKU, a private university chartered in Tanzania with a presence in other countries including Kenya, Uganda, the UK, Pakistan and Afghanistan, was connected to the Tanzania Education and Research Network (TERNET), collaboration between the university and its sister

institutes flourished, enabling students, researchers, staff and faculty members to share teaching and learning resources in real time and cost-effectively.

In Tanzania alone, AKU has four entities: the Institute for Education Development East Africa (IEDEA), the School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM), Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) in Arusha and the Medical College (MC). The availability of a reliable internet service provider (ISP) was fundamental to enable these entities to coordinate their activities, but not easily attainable for AKU.

Seamless communication and learning across borders

Now boasting at least 10Mbps of fast, dedicated and reliable bandwidth from TERNET, Fabian says that research and education networking and collaboration at AKU Tanzania is no longer the

same, as TERNET's connectivity is seamlessly supporting the university's IT infrastructure, allowing teachers and students to virtually traverse across universities and collaborate through applications such as Zoom, Skype and Moodle - something completely unthinkable prior to 2012. Switching from commercial ISPs to not-for-profit organisation TERNET has also reduced the bandwidth costs by 90%!

Aga Khan University is one of the 67 member institutions of the Tanzanian NREN, a member of the UbuntuNet Alliance which operates the UbuntuNet Network in Eastern and Southern Africa, interconnecting NRENs across the region and to other regional backbones, such as GÉANT.

TERNET was connected to the UbuntuNet network in November last year under the €26.6m EU co-funded AfricaConnect2 project which aims to create a pan-African research and education network by interconnecting the three regional research and education networks of Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN), West and Central Africa Research and Education Network (WACREN) and the UbuntuNet Alliance in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Find out more at:
www.ternet.or.tz



Picture
Magreth Mushi
(CEO TERNET)
and Arbogast
Fabian (AKU
Tanzania IT
Manager)



THE REBIRTH OF GARNET – RECONSTITUTED BOARD INAUGURATED



“Before connecting to the TERNET network we were struggling to collaborate effectively with our key partners in other countries – we were getting only 2Mbps from our ISP and were paying at least \$800 per megabyte per month. Despite the high price, the bandwidth speed was so slow and we were lagging behind our partner universities. It was also hard for us to reach out to our colleagues abroad,” says Arbogast Fabian, AKU Tanzania IT Manager who has been at the institution since 2011.

The idea of creating a Research and Education Network in Ghana was conceived in 1995 by the Association of Vice Chancellors of Public Universities. The REN was to be named the Ghanaian Academic and Research Network (GARNET) and was officially incorporated as a legal entity on 24 August 2010, as a not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee. The idea however, remained dormant until 2016 when it was revived with the objective to facilitate effective integration of ICT into higher education’s core mandate of teaching, learning, research and information management.

Just this summer, a reconstituted governing board of GARNET was inaugurated in Ghana’s capital city Accra. The board is chaired by Professor Clifford Nii Boye Tagoe, Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana and also former Chairman of the Governing Council of the National Council for Tertiary Education (which is the regulatory body of tertiary educational institutions in Ghana).

Inaugurating the Board, the Minister of Communications, Mrs. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, underlined the need for universities and tertiary institutions to put in place the right information and communication technology as well as ICT infrastructure to take advantage of opportunities being created by the government in the digital space. She announced that the National Communications Authority (NCA) has resolved to pay all the membership due by all universities that would subscribe to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) platform, to facilitate the sharing of ideas and experiences with other researchers across the world. Mrs. Owusu-Ekuful urged the GARNET board to work hard to bring many more institutions and researchers onto its network to consolidate the achieved gains.

Professor Salifu, the Executive Secretary of the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), who deputised for the Minister of Education, announced that the government is sourcing USD 120 million from the World Bank to establish centres of learning in tertiary institutions in Ghana. The initiative will be implemented over the next five years and will run alongside the National Research and Innovation Fund.

In his acceptance speech, the incoming chairman emphasised the importance of education and research as key to the development of every nation.



He described education as the universal equaliser which the United Nations consider a right and must be accessible to all. He expressed his delight that GARNET comes at an opportune time to help address the connectivity and access challenges to global education and research resources. He also sees it as an opportunity for institutions to adopt more virtual teaching and learning techniques to address the anticipated large increases in student enrolment in the wake of the Government of Ghana’s Free Senior High School Education Policy.

The current membership of GARNET includes 10 public universities. Efforts are underway to encourage all other accredited public and private tertiary education and research institutions to become members. Negotiations with selected service providers are in the final stages to establish a 10Gbps pipe between the GARNET POPs in the capital Accra and Kumasi, about 300 kilometers apart. In addition, connectivity from GARNET members to the POPs will be via dark fiber. GARNET has established a 10Gbps link to WACREN to receive services for members. The WACREN testing of the link is currently ongoing.

On 8 August 2018 GARNET CEO Peter Kaba and WACREN CEO Boubakar Barry signed an MoU to formalise the hosting of the next annual WACREN Conference which will be held in Accra, Ghana. The NREN also connected the GARNET network to the WACREN backbone and became the first country in the region to establish a path for its community to the global R&E networking community.

Words
Peter Kaba,
GARNET CEO

Picture
Boubakar Barry,
WACREN CEO
(left) and Peter
Kaba, GARNET
CEO

Find out more at:
www.wacren.net
www.garnet.edu.gh