Since more than 25 years, the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) \(^1\) has been working to develop open standards and protocols for the open development and expansion of the Internet.

But very few Africans Engineers and researchers are involved in this important work. Based on this observation, the Internet Society (ISOC) \(^2\) took the initiative to organize the first African Internet Standards Forum \(^3\) on 12 May 2012 in Serekunda, Gambia to encourage and improve the African participation in the IETF.

As a support to this initiative, I decided to organize with the Internet Society Cameroon Chapter (ISOC Cameroon Chapter) a Remote Hub to allow Cameroon technical Internet community to follow this forum live from Gambia and continue the discussion locally.

This report shares the outcomes of that remote Hub and the way forward.

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\(^1\) The IETF develops Standards, protocols and documents (RFC) which allow the Internet to function well. We use Internet services like Email, DNS, VoIP, IPv4, IPv6… because of IETF. More about IETF on: [www.ietf.org](http://www.ietf.org)

\(^2\) The Internet Society is the trusted independent source for Internet information and thought leadership from around the world. It enables the continued evolution and growth of the Internet for everyone. More on: [http://www.internetsociety.org/](http://www.internetsociety.org/)

\(^3\) [http://internetsociety.org/events/african-internet-standards-forum](http://internetsociety.org/events/african-internet-standards-forum)
THANKS AND RECOGNITION

To the Internet Society Africa Regional Bureau for the financial and technical support;

To the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Postes et Télécommunications for the logistical support;

To the Internet Society Cameroon Chapter’s members for the organization;

Thanks to Kevin G. Chege and Steve Conte for their support and advice.

Thanks to all remote hub attendees for their active participation.
INTRODUCTION

The African Internet Standards Forum Remote Hub Cameroon took place on 12th May 2012 at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Postes et Télécommunications (ENSPT)7 de Yaoundé in Yaounde, Cameroon. This Remote Hub was organized with the support of the Internet Society Africa Regional Bureau 8 (technical and financial) and the logistical support of the ENSPT Yaounde.

It took us two weeks to create communication materials (banner, poster…), promote the event (mailing list, social networks…) and create a dedicated web site 9 for registration.

36 participants registered 10 for the event but finally around 21 participants took part effectively to the remote hub. The objective of the remote hub was not only to follow the first African Internet Standards Forum (AISF) live from Gambia but also to initiate a local discussion about Internet Standards and create a Cameroon’s IETF community.

The agenda of the remote hub included the whole AISF’s agenda and others specific topics as follow:

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic &amp; description</th>
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<td>11:45 - 13:15</td>
<td>Session 2: A taste of IETF (Remotely from Gambia)</td>
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7 http://www.enspt-yaounde.net/
8 http://www.internetsociety.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/africa-mena
9 http://www.amiando.com/AISF-CMHUB.html
11 https://www.dropbox.com/s/u67851cm4ozhhrm/OIS-English.mp4
12 https://www.dropbox.com/s/wen1ly96mgtz3qg/IETF83-Voices-MirjaKuehlewind.mov
14 About Dan York: http://www.danyork.com/
15 About IPv6 Operations: https://datatracker.ietf.org/wg/v6ops/
16 DNSExt stands for DNS (Domain Name System) Extensions. The DNS has a large installed base and repertoire of protocol specifications. The DNSExt working group will actively advance DNS protocol-related RFCs on the standards track while thoroughly reviewing further proposed extensions. More on: http://datatracker.ietf.org/wg/dnsext/charter/
REMOTE HUB DAY: 12 MAY, 2012

Session 0: Welcome and Registration

We started at 09:15 by re-testing the equipment for remote participation, but unfortunately, we stated having Internet connection problem. The 3G Internet Key we prepared for the event could not give us a fast Internet as planned (the Internet connection was so slow and could not allow us to open a web page and be connected to WebEx). Despite that local Internet connection problem and while looking for the solution, we continue with the agenda as planned.

I welcomed all participants and explain to them in my own words why the African Internet Standards Forum and the programme of the day? After that, I invited each participant to introduce himself to others and answer the following questions: What do you know about Open Internet Standards and the IETF? After this icebreaking introduction which allows attendees to well know each other (background, experience, expectations...), it was time to be connected to Gambia and follow the first session but the Internet connection was still not working. Fortunately, I was in possession of enough resources to keep the participants active and interact.

Session 1: Why and How Participate in the IETF (Remotely from Gambia)

We were not able to follow this session remotely. The Internet connection problem was still not solved.

1.1. Introduction to IETF

The video about IETF \(^{17}\) that we received earlier from Kevin G. Chege\(^{19}\), Internet Development Manager for Africa was presented to the participants and they watched it with great attention. This video was a great and full presentation of IETF: What is IETF, What is its mission? How It works? Why its work matter and how an Internet enthusiast, engineer, researcher, everybody can participate? The Video also initiated a discussion among participants following with some questions like:

1. Does IETF really open to everybody?
2. What is the minimum university or technical level required to get involved in the IETF?
3. What is the working language of IETF?
4. Why It is important to participate in the IETF?

\(^{17}\) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqc8vd_iPpg
\(^{18}\) The French version of that video is available at: https://www.dropbox.com/s/30jhywr25gfpfk7/OIS-French.mp4
\(^{19}\) About Kevin G. Chege: http://www.internetsociety.org/who-we-are/staff/mr-kevin-chege
As the Hub organizer and moderator, I try to answer those questions and give more clarification based on the email message I received earlier from Steve Conte of ISOC. From his view, I can say that the participation to IETF is completely open and you don’t need to be deeply involved in protocols at a big level to start participate to IETF. If you are from the Internet technical community (network and systems engineers) and you use Internet standards and protocols every day, you are welcomed to the IETF.

Steve Conte also explains in his email message that: “Getting involved with the IETF doesn’t mean that you need to have a draft ready for publication. In fact, I’ve been involved in the IETF since 2002 (in my current capacity and also as a root operator when I worked at ICANN) and I haven’t published any RFC.” He continues by saying that: “The value one can gain from participating in the IETF (without having to be an RFC author) is to understand current technology and how it’s evolving and to prepare for new technology that is coming on the horizon.”

Concerning the working language of the IETF, he says: “Another potential barrier of entry into the IETF is language. The IETF uses English as its functional language. Unfortunately this will stay this way. Because most of the work happens on mailing lists (instead of at the meetings), there is no way that realtime translation can be put into place.” So Remote Hub participants were invited to improve their level of English if they want to effectively participate to the IETF work.

1.2. IETF processes

We could not follow that session remotely because the Internet connection was still unavailable. So we continue locally the discussion about IETF and how to participate. Based on Steve Conte email message, the best first step to start getting involved in the IETF is to subscribe to the overall IETF mailing list (general information about IETF and its work). After that you can join a specific and relevant working group mailing list. Concerning the effective participation to the Working Group, Steve Conte advises to start by reading their drafts in order to have a general understanding of their flow and output; and when you become comfortable with the list, you can contribute to the dialog or propose a new draft for the working group to consider. All participants were invited to do so when the Internet connection will be back.

1.3. IETF fellows experiences

I have received a day earlier some videos links from Kevin G. Chege about the IETF Fellows voices. Fortunately I have downloaded those videos before the event. I have played them but it was difficult for participants to follow because most of them were French speaking. The IETF fellows were speaking too fast in the video and it is difficult for a person with a basic level of English to follow the conversion. One more time participants agree on the necessity to improve their level of English if they really want to follow the IETF work and participate.

20 Steve Conte is a Senior Manager, Internet Leadership at the Internet Society. More about Steve Conte on: http://www.internetsociety.org/who-we-are/people/mr-steve-conte
21 www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tn98FvOluJl
Session 2: A taste of IETF (Remotely from Gambia)

The Internet connection was still unavailable and we could not follow this session remotely. To keep the participants in the move, I made a presentation about the Internet Society vision, mission, principles and programs. I also talk about the opportunities for participants to join the great family of the Internet Society and having a Chapter in the country. As an example of ISOC support to Chapter and members, I talk about the “Impact IPv6 Project” initiated by ISOC Cameroon Chapter which received a grant from the Internet Society Community Grants Programme. This presentation was following by a series of questions and answers about the Internet Society work and the Cameroon Chapter work too.

During this session, Sylvain Baya a Chapter member presented to participants the origin and creation of the Cameroon Network Operators Group (CamNOG). He also presented the Request for Comments (RFC) web site and some popular RFCs (RFC 1918, RFC 2901, RFC 2116) to the participants. Participants were also invited to read the RFC 3935 about the mission statement of the IETF.

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22 http://www.internetsociety.org/who-we-are/mission
23 Impact IPv6 Project focus on awareness and training on IPv6 and encourage effective adoption and deployment of IPv6 in Cameroon. More on: www.impactipv6.net.
24 The Internet Society Community Grants Programme funds community-based projects around the world that promote open development, evolution and use for the benefit of all people throughout the world.
25 http://www.camnoq.cm/
26 http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc1918.txt
27 http://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc2901.txt
28 http://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc2116.txt
We had the chance to join this session live and many participants were very excited to experience the remote participation via WebEx for the first time. Thanks to Dany Zie, a Cameroon Chapter member who help with his 3G Internet Key. From The distinguished panelists, remote hub participants learn a lot about the very low African Participation in the IETF and some suggested solutions to encourage Internet enthusiasts, Network and systems Engineers, students for getting involved in Internet standards development and the IETF work. Panelists also explain clearly to Cameroon Hub Participants that the participation in the IETF is open to all without any requirements as a response to a hub participant concerning the basic conditions or requirements to start getting involved in the IETF.

While following the session, one Hub participant asked the following question: “Does IETF do anything to protect Internet users living in countries where there is Internet censorship?” Answering to that question, Dawit Bekele30, ISOC regional Bureau Director for Africa clearly said that deal only with technical aspects of the Internet, policies aspects of the Internet are part of the Internet Society work.

Closing remarks of Michuki Mwangi31, Senior Development Manager for Africa & Middle East and Dr. Nii Quaynor32, the Africa Internet father and their words of hope were very appreciated by the Cameroon Remote Hub participants.

SESSION 4: CLOSING SESSION AND WAY FORWARD FOR IETF IN CAMEROON (LOCALLY ON SITE)

We mainly discuss during this session about the mechanisms that can be put in place to stimulate and encourage Cameroonian participation in the IETF. To reach that objective, we decide to:

1. Create a dedicated mailing list to facilitate discussion and skills and information sharing among the Cameroon technical Internet community (IETF-Discuss@isoc-cameroon.org).
2. To translate in French basic documents about IETF in order to facilitate their understanding by Internet enthusiasts and engineers who are mainly French speaking.
3. To prepare candidates for the Internet Society IETF Fellowship Programme33
4. To encourage those who didn’t attended the remote hub to join the group
5. To look for local sponsors to support ISOC Cameroon Chapter Initiatives like this one.

The session ends with a group photo and some interviews of remote hub participants.

CONCLUSION

The African Internet Standards Forum Remote Hub Cameroon was a great success despite the fact that the Internet connection didn’t allowed us to follow all sessions live from Gambia. Future remote hub will prevent such inconvenient by having two or three sources of Internet Connection. To do so, we naturally need more financial support or local ISPs to offer us Internet connectivity. The participants expressed the real concern about the topics discussed and expressed their interest to start the same day to follow the IETF work by join the different mailing lists.

30 About Dawit Bekele: http://www.internetsociety.org/who-we-are/staff/dr-dawit-bekele
31 About Michuki Mwangi: http://www.internetsociety.org/who-we-are/people/mr-michuki-mwangi
32 Dr. Nii Quaynor is the first African to receive the Jon Postel Award: http://www.internetsociety.org/nii-quaynor-receives-jonathan-b-postel-service-award
All participants expressed the wish to see the initiative continues and the ISOC Africa Regional Bureau to organize regularly such kind of event. The Remote Hub ends with a great hope, hope to have an RFC author from Cameroon in the near future.

**SOME PRINTING MATERIALS PICTURES OF THE REMOTE HUB**

![Remote Participation Hub Cameroon](image)

*The Event banner*

![Remote Participation Hub Cameroon](image)

*The event poster*

![Remote Participation Hub Cameroon](image)

*Remote Hub Participants – © Victor Ndonnang / Internet Society Cameroon Chapter*

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Thanks for protecting the Open Structure of the Internet.

**Thanks to all!**