

The e-Brain Forum of Zambia

The e-Brain Forum of Zambia was established in June 2001 and officially registered as a development oriented, not for profit organization in April 2002. It is a national multi-stakeholder organization whose over-riding objective is to develop a common knowledge-sharing community on the use of ICTs to foster social and economic development. e-Brain is a member-based organization and active in the areas of policy dialogue, awareness raising and membership support.

Learning from each other

A National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Development (ICT4D) Network is formed by local partners to devise ways of maximising the development impact of ICT. The aim is to share results, best practices, methods and lessons learned in the process of implementing ICT for development and to work towards policy participation. Besides face-to-face network meetings, these networks may develop their own local ICT websites, document project results and their experiences, and produce local newsletters. Through these activities, partners can reduce their isolation, learn from one another and explore opportunities for working together. The networks also provide a springboard for sharing practical skills more widely within a country or region, and in the wider international community.

Thematic Networks was introduced as a strategic approach for the first time as part of the 2002-2007 strategy. At that time, learning and accountability in IICD's work were stated to be the primary objectives of the Thematic Networks. This remains the case; however, we have since strengthened the understanding of exactly what a Thematic Network is. Taking in one step further, IICD has identified core building blocks that together give each thematic network a clear identity with analytical quality. The strategic aim in the context of this framework is to harvest and disseminate the evidence and learning from the fertile ground of Country Programmes. In doing so, Thematics contribute to IICD's base of expertise that can then be reinvested in new and existing activities.

The e-Brain network

The mission for e-Brain is:

"To contribute towards the improvement of the quality of life through the use of ICTs in the development process". The specific objectives for e-Brain are:

- to advocate for sector ICT4D Policy implementation especially in health, agriculture and education with activities like thematic research and events stimulating e-Brain members to actively participate in policy development;
- to support the government in drafting Zambia's first National ICT Policy;
- to contribute to discussions with the national regulator about the proposed ICT bill that deals with control over telecom providers;
- to share experience and knowledge of ICT4D among IICD programme partners, e-Brain members and relevant stakeholders in thematic areas like Education, Health, Livelihood and Rural Connectivity
- to provide a high-quality service to members of the network, through a website (www.ebrain.org.zm), a quarterly newsletter (*The e-Brain*, available in print and digital formats), and online discussions (through *D-Groups*)

Zambia Country Programme

Where are we now?

Currently e-Brain has 59 paying members and 146 members of the D-group. They comprise of ICT practitioners, researchers and students from universities and other professional institutions and policy makers who are attracted to the practical and policy dimension of the role of ICT in business and development.

e-Brain consist of three 'chapters': one in Lusaka, one in Southern province and one in the Copperbelt province. Events are organised predominantly in Lusaka, but also in the other chapters, on a regular basis.

The Forum has an elected management team with a two-year term. It also has a secretariat with a coordinator and an assistant coordinator. For 2008, the development of a new Strategic Plan for 2008 – 2010 is one of the priorities. The focus group meeting that will be hold on the 1st February 2008, based on questionnaires with members using the IICD M&E methodology will provide a base.

IICD has been the main funding and technical support partner of e-Brain since it inception. Since then, e-Brain has been making efforts to spread its support base among its members, as well as, other local and foreign technical and financial support partners.