

DNS as public good

By

Nii Quaynor

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We address the subject DNS as a public good and make some policy recommendations

The Internet relies on identifiers and the DNS performs a critical function of associating identifiers for user experience

We continued to have these identifiers because people have willingly chosen to use them. The legitimacy of DNS is derived from public acceptance to use

the identifiers and consequently the DNS

Thus the DNS is a public good not mandated by government policy or regulations but by choice of the people who use it

Recall that the name identifiers we provide are not property that are acquired and owned. These are public resources which you use and return when no longer needed so that others may also have

The fees collected are for cost recovery purposes for services and not for the ownership of the names.

It is a “good” that no one is excluded from having one and the use by one does not reduce availability for others as we can continue to create new identifiers. The DNS service is provided to all of society by whoever has expertise. We do this so that the Internet will benefit all for the well-being of the public

In this situation we as a DNS community must act responsibly and give back to community. It is for this reason that ICANN established a public responsibility panel in 2013 which provided initial definition of what our responsibilities might be. This was one of the first attempts at a definition

“[E]nsuring that the Internet becomes, and continues to be, stable, inclusive, and accessible across the globe so that all may enjoy the benefits of a single and open Internet. In addressing its public responsibility, ICANN must build trust in the Internet and its governance ecosystem.”

We ensure some things, give benefits and build trust. What are our public responsibilities as organizations building Africa’s DNS ecosystem? We serve in public interest but must act responsibly with the privilege”

It was an honor for me to have chaired this ICANN public responsibility panel

For actors to derive own public responsibility intent actors in the Africa DNS ecosystem of registries, registrars, technical services, Business and Governments, might consider

What things are we ensuring? What benefits? What else do we do in interest of public?

Actors in the ecosystem ensure different things. Some ensure system stability, others availability and other ensure policy that enables investment. We have to stick to our roles else ecosystem become ineffective or can fail

We have to build trust in the ecosystem so that all parties blossom. A cardinal rule in ecosystems is that the parties

stay within their roles. A swap of roles is likely to perform poorly as skills won't match problem needs. Trust in an ecosystem is earned in practice from consistent and expected behavior

We expect government to be facilitating a friendly policy environment to mobilize networks to narrow the digital divide and face development challenges. It is therefore awkward to see policy makers in Africa want to venture into the business of operating ccTLDs. What potential risks to stability of DNS services in the region does this bring? How would trust be built when politics comes into DNS technical operation ? Why would one party want to do what being done already by other stakeholders ? How would separation of

powers of policy authority, regulations and operations work?

Governments need to know that it is a difficult business...it's low price, high volume business

DNS is growing despite the well known challenges and will grow as Africa migrates businesses to the local internet.

Here are policy interventions that can help mainstream the DNS in four areas governance, business barriers, commitment and operation

Governance

- Practice bottom up multi stakeholder decision processes not just consulting but make decisions
 - Policy makers play their role in DNS ecosystem
 - Make communities active in local policy discussions and decisions on domain names
 - Stop taxing Internet; invest in Internet

Business barriers

- Shape the AUC African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), to empower DNS ecosystem.. (form a working group to address this) eg all businesses in trade area program use .africa domain name
 - DNS Operators be ready to adopt Central banks own developed digital

currencies (CBDC) and coordinate to make payments easier

- Stamp.africa, a DNS crypto currency tool and other payment schemes, mobile money, are also available

Commitment

- Government officers use only government email addresses for government business

- Policy to optionally use email in government services by individuals

- Require all new company registration to have a domain name

- Promote more services with domain names authentication

- No shutdown and don't break trust. Open internet and no fragmentation

DNS operation

- Make policies to guarantee names don't disappear

DNS is a public good and comes with responsibilities

We should be grateful that there is DNS in Africa during Covid pandemic and thank those who built it

DNS! People's choice!

Thank you