Dns forum: Improved Collaboration Within Fora and Symposium in Africa

Nii Quaynor
28 July 2021
Africa DNS forum

—

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to speak at Africa DNS forum and to contribute to the topic "improved collaboration within fora and symposium in Africa"

I'll attempt to do this by commenting on aspects of the history of Africa dns forum. I'll then explore why communities such as ours need strong commitment to public goods and conclude with some suggestions to enhance collaboration

The DNS forum journey started earlier but it's consolidation occurred as result of the Africa Strategy

working group at ICANN. This work was discussed at a Multi-stakeholder Internet Governance meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in March 2013

Some of take away messages from that meeting were:
   - ICANN is coming to stakeholders and not waiting for stakeholders to come to ICANN
   - An aspiration to be present in each of 6 subregions with

on ramps into ICANN structure but Africa has to climb

- Dramatic increase in numbers of registrars eg 5 fold increase in 2 years

- Commitment to implement the three-year Africa strategy in coordination with global and regional partners in Africa

Meanwhile Af* ecosystem was proposed in 1998 to ensure collaboration among African developed technical institutions. The institutions

were conceived together and implemented organically over time. Subsequently, Af*, tasked 2 of the institutions to jointly host an African Internet Summit (AIS) for the collaboration of institutions. Aside, from open bottom up processes, the Af* shares one very important common good, which is to grow the Internet in Africa

An improved collaboration is realizable when each accepts

they are necessary but not sufficient by themselves. That the collaboration creates shared goods and values which are beneficial to each and that, the dynamic of an interacting ecosystem further amplifies the benefits

This ecosystem requirement is not uncommon in communities where there's inter dependence or shared infrastructure and in our ecosystem it is to inter operate

with standards on inter-networks

The community would have unreserved commitment to shared goods and will not second guess each other's commitment in its principles. There are roles that we respect and grow by helping each build their capacities. Thus, we each take responsibility of our portion and sacrifice for the shared goods.

The ecosystem weakens when one thinks one is self sufficient then everyone thinks same and none thrives chasing the few coins. On the other hand if we share good values, all of us thrive through collaboration and create abundance. Others near the DNS ecosystem through interdependence can positively or negatively affect the ecosystem eg government and business actors

To an extent our different communities are becoming more centralized by trying to attract actors to their fold but intention is to also engage elsewhere. Additionally, there are many other DNS forum players other than registries, registrars and registrants. A big chunk of technical service providers, web and app developers, governments, businesses, legal etc are all very relevant in this forum

The ICANN African regional plan for fiscal years 2021-2025 is an interesting evidence on collaboration and states the following: "Collaborate with regional stakeholders such as Africa Computer Security Incident Response Teams (AfricaCERT), African Network Information Centre (AFRINIC), African Network Operators Group (AfNOG), Research and Education Networks (RENs), etc. for capacity development and outreach efforts."

We appreciate ICANN Africa regional plan commitment to larger collaboration with the Internet technical institutions in Africa, a win for Af*.

It is becoming clearer that the bottom up approach to policy decisions which our ecosystem shares has implementation challenges and chief among them is the intensity of participation

The decision making approach familiar to many in Africa is top down making adoption of multi stakeholder approach more difficult.

What was once a selfless sacrifice to a shared vision of developing Africa as we pursued in the early years, has unfortunately given way to a whole lot of self interest which impede community wellbeing and collaboration

African business is yet to view DNS as an corporate asset while it is at the core of new digital economy. We have to get this message across to boardrooms in Africa

It's not clear if governments recognize DNS as asset but too often we see policy authority desirous of being regulator and an ccTLD operator at same time. This is the pain point to negotiate

Community decision processes can best be based on merit which requires requisite capacities and dedication to a cause. In the early days we attached ourselves to some seniors in community to understudy. How's mentorship occurring in these times?

Perhaps, I'll make a few comments now on how DNS in Africa has grown over the years

On cctld names, 39 out of 55 registries have less than 10,000 names

The commitment to the Africa strategy in partnership with other organizations has been realized and has one office

In 2013, we aspired to increase existing number of registrars from 5 to 25 in 2 years. We are about half way in 8 years

On the technical side we looked at DNSSEC, DNS on v6 and capacities in DNS operations. However, the state of DNS in Africa has not changed much yet some of the initiatives have faded..no road show for sometime now as we killed home grown African momentum

Development occurs locally hence engagement with governments who make

decisions on digital economy is crucial. We may also not be engaging well and we have to learn a different language to evangelize the DNS. Should one not ask where are the govnet and national data center communities, who also deploy DNS? I listened to madam minister from Burkina Faso, H.E Haja Sanon-Watara, well known to this community and hope we see improvement in needed collaboration with governments

In a paper presented at the Durban Forum by 3 prominent African engineers identified 2 problems. The first was how a small Registrar in Africa would attain technical Epp connections to over 1,000 registries. The second being having to prepay deposit at over 1,000 Registries is locked capital and can limit growth of registrars. Hmm, we were told then if are not capable of being Registrars can become

Resellers! These are still barriers today.

On the whole we show marginal progress

Here are some Suggestions
  - Let's make sure we are talking to governments and businesses..and we stop talking to ourselves mostly. These days DNS is also discussed at W3C. We should reach out and genuinely engage

- Africa has a good supply of name provisioning capacity, from registries, registrars, payments, blockchain but little uptake. We have a digital economy of largely users and predominantly global suppliers. We need to build up DNS in local economy yet many don't yet want to undertake that extra work, maintaining name, hosting, upgrading, conflict with webmaster etc. Though access and price are factors

these may not be the real
problems which I think is
education and economic.
   - Engage specifically
national governments towards
policies that promote African
tlds (company registration
requirements of domain
names)
   - Regionalization and
globalization tensions. We
agreed development occurred
locally hence must
decentralize to effect. While
one may decide what to

decentralize, the region needs to build capacity in all spheres. The expected role of global might be to transfer technologies and expertise to regional parties to execute in region.

- The Af*, were formed to fill gaps by establishing focused organizations. We should uphold these and collaborate better to create impact in developing Africa. Africa's local needs will drive DNS growth.

We should be each other's keeper

Know our roots, culture of collaboration, language and be confident in our development future. As we talking about collaboration, which one of us has gone to the aid of Afrinic, while it under siege from foreign actors? Let us act our collaboration

I trust you've had a good forum and find my comments

useful. Thank you for your attention