Gamos contributed strongly to NSNs report "Towards effective e-governance: The delivery of public services through local e-content"

This report indicates that, although all technologies should be considered, mobile devices have the potential to be the most effective technology for stimulating the demand and supply of public services through local e-content in a broad range of contexts. The large and increasing subscriber base of mobile devices, the way they enable users to demand services, and the way they are giving an increasing number of users an "Internet experience" are important. In addition, the private sector is already delivering services over mobile devices, while convergence means mobile devices now incorporate many of highly effective technologies such as Internet and radio. The promise of mobile devices is unequivocal.

The governments of Ghana, India and South Africa have developed e-governance plans in which the provision of public services through local e-content is the ultimate goal. However, they are taking different approaches to meet the objective. The governments of Ghana and South Africa have prioritized the implementation of ICT infrastructure and processes for effective government-to-government (G2G) e-governance. In contrast, the government of India has adopted a two-pronged strategy, simultaneously implementing G2G ICT infrastructure and processes while attempting to provide public services to citizens on a wide scale. Despite the different priorities and approaches, the three governments believe shared access points and broadband Internet will be effective for stimulating the demand and supply of public services.

However, not many of the key stakeholders consulted recognized the benefits of mobile communications. Moreover, out of more than 900 end users surveyed, only half felt it was important to receive e-content services through a mobile device. This can partly be attributed to little awareness of the benefits of mobile communications, resulting from a lack of socially orientated e-content currently delivered through mobile devices. There is clearly a need to educate people about the potential of mobile communications to stimulate the demand and supply of public services. Of course, practical examples help increase understanding, and some can be found in each country, but these need to be scaled-up if they are to raise awareness about the ability of mobile devices to be more than tools for talking.

This report argues that all stakeholders play an important role in ensuring that ICTs, in particular mobile devices, are used to stimulate the demand and supply of services. Multi-stakeholder partnerships joining policymakers, the private sector and civil society are required to exploit the expertise of all and create synergies. Yet, while collaborative relationships between all key

stakeholders are important, this report finds that the relationship between government and the private sector matters most. Government possesses the content, while the private sector owns the expertise and infrastructure to develop and disseminate content as a service.

While all three governments recognize the importance of PPPs, the Indian government has gone furthest in utilizing them. It has mandated a private sector organization to manage its entire national e-governance project and created a clearly defined framework for other private sector organizations to join them in partnership. The strength of India's PPPs holds much promise and is an important reason why it has been able to take a two-pronged approach. The needs of users lie at the heart of any initiative to improve the demand and supply of public services through local e-content. Their requirements with respect to information and e-content services should dictate supply. Users have many information needs and this report indicates that the most important are related to news, health, education and training. They also have priorities in terms of the e-content services they would like to receive through the mobile device and Internet, and these are related to health, education and income-generating activities.

In many cases, users are willing to pay to receive these services. Understandably, many policy makers consulted were concerned with developing sustainable services. These priority types of information and e-content services provide an indication of where efforts should be focused.

Currently, few users are using mobile devices and the Internet to access the services and information they need. However, while being a challenge, this must be viewed as an untapped opportunity by policymakers, the private sector and civil society.

The primary purpose of the research project was to:

- Enhance the reach of public services through ICTs in general and wireless channels in particular.
- To accomplish the primary purpose, three main research objectives had to be fulfilled:
- Scan selected markets to identify ICTs currently being used to meet local e-content needs and evaluate their effectiveness according to criteria.
- Identify and assess the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders (NGOs, the public sector, users and solutions providers) in stimulating the demand and supply of public services through ICTs in general and wireless channels in particular.
- Understand end user priorities and attitudes regarding information relating to various aspects of livelihoods and to the delivery of associated e-content services.

A range of qualitative and quantitative research techniques were used:

Qualitative:

- Literature review
- Telephone interviews with keys stakeholders (policy makers, regulators, private sector and civil society)
- Face-to-face interviews with key stakeholders
- In-country focus groups (1 per country) with key stakeholders

Quantitative:

- 310 face-to-face interviews per country with rural and urban user of telecommunications services (fixed, mobile or public phones) in the last three months.

Read the full report here - Towards Effective e-Governance: The delivery of public services through loacl e-content