

With Burkina-ntic local content gets onto the Web

By: Ramata Soré

In Burkina Faso, there are many local initiatives as regards the extension and popularization of ICTs. Among all these initiatives, there is one in particular that can be regarded as the most dynamic platform and the one which is in the public eye. It is called Burkina-NTIC (<http://www.burkina-ntic.net/> and <http://www.burkina-ntic.org/>) and it attends to local content by permanently updating the activities performed by the different local communities in the area.

On the Web Site <http://www.burkina-ntic.org/>, it is possible to see and listen to the videos of the most successful TV program in the country dealing with issues concerning the agricultural world. The initiative of this program has been sponsored by the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), and it is managed by the African Institute for Rural Bio-economy (Institut Africain de bioéconomie rurale (IABER) in Burkina Faso. On the Web site, we can



read articles about the evolution that rural areas are undergoing as well as information concerning local innovations, as for instance the extension of electricity supply in rural areas and its use mainly in the informal sector in the area of Bobo-Dioulasso.

As regards education and teaching, there are many articles that discuss the advantages offered by E-education and cyber classrooms. This new form of education allows, for instance, to maintain a master's thesis in a videoconference and to obtain a professional master diploma in distant learning engineering. The site also provides information concerning the impact of "L'œil des parents" (the eye of parents), a Web site which is actually a new way of establishing bonds among the students' parents and the different High Schools in Ouagadougou.

These contents about ICTs and the educational system in Burkina Faso (TIC EDUC), or dealing with agriculture or information centers, or discussing gender issues, governance or computer security are the result of the efforts of many working groups that belong to the association Burkina-Ntic.

According to its coordinator, Mr. Sylvestre Ouédraogo, "these groups are the best stopping places to work in specific fields and to produce content. To carry on their activities these groups base their work on the

achievements attained by the projects supported by the IICD in Burkina Faso. In this way, their most important mission is to capitalize the accomplishments of all these projects”.

Virtual exchanges are very important for the production of content and the access to this kind of exchanges is easier for thematic groups working with gender issues, with good governance or with computer security, since they are located in environments where connectivity is available.

On the other hand, there are other groups, like the one working with agriculture, that have to overcome important hindrances as regards connectivity, as Internet access is virtually nonexistent in many rural areas. In order to overcome these obstacles, face to face meetings are organized by the members of the working team, as a way to facilitate the exchanges.

This continuous production of content calls for a wide range of permanent activities.

About this, Douamba Korotimi, the Communications Officer of the Professional Federation of Small Agricultural Producers of Sissili, assures “for the correct updating of knowledge it is absolutely necessary to guarantee the availability of permanent training activities; it is important to smooth the progress of



new ideas in order to keep among the peasants a constant motivation for learning and to facilitate the permanent updating of the focus of attention”.

Faced with this prospect, the IICD periodically organizes training sessions concerning the production of content, emphasizes François Laurey, in charge of the National Program in Burkina Faso and Mali.

The creation of content stemming exclusively from Burkina Faso

The network Burkina-Ntic has been able to consolidate its capacities for the production of content by being on the alert for every single ICT event in Burkina. Interviews made in rural areas are very useful to understand the real situation of the country. The statistics available in the network show an average of 300- 400 visits a day. According to the same statistics in the rest of the countries, Burkina is in the third place, a fact that clearly shows the importance given by Burkinabé people to issues concerning ICTs for development. The Web site contains more than 800 articles with interviews, statements, publications and videos.

The Burkinabé contents available on the Web site correspond to communities that share a unique cultural, geographic and linguistic environment. On the Internet, this fact helps to bridge the gap existing in the global information society among the poor and the rich. These local contents are the thread of all the actions and are invaluable to help field activities to meet the expectations of the different communities in Burkina Faso. These contents are also of great help for countries

in the South to overcome one of the obstacles that hinder the use of the Internet as a development tool.

The activities of the network Burkina-Ntic have always been focused on two main central points: the creation and updating of an Internet Site especially devoted to ICTs in Burkina Faso and, at the same time, the decision to always look for an opening-up to the world. The network has a quarterly newsletter dealing with ICTs in Burkina Faso. It also organizes meetings and exchange and training seminars about the phenomenon of ICTs in Burkina and in the rest of the world. Individual contributions are also welcome as for instance, articles or stories starring these new technologies. In general, Burkina-Ntic arranges meetings for the sharing of information concerning ICTs or multimedia technologies, organizes training sessions for subsidiary centers of ICT production and sees to the promotion of commercial activities, lobbying and advocacy.



Searching for performance

After several years of existence, accompanying the structures of civil society and producing ICT content, the network Burkina-ntic keeps searching for performance. The web site burkina-ntic is undergoing its fourth change of image. Even if the site is pretty well structured, the evolution of the network and new technological changes, such as blogs, videos, images, RSS flux...) keep asking for a permanent updating of the site, when it is no longer able to meet the new requirements.

This was a matter of discussion in order to make the site more straightforward, more users friendly and more interactive (for instance, giving the members the possibility to blog and to post images and videos).

The publication of a directory of Web sites in Burkina Faso is another innovation that is being introduced, in order to provide dynamism to the Web sites of the government and organizations of civil society.

According to Sylvestre Ouédraogo, coordinator of the network, Burkina-Ntic, a network for the sharing of information about new technologies, was born "because computer science and the Internet are considered as essential resources to help and accelerate development all over the world, particularly in developing countries.

The multiplicity of interventions, the innovations and all the experiences in favor of the installation of new technologies in our countries, demand us to coordinate all our efforts in order to be more efficient.

The field of application of these new technologies is so huge that better than to consider other initiatives as competitors it is to think about them as complementary efforts and as a support for the different initiatives appearing here and there".

In this way, the coordinator thinks that a federation of actions would be very useful and would allow the actions enabled by new technologies and performed by different actors to become more visible. This efficacy is closely connected with the creation of local content, that is to say, the creation of a content coming exclusively from Burkina.

For as it has been asserted by the UNESCO, "The production of local content is essential to persuade many people that the Internet can play a very important role in development, as another public service provided by society".

Civil society in Burkina Faso has to display its own opinions concerning development of new technologies and, on this ground, the space provided by the ICTs network will help society to better express its own ideas.

Getting to be known all over the world

The network Burkina-Ntic is formed by associations where individuals and public sector organizations can undertake actions in the area of new technologies. Burkina-ntic and its partners have participated in many events, such as the World Summit of Information Society, the International Exhibition Hall of Handicrafts in Ouagadougou and the Youth Forum in New York. The works of several of its members have been presented with national and international awards in the area of ICTs and in the area of development. Roukiatou Ouédraogo received the CIPACO prize, the Yam Pukri team of young people was presented by the UNESCO with the award Scènes et Son de la ville, the Association Songtaaba received many prizes and among them the World Bank award to innovation.



Burkina-ntic is often asked to organize and host conferences on the subject matter of new technologies. It is also asked to carry on training meetings or to create databases for the Ministries. Through the production of different goods such as bronze statuettes, batiks, postcards, computer casings made of local materials, documentary films...) the network tries to establish bonds between the ICTs and the local environment. All these handicraft outputs are also considered as a production of local content. The actions undertaken to promote the network, such as paid for consultancy services and training activities are also a source of income as well as the beginning of a real appropriation. Income coming from different sales is used to strengthen the material aspect of the network.

Sometimes, the network is entrusted even with the drawing up and management of content, evidence that the network is able to produce a quality work. Many international journalists come to Burkina just to make their interviews, because they have been seduced by the simple way in which Burkina-ntic tells the stories about what happens in the real and profound Burkina. Once, a Canadian ICT private office affirmed that this is one of the rare web sites in the Francophone world where it is possible to find good quality digested interviews.

The association Yam Pukri coordinates the network, headed by a coordinator, a manager and a Web Master. The network was launched in 2002, thanks to the technical and financial support of the International Institute for Communication and Development. (IICD).

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www.iConnect-online.org is a knowledge sharing platform for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in sustainable development. iConnect draws content from its partners, links resources and expertise and encourages collaboration. For the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), the host of iConnect, this is a way to share experiences, lessons learned and ideas, and interact with communities and people with an interest in development and the applications of ICTs. These experiences can lead to a better understanding of the actual benefits of ICTs for Development (ICT4D). The core of iConnect will be a series of locally written articles on the impact and the use of ICTs for development. The articles have a strong focus on fact finding; objective information on ICT4D practices from a southern perspective: Southern content written by Southern people. i4d is the iConnect partner for Asia, and ECA is the iConnect partner for Africa, disseminating the articles to their public.
