

Community news

The Kensington Nursery gets set to open doors in DSO in September 32



A creative SPARC

Intersat Africa connects rural Africa to the world through innovative and sustainable technology that is also economically viable

The advantages of technology are best experienced when the medium that delivers it is easy to implement, sustainable and offers unprecedented reach. No wonder then that Intersat Africa's Rural Internet Kiosk is ushering in a silent revolution in deep, dark Africa.

Providing connectivity that is at once affordable, reliable and sustainable to underdeveloped markets around the world, has been Intersat's USP. Its SPARC (Solar Powered Advanced Rural Communicator) concept is much sought after, combining innovation with information and communication technologies (ICT). With satellite connectivity and solar power, SPARC provides a complete communication solution, covering telecom, the internet, media and IT.

The Solar Powered Rural Internet Kiosk, part of the SPARC initiative, helped Intersat Limited win South Africa's Most Innovative Application of Satellite Technology Satcom Star award recently at a function in Johannesburg.

Says Abdul Bakhrani, CEO, Intersat, on receiving the award: "Since inception, Intersat Africa has had a clear vision to transform the rural landscape and bridge the digital divide throughout Africa. After considerable research, Intersat started developing a breakthrough concept — a sustainable, practical and adaptable Rural Internet Kiosk. Solar powered, it would be vandal-proof and economically self-sustaining." Enlisting the help of NGOs, sociologists, environmentalists and

technologists, Intersat chose to understand rural Africa's pulse. The idea was to provide a practical and indigenous solution that would run for years to come.

Initiating change

A decade hence, Intersat Africa launched its first Rural Internet Kiosk in February, 2010, in Ukunda, Kenya. It has hence helped facilitate the informal training of more than 150 youth in the area at low cost. Computers and internet access were previously unavailable to Africa's youth, the cost of access and training being major deterrents. Now with the kiosks anyone can learn to harness the potential of information and communications from the comfort of their village communities.



Discussions are at an advanced stage with heads of government in Uganda, Rwanda and Nigeria to set up the Intersat Kiosks

“Intersat Africa has a clear vision to bridge the digital divide throughout Africa.”

Abdul Bakhrani
CEO, Intersat



Intersat's Solar Powered Internet Kiosk initiative in Africa (above) helped the company receive South Africa's Most Innovative Application of Satellite Technology Satcom Star award (opposite page)



The long-term impact is yet to be felt, but the repercussions are tremendous. To implement the Rural Internet Kiosk project together with a programme, Intersat Africa partnered with a local non-governmental organisation, Voices of Africa for Sustainable Development (VOA). After implementing the SPARC in Ukunda, Intersat and VOA saw the need for quality ICT training to facilitate growth of the SPARC project and to create socio-economic change. The unemployment rate among youth

in Sub Saharan Africa is often more than 50 per cent of the population. A pilot Youth Empowerment Centre has been created in Webuye, a small town in Kenya's western province, to teach high-quality ICT skills and create an ICT development model to be duplicated through the continent.

The biggest success so far has been the acceptance of the Kiosks by the Coop union of Kenya and rebranded as Coop Kiosks, with their own colour scheme and logo. An LOI and agreement for more than 4,500 units to be

1 million
The number of people expected to gain basic knowledge on the usage of emerging technologies once the Coop Kiosks are set up in Kenya

deployed over 18 months was issued, with Kenyan Vice-President Kalonzo Musyoka announcing the landmark initiative on July 3, 2010, in Nairobi. It is an initiative that is expected to get over one million rural youths to gain basic knowledge on the usage of new technologies.

There is reason why we call it a silent revolution. Discussions are at an advanced level with heads of state and government representatives in Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, DRC, Angola and Nigeria, on implementing this radical technology. It is difficult to measure the direct impact this implementation might have on Africa and its people. What it does help in is raising awareness levels while delivering a practical form of training and self-help to the rural areas. It is expected to be a catalyst that will help instigate and invigorate the thoughts and hidden skill sets among citizens, providing the foundation for a steady source of income in the years to come. This is only the beginning.