

PAREN: Promoting African Research and Education Networking

**Workshop to promote National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in Africa -
November 15 from 14.00 to 18.00**

Sponsored by IDRC, AAU and other partners

Corinthia Khamsa Hotel, Les Côtes De Carthage, Gammarth, Tunisia

Purpose

This Workshop follows the one and a half-day AAU conference on Promoting African Research and Education Networking (PAREN) to be held on 14 and 15 November. It highlights the important steps towards building the social and broadband networks that will link the African research and education institutions regionally and globally.

Target audience

The Workshop is targeted at all university decision-makers and government policy makers as well as donors who have an interest in promoting the development of national research and education networks in Africa. A number of NREN practitioners from other regions will also attend. 50 to 60 participants are expected to attend.

Objectives

The NREN workshop aims:

- to spawn new African NRENs and to provide emerging NRENs with the tools and contacts to initiate or develop action plans to move their networks forward;
- to clarify the role of the Association of African Universities (AAU) in supporting the development of NRENs; and
- to set an agenda for future meetings, information sharing and dialogue among African NRENs and identify priority areas of collaboration.

Format

The Workshop will be an open interactive session and to achieve optimum participation from all workshop delegates, the workshop will be facilitated by Steve Song of IDRC.

Coverage

The workshop agenda will emerge from the facilitation process through interaction among participants. This puts a premium on a high level of participation; every workshop delegate will have an opportunity to learn from relevant experience from regions that have already achieved the benefits of building national and regional RENs as well as from current experience in the African context. The process depends on a high level of participation.

Issues that have been flagged in NREN discussions over the last few months include:

- What is an NREN – is there one model or many – what are the core characteristics that distinguish an NREN from other national networks? Are there unique characteristics of an African NREN?
- What strategies can universities develop to ensure that they can access the infrastructure needed to support the bandwidth-intensive requirements of education and research networks?
- What steps can be taken to build a national advocacy movement in favour of national research and education networking? How can national policy support NREN development? What policies and policy makers are in play: telecommunications, information, education, science and technology?
- What skills are required to build and maintain NRENs – where should these be located – how can they be developed?