

IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA



REPORT OF

SUB-COMMITTEE II

ON

**OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS CONSIDERED RELEVANT
FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING COMPUTERIZATION
AND ICT DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRY**

TO THE

**NATIONAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON THE
HARMONIZATION OF IT INITIATIVES (NTC-HITI)**

Dec 2004

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1.0 Members of the Sub-Committee

Members of the Sub-Committee are:

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|----|--------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| 1. | Chief Jimson Olufuye | NCS | Chairman |
| 2. | Engr Aliyu Aziz | IT Adviser MFCT, Abuja | Member |
| 3. | Chief Leo Stan Ekeh, CFR | Zinox Technologies | Member |

2.0 Term of Reference

To make any other recommendations considered relevant for the purpose of promoting computerization and ICT development in the country.

3.0 Term Overview

According to the United Nations Development Index, 2004, the nation of Belgium with a population of 11million produces capacity (GDP) at par with the whole of Africa with a population of about 600million. The dividing line is the role ICT is playing in the economies of the two entities. Belgium is using ICT to efficiently annex knowledge and information for enhanced productivity. Therefore, if knowledge and information is not efficiently and methodically engaged, the resultant scenario will be information overload - a state of inefficient and wasteful utilization of scarce resources. Moreover, the United States of America's experience in which prior to the Second World War she domesticated nearly all technologies to emerge as the economic giant of the world readily comes to mind. Therefore, the computerization and ICT development initiative must be with the view to developing local adaptations and expertise that would then be exportable to other countries in Africa and beyond. A case in point is India.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROMOTION OF COMPUTERIZATION AND ICT DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRY

Recommendations for the promotion of computerisation and ICT development in the country are hereby given from four perspectives namely: Software, Hardware, Capacity Building and General Development.

4.1 Software

As it is well known, software is the driven force of ICT. It is the stream of invisible code structures that give life to ICT systems. India makes more than US\$20b annually from software export. English is the language of software – a major advantage for Nigeria. India has used this advantage to its benefit. Therefore, a mastery of software would definitely give unprecedented boom to computerisation and ICT development in Nigeria. Here are recommendations under the software perspective.

4.1.1 Convening of an all stakeholders' conference on Software

It is recommended as a matter of necessity that an all stakeholders' conference be convened on software indigenization and imperative holistic approach to software development. The conference could be co-ordinated by NITDA in collaboration with the Institute of Software Practitioners of Nigeria (ISPoN). Stakeholders to be invited to the conference should include:

- ✓ *Federal Ministry of Science & Technology (FMST)*
- ✓ *Federal Ministry of Education (FME)*
- ✓ *Federal Ministry of Information (FMI)*
- ✓ *Ministry of Communications (MOC)*
- ✓ *Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC)*
- ✓ *Nigeria Computer Society (NCS)*
- ✓ *State Information Technology Advisers*
- ✓ *Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)*
- ✓ *the Institute of Software Practitioners of Nigeria (ISPoN)*
- ✓ *Information Technology Association of Nigeria (ITAN)*
- ✓ *All ISPoN registered companies*
- ✓ *Leading University scholars in Software Engineering & Management*
- ✓ *Any other calibre of professionals that might further be considered.*

Sectorial groups should be encouraged to present papers authored by more than one person

4.1.2 Establishment of Software Task Force

Emanating from the conference, a software task force should be created under NITDA with the following functions/objectives:

- i. *Identify major processes in the government requiring software as the driving tool. Examples: Nigerian Secondary School syllabi (Education); Government accounting processes (Finance); Tax remittances (Finance); Non-oil export processes (Agriculture/Industry/Commerce/Trade etc); 2011 Elections (INEC); 2015 Census (Population Commission) etc. It is only when there is demand that there can be supply. Demand for software development and sustainability will automatically generate interest in skilled manpower.*
- ii. *Institute a mechanism for selecting Nigerian based and ISPoN/NCS registered companies for government software projects.*
- iii. *Identify/partner with Institutions of higher learning in the country with rigorous curriculum in Software Engineering with a view to providing/encouraging the establishment of faculty chairs and grants tied to specific software research projects.*
- iv. *Design primary and secondary schools IT syllabi in conjunction with National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) of the Federal Ministry of Education. The syllabi should be subject to review every 2 years.*

To Education

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4.1.3. Engender software patenting and protection of copyrights

4.1.4. Develop a software bill to be presented to the National Assembly to give legal backing to all software initiatives.

4.2. Hardware

The physical computer constitutes the hardware. The government deserves commendation for efforts made so far to make computer hardware available in the government work places in the past five (5) years; and its decision to recognise and patronise locally assembled computers. The companies so recognised are: Zinox Computers, Omatek, Beta & UNITEC Computers. However, there exist many more locally assembled computers which government should recognise as they pass its set criteria (if any). Government is further applauded for reducing import duties on computer hardware from 20% to 2.5%. Against the backdrop of increased computerisation, the empowerment of individuals to acquire the computer hardware and the need to facilitate local fabrication of computer parts that the following recommendations are made:

4.2.1 Government (Federal & States) should set a target of two years for full acquisition of computer hardware in all its establishments.

2-5yr

- 4.2.2 Government should set minimum standard of configuration for all its agencies. The minimum standard configuration should have capacity to support software upgrades/advancements in the next five years. A different (lower) minimum standard can however be made for primary and secondary school education in the country to facilitate massive diffusion.
- 4.2.3 Government should develop a computerization guide in form of a pamphlet to be circularised to all its departments/agencies. The guide should contain information on basic IT infrastructural facilities like computer hardware, software, Local Area Network (LAN), Intranet, electronic messaging etc
- 4.2.4 Government should as a matter of urgency facilitate the passage of the IT Bill. Despite government's many demonstrated commitment to computerisation and IT development in the country, it has however, failed to enact appropriate legislations to accelerate IT development. The IT Bill has not passed for four (4) years i.e. since 2001. The non-passage of the IT Bill ensures:
- i. *that there is no governing board for NITDA*
 - ii. *that the **IT Development Fund** proposed in the IT Policy is not actualised*
 - iii. *that target to have been made (between 2001 and 2005) on the training of 500,000 IT professionals remains unattainable.*

4.3. Capacity Building

It is important to note that the IT Policy as approved by the Federal Executive Council in 2001 sets for itself the target of training 500,000 IT professionals within a 4-year period; but that has largely failed. Without proficient capacity, computer hardware and software so acquired will just be a piece of furniture and the much desired software industry will remain a reverie. Therefore, the following recommendations are made to improve capacity for IT development in the country:

- 4.3.1. Government should setup/encourage the establishment of faculty chairs in leading Information Technology higher institutions (Universities/ Polytechniques) in the country with the sole purpose of tying project research grants to engaging and building a specified number of professional capacities over a given period of time.
- 4.3.2. Government should use the NYSC as a major incubation ground for some measure of IT capacity building strategy.
- 4.3.3. Government should require basic IT proficiency as a major requirement for promotion in the Civil Service.
- 4.3.4. IT cadre should be established in the Federal and state civil services to serve as incentive for IT professional to join the service.

4.3.5. Energise the primary and secondary schools IT syllabi proposed in 4.1.2. iv above

4.4. General Development

The IT revolution is a knowledge revolution which must cut across every segment of the Nigerian economy, be it urban or rural based. Furthermore, it is well known that the private sector must drive the economy; however, the government must kick-start it. With a mind to diversify our nation's revenue profile from Oil & Gas to Information & Knowledge therefore, it is recommended that

4.4.1. The Federal Government increase Information Technology budget to 3% of the annual national budget and encourage the states to do the same.

4.4.2. The Federal Government should collaborate with the state governments as much as possible to engender intense computerization and IT development across the nooks and cranny; and length and breath of the country

4.4.3. Information Technology Parks should be established in the six geopolitical zones of the country including Abuja. These parks would serve as incubation sites for new technologies and would give the new economic orientation the necessary boost.

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the development paradigm of the newly industrialized countries of Asia; it now become imperative that for Nigeria to experience such *Cheetah-pole-vault* development, she must cut bureaucracy by 80%. This implies that the implementation of the above measures must be on VERY URGENT PEDESTAL.

Basic for remediation in assistance 90%

Project can be reached

70 VSA operators

GVF = Global VSA Forum