AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION (ACOP)

'Empowering the Future Digital Citizens'

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Importance of implementing National roadmaps to enhance child online safety

Ghana's experience in taking steps and measures to reduce online crimes related to children.

ICT Skills Training for Girls,

General Information on Ghana

Map of Ghana

- Ghana- first African country South of the Sahara to gain independence from British colonial rule. Ghana is bounded on the west by Cote D' Ivoire , on the east by Togo, north by Burkina Faso and on the south by the Gulf of Guinea

- A population of **25, 824, 920**

Source : Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) www.stasghana.gov.gh

- Total land size of **238,533 sq km (land:** 227,533 sq km **;** **water:** 11,000 sq

Role of MoC in promoting ICT

- The fist step taken by Govt of Ghana to transform the country into an into an information-rich and knowledge-based society was the development of ICT For Accelerated Development Policy (ICT4AD)

Role of MoC in promoting ICT

- The 2nd step was to create an enabling environment with the development of supporting laws and relevant regulations to provide confidence and predictability to attract investments into the communications sector.

Role of MoC in promoting ICT

- The laws include:
- National Communication Act (1996)
- National Information Technology Act (2008)
- National Communication Authority Act (2008)
- Electronic Communication Act (2008)
- Electronic Transactions Act (2008)
- Data Protection Act (2012)
- Postal and Courier Services Regulations (2013)

Vision and Mission of the Ministry

- **Vision**

  The Ministry's vision is to manage the convergence of Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) to ensure the development of modern ICT infrastructure and services and also secure free flow of information and feedback national development.

- **Mission**

  Ministry's mission to facilitate the development of a reliable and cost-effective world-class Communications infrastructure and services, driven by appropriate technological innovations and facilitate a two (2)-way free flow of timely information and gathering of feedback for all citizens to enhance national unity.
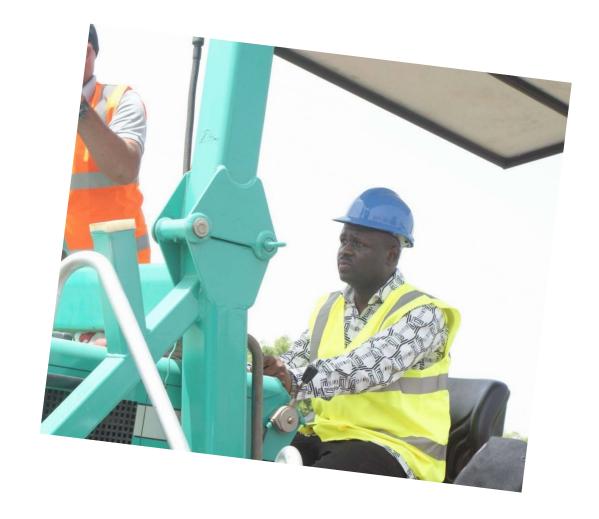
Policy Objectives of the Ministry

The following are the policy objectives of the Ministry.

1. To develop policies and programmes aimed at promoting the development of communications infrastructure and services for national development

2. To support the development of ICT Industry, Research, Development and networking among stakeholders.

3. To promote e-government and governance activities for transparency and public access to information.

4. To promote and encourage the expansion of postal services for the social and economic development of the country

State of ICT Infrastructure and Broadband Development in Ghana

- Presently, Ghana is served by five submarine cables: SAT-3; MainOne; Glo-1; and WACS Cables supplying about 7.16 Terabits capacity.

- On 10th May 2013, the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable system was inaugurated in Accra, bringing onboard additional 5.1 Terabits, to increase the overall submarine cable capacity to 12.3 Terabits, hence five submarine cables.

Eastern Corridor Fiber Optic Backbone Infrastructure from Ho to Bawku , linking Tamale from Yendi
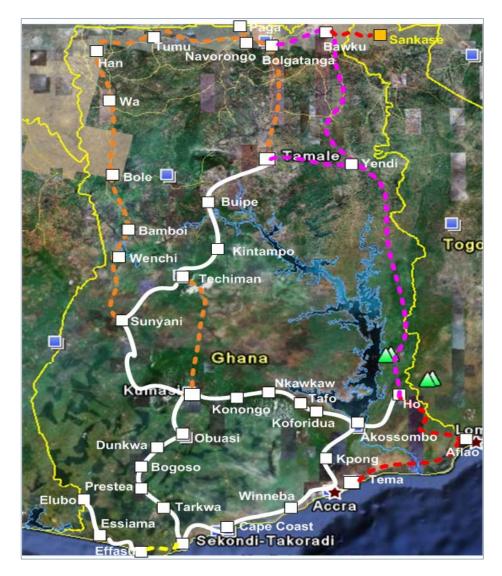
The Hon. Minister on the Duct Cabling Tractor.

State of ICT Infrastructure and Broadband Development

Govt of Ghana is constructing a 780 kilometre fibre optic ICT backbone infrastructure on the Eastern Corridor of the country from Ho to Bawku and a link to Tamale from Yendi

- Eastern Corridor Project

State of ICT Infrastructure & Broadband Development

- The fibre optic assets of the National Communications Backbone Company (NCBC)/Vodafone also provides nearly 3,000 kilometres of terrestrial fibre from Accra through Kumasi, Sunyani, to Wa, Tumu, Paga, Bawku and to Tamale, Kintampo, Techiman and back to Kumasi.

WiMAX upgrade to 4G LTE Base Stations

WIMAX upgraded to Local Technology Evolution (LTE)

- All exiting 30 World Wide Interoperability Microwave Access (WIMAX) sites installed across the nation has been successfully upgraded to 4G LTE Base Station, to serve as the last mile solution.

- 90 more sites are under construction for deployment of advanced ICT Applications in education, health, commerce, Open Govt etc.

National Data Centre

Data Centre

- To enable broader participation in the information age, government is building a **National Data center infrastructure** that will serve the public and private entities in the country.

- (The centre, would be the national centre for coordination of computer security incidences, including a child online portal facility.)

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State of ICT Infrastructure & Broadband Development

- The Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC) provided universal access projects and programmes to underserved and unserved areas of the country. Some of the initiatives include ff:

- provision of Internet connectivity for 200 institutions

- Installation of rural telephony access points to over 500 rural communities.

State of ICT Infrastructure & Broadband Development

- Govt of Ghana accepts *Digital development as a transformative tool to fast-track sustainable development* and therefore it is essential to push for the roll-out of high-speed broadband networks, making it affordable and accessible. Government has therefore invested heavily in ICT infrastructure..

Issues related to COP

- The issue however is that , promoting ICT has come with challenges and that is because to quote the Minister for Communications, Ghana "The dangers facing our children in cyber space are multiple , and include child abuse , child pornography , hate and suicidal sites and many more which many are not aware.

Issues Related to COP

- It is for this reason that , again to quote the Minister , "Children must be protected whilst they are on the internet even much more than we protect them in their ordinary day-to-day lives because on the internet nobody is actually looking at that imaginary space.

Issues Related to COP

In Ghana (like in most countries ,) what we see at a glance is that:

a. Teens and young adults use the Internet.

b. Children and teenagers talk in chat rooms on a daily basis.

c. Children online are willing to share personal information about themselves

d. The possibility of children being targeted by a predator or paedophile each year is high.

e. The possibility of teenage girls being sexually harassed in a chat rooms are high. The number of Children who tell their parents is low, main reason could be for fear their online access will be limited.

Online Risks for Children

1) **Pornography**

 Many children in Ghana , are still at risk of viewing images that they aren't mature enough to understand. Even worse is when children themselves are used and depicted as sexual objects.

2) **Violence**

 The sheer range and volume of online violence is something most of us don't want our children exposed to: images of war, domestic abuse, intolerance, misogyny and other vicious attacks.

3) **Online Gaming & Addiction**

 Most barbering shops have a small outlet where children play games .Addiction to such internet gaming is on the ascendancy . This poses an increased risk of health and social problems.

On line Risks for Children

4)   Online Fraud
Many fraudsters like to specifically target children, and can use knowledge gained from children online to steal, blackmail, terrorize or even kidnap.

5)   Cyber-bullying
With the arrival of the Internet and mobile technology, children today are open to bullying and intimidation wherever they are. Surfing the internet can have severe consequences for a child's self-confidence and personal development.

6)   Racism & Religious prejudice
The Internet has given us instantaneous global access. While this can promote greater communication, understanding and respect, it also makes it easier to spread racial or religious abuse and hate.

Importance of National Roadmaps to enhance Child Online Safety

1) To protect children online and share responsibility both to make a safer online environment for children by reducing online threats to children.

2) To empower children and parents to evaluate and minimize risks and engage online as well as offline , in a secure, safe and responsible manner.

3) To maximize the protection against online risks faced by children without restricting the opportunities and benefits of the Internet for children as well as for other users.

4) To protect children online without undermining the framework conditions that enable the Internet to operate as a global open platform for communication, innovation, economic growth, and social progress.

Child online Protection Strategy

- The strategy focuses on 4 cardinal points
1. Developing a sound research base and monitoring framework involving the establishment of COP stakeholder committee to serve as the leading expert advising Govt on formulation and implementation of a notational COP plan.
2. Capacity building and awareness creation
3. Developing Legal measures to review the existing child protection act to include COP

Cop Strategy

3. Establishing a COP Portal with all Child online education information and forms for making online reports of COP incidences. A call centre is being put in place at the MOC new building and Data Centre.

4. Special COP support numbers will be provided for the public to call for assistance .

Steps and Measures to reduce online crimes related to children.

- **National Cyber security   Strategy Developed**

- The Ministry of Communications developed through stakeholder consultation, a National Cyber security Strategy . The objective is to build confidence and security in the use of ICTs in line with the requirement of World Summit on Information Society9 WSIS)

Steps and Measures to reduce online crimes related to children.

- **Harmonised International Cooperation**
- Within the framework of ITU – IMPACT initiative , the Ministry of Communications , entered into agreement with ITU on the establishment of a National Computer Incident Response Team , to strengthen its ability to prevent and mitigate cyber security incident.

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

Figure 1: Dr. Edward Kofi Omane Boamah , Minister of Communications (left) and Mr. Brahima Sanou , Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau at the ITU jointly showing the agreement signed with the ITU for the establishment of National Computer Incidence Response Team

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

- In Ghana, a Computer Emergency Response Team has been instituted to serve as a trusted & central coordination point of contact for cyber security.

- The Computer Emergency Response Team-Ghana (CERT-GH) and the International Multilateral Partnership Against Cyber Threats (IMPACT) have been creating awareness about protecting children online,

- The CERT-GH website has link to ITU's Child Online Protection channel, a link to IMPACT'S child online protection global assessment page and a flash tutorial that guides children on how to use the internet safely, report an incident etc.

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

- **The Charter & Mission of the CERT –gh website :**
- CERT-GH provides information and assistance to its constituent in implementing proactive measures to reduce the risks of computer security incidents.
- Complains can be channelled through the ff:
- **+233- 299009327-29**
- **incidents@cert-gh.org**

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

- **CERT-GH** coordinates security incidents in Ghana .
- **CERT-GH** makes operational recommendations regarding vulnerabilities and mitigation of incidents and/or incident handling. Such recommendations can include but are not limited to blocking addresses or networks.
- (The implementation of such recommendations is not a responsibility of CERT-GH, but solely of those to whom such recommendations are made.)

- **CERT-GH** is authorized to address all types of computer security incidents which occur, or threaten to occur, & which require cross-organizational coordination.
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  The level of support given by **CERT-GH** will vary depending on the type and severity of the incident or issue, the type of constituent, the size of the user community affected, and CERT-GH's resources at the time.

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

- Two-week training programme to sharpen the skills of Ghana's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) was conducted in Accra to ensure better protection of Ghana's ICT infrastructure.

- Training was facilitated by International Multilateral Partnership Against Cyber Threats (IMPACT).

- Participants were drawn from the Internet communities and points of contact for subsidiary computer emergency response teams (CERTS) and institutions, including NITA, e-Crime Bureau, Fidelity Bank, University of Ghana Legon, Alcatel-Lucent, Tullow Ghana, Ghana Immigration Service and Internet Registry.

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

- **Inter- Ministerial Cooperation & Collaboration**.
1) **Ministry of Gender , Children and Social Protection.**
- **Activities on child development and protection in Ghana**
a) The Ghana Government recognizing that children are vulnerable and require special protection, ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.** Also to protect her children against harmful traditional practices included a whole chapter on the rights of a child in the **1992 Constitution.**
- Ghana , as far back as in 1989, established the Ghana National Commission on Children to see to the general welfare and development of children.
- To day we have the Department of Children, performing that role.
- The first National Programme of Action dubbed, ' **The child cannot wait',** was developed with set goals that enable progress for children in their survival, protection, participation and development.

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

- Ghana has promulgated an elaborate framework to address crimes (not strictly online crimes) related to children . The frame work includes:

- The Domestic Violence Act , 2007 (Act 732)

- The Human Trafficking Act of 2005(At 694)

- The Juvenile Justice Act of 2003 (Act 653)

- The Commission on Human Rights & Administrative Justice of 1993 (Act 456)

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

- The Criminal Offences Act of 1960 (Act 29)
- Children's Right Regulations of 2002 (LI 1705)
- Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (1996)
- The Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy (2000)

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

1) **The Ministry of Education & Ghana Education Service** aim to educate students on the importance of practicing safety, security and good ethics when surfing the internet.

a) **Gender Desks & Girl Child Coordinators** have been set in schools to assist children to understand how to protect themselves from perpetrators and seek justice .

2) **Ghana Police Service**

a) **Cybercrime Unit -** it handles cheating, forgery, money laundering and cases under Intellectual Property Rights.

b) **Domestic Violence Unit** - it handles, domestic violence , sexual exploitation and crime on children.

Steps & measures to reduce online crimes related to children

- **Ministry of Justice & Attorney General's Department**

- The Attorney General, exists to establish abiding respect for the Rule of Law and a constant observance of human Rights, to ensure equality of access to Justice and treatment before the Law for all citizens, to promote by law social justice to facilitate the operations of a fair, efficient and transparent legal system and to propagate a culture of due process and legality for these purposes.

Success of COP is due to Political Commitment

- Communication Minister, Dr. Edward Omane Boamah, in an interview with told Joy News, an online media network on the agreement with Commonwealth Cybercrime Initiative (CCI) prioritizes mechanism to **protect children from cyberspace abuse and said ….**

- "Children must be protected whilst they are on the internet even much more than we protect them in their ordinary day-to-day lives because on the internet nobody is actually looking at that imaginary space.
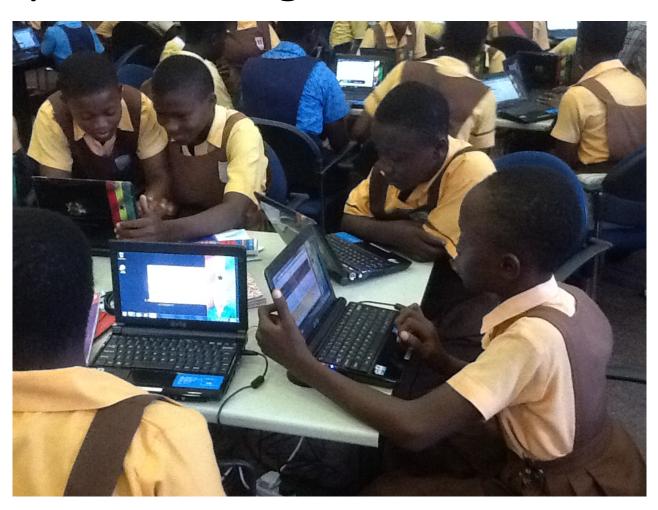
Political Commitment

- In another speech delivered at the signing of MoU with the Commonwealth Cyber security Initiative (CCI) to support the implementation of specified cyber security programmes, the Minister for Communications indicated that :

- "The dangers facing our children in cyber space are multiple and include child abuse , child pornography , hate and suicidal sites and many more of which many are not aware."

Political Commitment

- At the 35th Annual Management Day Of The University Of Ghana Business School, Legon, (On 30th April 2014) the Minister for Communications indicated that one of the challenges facing Ghana is Cyber security and **protection of children from exploitation on line.**

- Government indicated its preparedness to collaborate with ITU through an MoU   for International cooperation in fighting cybercrimes in Ghana.

ICT skills training for girls .-proven popular among the beneficiaries.

Conclusion.

- In conclusion, it is fair to say , Govt of Ghana is taking the necessary steps & measures not only to ensure that our boys and girls are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities that ICT offers but also to reduce online crimes related to children.

Thank you for your kind audience