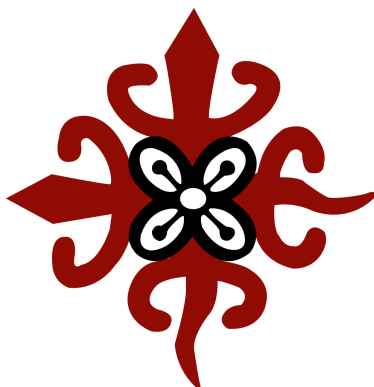




## Technical Brief 4:

### Resource Centre



#### for ICTs and Knowledge Management in African Parliaments

*The logo combines the symbol used by the Akan people of West Africa for collaboration and unity (Siamese crocodiles, in red) with the symbol of "abundance and plenty (sacks of cola nuts, in black) to represent the strengths and benefits that working together, as in a Resource Centre, can bring to all.*

#### Background

Majority of African Parliaments lack capacity in development and deployment of ICTs and information & knowledge management solutions which can be major enablers for the achievement of their missions.

Information & Knowledge Management are strategic skills necessary to deal with the critical issues of organizational adaptation, survival, and competence in the face of increasingly discontinuous and demanding environmental changes. Now more than ever the information requirements that Parliaments have to be able to respond are really wide and huge. It is a must for Parliaments to seek to combine the data and information processing capacity of IT and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings in order to create an evolving base of information and knowledge to support parliamentary works. Parliaments need to make a committed effort to capture the information and experience available so that it is easily accessible to both MPs and citizens at large and grow it into a powerful information asset.

The UN/DESA project "Strengthening Parliaments Information Systems in Africa" set up an "Incubator" to foster the deployment, transfer of knowledge and ownership of the newly developed Bungeni Parliamentary Information System in African Parliaments. The creation of the "Incubator" was done within the framework of a broader initiative in Cape Town, SA, to support the adoption and diffusion of Open Source Software in Africa, under the aegis of the Pan African Parliament and in collaboration with the Parliament of South Africa.

The Resource Centre is an enhancement of the "Incubator" set up by the previous Project. The currently proposed Programme will build on the "Incubator" and will transform and strengthen it by structuring partnerships with academic, technological and business communities. It will also build on the staffing and resources of the existing "Incubator" to broaden its scope to handle the innovative use of ICTs in African Parliaments and the broader issue of information and knowledge management in the Parliaments of Africa.

The mission of the Centre, as a thematic facility for ICTs and information and knowledge management matters for Parliaments, is to proactively fulfil the information, research and knowledge needs of African parliamentary institutions while also supporting citizens' participation and democratic oversight. The goal of the Centre is to support the positioning of African Parliaments as champions of democratic governance and as means to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.



The Resource Centre will build and expand on the involvement of African and non-African Parliaments and continue to engage the Parliament of South Africa as a partner not only due to their leadership in the adoption of ICTs amongst African Parliaments, but also because of its very comprehensive information strategy that makes it a leading organisation in the use of information and knowledge management strategies and tools. The Parliament of South Africa, thanks to its human capital which has a lot of IT and information management experience, can play a significant role in disseminating best practices and sharing its experience around the continent. Another asset of the PSA is the fact that majority of the staff and management of the Parliament has a high level of appreciation of the role that information technology and knowledge management can play in furtherance of the goals of a Parliament. Also, the existing ICTs infrastructure, both at Parliamentary and national level, can be quickly leveraged to benefit the Resource Centre and can also serve as a model for other Parliaments.

The Resource Centre is meant to provide technical support and training opportunities for African Parliaments in the field of ICTs and knowledge and information management. Its primary function will be that of providing full life-cycle support for ICTs and Knowledge Management in Parliaments, especially focussing on Parliamentary applications and systems. These are systems that support Parliament's strategic missions which include enhancement of good governance and democratic participation. The centre will support information technology and knowledge management ventures in Parliaments through a collaborative approach among the Parliaments, academia, private venture capital companies and other private and public sector parties. Established to encourage rapid adoption of ICTs breakthroughs and the latest knowledge and information management strategies in Parliaments, the Centre will specialize in information technology applications and information management services relevant to Parliamentary processes.

The Resource Centre will operate at the Pan African level to provide high quality and effective services for Parliaments in the field of information technology and knowledge management. It will also serve as a site for proof-of-concept implementations, system customizations and also training for ICTs practitioners from African Parliaments. It will provide the organizational and technical infrastructures for the practitioners to have hands-on work experience on IT related projects relevant to African Parliaments.

The Centre aims to achieve technical excellence through a first-rate management team, technological partnerships to create a critical mass of top-tier technologists, an "excellence-driven" research environment, and collaboration with distinguished academic, corporate, and non-profit organizations. The Centre, through its programs will make a commitment to promoting the full realization of human potential and maximizing the capacity for self-reliance in Africa.

The goal of the Centre is to provide the support, expertise, leadership, training and guidelines needed to create a rich and dynamic technological future for Parliaments in Africa. The Resource Centre will further the Parliaments' innovation agenda by encouraging research and development into relevant and leading edge information and communication technologies.

### **Specific objectives**

#### **Deployment of the Bungeni Parliamentary Information System in Parliaments**

The Centre will provide technical advice, support and training for deployment of the PIS in the participating parliaments and stimulate the development of new and more advanced functionalities and services in coordination with the parliaments.

#### **Deployment of the AKOMA NTOSO framework**

The Centre will provide technical advices, support and training for customization and further development of AKOMA NTOSO in the participating parliaments. It will also further enhance the interoperability guidelines and an implementation guide and assist parliaments in assessing the needs of further expansion of AKOMA NTOSO to address the changing needs of parliamentary documentation and information systems.

The Centre will also examine the issue of interoperability with other institutions and advice Parliaments on how to accommodate AKOMA NTOSO into country specific interoperability frameworks in order to keep compliance with both national and AKOMA NTOSO interoperability requirements (see AKOMA NTOSO).

The Centre will also provide technical support for "Tezauri Eurovoc-Africa Addendum Maintenance Committee" to update the thesaurus in order to meet the needs expressed by its users while keeping in mind

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the objective of covering in a homogeneous way the fields of activity of the African Parliaments (see Tezauri Eurovoc-Africa).

### **Software Development and Business Links, Research and Development**

The Centre will host a software development unit that will assist in customization and further development of Parliamentary information systems. This unit will work on research and development projects. It will provide facilities, resources, and tools to develop both a research and development culture in a rich environment for innovation and creativity. Staff of the Centre will join efforts with appropriate partners to develop products that relate to the ICTs needs of African Parliaments. Research and development activities will serve as a vehicle for generating new ICTs projects for Parliaments. Some of the strategic objectives in this area are:

- Provide software development expertise for the customization and further development of the Bungeni Parliamentary Information System
- Develop and customize the various components of the Pan African cooperative portal, including the AfricaLawOnline (ALO) and the APEX (Africa Parliamentary Exchange)
- Develop appropriate deployment and usage models for the Bungeni Parliamentary Information System
- Promote links with the private and public sector partners in ICTs
- Identify and evaluate useful ICTs applications available locally, regionally and internationally for Parliaments and help professionals and businesses find opportunities in African Parliaments.
- Maintain a website to promote the activities of the Centre

### **Training Capacity**

The Centre will contribute to the development of information technology capacity in African Parliaments through the delivery of quality training, research and development. It will work directly with field experts using a Training of Trainers (TOT) approach. The Centre will provide high quality and tailor-made training packages for ICTs practitioners in Parliaments. Also, in order to strengthen and complement their technical skills, the Centre will promote IT business development skills. This will encourage creativity and a business-case oriented approach to ICTs adoption and transformation of processes and procedures in Parliaments. Some of the strategic objectives in this area are:

- Set and achieve high standards for courses in core IT skills and IT business development.
- Strengthen the capacity of its staff and contribute to their professional expertise in key training areas.
- Achieve excellence as the leading institution in the Training of Trainers (TOT) in IT for Parliaments in Africa.
- Develop training packages to meet changing needs of Parliaments.
- Develop and provide training modules that help ICTs management in Parliament build viable business cases for ICTs projects. The modules include:
  - Strategy, Goals and Objectives
  - Business Formation & Financing
  - Management & Staffing
  - Product Management & Development
  - IT Project Management

### **Promote Information & Knowledge Management best practices, skills and tools by focusing on ICTs**

The Centre will promote the application of Information and Knowledge Management best practices, skills and tools in Parliaments. In this regard it is also crucial to develop a sound understanding of how



organisations/parliaments learn new things and how they act on this information. Parliaments will have to be supported in their struggle to become learning organisations, organisations capable of learning and transforming information into data and data into knowledge.

Some of the strategic objectives in this area are:

- Develop, collect and disseminate information and knowledge management best practices for use in African parliaments.
- Develop, collect and disseminate ICTs usage and management policies for use in African parliaments
- Conduct and disseminate research into the current and modern trends and techniques in the area of information and knowledge management.

#### **Managing the ICTs Infrastructure for the Pan African Cooperative Information Services**

The Centre will run and maintain all the components of the infrastructure hosting the components of various Pan African Cooperative Information Services, e.g. the cooperative portal. This includes but is not limited to: computers, servers, data storage, security and failover protection, LAN and WAN devices and connections. The Centre sets the guidelines for purchasing new hardware and software, and ensures that the delivered equipment is properly integrated into the existing network infrastructure. The strategic objectives in this area are:

- Identify and implement appropriate technology platforms, equipment and service providers as required for the proper functioning of the services
- Maintain a database of all available hardware and software.
- Set guidelines for purchasing new equipment and software.
- Install, support and maintain hardware and software as required
- Provide user support for the users of the information services.

#### **Organization**

The Resource Centre is a multi-stakeholder initiative that due the very nature of its mission will have to be open to collaboration from a diversified set of partners, e.g. Parliaments, research institutions, universities, civil society organizations, etc. provided that they share the common goal of strengthening information and knowledge management of African Parliament while at the same time meeting the challenges of providing ever better access to parliaments by citizens in order to increase participation and oversight from civil society. It will be established under the aegis of the Pan African Parliament but will be run by an autonomous board made up of representatives of the collaborating partners; e.g. Pan African Parliament, APRIMA, collaborating research institutions, participating Parliaments and institutions and UN/DESA

The Centre is a multipurpose IT and Knowledge Management service and training centre with a team comprised of technical staff overseen by a Team Leader. The staff will operate under the direction and supervision of the Centre' Board of Directors.

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