

Registries Stakeholder Group Statement

Issue: Draft 2016 African Domain Name System Market Study

Reference URL: <https://www.icann.org/public-comments/africa-dns-market-study-2017-03-11-en>

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RySG comment:

In November 2015, ICANN requested a marketplace study on the domain name industry in Africa. With vast variations in internet penetration to language in each country across the continent, this was a daunting task. The Registry Stakeholder Group appreciates the amount of work, care, and detail that went into this study.

Overall, this baseline study offers the African, and global, community a foundational understanding of the current state of the domain name industry in Africa and the very specific challenges the region faces as a whole. While the RySG appreciates the larger picture that is provided by this study, we do have some concerns and suggestions around some of the study's proposals, particularly in relation to ICANN's scope and budget..

Research Methods

The research team's efforts to reach as many people as possible in the region were both challenging and well-crafted. Building an online tool for the survey to facilitate communication between individual users and businesses throughout Africa, along with the translation of the survey into the major languages of the continent, ensured that participation in the study was accessible to a large portion of the population.

For future studies, particularly if and when an observatory is implemented in the region, we recommend the following to ensure that accessibility and participation is even more accessible and streamlined:

- Localized translations based on the region. This has the added benefit of producing more local content for end-users who may participate in this research, one of the recommendations of the study.
- Fewer survey questions. With 200+ questions on this first survey, some participants may not have the bandwidth to participate in the study. Now that this baseline has been collected, the surveys can be sent with much fewer questions so that more people can participate, and be sent with slightly more frequency, if needed.

Regional Observatory and Recommendations

The suggested African DNS Observatory may provide many benefits. As stated in the study, desktop research for this region was difficult, primarily due to a lack of resources available. For example, a number of the IANA links to ccTLD registries were either missing or outdated. As researchers and experts focusing on this region, if such information is not readily available to us, it's fair to assume that it's even more difficult to access for residents and end-users in the area.

However, prior to approving an observatory in the area:

- Those working on these efforts should draft a proposal specific to the creation of this regional observatory, including budgetary and staff projections. This proposal should be made available for community comment to ensure it fulfills long-term financial and community priorities.
- In the event an observatory is created, one of the responsibilities of regional staff should be to interact more directly with community members. This may be through regional events, when feasible, or through assisting local governments and institutions in creating localized content to improve internet penetration rates in countries where access is very low. As the report states, as low as 1% of residents and as high as 60% of residents have internet access. By making an effort to more directly engage local users, regional staff will be better able to collect data from an even wider variety of sources and increase the visible presence of internet governance groups for residents of the region.
- Ensure working websites for all registries in the region to facilitate auxiliary efforts around ease of registration for end-users and building the availability of locally-relevant information online.