

The Unintended Consequences of ICT in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Akin is, like many things in cyberspace, an alias. In real life he's 14. He wears Adidas sneakers, a Rolex Submariner watch, and a kilo of gold around his neck. Akin, who lives in Lagos, is one of a new generation of entrepreneurs that has emerged in this city of 15 million, Nigeria's largest. His mother makes \$30 a month as a cleaner, his father about the same hustling at bus stations. But Akin has made it big working long days at Internet cafes and is now the main provider for his family and legions of relatives. Call him a "Yahoo Yahoo Millionaire." Akin buys things online - laptops, BlackBerries, cameras, flat-screen TVs - using stolen credit cards and aliases. He has the loot shipped via FedEx or DHL to safe houses in Europe, where it is received by friends, then shipped on to Lagos to be sold on the black market. (He figures Americans are too smart to sell a camera on eBay to a buyer with an address in Nigeria.). Akin's main office is an Internet cafe in the Ikeja section of Lagos. He spends up to ten hours a day there, seven days a week, huddled over one of 50 computers, working his scams. And he's not alone: The cafe is crowded most of the time with other teenagers, like Akin, working for a "chairman" who buys the computer time and hires them to extract e-mail addresses and credit card information from the thin air of cyberspace. Akin's chairman, who is computer illiterate, gets a 60 percent cut and reserves another 20 percent to pay off law enforcement officials who come around or teachers who complain when the boys cut school. That still puts plenty of cash in Akin's pocket. (Quoted from <http://www.nairaland.com/nigeria/topic-37929.0.html>).

In recent years, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has proliferated Africa and the world at large. It's no doubt that Sub Saharan Africa is one of the last continents to exploit the internet; however, it has experienced a brisk growth in

the internet and mobile phones. It had a total of 22,559 Internet connections and 1,121 broadband connections in 2006. Just about a decade ago, only a few countries had local Internet access; today, however it is available in every capital city and in even villages.

This is evident in so many cyber cafes located everywhere in these countries. In the same way, SSA has also experienced a growth in wireless communication within the last decade. More cell phones are being deployed on the continent than the number of fixed phone lines. Many people now electronically transmit information both qualitative and quantitative via mobile telephone text messages. Current statistics shows that, the telephone teledensity in SSA is measured at 12.27%. The number of prepaid mobile phone connections has moved from 30,000 in 2005 to 97,000 in 2006. The number of postpaid has risen from 36,000 to 52,000. There is no doubt that ICT have positively impacted Sub-saharan Africa as it has give them access to teleducation, telemedicine, teledemocracy, etc.

Although these technologies have brought great development to sub-Saharan Africa, one cannot completely say that it has all been a success but it has also to a great extent brought about some reparations. Amazingly, many people do not seem to see the negative effects these fast developing technologies have brought to other continents and Africa in particular. Information and communication Technology has precipitates the spread of crime such as internet sex terrorism, prostitution, child trafficking, identity theft, pornography etc.

Most criminals use the internet and cell phones among others for criminal acts i.e. from computer intrusions to money. Terrorists around the world recruits, train and plan attacks, armed only with laptops and Internet access. These technological crimes have never been the reason for the introduction of these technologies. Every now and then, fraudulent (scammed) e-mails flood people's in-boxes around the world. Financial exploitations are the most frequent target, with 4 of 5 of these scammers claiming to be authorities of big banks with good reputation or some other financial institutions. These criminals claim they want to do business with the people they send those mails to. At the end of the day, people who fall for it only discover millions taken away from their bank accounts. These scammers' operate under the slogan; "I Go Chop Your Dollar." They call it a '419' game which is the criminal section taken from the penal code of Nigeria, a

country in West Africa. To them, they believe that scamming is just a game which has a winner and a loser. Recently three individuals who allegedly manipulated Google “put options” and Sun Microsystems shares after-hours as part of scams built around using stolen log-ins to break into online brokerage accounts. In addition, a malicious website had been set up as www.gooke.com, just a key stroke different from the famous www.google.com site. Users, who log into the site, were contaminated with spy ware, ad ware and other fraudulent software that tried to load itself on to their PCs.

Also important is how people use cell phones and the internet for these criminal acts. Today, we hear of rapid growths in new cases of HIV AIDS all over the African continent, despite multiple intensive campaigns to sensitize people of the dangers of the pandemic. The internet and the use of cell phones have just been another means of promoting this deadly pandemic. There is also the case of child pornography and trafficking, the use of ICT to promote sex Terrorism. All of the above mentioned crimes are some of the Unintended Consequences of ICT in Africa. One of the major problems that most African countries face today is this technological crime. The major concern here is how these criminal activities are carried out with the aid of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). With the rapid growth of these criminal activities, it becomes a problem and need to be addressed.

During the forthcoming Paris SIG on developing countries, we intend to present a comprehensive review of these unintended consequences of ICT in Africa from a case study perspective. We will also present our research design for further in-depth qualitative analyses of these cases. Overall the study captures data from the “yahoo-yahoo boys” themselves, the banks involved, the police as well as Nigerian state controlled services that oversees the prevention of such crimes.