

NAMIBIA'S DIGITAL FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMACY

Towards greater co-operation and prosperity in a connected world¹

Katharina E Höne

Policy recommendations

1. There are notable policy initiatives in Namibia, the SADC region, and at the level of the African Union that have the potential to address the digital divide and promote Information and Communication Technology (ICT) development.
2. A three-pronged approach to Namibia's foreign policy, consisting of Internet infrastructure and digital geopolitics, digital policy and Internet governance, and digital diplomacy is recommended.
3. Despite advancements in connectivity via undersea cables, mobile access is the most important factor to connect the unconnected in Namibia and Africa as a whole. Further national infrastructure development and the promotion of greater cross-border connectivity in the region remain crucial infrastructure challenges.
4. Policies and regulatory frameworks are key in order to fully benefit from ICT possibilities. ICT policy needs to be approached as a cross-sectoral issue and cannot be treated in policy silos. It will be important to ensure a 'government as whole' approach to manage the digital impact on economic development, security, culture, education, etc.
5. ICT is crucial for achieving the ambitious SDG agenda. By aligning ICT-related foreign policy explicitly with the SDGs, additional momentum can be gained and international co-operation can be fostered.

Introduction

The 2004 White Paper on Namibia's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Management makes prominent references to Information Technology (IT). The White Paper describes IT as an 'integral part of the country's overall strategic policy framework' and links it to peace and security, economic, social, developmental and human rights issues.² This position is an ideal starting point for further strengthening the

role of ICT in Namibia's foreign policy and to acknowledge the rapid growth in ICT access and usage that we have seen over the last years.

ICT influences and is influenced by a multitude of issues. ICT can accelerate growth and present new labour market opportunities. It promotes development through

supporting inclusion, efficiency and innovation.³ It is, for example, integral to better service delivery in governmental and non-governmental sectors alike. Similarly, it promotes development in the health and education sectors. ICT is a strong driver of development. Yet, a gap in the ability to make full use of the potential of ICT between developed and developing countries, as well as within countries, remains and needs to be tackled.

ICT is clearly a cross-cutting issue and, therefore, cannot be treated in isolation. This means that we need to challenge the tendency to think in policy silos. ICT affects development, economic growth, security, privacy, and infrastructure to name a few. Considering the many linkages and interdependencies among these issues, none of them can be effectively dealt with through a silo-approach.

In the case of Namibia, ICT is both a part of the country's development efforts and a key driver of development. The 2008 Information Technology Policy for the Republic of Namibia states that 'from the perspective of a developing country, ICT is both a prerequisite for economic progress and a major potential contributor to economic progress'.⁴

Development efforts need to focus on developing ICT in its various dimensions. In doing so, ICT also becomes a transformative tool on the way to a knowledge-based economy.⁵

We can already identify many positive developments in Namibia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) that seek to harness the development potential of ICT. Yet, a lot remains to be done to close the digital divide and promote ICT in Namibia. The task for the future is to build on these efforts while working to close the development gap. Namibia's foreign policy, through facilitating co-operation and partnerships and through positioning Namibia well within the global and regional discourses on ICT, will be key in achieving this.

After giving a brief overview of the context of ICT in Namibia, this paper will focus on three topics in particular:

- the dimensions of Namibia's digital foreign policy and diplomacy;
- the global discourse on ICT and development and its implications for Namibia; and
- ICT as a factor in poverty eradication.

Context

To understand the best way forward for Namibia's digital foreign policy, it is most useful to begin by pin-pointing Namibia's current situation in terms of ICT availability and usage, and also to explore the current policy environment for ICT in Namibia.

The 2015 Measuring the Information Society (MIS) Report is a highly informative resource to understand recent developments in ICT. The MIS is published yearly by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and includes the ICT Development Index (IDI), which is helpful in mapping

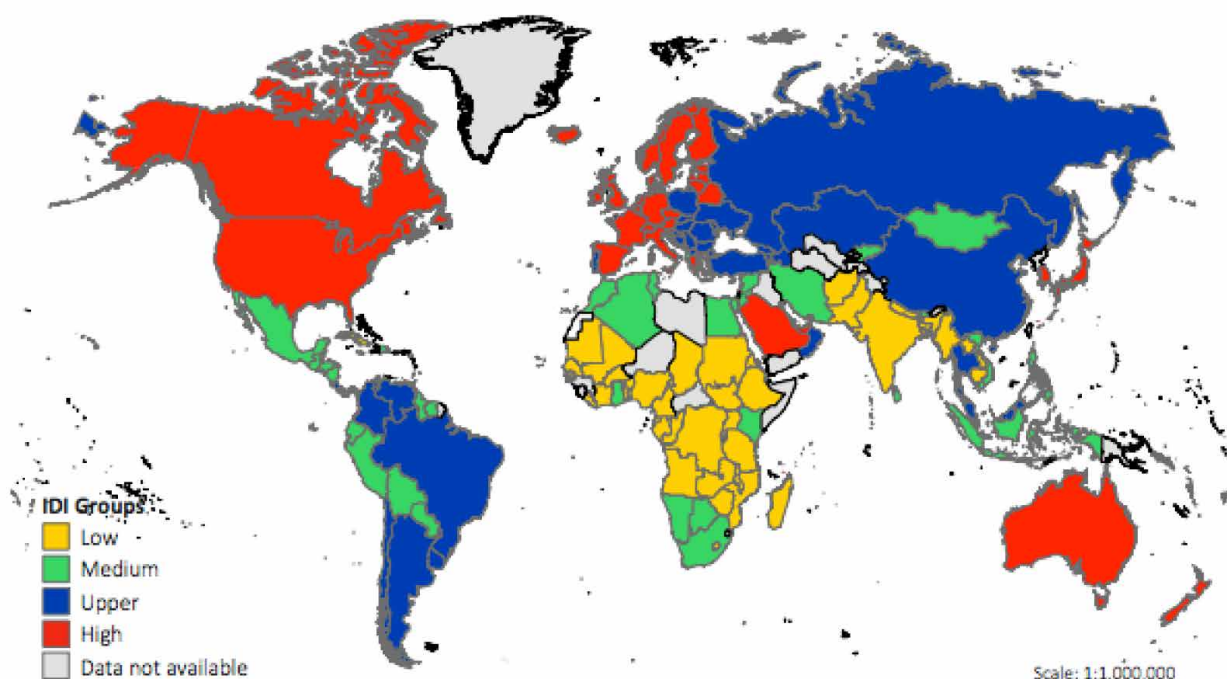


Figure 1: Quartiles by IDI value.⁸

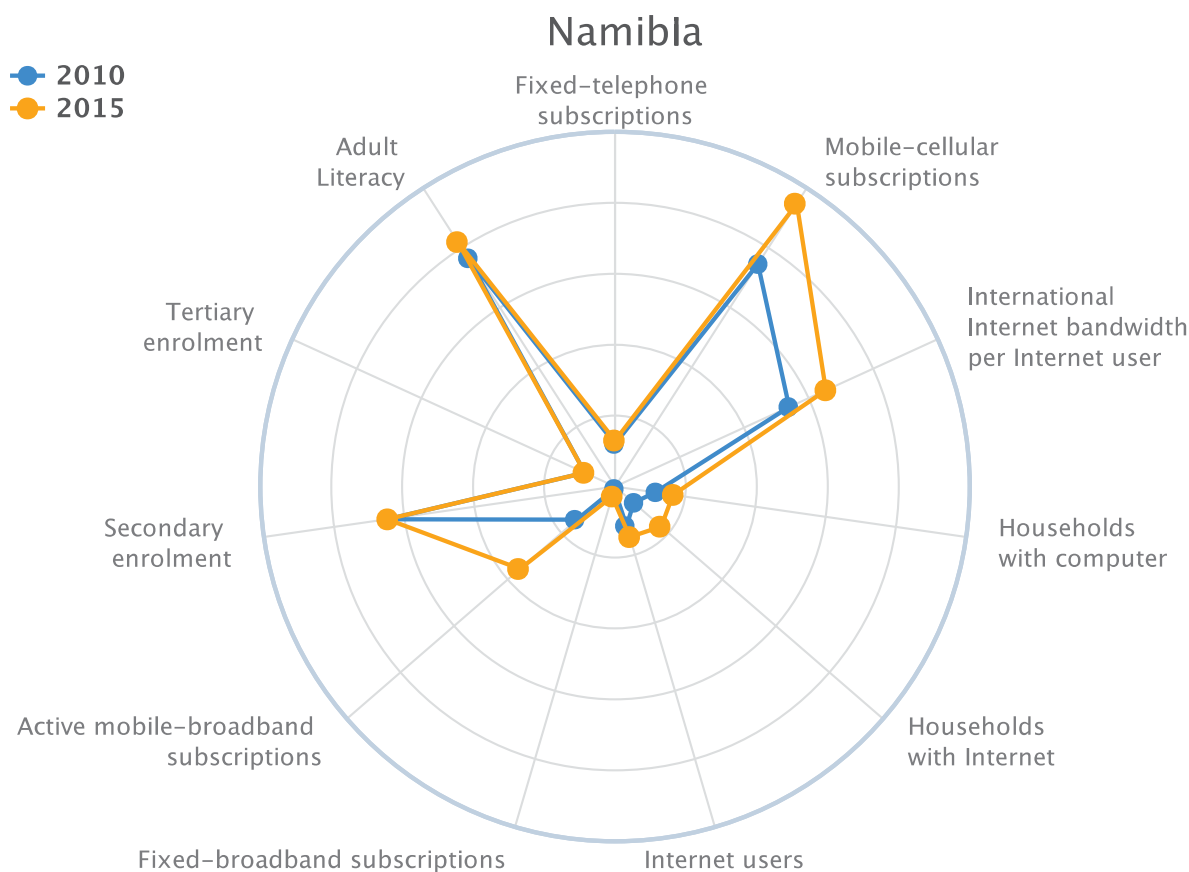


Figure 2: <http://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/idi/2015/#idi2015countrycard-tab&NAM>

Namibia's current position in the world and the region. The IDI uses 11 indicators, which, taken together, allow to chart the level and evolution of ICT developments over time and highlight their progress. These indicators are divided into three sub-indices:

- ICT access (measured by, among other aspects, mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions, international Internet bandwidth per Internet user, and percentage of households with Internet access),
- ICT use (measured by, among other aspects, percentage of individuals using the Internet and active mobile-broadband subscriptions), and
- ICT skills (measured by adult literacy rate, secondary gross enrolment ratio, and tertiary gross enrolment ratio).

In the 2015 IDI, Namibia ranks 118th out of 167 countries.⁶ Globally, this puts the country in the third quartile and the IDI Medium Group of countries, which also includes Bolivia, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, Peru, and South Africa. In the African context, Namibia ranks seven out of 37 countries and places behind Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Cape Verde, Ghana, and Botswana.⁷

We can further explore Namibia's ranking by looking at its position in the three sub-indices. In terms of Internet access, Namibia ranks 117th. Looking at Internet use, Namibia takes the 116th place. However, for Internet skills,

Namibia falls to the 124th place in the IDI ranking.⁹ As noted above, ICT skills in the IDI are measured via education-related proxy-indicators, which do not specifically focus on ICT. Yet, these indicators are important if ICT is to become a factor for economic growth and development. We can generalise this further and point out, as the MIS does, that 'the ability of ICTs to fulfil their catalytic potential for development depends not only on connectivity and access, but also on usage, types of usage and the ability of individuals and communities to exercise that usage to the full'.¹⁰

Looking at how Namibia scores on individual indicators of the IDI further helps in pin-pointing areas of success and areas in which more work needs to be done. The MIS compares the results for various indicators in 2010 and 2015. Over the course of these five years, Namibia has notably improved in the number of mobile-cellular subscriptions (from 89.5 to 113.8 per 100 inhabitants), international Internet bandwidth per Internet user, and active mobile-broadband subscriptions. The number of Internet users grew by 27% and the number of households with Internet access has increased by a factor of 2.4.

In order to put these developments in perspective, a comparison with Ghana is instructive. Ghana is the African country that showed the most IDI improvement (comparing its ranking in 2010 with that in 2015). The MIS calls it one of the 'most dynamic countries' for climbing 21 places in the IDI.¹¹ In 2010, it ranked ten places behind Namibia

while in 2015 it is almost ten places ahead. Mobile-cellular subscriptions showed significant growth from 71.9 to 114.8 per 100 inhabitants. The number of Internet users has more than doubled and the number of households with Internet access is five times higher than in 2015. International Internet bandwidth per Internet user and active mobile-broadband subscriptions also show

significant growth. The MIS report credits the arrival of four undersea cables for increasing bandwidth and also bringing costs down. It also stresses the importance of policy and tax incentives.¹² We can see from this comparison that IDI areas of growth are similar in Ghana and Namibia, Ghana, however, shows higher growth rates overall.

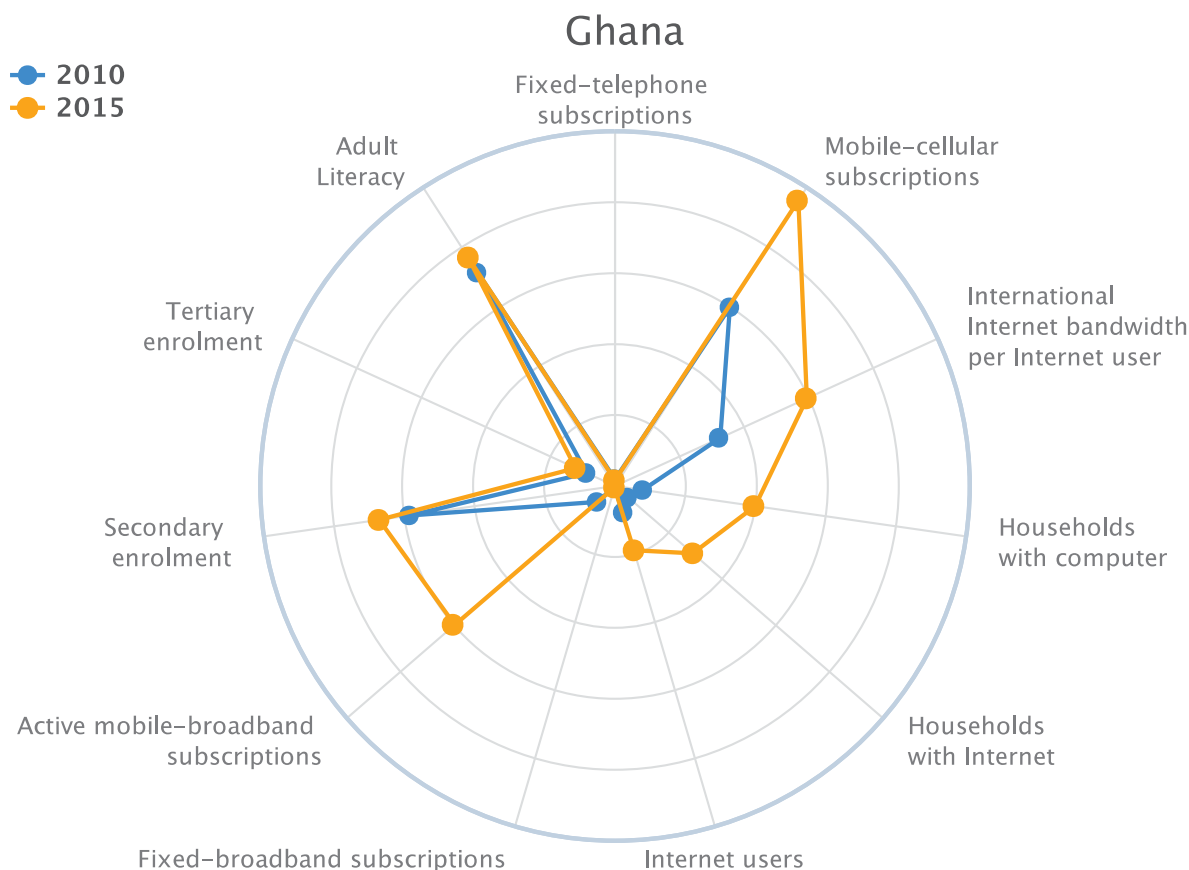


Figure 2: <http://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/idi/2015/#idi2015countrycard-tab&GHA>

Compared to the East African countries Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda, Namibia is doing well on indicators such as fixed telephone lines and mobile penetration and percentage of households with Internet.¹³

Looking at Africa as a whole, we observe rapid growth in access to the Internet. Nyirenda-Jere and Biru point out that 'in 2005, Internet penetration in Europe was almost 20 times that of Africa' and that 'by 2014, it was less than 4 times greater'.¹⁵ Similarly, in the six years between 2009 and 2014, international bandwidth in Africa increased by a factor of 20.¹⁶ In terms of the IDI, Africa is the region with the highest growth rates between 2010 and 2015.¹⁷ Africa, however, is also the region with the countries ranking lowest in the IDI. As a whole, it clearly lags behind the global ICT development.

In order to address the digital divide, the MIS Report emphasises that 'targeted policy initiatives can improve IDI performance' and 'enhance the contribution of ICTs to social and economic development'.¹⁸ There are a number of

policy documents that support the creation of an enabling policy environment for ICT in Namibia and the SADC region.

- Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP): The plan, launched in 2016, includes ICT prominently as part of infrastructure development. The plan also makes commitments to improve the government's online presence and use of social media and to build a national framework for e-services.
- SADC Digital Agenda: 2012 ICT Infrastructure Master Plan and SADC Digital 2027: The 2012 Master Plan and SADC Digital 2027 exemplify the increasing coordination in the areas of policy, infrastructure, and regulations in the SADC region.
- Agenda 2063 of the African Union emphasises the role of ICT and the digital economy for supporting 'accelerated integration and growth, technological transformation, trade and development'.
- Information Technology Policy for the Republic of Namibia (2009): The policy outlines goals for IT development, ICT use, and education and skills development.

- Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (2008): The decision to create the ministry clearly highlights the importance of ICT in furthering development in Namibia and the transition towards a knowledge-based economy.

This cursory overview of ICT in Namibia shows that the issue is complex and that there is no clear dividing line between domestic and foreign policy issues. Policy initiatives already recognise the importance of ICT. Yet, more needs to be done to provide greater access to the Internet and to harness the potential of ICTs for development. As we will see in the remainder of this paper, the solutions mainly lie in the provision of infrastructure and the creation of an enabling policy environment. The paper will also briefly discuss possibilities of foreign policy practitioners to use ICT as a tool to improve their diplomatic activities, most notably in the field of public diplomacy.

Indicator	Kenya	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda	Namibia	South Africa
Fixed lines (/100)	1.1	0.4	0.4	0.1	6.7	8.4
Mobiles (/100)	61.6	33.4	46.8	38.4	67.2	100.5
Hh with computer (/100)	8.0	0.5	2.6	2.1	15.4	18.3
Hh with internet (/100)	0.4	0.1	0.7	0.4	3.9	10.1
Internet users (/100)	25.9	7.7	11.0	12.5	6.5	12.3
Rank (of 228 countries)	115	142	138	140	113	97
ICT Development Index (IDI) ¹ 2010	2.29	1.44	1.51	1.49	2.36	3.00
IDI Global Rank Change (2008–2010)	1	1	3	0	1	–3
ICT Development Index (IDI) 2008	1.74	1.18	1.23	1.24	2.06	2.71
IDI change (2008–2010)	31.6%	22.0%	22.8%	20/2%	14.6%	10.7%

1 The IDI is calculated by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and is a composite index of ICT infrastructure and access, ICT use and intensity of use, and ICT skills and capacity to use ICT. The index has 11 components. The IDI of the surveyed countries can be compared with the top ranking countries: Sweden at 7.5 and the Republic of Korea at 7.3, as well as the USA at 6.4.
Source: ITU, 2011

Figure 4: ICT Indicators East Africa 2010.¹⁴

Key issues

- According to the ICT Development Index (IDI), Namibia ranks highly within the African continent.
- In global comparison, it is part of the IDI Medium Group and ranks in the bottom third of countries. The digital divide between developed and developing countries is clearly visible and needs to be addressed.
- There are notable policy initiatives in Namibia, the SADC region, and at the level of the African Union that have the potential to address the digital divide and promote ICT development.
- It will be important to engage in digital policy on national, regional, African, and global levels.

Three dimensions of Namibia's digital foreign policy and diplomacy

The following analysis of Namibia's digital foreign policy and diplomacy focuses on three aspects. First, it gives an overview of Internet infrastructure and digital geopolitics. Second, it addresses digital policy issues that Namibia,

Internet infrastructure and digital geopolitics

Foreign policy is never done in isolation. It is influenced by political, economic, and social developments at home and abroad. While the previous section illustrated the Namibian context, this section shifts the focus to regional and global developments.

Traditionally, land, raw materials, and industrial technology are key factors for success. With the advent of the Internet age, a new important factor has been added: digital infrastructure. ICT connects across borders and seems

like other countries, has to address at national, regional and global levels. And third, it focuses on the use of digital tools in diplomatic activities, ranging from public diplomacy to information-support for negotiations.

to make geographical location negligible. If we, however, look at the Internet's infrastructure, the importance of geopolitics becomes clear.

Nearly all of the Internet traffic flows through undersea cables. Globally, this physical infrastructure remains the most important backbone of the Internet and of ICT. The majority of these cables still follow the routes that were used when the first undersea telegraph cables were put in place in the 19th century. This also means that some

parts of the world did not appear on the map of the world's submarine cables until very recently. The SADC region is such a case. Namibia is connected through two undersea cable systems: the West Africa Cable System (WACS) and the African Coast to Europe system (ACE). WACS links South Africa and Europe through approximately 15 000

kilometres of cable with 15 landing points across the West coast of Africa and Europe. It went operational in 2012.¹⁹ The ACE connects 23 countries between South Africa and France, including two landlocked countries, on 17 000 kilometres of cable. It also went operational in 2012.²⁰

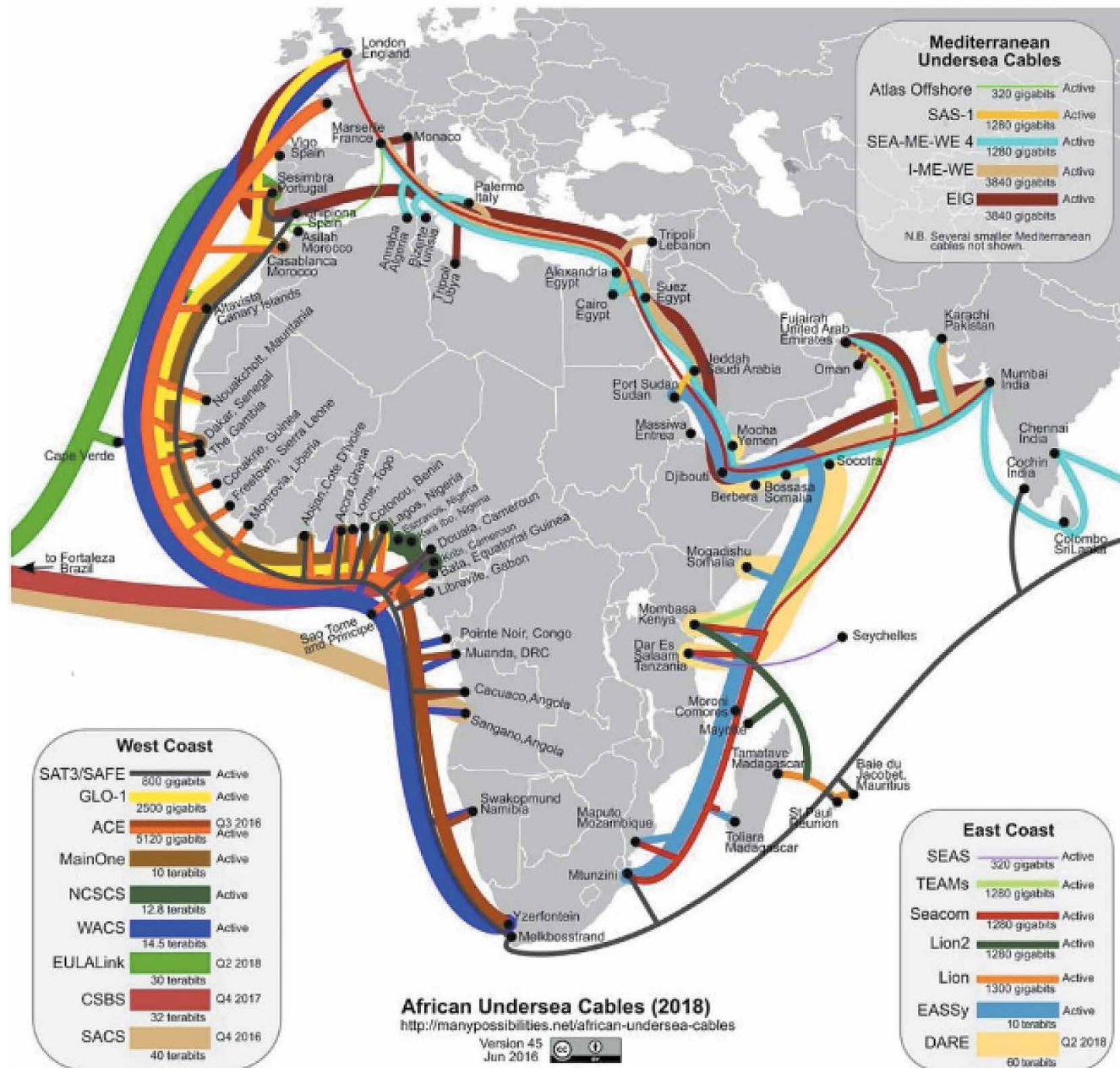


Figure 5: African Undersea Cables.²¹

These cable systems are crucial infrastructure factors that address the digital divide and support economic and social change. They have the potential to allow for cheaper access at higher bandwidths. It is clear that the development opportunities emerging from WACS and the ACE need to be used to their fullest extent.

Further, to reduce dependency on international infrastructure and to further boost local access to the Internet, the development of Internet exchange points is crucial. The first such point in Namibia, the Windhoek Internet Exchange Point, was launched in 2014.²² In a foreign policy context, it is also noteworthy that by providing Botswana

access to WACS Namibia has contributed to lowering Internet cost in its neighbouring country.

While undersea cables promise cheaper access to higher bandwidth, growth in the use of the Internet has been largely driven by mobile access in Africa as a whole and Namibia in particular. Currently, access to the Internet in Africa can still cost 30 or 40 times more than in developed

countries.²³ We can observe that 'most of the traffic between African countries (and very often within the same country) still passes over expensive international links via Europe and the US, rather than taking more direct connections'.²⁴ Harnessing the Internet as an economic growth factor is hampered by the high access costs. In order to change this, national and cross-border connectivity and policy environments need to be further improved.

Key issues

- There are multiple ways to boost Internet access. Greater connectivity was achieved in 2012 when two undersea cables, WACS and ACE, went operational.
- Further national infrastructure development and the promotion of greater cross-border connectivity in the region remain crucial challenges.
- Apart from advancements in connectivity via undersea cables, mobile access is still the most important factor to connect the unconnected in Namibia and Africa as a whole.

Digital policy and Internet governance

The role of ICT for Namibia in general and the Namibian foreign policy in particular is best understood through the lens of digital policy and Internet governance. The World Summit on the Information Society defines Internet governance as the development and application of 'shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet' by 'governments, the private sector, and civil society, in their respective roles'.²⁵ Following this definition, Internet governance allows us to focus on the discourse and the policies related to ICT. Doing so reveals the complexity and diversity of ICT issues. Internet governance addresses between 40 and 50 issues. DiploFoundation developed a classification to group them into seven main issue areas, so-called Internet governance baskets.²⁶ Each of these baskets contains between four and ten issues. The seven baskets are:

- Infrastructure and standardisation
- Security
- Human rights
- Legal
- Economic
- Development
- Sociocultural

Using this framework of seven Internet governance baskets not only allows us to understand ICT as a complex and cross-cutting issue, it is also a useful reminder that ICT cannot be treated in isolation and that policy silos need to be overcome. On top of that, a clear dividing line between foreign and domestic policy cannot be drawn. It is, therefore, important to keep in mind that Namibia's ICT foreign policy has implications for all seven Internet governance baskets.

Creating an enabling policy environment is key to reaping the benefits of ICT and the opportunities of increased connectivity in the SADC region. The Measuring the Information Society Report, for example, states that 'positive regulatory frameworks have enabled a number of countries, with different levels of performance in 2010, to improve their positions in the rankings'.²⁸ The Harambee Prosperity Plan expresses the ambitions and goals for the future of ICT in Namibia. Similarly, the 2012 Infrastructure Master Plan and SADC Digital 2027 contain the ambitions for the region, while Agenda 2063 articulated ICT aspirations for the whole continent. For Namibia, it will be important to work with partners in the region and to move towards implementation. At the same time, a keen awareness of the global agenda, discourses, and policy environment is crucial

Two global developments are especially important. First, the World Summit on the Information Society and its related processes are crucial. Active participation in global meetings and engagement of all national stakeholders in these processes will be key. One such process is the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which was established by the United Nations in 2006. It is a multi-stakeholder platform to discuss public issues related to the Internet. Global IGF meetings take place once a year. Regional and national IGFs foster continuous multi-stakeholder dialogue. There is an IGF for Africa and five sub-regional IGFs. Nyirenda-Jere and Biru point out that Namibia does not take part in the sub-regional IGF and has not established a national one.²⁹ This means that there is some untapped potential that can be accessed through engaging all relevant stakeholders and national talents. Second, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) establish the global development agenda for 2030. ICT is explicitly as well as implicitly

mentioned in the agenda and is linked with, among other aspects, poverty eradication and economic growth.

The development of ICT in Namibia will depend on international development co-operation. We can also see that

it is a priority of the international community to address the digital divide. Therefore, aligning policy goals with the global discourse will help to garner support and develop partnerships.

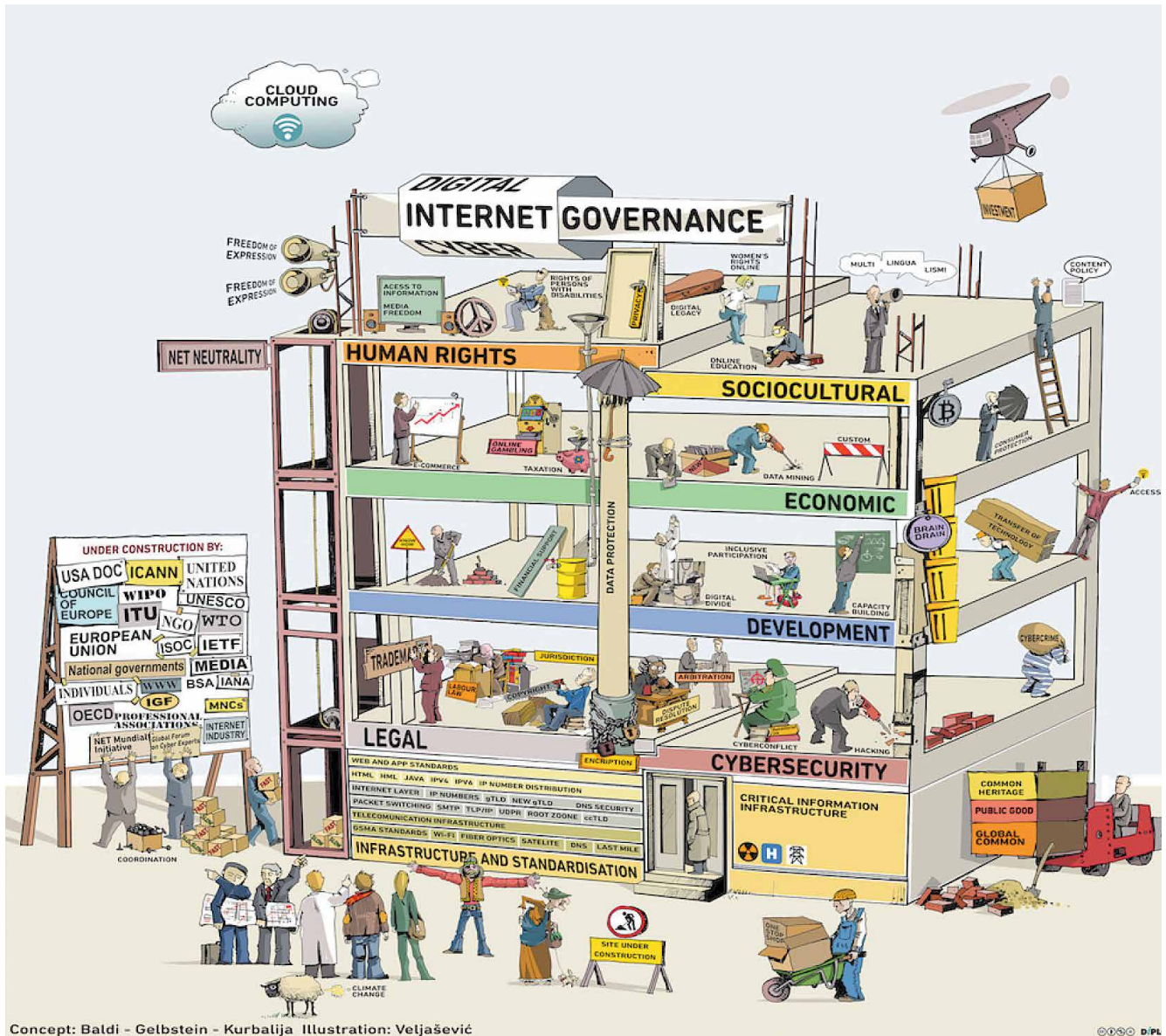


Figure 6: Internet Governance Building.²⁷

Key issues

- The framework of seven baskets of Internet governance (infrastructure and standardisation, security, human rights, legal, economic, development, and sociocultural baskets) is helpful to illustrate the complexity of the issue and to highlight the need for inter-ministerial co-operation.
- Policies and regulatory frameworks are crucial in order to fully benefit from ICT possibilities.
- ICT policy needs to be approached as a cross-sectoral issue and cannot be treated in policy silos.
- It will be important to ensure a 'government as whole' approach to manage the digital impact on economic development, security, culture, education, etc.
- It is recommended to activate all national talents in the digital field (government, business, academic, non-governmental) through establishing a national Internet Governance Forum.

Digital diplomacy

ICT shapes the conduct of foreign policy in various ways. While diplomacy, understood as the management of international relations through negotiation by official representatives, is a practice that shows incredible continuity over time, ICT has clearly impacted the conduct of diplomacy. In some cases, ICT allows foreign ministries and diplomats to do more with less. At the same time, ICT has led to increased flows of information and the need of rapid responses and greater engagement with publics at home and abroad.

Digital diplomacy is one of the most important new developments that impact the conduct of foreign policy. Digital diplomacy describes the impact that the advent of ICT has on the day-to-day work of ministries of foreign affairs, the conduct of negotiations, and possibilities for public diplomacy. Most commonly, digital diplomacy is associated with public diplomacy and the following observations will focus on this area.

Public diplomacy can be understood as the communication with foreign and domestic publics in order to gain or consolidate soft power. More specifically, the Internet created a new environment for public diplomacy, which is characterised by

- 'the rapid availability of information to public everywhere, where governments are too often behind the

game, and certainly behind the 24/7 news media (both traditional and new media)

- the abundance of visual information
- the virtually infinite quantity of information available with the expansion of the World Wide Web
- the transformation of the Web from a one-to-one source of information into a multidirectional forum for interactive debate³⁰

Ministries of foreign affairs increasingly engage with social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Such engagement is part of diplomacy in the 21st century. It, however, also demands additional resources and personnel. Former US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton strongly associated social media engagement with communicating effectively. Shortly after taking office in 2009, she said that 'we are, in my view, wasting time, wasting money, wasting opportunities because we are not prepared to communicate effectively with what is out there in the business world and the private world'.³¹ As a result the social media engagement of the US State Department was intensified, making the US one of the countries with the strongest social media presence. It remains to be seen to what extent this view and the associated social media engagement can be adopted to the Namibian context. However, as levels of Internet capacity, access, and usage increase in Namibia and the region, so will the need to engage with publics at home and abroad via ICT.

Key issues

- Digital diplomacy encourages the skilful use of ICT, including social media such as Twitter and Facebook, in public diplomacy.
- Capacity building is important in exploring this avenue of engaging publics at home and abroad.

The global discourse on ICT and development

Foreign policy is never done in isolation. It is, therefore, paramount to understand the global discourse and policy environment. In the area of ICT for development, two key sets of goals and their associated processes stand out: the

ICT and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs, agreed by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, represent the global ambitions for the 2030 development agenda. They build on and expand the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and are the most ambitious development goals ever set. The SDGs consist of 17 goals that are broken down into 169 targets. In

Sustainable Development Goals and the World Summit on the Information Society. It will be important to not only engage these debates but also align foreign policy with these processes and the associated goals where feasible.

contrast to the MDGs, these goals are equally relevant for developed and developing countries.

ICT will be crucial for moving towards achieving the ambitious goals of the 2030 development agenda. A recent report from the Earth Institute at Columbia University argues that the SDGs are 'definitely "stretch" goals that



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



Figure 7: Sustainable Development Goals. Source: UN.org

will require a transformation of societies that is far deeper and faster than in the past'.³² Despite the almost utopian ambition of the SDGs, 'the rapid development of ICT-based services and systems offers the possibility for the needed deep transformation of the world economy and societies more broadly'.³³

ICT, as a cross-cutting issue, is included at various points in the SDGs. It is, however, important to note that ICT does not have its own goal. Yet, there are a number of explicit as well as implicit references to the importance of ICT. ICT is mentioned explicitly as part of:

- education (goal four),
- women's empowerment (goal five),

World Summit on the Information Society action lines

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is a global summit established in two phases: in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005. These aimed to lay the groundwork to build an 'Information Society for All' and present concrete steps towards this goal. One of the most important outcomes of the WSIS process are 11 action lines

- infrastructure, industrialisation, innovation (goal nine), and
- implementation and global partnership (goal 17).³⁴

Each of these goals is broken down into measurable indicators that can be applied to assess progress towards the 2030 development agenda. In this regard, the SDGs are helpful for further developing concrete national policies and building international co-operation on the basis of specific goals, targets and indicators for ICT development. As more and more national policies and development co-operation efforts are aligned with the SDGs, it is crucial to be aware of this link between achieving the SDGs and ICT, and to emphasise this, especially in dialogue with partners from developed countries.

included in the Geneva Plan of Action, which map the complexity, importance, and potential of ICT. Action line 11 is of particular importance in a foreign policy context. It calls for raising the priority of ICT in development projects and accelerate public-private partnerships. It also invites regional organisations to mainstream ICT in their work.

Action line 11: International and regional co-operation

International co-operation among all stakeholders is vital in implementation of this plan of action and needs to be strengthened with a view to promoting universal access and bridging the digital divide, inter alia, by provision of means of implementation.

- a) Governments of developing countries should raise the relative priority of ICT projects in requests for international co-operation and assistance on infrastructure development projects from developed countries and international financial organisations.
- b) Within the context of the UN's Global Compact and building upon the United Nations Millennium

Declaration, build on and accelerate public-private partnerships, focusing on the use of ICT in development.

- c) Invite international and regional organisations to mainstream ICTs in their work programmes and to assist all levels of developing countries, to be involved in the preparation and implementation of national action plans to support the fulfilment of the goals indicated in the declaration of principles and in this Plan of Action, taking into account the importance of regional initiatives.³⁵

We can also draw connections and direct linkages between the SDGs and the WSIS action lines. Doing so highlights the importance of ICT for development and presents us with a matrix that helps in directing foreign policy and diplomacy towards ICT and development. A full overview linking the SDGs and the WSIS action lines can be found

in the annex. In the context of this paper and its particular focus, it makes sense to focus on SDG 1, which calls for ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, and the WSIS action lines. The next section will develop this point further and also look into the general discourse on ICT and poverty eradication.

Key issues

- ICT is crucial for achieving the ambitious SDG agenda. By aligning ICT-related foreign policy explicitly with the SDGs, additional momentum can be gained and international co-operation can be fostered.
- The implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 development agenda needs to be supported via digital means.
- WSIS action line 11 (calling for making ICT a priority in development projects, accelerating public-private partnerships, and mainstreaming ICT in the work of regional organisations) represents an important yardstick for a foreign policy that acknowledges the importance of ICT.

ICT, economic growth, and ending poverty

Some see ICT as a panacea for developing countries. Their argument is that ICT allows developing countries to leapfrog stages of development and gain access to global markets and support economic growth. Others highlight a growing digital divide and warn that ICT might further solidify existing inequalities.³⁶

There is evidence that links ICT with economic growth. For example, it can be suggested that a '10% increase in broadband access correlates to 1.35% increase in GDP

growth' and that an additional '10% in mobile penetration can bring 4% increase in productivity'.³⁷

The case that ICT, if managed appropriately, is an important factor in ending poverty is made strongly in many global discourses. As mentioned in the previous section, SDG 1 which calls for ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, can be linked to many of the WSIS action lines. We can visualise this through the so-called WSIS-SDG Matrix, which is reproduced in part below.

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	e-gov	e-bus	e-lea	e-hea	e-emp	e-env	e-agr	e-sci	C8	C9	C10	C11
SDG 1																		

Figure 8: WSIS-SDG Matrix (part).³⁸

Based on SDG 1 targets and WSIS action lines, the WSIS-SDG Matrix links poverty reduction to:

- promoting ICT for development by government and all stakeholder (C1)
- developing and strengthening ICT infrastructure (C2)
- increasing access to knowledge and information (C3)
- capacity building and the integration of ICT in education and training at all levels (C4)
- building confidence and security in the use of ICTs (such as training awareness of online threats and developing secure application) (C5)
- actively developing and using various ICT applications (C7):
 - e-business

- e-health
- e-agriculture
- e-science
- developing the ethical dimensions of the Information Society by enabling meaningful participation (C10)³⁹

The link between ICT and poverty reduction is generally less well researched than the link between ICT and economic growth.⁴⁰ We also need to take note of the warning that ‘the mechanisms through which this link [between ICT and poverty eradication] takes place have yet to be systematically interrogated’ seriously.⁴¹ More research needs to be done and more learning-by-doing needs to take place before we can understand this link better.

Conclusion

This report addressed a variety of issues in three key areas:

- the dimensions of Namibia’s digital foreign policy and diplomacy,
- the global discourse on ICT and development and its implications for Namibia, and
- ICT as a factor in poverty eradication.

With regard to the dimensions of Namibia’s digital foreign policy and diplomacy, the report suggests a three-pronged approach consisting of the following key areas: Internet infrastructure and digital geopolitics, digital policy and Internet governance, and digital diplomacy.

The report explored global discourses on ICT for development by looking at the SDGs and the WSIS action lines

in particular. Connections can be drawn between many of the SDG goals and targets and the WSIS action lines. This further highlights the importance of ICT for development. The last section focused specifically on ICT and economic growth and poverty eradication and gave further evidence for the importance of ICT for development.

In conclusion, Namibia’s optimum formula to capture the development-potential of ICTs will depend on a myriad of factors, including dialogue across fields and sectors, at home and abroad, and alignment and engagement with global policy processes. This way, an enabling environment can be created in which ICT can be much more than ‘Internet access’ alone; it can drive development and growth, reduce inequalities, and help alleviate poverty.

Endnotes

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Katharina E Höne

Dr Katharina E Höne is a research associate in diplomacy and global governance and project manager for online learning with DiploFoundation. In this capacity, she researches and lectures on a variety of topics in diplomatic studies and works on Diplo's capacity building projects. In 2014, she completed her doctorate at the Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University, Wales. She obtained a Master in Diplomatic Studies with distinction from the University of Leicester, GB. Before joining Diplo, She worked on a research project on the Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General at the University of Jena, Germany and interned with the German Federal Foreign Office.

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