



Caribbean Telecommunications Union



Harnessing the Power of Innovation - the Engine for ICT-Enabled Caribbean Development

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The Caribbean ICT Roadshow was officially launched on 28th July, 2009 in Grenada, by The Hon. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada and CARICOM Head of Government responsible for Science and Technology. In his address at the launch, the Prime Minister noted the challenges faced by the region and the opportunities presented by ICT to mitigate their effects and to foster national and Caribbean advance.

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From August to December 2009, the Roadshow visited Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Curacao, the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Republic of Suriname with a programme designed to deliver tangible benefits to the citizens of the region and lay a foundation on which knowledge-based societies and economies may be built.

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Each Roadshow was customised to reflect the special circumstances the countries visited, however the following core elements were addressed throughout the region:

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1. ICT capacity building
2. ICT innovation and entrepreneurship
3. Network Operators' Issues
4. Fostering local content development,
5. Encouraging collaborative work in ICT
6. Building ICT policy and regulatory capacity
7. Fostering responsible use and ICT innovation in Youth

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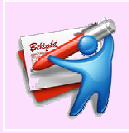
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Interspersed with these country visits were ICT stakeholder meetings in the five (5) countries as well as an Executive Lecture Forum in St. Lucia and a series of IXP Workshops in the British Virgin Islands, Grenada, St. Maarten and Trinidad & Tobago.

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The Roadshow adopted a unique approach which linked the dissemination of information to activities that reinforced the message and initiated activities which will produce tangible benefits in the long term.

The very highly interactive Roadshows featured the following modules.



1. POLICY MAKERS & REGULATORS' FORUM

The regulatory imperatives for an environment of rapid technological innovation and the convergence of formerly distinct disciplines are addressed in this Forum. It considers the transformational potential of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a means to foster sustainable economic and social development.



2. SME BUSINESS FORUM

This forum considers key areas for redefining small business and how existing ICT tools can be used in small and medium size businesses to improve their efficiency and extend their reach to markets which could not be tapped in the traditional ways. Particular applications for research, accounting, procurement, inventory management, marketing and customer service are explored.



3. THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

The value of the Internet and how the global decision making process operates by engagement of all stakeholders is discussed in this Forum. The value of Generic Top Level domain names and the options for the management of these resources at the country level are explored along with the imminent exhaustion of the IPv4 numbering and naming system which will be replaced by IPv6.



4. NETWORK OPERATORS' FORUM

This forum seeks to facilitate the collaborative work of operators in the establishment of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) and Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTS) and in the work of a Caribbean Network Operators' Group (CARIBNOG).



5. ICT INNOVATOR'S FORUM

ICT Innovation will be showcased in this forum which will present a variety of opportunities for the effective use of ICT. It will promote a better understanding of the innovation ecosystem. Practitioners in the field will share their experiences and discuss the prerequisites to encourage innovation and the use of the technologies to advance the region to higher levels of prosperity.



6. YOUTH FORUM

The keen affinity of youth to ICT is as a motivator for innovation in this forum which will deal with issues directly focused on the youth. Dangers in cyberspace are discussed and instructions for content creation will be given.



7. CTU AND PARTNERS AT YOUR SERVICE

The respective roles and work of the CTU and its partners are presented in this forum which will make a case for Caribbean ICT stakeholders to participate in the activities of regional and international ICT organizations.



8. THE BANKS AND BUSINESS FORUM

This forum explores banking tools available to small and medium size enterprises and the benefits of ICT tools in banking and business.



9. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Roadshow visits selected communities to discuss the potential of ICT to enhance lives. The capabilities of mobile phones are demonstrated and the efficiencies that can be achieved are discussed. Participants have to opportunity to seek answers for ICT-related questions in an informal setting.



10. HOT SEAT DISCUSSION PANEL

Issues of national importance are discussed by stakeholders with a direct interest in the selected topic. The panels are configured to ventilate concerns, present perspectives and identify challenges, to arrive at consensus on the solution.

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Without exception, the first six ICT Roadshows were enthusiastically received and highly commended by CTU members, ICT stakeholders and citizens for the insight provided and the prospects of real and sustainable benefits accruing to their countries. They noted the timeliness, necessity of the initiative and the effectiveness of the various programmes in improving public awareness, educating, mobilising ICT communities and prompting action in ICT development. In addition the Roadshows have unearthed not only obstacles to the effective use of ICTs but also a considerable reservoir of ICT innovative talent in the region.

The benefits of the Roadshow were clearly demonstrated in that:

- Stakeholders in the English-speaking countries were convinced of the need for and committed to the establishment of local IXPs in so much as there is now a race on to have the first IXP in the English speaking Caribbean.
- There was a real commitment by stakeholders to collaborate on ICT issues for mutual benefit and to participate in the CARIBNOG programme.
- ICT communities were mobilised to strengthen and support ICT development in each country.
- Stakeholders introduced to the work of the organisations that direct the development of the Internet expressed interest in participating in their activities.
- The seeds of a local content industry were planted through the training of youth in content creation.
- Young people were made aware of the dangers of cyberspace, while parents and guardians were educated on their role in the children's ICT development.

The value of the Roadshow is summed up in the following comments from some of the participants.

- *"...it's been a long time since we've had so many IT professionals in one room in Belize...if nothing else you have at least motivated some of us to try again...we did indeed have an IT association in Belize, it had just become dormant.....the Roadshow has motivated a number of us who were on the board of that organisation to revive it again." - IT Professional, Belize*
- *"I thoroughly enjoyed the days... it's now for the actions to be implemented." - ICT Innovator, Antigua and Barbuda*
- *"It was a gathering of talent and ambition and this was without a doubt an added value for the development of the Island... I learned more about ICT in two days than I did in the last two years. For this I thank you and am eternally grateful." – MP, Curacao*
- *"I learnt how to create my own podcast and of the dangers in cyberspace" Student - St. Vincent and the Grenadines*

Based on the outcomes of 2009 Caribbean ICT Roadshows, there is no doubt that the initiative is filling a void in the Caribbean ICT landscape. It has been very effective in educating and raising awareness on ICT innovation and has mobilised ICT Stakeholders to commence work on a number of beneficial ICT activities that will foster ICT enabled development.

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The 2010 Roadshow programme will commence in March and will culminate in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2010 with an ICT Symposium at which a comprehensive report highlighting recommendations for fostering ICT innovation and development will be presented and ICT innovators will be recognised. Confirmed Dates for the 2010 ICT Caribbean ICT Roadshow country-visits are as follows:

	Country	Dates	Activity
	Belize	24 th -26 th February	Follow-up Workshop
	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	23 rd March	Executive Lecture Forum
	Montserrat	24 th March	Executive Lecture Forum
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UPDATE	British Virgin Islands	16 th -18 th May	Roadshow
UPDATE	St Lucia	31 st May -2 nd June	Roadshow
UPDATE	Jamaica	27 th 29 th June	Roadshow
UPDATE	Grenada	14 th -16 th July	Roadshow
UPDATE	St Maarten	15 th -18 th August	Roadshow
UPDATE	Barbados	27 th -29 th September	Roadshow
UPDATE	Trinidad and Tobago	14 th -18 th November	Roadshow
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