Summary of ngNOG VII, Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna: Nov 26 - Dec 02, 2012

The 7th edition of the annual Nigerian Network Operators' Group (ngNOG) Workshop and Meetings were successfully co-hosted by the National Board for Technical Education and the Kaduna Polytechnic (KadPoly) in Kaduna from November 26 - December 2, 2012.

The 2012 ngNOG Workshop in Kaduna was declared open by the Honourable Minister of Education, Professor Ruqayyah Ahmad Rufa'i (who was represented on the occasion by Professor Sagir Adamu Abbas) a day after the bomb blast at Jaji in Kaduna State (which sad event actually happened on delegates' arrival date). It was closed with a celebratory dinner by the newly-appointed Rector of Kaduna Polytechnic, Dr. M.B. Ibrahim, the night before the Local Council elections in Kaduna State and the ngNOG Meeting, when (that part of) the world was to end according to some media reports.

Ninety seven (97) amazing Nigerian delegates from 32 Institutions and Organizations from all over the country denied hysteria and participated in the six parallel tracks offered at the 2012 ngNOG workshop in Kaduna, making it the best attended and diversified in the history of the event. There were 35 delegates from 14 institutions in the single track at pre-ngNOG Ibadan; 56 delegates from 14 institutions in the three tracks of ngNOG Jos; 75 delegates from 21 institutions in five tracks at ngNOG Kano; 71 delegates from 25 institutions in the five tracks of the 2008 ngNOG in Lagos; 85 delegates from 15 Institutions and Organizations in the five parallel tracks of the 2009 ngNOG workshop in Ilorin; 66 delegates from 18 Institutions in the six parallel tracks of the 2010 ngNOG workshop in Port Harcourt; and 77 delegates from 31 institutions in the five tracks offered at the 2011 edition in Ile-Ife.

The distribution of the 97 delegates to the 2012 workshop tracks is given below:

25 System Administration (SA)
23 Internet Infrastructure (II)
13 Internet Services and Applications (IS)
14 ICT Strategy, Policy and Management (SPM)
15 Applications and Content Development (ACD)
07 Appropriate Power Technologies (APT)
[G2:5026 class=g2image_float_left]ngNOG VII at KadPoly was also dominated by Academic Network Operators: 88% of the 97 delegates were from Higher Education Instions (HEIs). Besides being the best attended so far, the 2012 ngNOG at KadPoly records several other significant milestone achievements. ngNOG VII is the first to be hosted outside the University Education Sub-System. From becoming visible at the 6th edition at OAU Ife, Polytechnics and Colleges moved on to account for 53% of the institutions and 64%% of all the delegates at ngNOG KadPoly. And for the first time ever, there was broad representation of Institutional Principal Officers to interact directly with ICT Directors from across Higher Education sectoral divides in the SPM track. As a result, Librarians from UniPort, KadPoly and other institutions are discussing systemic strategies to widen and deepen useful and credible interventions and relationships championed by the Mortenson Center.

Host Kaduna Polytechnic (KadPoly) led institutional representation with 28 (29% of) delegates. It was followed by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) with 7, and Yaba College of Technology, Lagos with 5 delegates. The 3rd position was a tie between the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the National Assembly and the University of Ibadan, each with 4 delegates. In terms of utilization of hosting benefits, while the University of Jos retains its long-standing record (50% of all delegates at the 1st edition), KadPoly is almost at par with the University of Ilorin for a healthy third position in the history of the event.

Participation rate for women at ngNOG Kaduna was 14%. This is a little higher than the previous year, but is still low. It was 26% in 2006; 13% in 2007; 14% in 2008; 19% in 2009; 33% in 2010; and 12% at ngNOG Ife in 2011.

Meetings and Tuturials

It was an especially rich and interactive event, with daily evening discussions respectively on the following topics of current interest:

Cloud Computing issues of data security, confidentiality, and cloud ownership) were discussed and moderated by Kanmi Adewara of OAU Ife;
e-learning (and issues of technology platforms, management and roles of teachers and students, and experiences of the various institutions), was moderated by Benjamin Ben of UniJos;
Data Security issues (including unauthorized access, disaster recovery, integrity, and physical security) were discussed and moderated by Geraldine Daloeng of UniJos. Interest in this topic was such that the discussions spilled over to a second evening; and
Internet Governance, Net neutrality, and Cyber Security issue-discussions were moderated by Dele Amire of Network Infrastructure & Services Technologies Ltd.
Inadequate preparedness of students for eLearning was a common problem. In order to accelerate and improve impactful participation of students in eLearning projects, the ngNOG 2012 Assembly recommended that the Forum and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should do what they can towards upgrading ICT awareness, knowledge and skills of secondary school students and teachers. Most HEIs have faculties and/or institutes of education, as well as primary and secondary schools for their staffs' (and neighborhood) children. Many HEIs also admit significant proportions of their freshmen and women from their own schools of basic and remedial studies. These are logical places for HEIs to start making appropriate interventions towards enabling participation of new entrants in eLearning activities. This is especially important because (among other things) the largest classes on all campuses- where eLearning would have immediate impact and simplify life- are the general studies programs, and these are populated by new entrants.

On Friday 30th November, an enthralling tutorial was delivered by Ahmed Atere of Meed Technologies Ltd, on planning, designing, equipment standards, building and maintenance of Campus Networks.

The 2012 ngNOG Meeting took place on Saturday, December 1st, at Hotel 17 in Kaduna (where most delegates and instructors were accommodated; SPM track delegates were accommodated at the nearby Asaa Pyramid Hotel, on the same street). An overview of ngNOG this far was presented and discussed. Workshop track reports and suggestions for improvements were presented and discussed. Panel discussions were held on formation of proper REN clusters, sustenance and maintenance of the high standards and integrity of ngNOG and the Forum, and plans for specialized workshops (esp. on network monitoring) and collaboration project activities.

Delegates requested that a special account be opened by the Forum, for alumni and other individuals to make free financial contributions towards sustaining ngNOG and the Forum. The ngNOG Assembly also urged that Institutions should be enlightened to accelerate impact and rate of capacity building, by each sending a full compliment of delegates to ngNOG (that is, at least one delegate to each of the six tracks).

Tours and Social Networking Activities

A football match took place at Murtala Square in the heart of Kaduna, in the morning of Friday November 30, with ngNOG delegates scoring 2 goals and allegedly allowing instructors to score as many as 5 goals Smiling

After the match, delegates were treated to a tour of the Centre for Historical Documentation and Research (Arewa House). The day closed with a grand dinner and cultural dances organized by our host at the Kaduna Polytechnic. "We are the practical, doing sector of higher education, as you shall see very shortly", remarked the Rector, on behalf of the NBTE Executive Secretary.

Earlier (on Saturday, November 24th), ngNOG Instructional Track Leaders and Organizers travelled to Zaria to tour the new Campus Network and Data Centre at the Ahmadu Bello University that was dedicated (by Jonathan Fanton, the former President of the MacArthur Foundation) just a day earlier.

Based on their report, SPM Track instructors and delegates (including the Rector of KadPoly and the Director of the Centre of Excellence for Technical and Vocational Education and Training) made the same trip (on Wednesday, November 28th) to ABU Zaria, to have a look and pay homage at the "Holy of Holies" of Campus Network and Data Centre Infrastructure in Nigeria.

Travelling from Kaduna to Zaria requires driving through Jaji, where a bombing incident had taken place on Sunday, November 25- the arrival date of delegates to ngNOG VII.

As we had occasion to remark at the conclusion of the ngNOG editions at Jos in 2006 and in the Niger Delta in 2010, we had a marvelous time and not a single untoward event happened to any of us.

Acknowledgements