Promoting Use of Broadband: Key Enablers for Vanuatu

Ronald Box

Regulator

The Government
of The Republic
of Vanuatu

TRR

Telecommunications &
Radiocommunications
Regulator

Why is Broadband So Important?

- Broadband is a transformative platform that impacts on the ICT sector & ALL other sectors of the economy & improves quality of life

- Broadband is the ENABLER. It facilitates growth & innovation in all sectors & serves as a vital productivity gain mechanism. It expands & strengthen the economy as a whole

- Broadband dramatically changes & improves our personal lives, our businesses and our economy

- Broadband is powerful & has a multiplier effect

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Key Enablers for Broadband

- GOV, TRR, Licencee, Stakeholder & community support – needs everyone involved & aware

- International & regional support & advice, & expert advice mechanisms

- Learn from others & make appropriate national decisions. Don't "reinvent the wheel"

- Plan carefully – move promptly

- Need appropriate Policies, legal instruments & regulatory arrangements in place

- UAP implementation is critical enabler

Where are we re Key Enablers?

- We have GOV, TRR, Licencee, (some) Stakeholder support, but we have to build more Stakeholder support, & community support & awareness

- We have International & Regional support & advice, & expert advice mechanisms

- We are not "reinventing the wheel" – *but* we are making appropriate national decisions

- We are planning carefully & ready to move promptly, & we have or are developing Policies, legal instruments & regulatory arrangements

- UAP is being implemented

TRR
Telecommunication &
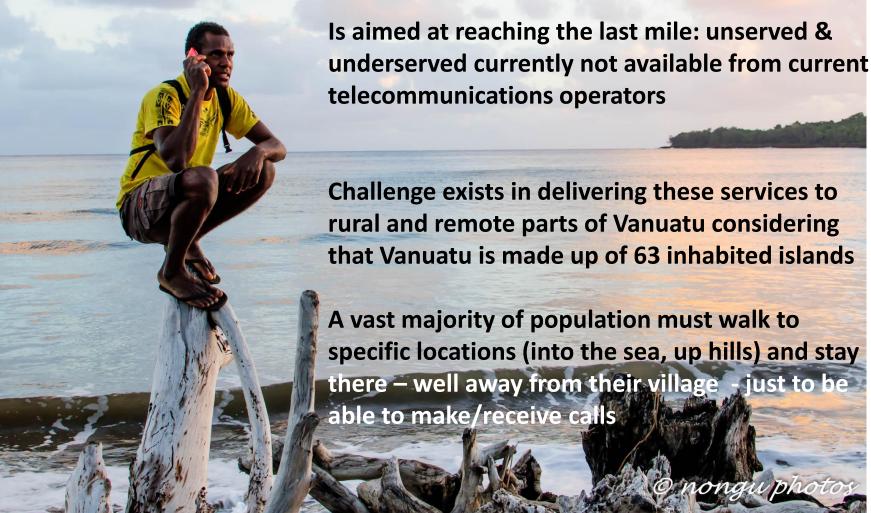Radiocommunication
Regulator

Broadband & Universal Service/Access

- Broadband only available in Port Vila & Luganville
- Broadband needs to be provided to all Vanuatu citizens:
  - to ensure maximum benefit to Vanuatu as a whole
  - to provide non discriminatory availability
  - for fairness & equity
- GOV's National ICT Policy & the UAP, & a Broadband Policy or Plan are key facilitators in the framework to achieve this objective

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Universal Access Framework

- Millennium Development Goals – set by UN
- Government's Priority Action Agenda (PAA) 2006 – 2015
- GOV's November 2013:
  - National ICT Policy
  - Universal Access Policy (UAP)
  - National Cyber Security Policy
- The Act & UAP Fund: Agreement between Australian AID, OGCIO & TRR for utilization of UAP Fund.
- TRR is implementing the policy, manages universal access provision & administers the UAP Fund
- GOV is developing its Broadband Policy/Plan

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Universal Access Policy (1)

Is aimed at reaching the last mile: unserved & underserved currently not available from current telecommunications operators

Challenge exists in delivering these services to rural and remote parts of Vanuatu considering that Vanuatu is made up of 63 inhabited islands

A vast majority of population must walk to specific locations (into the sea, up hills) and stay there – well away from their village - just to be able to make/receive calls

© nongu photos

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Universal Access Policy (2)

- Developed by GOV under the TRR Act 2009 (the Act), after in-depth, & comprehensive policy consultation
- Policy has a 'Pay' (collect a levy) or 'Play' (agree with operators on an approach that will achieve Policy objectives) approach
- 3 players determined in 2014: Digicel, TVL, Telsat
- The Act provides for the Regulator to make & finalize contracts on behalf of the Government, for subsidies of telecom services to UAP areas
- TRR has developed a public UAP Implementation Report & will do so regularly for stakeholder awareness
- TRR reports to Minister on progress every 6 months

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Universal Access Policy Implementation – in action (1)

- The policy is innovative, powerful & visionary
- Has already gained traction, commitment & support
- Implementation plans developed
- TRR negotiating with industry "players" & "payers"
- Importantly, the Policy is Broadband focused
- Eagerly awaited & supported by rural & remote communities, business, consumers & stakeholders
- Is a leader in the Pacific & many other countries
- Could become a benchmark for others
- Combined approach being taken – all will contribute to achieve the 98% goal – & we may achieve more!

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

UAP Targets

- By 1st of January 2018, **98%** of the population must have access to voice, narrowband and broadband internet services
- Broadband internet speeds of 21 Mbps download and 12 Mbps upload – TRR developing its Interpretation
- These services must be in place at all schools, health facilities and public offices (the communities)
- TRR will specify QOS, measure & confirm coverage, & implement & monitor the Policy
- TRR can levy a fee up to 4% on all "payer" operators if they do not wish to "play" AND HAS for 2014 & is likely to do so for coming years to achieve UAP goals

What UAP will achieve? (1)

- Digital divide will be bridged through UAP
- Rural & remote areas will have same access to, & provision & use of, services as Port Vila & Luganville
- Access to ICTs/Broadband in schools: Focus on education
- University degrees – online – for rural & remote areas
- No discrimination & lesser need to travel, equality
- Fit with GOV On-line Policy & Connectivity Goal
- Perfect fit, match with & great support to Vanuatu's Vision of: "An educated, healthy, wealthy Vanuatu"
- Assists keeping rural & remote communities together, preserves Vanuatu's culture & ideology

What UAP will achieve? (2)

- ICT & Broadband access to Vanuatu citizens & residents in general, will be radically expanded
- ICTs/Broadband will transform government services & public administration
- ICT's/Broadband will supercharge advance & the socio-economic development of the country
- Promotes creative collaboration & action of public & private entities, academia, civil society & the public in general through a shared vision & platform for multi-stakeholder & multi-sector coordination & collaboration in conjunction with the National ICT Policy

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Vital Statistics

- Voice & SMS population coverage is currently estimated to be around 92%.
- Internet Usage nationally is very low. 2009 Census report found: 6.7% of population uses internet (five times more in urban areas than rural)
- Internet subscriptions now 15 - 16%, but subscriptions remain very low; particularly in rural & remote areas
- Digital Divide gap must be closed – Government's UAP is intended to overcome this challenge – otherwise gap widens even more
- Broadband penetration is lagging and needs an impetus – the UAP is the stimulus tonic!

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Where are we today?

- Operators have connected to the submarine cable
- Market stimulation: An exciting time for broadband users in Port Vila with increased access to & use of broadband services - particularly mobile broadband
- Prices down & speeds up
- Variety of choice & cost of access to broadband internet services – but more needed
- UAP & development of other UA initiatives to drive demand & assist & contribute to achievement of 98% population coverage goal – fully coordinated & integrated approach
- All licencees must contribute to achievement of GOV's UAP goals

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Other UA Initiatives

- Three grant programs were developed; 2 of which are directly tied to schools:

(i)   CLICC (Computer Lab & Internet Community Center) - 15

(i)   Tablets for Students - 1000

(ii) Community Internet cafes - 10

- APT Telecentre Project at 3 rural locations

- E-Government Network connecting public offices throughout Vanuatu

- All are Broadband focused

- Other UAP indicatives

TRR
Telecommunication & Radiocommunication Regulator

How to achieve this?

- Cooperative working with operators, stakeholders and ALL other relevant parties is TRR's methodology
- Rollout out of services to unserved & underserved areas by service providers, the "players"
- Collect levy into the UAP Fund to rollout services from the "payers" to compliment & contribute to the rollout of the "players"
- Connecting Government & public offices through the E-Gov network
- Deployment of other UA initiatives to drive demand & add to achieving overall population coverage & stimulate service take up – previous slide is a good example of that & more to come

TRR
Telecommunication &
Radiocommunication
Regulator

Expected Outcomes

- Increased ICT/Broadband usage in schools & communities will drive demand & assist in widened education
- Improved use of ICT's, particularly mobile broadband, will greatly contribute to Vanuatu's economy & growth
- Connecting those that do not currently have access to existing services will derive social & economic value & benefit & bridge the current digital divide gap – 'equality'
- By January 2018, 98% of Vanuatu's population will have access to not just mobile voice but, importantly, broadband services
- Increased consumer benefits for rural & remote users: faster speeds & lower costs, & enhanced products & services, with educational, medical & social benefits
- Advanced business activities through access to ICT's