GINKS PROJECT NODE MEETING

"POPULARISING PROJECTS USING THE MEDIA"

The GINKS southern Project-node meeting was held on Thursday, September 30, 2010, with the theme **"Popularizing Your Projects Using The Media".** In opening the meeting, Mr. Ibrahim Inusah (co-ordinator of GINKS) welcomed all the participants (who were both from the public and private sector) and mentioned to them that the purpose for the meeting is to help members of the node understand the impact that popularization could have on projects and how to apply themselves to popularizing their projects using one of the most effective tools (if not the most) of popularization which is the media.

Mounting the podium, the resource person Prof. Absalom Mutere started by asking the participants to share their experiences in the projects they are running presently and how they expect the theme of the meeting to address their need to popularize those projects. He said that organisations have not quite appreciated the power in information and delivery systems, and how they can use this to boost the popularity of their projects and harness their image.

According to him, popularization must go beyond what makes organisation looks good to the level of applying it as a strategic version of reality. To this extent popularization must be:

- **Deliberate:** Intentional. Designed to influence, gain understanding, provide information and obtain feedback.

- **Planned:** organized and systematic, requiring research and analysis.

- **Performance oriented:** Policy and projects which are responsive to community concerns.

- **Public interest specific:** Mutually beneficial to the organization and public concerns and interests.

Prof Mutere deliberating on the theme

Some participants listening

Prof. Mutere continued by postulating that popularizing must follow a cycle, as this is what determines how stories which ordinarily will not make front page news suddenly become a media success. Namely:

Research and analysis – You must clearly identify who you are talking to, which ought to lead to Policy formulation, and programming of the details pertaining to the pattern (what should be addressed and how) and time frame for the project activity. This must then be properly communicated in order to get the desired feedback, as the feedback will not only help to justify the project but would also help to do program assessment and adjustment (where necessary). Leaving this part of his presentation, the Prof. educated the participants that events that make news, end up creating dialogue and setting the agenda.

Apart from the cycle that popularization must follow, Prof. Mutere added that it must have certain components, as this would help an organisation to decide whether to develop its own media structure or to engage an already existing media to popularize its projects. He said that these components would include:

- Counselling – this will help people come to a certain level of awareness about the project.

- Employee relations

- Community relations

- Media relations

Bearing in mind (and detecting from the observations and contributions of the participants) that most projects are under-funded, Prof. Mutere recommended to the participants that:

1. The onus is on organisations to cultivate a relationship between themselves (in their projects) and the media.

2. Build a relationship with the media on a personal level, and always make every presentation insightful, no matter how short the time is.

3. Always take what you have to the media.

4. Every week, have a headline and have a feature story. Be willing to give your story for free, even if the media takes credit for it.

At the end of his presentation, Mr. Ibrahim thanked the Prof. And the participants for an insightful meeting, and recommended that the discussion should continue (online) until the opportunities available in popularizing projects through the media are effectively harnessed and tapped into, for the benefit of the projects and the project-node.

Section of participants at the Meeting

Prof Mutere cautioning participants to be vigilant in their project popularization exercise