

GINKS NORTHERN ICT4D SERIES

MARCH 2010 SEASSION

SIM CARD REGISTRATION AND THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

“Mobile phone operators should make use of every available opportunity to educate the general public on the importance of SIM card registration”. These were the words of the Northern Regional Coordinator of GINKS, Mr. Agbenyo John Stephen at the March 2010 session of the Northern ICT4D series on the theme “SIM card Registration and the Right to privacy”.

In a welcome address, Mr. Agbenyo thanked all participants present and prayed that they will continue to help build a formidable knowledge sharing community in the North. He lamented on the fact that the mobile phone operators who were invited for the program failed to attend. He singled out the management of Tigo who were invited as resource persons but only disappointed him at the very last moment with the excuse that they had a product to launch and was thus unable to be present. Mr. Agbenyo mentioned that while Tigo had put in huge amounts in making banners hanged in an around their office premise to educate the general public on the need to register their SIM cards, they have ironically failed to take advantage of the free opportunity provided them by GINKS to educate the public on a face to face platform.

When he took his turn, a lecturer at the Tamale Polytechnic, Mr. Kubuga Kennedy recalled some incidence of SIM card abuses. He mentioned that in May, 2006 in Kuala Lumpur, a woman used SMS to spread the news that a local catholic church was about to baptize some Muslims who had converted into Christianity. The result was that, that church and other churches were burnt down. It finally turned out that the woman had lied.

He also sighted the January 18th 2010 rumour of an impending earthquake in Ghana. He further recalled the 20th January 2010 incidence of a convicted prisoner who broke jail and used a mobile phone to call and threaten to kill the Tamale Police commander.

Mr. Kubuga mentioned that the Electronic Transactions Act, 2008 (Act 772) prohibits the divulging of subscriber information by providers of electronic communication services, except with the consent of the subscriber or upon a court disclosure order, and reserves to the subscriber the right to apply to the court to vacate the disclosure order.

He recalled that on 18 Jan 2010, the Director General of the National Communication Authority announced that from June 30th 2010, all new mobile SIM cards will have to be registered in the name of the user before they can be activated for use on any network.

On some of the possible disadvantages of SIM Card Registration, he mentioned that some corrupt officials may leak out information about a person. He added that it will be cumbersome for some people especially those in the rural areas to get registered.

On how to ensure one's privacy after registering, Mr. Kubuga stated that call details can only be released in accordance with the law. He added that one will have no problems retrieving his/her number when the phone or SIM card is lost or destroyed.

Mr. Kubuga then led all participants in a discussion on the question "Do you support SIM Card Registration?"

The following links shows the views of some of the participants.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOUFIUpnu8w>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7cUW0unkmw>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7afwAnX_qqs

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC9somqq5tU>