

REMARKS BY THE EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN, ENGR. E. C. A. NDUKWE AT THE COMMISSIONING OF DIGITAL AWARENESS PROGRAM (DAP)

Your Excellency the Deputy Governor of Enugu State
Madam Commissioner of Education, Enugu State
Honorable Offor, Federal House of Rep.
Other Members of the State Executive Council
My colleagues on the Board of the NCC
Members of the Press
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to welcome all the guests to this event which is the commissioning a set of information technology tools for the use of students in this institution

Today, we live in an information age characterized by the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resources in nearly all aspects of human endeavor and ICT tools have taken center stage in shaping the world economy and will continue to do so far into the foreseeable future.

In Nigeria, some modest achievements have been recorded in our drive to ensure Digital inclusion and ensure that the Nigerian citizen has the necessary facilities to be an active member of global information economy. Our mobile subscriber base is now over 42 million active subscribers and a teledensity of over 30%. This is no doubt a big achievement. However a lot remain to be done. Many parts of the country are without communications coverage. Several schools even in some urban and semi-urban do not have computers and internet facilities.

It is in response to this that the Nigerian Communications Commission initiated the Digital Awareness Program (DAP). This program involves the provision of ICT facilities in as many educational institutions as possible across the country.

Under the Program, the selected institution is equipped with computer laboratories fully installed with about 20 computers, furniture and internet facilities. In most locations, these facilities are

backed-up with structural renovation of buildings and supply of air conditioners and power generators. In addition, the Program provides basic training for the teachers and students to enable them effectively use the facilities provided.

The first phase of the Program was launched in October 2004 with the selection of twelve educational institutions spread across all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Today about 141 schools and colleges have benefited from this initiative. It is planned that in 2008 about 80 schools will benefit from this program. This is in addition to the 360 schools being targeted in the Schools Access Program of the Universal Service Provision Fund Secretariat.

Literacy is usually defined simply as the ability to read and write. However in the world today the word literacy is often used to substitute for "ability" or "competency". The abilities such as Computer literacy and information literacy are today necessary skill to have in the emerging Information age. It is however important to emphasize that the ability to read and write is a prerequisite for acquiring many of these abilities.

A recent publication by UNESCO reported: "studies indicate that although learning to read and write requires significant guidance and a degree of formalized education, learning to use a computer and other modern technologies can be an intuitive process. The "Hole-in-the-Wall" study, for example, which set up computers in public spaces in slum areas of India, found that curious children in these areas became proficient in browsing the Internet and using certain computer programs within days, without any formal teaching. This example demonstrates that, for children at least, it is possible to gain basic computer skills without formalized assistance."

What this indicates is that if introduced early, ICTs can easily become part of the everyday tool of the young people who will grow to become active and productive members of the emerging knowledge societies. This has been the motivation for initiating DAP.

In conclusion, I wish to appreciate the enthusiasm demonstrated by the government of Enugu state and the cooperation we have received in the implementation of this project. I enjoin the state government to do what ever is necessary to ensure the sustainability of this project in all the DAP locations in the state. To the school authorities, we recommend that the facilities provided are maximally used by both staff and students. The internet is world's biggest knowledge source today. The possibilities that become available to those that have access to the World Wide Web is almost limitless. Let us employ it to the fullest.

We are also anxious that this program is sustained and perhaps be made available to the local community around the school. In this regard, we advise that the Management of the school should put in place modalities for partially commercializing the centre to generate funds to defray recurrent running costs such as renewal of bandwidth subscription, fueling of the generator, maintenance and repairs of the equipment.

On behalf of the Board, Management and staff of the Commission, we thank you all for coming to this event and wish all those that will use this facility, a digitally enhanced life.