



Metro eduroam Now Accessible Upcountry!



Internet Society
Foundation

On **1st September 2020**, RENU launched Metro eduroam service, the first of its kind in Sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing its name from “Metropolitan eduroam”, the service is a product of eduroam, delivered off-campus, i.e., in the streets, malls, homes of residence, parks, hotels, etc., where students and staff can access it when campuses are closed. Metro eduroam therefore bears all the features of eduroam, except that it (Metro eduroam) can be accessed off-campus. For the first phase, the service was activated in over 300 hotspots scattered across various locations in Kampala, Entebbe and Mukono.



RENU being a member-based organization, interventions and solutions by the NREN are typically guided by the needs of the members and as such, RENU considered extending Metro eduroam to more regions of the country to benefit students outside the Kampala Metropolitan region.

On **23rd December 2021**, RENU signed an agreement with the Internet Society Foundation, for a USD 200,000\$ grant, to extend eduroam to other regions of the country to enable students, staff and researchers, access free, secure and trusted connectivity when off-campus. The funding is from the Building Opportunities/Leveraging Technologies (BOLT) Grant Program of the Internet Society Foundation, which is designed to support teams of innovators working to expand the possibility of Internet connectivity and access globally through the development of prototypes and pilots.

Thanks to the BOLT grant, during the first quarter of 2022, RENU was able to deploy Metro eduroam hotspots in 98 locations in 14 towns, upcountry. Below are the different towns where eduroam was deployed through the BOLT grant.

- Hoima
- Ibanda
- Iganga
- Lira
- Mbarara
- Sheema
- Tororo/Malaba
- Arua
- Fortportal
- Gulu
- Jinja
- Kasese
- Masaka
- Mbale

The table below shows the active Metro eduroam hotspots per listed upcountry town.

Town	No. of Metro eduroam hotspots
Hoima	4
Lira	2
Iganga	2
Sheema	3
Mbarara	19
Tororo/Malaba	2
Ibanda	1
Jinja	18
Mbale	9
Gulu	12
Kasese	4

Town	No. of Metro eduroam hotspots
Fortportal	4
Masaka	15
Arua	3

eduroam was commissioned in Uganda in January 2016, when RENU was officially recognized as the 75th National Roaming Operator (NRO) for eduroam in the world. Since then, RENU members have gradually taken on the service to meet their wireless Internet connection needs, mostly on-campus.

At the time of first deployment of eduroam by RENU, it was envisaged that students, researchers and lecturers are never stationed in one place. For example, lecturers tend to teach in different universities or at different campuses of the same university; students usually roam between different locations within and out of their institutions' campuses, for example, libraries, classrooms, hostels and other assembly points; likewise, researchers are never stationed in one place; they tend to move from one station to another in search of information. With such movements, these groups usually have wireless network needs which are typically not easily attended to at their destinations. As an example, at a campus away from their home institution, roaming students and staff have to always look for someone (usually an IT personnel) to give them login details for the available Wi-Fi, and even when this happens, it is hard work, plus one does not feel totally secure since these login details are usually shared with many other users.

Introducing eduroam gradually changed the status-quo for the institutions that signed up for the service. What these eduroam ready institutions do is, assign email addresses with the institution's domain to their

students, staff and researchers so that whenever they (students, researchers and staff) are in a location where there is eduroam, whether within or outside Uganda, they can get connected to the wireless network automatically and securely without asking anyone for passwords. The deployment of eduroam at the institutions' campuses is usually done with the support of the RENU technical staff at no cost to the institution.



The BOLT grant has also helped support the deployment of eduroam in more RENU member institutions. At the end of 2021, eduroam had been deployed in 28 institutions and by the end of March 2022, eduroam had been successfully deployed in a total of 32 institutions.

When COVID-19 set in, institutions were closed for close to two years, forcing many of them to adopt online study. To support the teaching institutions RENU on 1st September 2020 launched Metro eduroam, to make it possible for students, university staff, and researchers to access free, secure and trusted wireless Internet connectivity while they worked off-campus. Users from institutions that were signed up for eduroam were able to use their institutional login details to access eduroam in over 300 locations within Kampala, Entebbe and Mukono at no cost.

The 300+ hotspots commissioned in 2020 served staff and students of our members institutions in only the Central region. We have now deployed a total of over 400 eduroam hotspots serving the off-campus connectivity needs of the students/staff/faculty of our member institutions countrywide. [All these hotspots can be located here.](#)

While we celebrate the extension of Metro eduroam upcountry with the visible progress in the usage, we also

acknowledge that the current number of users is still a small fraction compared to the population of students and staff of education, and research institutions countrywide who need it. RENU's desire is to see all students, lecturers and researchers out there accessing the free, secure Wi-Fi throughout the country, at least in the spots where eduroam has been deployed.



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