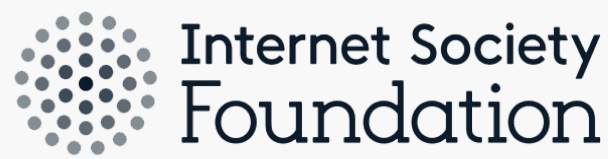


RENU Secures Grant to Extend Reach of Free Connectivity Services Network



On **23rd December 2021**, the Research and Education Network for Uganda (RENU) signed a grant agreement with the Internet Society Foundation, for a USD 200,000\$ grant, intended for the expansion of the FREE connectivity services network, 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.



For RENU's case, the grant is intended to enable expansion of RENU's eduroam network. [eduroam](#), which stands for education roaming, is an idea that was developed by Klaas Wierenga, the Chief Information and Technology

Officer of GEANT. It is a free global Wi-Fi roaming service for the Research and Education community, that is based on usernames and passwords from a user's home institution's database. Traditional deployments of eduroam were always within campuses of these institutions, meaning that the service could only be accessed at the campuses of universities and research institutions.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, as a measure to curb the spread of the deadly Coronavirus, the Government of the Republic of Uganda, just like many other governments around the world, ordered the closure of all education institutions in the country. This rendered the eduroam service at the campuses of these institutions useless, and the huge volumes of bandwidth at these campuses remained unutilized. Students and staff needed reliable and affordable connectivity off-campus, and not on campus, since campuses were closed. The migration of learning to online platforms exacerbated the problem.

On **1st September 2020**, to provide connectivity to students and staff off-campus, RENU launched the [Metro eduroam service](#), the first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa. Standing for Metropolitan eduroam, this variant retains the core tenets of eduroam, i.e., it is free, secure and trusted Wi-Fi access, BUT, it is 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. For the first phase, the service was activated on over **300 hotspots** scattered across various locations in Kampala, Entebbe and Mukono. Within the first three months after the service was launched, over 65,000 successful logins were recorded from over 1,000 unique users.

Currently, the service can only be accessed in 3 districts out of the 135 districts in Uganda, and less than 30 RENU member institutions are using the service. The BOLT grant will enable expansion of the Metro eduroam service to cover more towns and cities countrywide, and also support the onboarding of more RENU member institutions to the eduroam service, consequently extending FREE connectivity services to a bigger number of users from the research and education community of Uganda.

About the Research and Education Network for Uganda (RENU)

Founded in 2006, the Research and Education Network for Uganda (RENU) is a not-for-profit National Research and Education Network (NREN), a cooperatively owned and community-driven service provider, that offers affordable services uniquely designed to enable collaboration among its member institutions and their global partners.

About the Internet Society Foundation

The [Internet Society Foundation](#) was established to support the positive difference the Internet can make to people everywhere. Guided by our vision of an Internet for Everyone, the Foundation champions ideas and enables communities to unlock the Internet's potential to tackle the world's evolving challenges. Focusing in [five program areas](#), the Foundation awards grants to Internet Society Chapters as well as non-profit organizations and individuals dedicated to providing meaningful access to an open, globally connected, secure and trustworthy Internet for everyone.