

INTRODUCTION

Why Get Online?



*Time to Get Online:
Simple Steps to Success on the Internet*

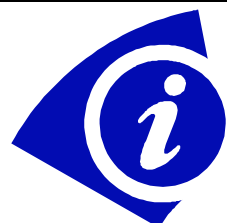
Introduction: Why get online?



Definition

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a global network of people and organizations connected through computers and phone lines. It works through several very clever tools (software programs) that enable you to access valuable information resources and communicate with others around the world.



Key Information

The Internet is a powerful tool that connects people and organizations throughout the world

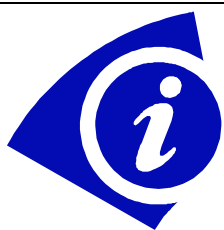
Three overarching benefits make the Internet an important tool for everybody.

1. The Internet provides you with quick and easy access to a wealth of valuable information and resources.
2. The Internet is a quick, easy way to keep in regular contact with friends, collaborators, and supporters.
3. The Internet enables you to network and interact with people that share your views and ideals.

More and more activists and organizers are using the Internet

According to the International Telecommunications Union, only 1 in 250 people in sub-Saharan Africa use the Internet compared to 1 in 30 people in Latin America and 1 in 2 in the United States. Despite these low numbers, our own experience has shown that the number of African rights workers using the Internet is significant, and is growing rapidly. Pambazuka News, Kabissa's social justice newsletter for Africa distributed exclusively via the Internet, has over 10,000 subscribers. Kabissa's membership has more than doubled in 2002 to over 550 organizations – over a quarter of which are in West Africa. The amount of online interactions and Web sites emanating from Africa is also increasing visibly. More and more organizations are realizing that the Internet is an ideal medium for mobilizing others around the world to work on human rights issues and to get quick responses to human rights violations.

Introduction: Why get online? (continued)



Key Information

A powerful tool for African rights workers

While originally designed for scientific and military purposes in North America, it turns out that the Internet is ideally suited for the difficult conditions under which African human rights workers often operate. Using the Internet, you can store your information safely in a centralized place while still having access to it from anywhere – from a cyber café, a colleague's office, and even another country. This protects your information from many risks, including damage to your office or interference from other people. And the Internet makes all of this possible at comparably lower cost and with more reliability than faxing, phoning, and sending notes via courier.

Getting online will empower you

- *Build and maintain relationships*

Much of human rights work is made up of relationships – with the communities you serve, with your partners, and with your supporters. Thanks to the speed and global nature of Internet communications, building and maintaining these relationships is considerably easier with the Internet. This is particularly true for human rights organizations in West Africa that typically face difficulties with other means of communication such as fax, phone, and courier.

- *Disseminate information*

If your organization already produces action alerts, reports, and other materials, you will embrace the Internet as a powerful tool for distributing your materials even more widely – in your country, throughout West Africa, and around the world. All your readers need to do to access your materials is to access the Internet.

- *Raise your profile globally*

An attractive and well-maintained Web site will greatly improve the credibility and visibility of your organization to local and global audiences. People will take notice if you have your Web site and e-mail addresses with your own domain name printed on your business cards, brochures, and materials. Your online profile will also be raised if you offer a regular service on the Internet that people find useful – for example, disseminating an informative e-mail newsletter, providing updates of human rights violations in your country, or running an online discussion.

It's time to get online!