

Creating a 'one stop shop' for information

Kubatana.net was established with main aim to create a 'one stop shop' for all human rights information on Zimbabwe. One major goal of this portal was to make Zimbabwean NGOs more accessible to local, regional and international stakeholders.



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Zimbabwe's civic and human rights information portal (www.kubatana.net) was established in July 2001 with main aim to create a 'one stop shop' for all human rights information on Zimbabwe. One major goal of this portal was to make Zimbabwean NGOs more accessible to local, regional and international stakeholders. To achieve this, an online directory was created to host an electronic 'fact sheet' for each of the 240 Zimbabwean NGOs in the Kubatana network. These NGOs work in a variety of sectors from democracy, health, and culture to HIV/AIDS. These fact sheets list important organisational details such as contact information, the names of key personnel, mission statement and core objectives. If an NGO has their own web site then their link is put on their fact sheet.

Online directory

The Kubatana online directory provides grassroots NGOs and community-based organisations with a basic entry level to the Internet. Organisations that do not have resources for the establishment of a full-fledged web site can quote their Kubatana fact sheet URL and in doing so, become a member of the global digital community. The statistical site software of Kubatana allows to view the number of 'hits' each fact sheet gets. This helps to strengthen the partner's belief and confidence in the Internet as a worthwhile communication tool. We have found that our online directory is one of the most popular aspects of the Kubatana project. It has opened up communication between local Zimbabwean NGOs both regionally and internationally.

In keeping with many Internet based information initiatives, for the Kubatana online directory, a lot of hard work goes to make sure that the information is regularly updated and therefore accuracy is main-

tained. There is a high level of mobility within the NGO sector with people leaving their jobs, and usual changing of email addresses and physical locations. Thus the NGOs are regularly contacted for verifying their contact details. This means that we are permanently contacting NGOs by telephone in order to verify their contact details. A recent updating exercise has also illustrated how government repression in Zimbabwe has made certain NGOs fearful of having their contact details known. In certain circumstances, they have requested to remove their physical address from their fact sheet.

Information dissemination

The source of the information that Kubatana publishes is primarily provided by NGOs, CSOs and CBOs. This information takes a variety of forms, from press statements, reports, surveys to articles and workshop resolutions. Submissions are not edited in any way and Kubatana has become known for the accuracy of the information that it carries. Efforts are still being made to adequately convey the usefulness of the Internet as a communication tool for NGOs. It has been found that generally NGOs communicate their information in very narrow channels, mainly to their small core constituency and to their local and international donors. However, they are encouraged by Kubatana to share their information far more widely, in order to increase the flow of information and news in Zimbabwe where it is often difficult to access diverse views and opinion.

At Kubatana, efforts have been made to fill some gaps in the dissemination of important information. For example, Kubatana web site is the only online resource for electronic copies of legislation. This web site is invaluable in the face of non-functioning sites such as the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

THE NGO NETWORK ALLIANCE PROJECT - an online community for Zimbabwean activists

LAST UPDATED: 12 July, 2005
Search the site

kubatana.net

THE PROJECT JOIN THE ALLIANCE THE DIRECTORY ELECTRONIC ACTIVISM ARCHIVE LINKS CONTACT US

ARTS & CULTURE
LITERATURE
RESOURCES
ALPHABETIC LISTING
INDEX DIRECTORY BY SECTION BELOW



Owen Muzuru - photo by Tsamu Madzura

Toilet democracy Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980. But what does 25 years of independence mean to the ordinary Zimbabwean? Does it mean standing in a long queue waiting for a bag of sugar or questioning what has led a black man to oppress his comrades? [Click here](#) from Taurai Madzura

[Click here to audio files](#) associated with this article

Shaped black men (SBM's)
The SBM in my life come in two broad categories: SBM Archetype #1 includes presidents and general ruling party power mongers. SBM Archetype #2 includes the many and varied general male harasser found on the streets of Harare. These include motorists, vendors, cyclists, pedestrians, sidewalk walkers, various shopkeepers and some selected walkers. [Click here](#) from Amanda Atwood

Zimbabwe's tsunami

This Project aims to improve the accessibility of human rights and civic information in Zimbabwe. Each category lists a variety of NGOs, civil society organisations and social justice groups. Please review the [Kubatana Page](#) regularly where we encourage electronic lobbying and action.

Local details
- Media email and website addresses, [click here](#)
- Foreign embassies in Zimbabwe email and website addresses, [click here](#)
- Government Ministers and Provincial Governors [Click here](#) for names
- Members of Parliament 2005, [click here](#)

Important links for Development News & Information
[Kubatana](#)
[Electronic](#)
[Zimbabwe](#)
[Questions](#)

For an index of articles on and images of the ongoing evictions, [click here](#)

The Zimbabwean Crisis and the Challenges for the Left
For some on the African left this resurgent nationalism represents a necessary defensive stance in the face of the New

Currently Kubatana's online archive holds over 3,800 home-grown Zimbabwean documents. Another core objective is to specifically focus on and develop local content. This has been done very successfully and this has strengthened the methods of information delivery by placing audio files of interviews and workshop presentations on Kubatana web site. Kubatana staff bridge the cyber/real world divide by getting out and about with digital cameras and tape recorders. Local views and opinions are captured and Zimbabwean content is consistently contributed to other portals like OneWorld Radio. The photographs and the graphics that are used on our site reflect the country and the challenges that Kubatana is experiencing.

Publications

To complement Kubatana's work using the Internet, a regular email newsletter is also published that is sent to a diverse and substantial subscriber base. A lot of promotional works have been done to encourage ordinary Zimbabweans, working outside of NGOs in such places as banks, insurance companies, garages and other establishments to subscribe to the newsletter so that they can become involved in civic, social and political issues. Kubatana also assists the NGO sector by publicising their events and public meetings in order to strengthen public participation.

Electronic activism and workshops

An important part of the Kubatana information portal is regular electronic activism campaigns. Attempts are made to engage the subscribers and visitors to the web site to get involved in lobbying, mobilising and creating awareness about various civic and political issues in Zimbabwe. This is in keeping with global trends in using the Internet for electronic advocacy.

Since the initiation of Kubatana, electronic activism workshops are being organised. In the past, Internet Cafes were used and about 15 Zimbabweans from different walks of life were gathered for each training session. Sometimes the participants would be drawn from the non-profit sector and at other times our training would include students and individual activists. The approach of Kubatana has always been very inclusive and diversity in all of initiatives have been encouraged.

In 2004, an ICT Learning Centre in central Harare had been set up which has a permanent optical fibre connection which makes online training much more efficient and pleasant. The centre has 7 networked computers, a printer and a TV and video. Two day learning sessions are being facilitated, where participants learn to use e-mail and the Internet, to advocate, lobby and mobilise. The objective of the first day's training is to train each participant to publish an email newsletter. The second day is spent screening motivational videos, which describes non-violent tactics used to effect social change. These screenings are followed by group discussion. In the second day, each participant is asked to write an essay on any topic she/he feels passionate about. The essays are then published on the Kubatana web site.

Lessons from Kubatana

Some important points to bear in mind when establishing a civil society information portal are as follows:

- Developing a good relationship with NGO partners and encourage them to share their information as widely as possible;
- Even though any initiative might be cyber based, it is important to seek out original content;
- It is necessary to stick to own country. It must be made sure that developmental information of any particular country is accessible to local, regional and international stakeholders;
- It is necessary for the people associated with any organisation to be aware of the role of public relations in that organisation. In Kubatana, the web site is continually being promoted through advertisements in the press, fliers and promotional emails;
- Making sure that the information, published is accurate. Facts must be checked, whenever possible;
- The links on the web site must be checked as thoroughly as possible. Dead links must be eliminated from the web site;
- It is necessary to develop a substantial and diverse email subscriber base. It is also required to reach out and include people so that the information gathered can be disseminated very widely;
- People like to receive a variety of information. The contents must be varied containing poetry, song lyrics, etc. and even encourage subscribers to share their stories;
- The subscribers should never be bombarded with emails. At Kubatana, one regular monthly newsletter is sent and then a few email alerts, which publicise public events;
- Good graphics need to be used that resonate with the country concerned so that people can identify with the work.

Achievements and the road ahead

Kubatana has won the Highway Africa Prize excellence in ICT in 2003, short-listed for the Hafkin Prize in 2002, runner-up for the Yeoman Local Content Award in 2005 and recently received an Honorary Mention in the prestigious Prix Ars Electronica 2005. Kubatana is still in the process of determining how best to use the training centre in order for it to become self-sustaining and income generating. Kubatana.net has become one of Africa's ICT success stories. Plan is being made for working with partners in other countries to establish Kubatana portals throughout Africa. It is important to make sure that the local content in each of African countries is recorded and shared as extensively as possible. ■