



## Telecom Program Brief | May 5, 2014

The purpose of this brief is to inform colleagues and counterparts about USAID Global Broadband and Innovations (GBI) program developments worldwide, soliciting feedback and opportunities for collaboration. Please send submissions, general questions and requests to be added to the mailing list to Jeff Cochrane at [jacochrane@usaid.gov](mailto:jacochrane@usaid.gov).

Key GBI Twitter Hashtags and Usernames:

USAID Program: #USAIDGBI, @USAID, @Nethope\_Org, @IntegraLLC

Partners: @MawinguNetworks, @LaikipiaCA

### Connecting Citizens to County Government in Laikipia

**t** New County Assembly of Laikipia leverages @MawinguNetworks to reach citizens, build foundation for public participation

- <http://bit.ly/lryckSW>

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*In 2010, Kenya adopted a new constitution calling for a devolved system of governance structured around two key facets: national and county. The leadership of the County Assembly of Laikipia, which was created in March of 2013, quickly discovered that good governance -- making local laws reflecting the aspirations of the citizenry -- requires direct citizen contact and public consultation. Danilo Legei, the Assembly's Director of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) called this "an undeniably pivotal period" for the county's development.*

In February 2014, the Assembly reached out for assistance from Mawingu Networks, Ltd., a telecommunications service provider in Kenya supported by Microsoft and the USAID Global Broadband and Innovations team (GBI), among others, to implement a new high-speed, low-cost network called 'Mawingu' (Swahili for cloud).



Photo: Laikipians access the Internet at a solar cyber kiosk, one of the sites to which the Mawingu network is delivered. The kiosk is accessed by 70 unique users each month -- 70% of which visit four times or more each week. (Credit: NetHope)



Danilo Legei was appointed as Director of ICT & Research Services of the County of Assembly of Laikipia in Nov. 2013. Prior to joining the Assembly, Legei worked at Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) and has over eight years of experience providing strategic ICT advice.

Thanks to [the Mawingu project](#), Laikipians can now access the Assembly's [newly launched website](#) to read regular news updates, find transcripts from proceedings, communicate directly with Assembly members, respond to calls for participation or submission, and engage via social media.

Assembly ICT Director Legei recently spoke with a representative of NetHope, a principal implementing partner for GBI.

"Mawingu is very cost-efficient for us. We've never had better or faster connectivity," shared Legei. "There's a lot of interest and high expectation on the part of Laikipians for their government. This connectivity has allowed us to manage the expectation, to be held accountable... Many people have already come to the Assembly to witness committee proceedings and give input on basic bills passed to kick-start the system."

The Assembly is just one of several public institutions now relying on the network to improve the lives of rural Kenyans. Utilizing solar power (funded in part through USAID's Global Climate Change program) in areas with little or no reliable access to the national electricity grid, the latest TV White Space (TVWS) wireless technology is now delivering

broadband speeds to primary school computer labs, a community library, and a kiosk staffed by village entrepreneurs. This technology, operating over unused radio frequencies previously reserved for television, has generated significant excitement in the County, and for the Assembly represents an immediate accomplishment delivered to citizens that strengthens their confidence in the importance of local control of government.

Legei hopes one day citizens will be able to watch live streaming of Assembly committee meetings. For now, access to the network continues to stir the engagement and participation needed to ensure effective citizen representation.