



The Internet remains one of the most important resources for information retrieval, research, communication and networking. Many of its users keep on discovering that there are an increasing number of opportunities offered by the new 2nd generation platforms available on the internet also dubbed as Web 2.0. Although the Internet may not be easily accessible to the rural poor in the African continent, the steadily decreasing costs of ICTs and Internet infrastructure all point to a promising future. A total of 28 participants (50% women) representing academic Institutions, NGOs, media, research and development organisations at a recently concluded **Web 2.0 Learning Opportunity** organised by CTA and held at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) in Nairobi, Kenya, on July 5-9, 2010, could not hide their excitement as they were introduced to Web 2.0 innovations and started exploring some of its many avenues.

According to CTA's Sr. Programme Coordinator Giacomo Rambaldi, this Learning Opportunity was open to representatives from organisations operating in the sectors of agricultural and rural development, biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management, and to individuals specifically involved in information management and communication. [CTA](#) conceived this initiative, currently implemented in Kenya, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria and Benin to expose innovators and eager adopters to the forthcoming reality of fast connectivity in Africa and the opportunities offered by embracing Web 2.0 applications. Web 2.0 refers to free or low-cost interactive web-based services that help people share information and collaborate online more easily than with earlier tools. In his opening remarks Mr. Rambaldi expressed his wish that participants would be able to apply their newly acquired or improved skills as well as disseminate the same within their working environments and through their networks.

Equipped with their own Wi-Fi enabled laptops, participants discovered exciting features on various types of social and professional applications that included Google (docs, maps, alerts), [LinkedIn](#)

, [Facebook](#)

, [Skype](#)

, and

[Wikis](#)

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[Yvonne Otieno](#) , the Communications Officer for World Agroforestry Centre ([ICRAF](#)) was particularly fascinated by the various Google applications that she is very eager to apply in her day to day work. She pointed out Google maps, alerts and Google search as well as LinkedIn to be her priorities in terms of use.

[Grace Mwaura](#) , intern at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), though that she knew quite a bit in terms of online applications before attending the Learning Opportunity. She changed her mind when she discovered that selected news can be delivered at your desktop via alerts or RSS instead of having to spend time for searching the Internet.

{vimeo}13496809{/vimeo}

Francis Muchiri, the Communications Documentalist at [Practical Action](#) who has in the past been quite sceptical about publishing on the web felt confident that he could do so.

[Eric Kadenge](#) , a radio journalist working for [Trans World Radio](#) considers web 2.0 applications essential for improving his work performance and speed.

{vimeo}13496426{/vimeo}

[Anne Wachira](#) , the Database Administrator for the Communications unit at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) in Nairobi [www.icraf.org], plans to use Flickr [www.flickr.com] and geotag photos that they have from all over the world. She also looks forward to using YouTube to upload videos.

Luisa Kadzo, communication officer at the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation ([VVOB](#))

) discovered the power of crowdsourcing and remote collaboration and stated that she would become an author and contributor on

[Wikipedia](#)

{vimeo}13495935{/vimeo}

Other participants like Charles Deya, the Programs Coordinator for Bottom Up Capacity Building Foundation (BOCA) was thrilled by the fact that Web 2.0 applications, like remote collaboration platforms, offer the opportunity to avoid unnecessary displacements. This would translate into extra time for attending more important matters.

Most participants felt that the learning opportunity couldn't have come at a better time although some felt overwhelmed with all what Web 2.0 has on offer.

Speaking at the conclusion of the Learning Opportunity, Mr. [Nicholas Kimolo](#), the lead trainer, was impressed by the high turnout of participants who he found to be very enthusiastic, passionate and eager to learn. He found it quite challenging to handle a rather large and knowledgeable group that really pushed him to present new and detailed insights into Web 2.0. He expressed his wish that more people from Africa will join the online community as our continent still contributes little online content. All participants shared the view that more corporate, media, NGO's and the informal sector should adopt Web 2.0.

When questioned on the areas where they could make best use of Web 2.0 applications based on what they had discovered and learned during the 5-day training event, 96% of the participants stated "collaborate more efficiently using online applications"; "share information" (92%); "keep up-to-date about news and events relevant to my work" (88%); "release information periodically" (88%); and most excitingly "keep on discovering and testing web 2.0 applications" (88%).

Reading though the concluding remarks of the end-of session questionnaire the following words strongly reverberate: *"Africa, which - as a continent - has been playing catch-up for a long time is now slowly closing in. Africans have for a long time been consumers as opposed to creators of content, especially on the web, and I see this as a wonderful opportunity to fill that gap and tell stories from an African perspective, and to some extent to have control over the perception of Africa worldwide. What encourages me most is that one does not need any specialised training to make his/her voice heard on the web. There is going to be a phenomenal growth in*

terms of African content ... ”.

Soft-spoken but straight to the point another participant concluded “*I will never be the same again*”; ... we are sure ... for the better.

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