Experience Profile

Overview

Managing Director Mark Bennett founded AfriConnect in 1996 in response to emerging ICT requirements across the African continent, following 12 years based in Zambia, having previously been Managing Director of ZamNet Communication Systems Ltd., which, outside of South Africa was the first ISP in Sub-Saharan Africa.

AfriConnect specialises in the provision of sustainable solutions, which are resilient to the remote & harsh environments in which they are deployed and simple for customers to use and support.

AfriConnect's experience spans a range of ICT technologies and implementations:

- Internet access specialists, by satellite and wireless
- VSATs, mobile VSAT solutions, satellite phones
- Wireless short and long haul links
- Field connectivity, including WiFi hotspots and PDAs
- Systems for network security, email management, support for remote networks
- Network management and security tools, content filtering, anti-spam software, traffic shaping and statistics
- User friendly customer network software for bespoke applications and satellite network access
- Local and Wide area networks, Leased-Lines, Fibre, DSL, Cable
- Design and provision of local LAN infrastructure
- ICT hardware procurement and installation
- Interactive, static and content managed web site for Intranets and external web presence
- Consultancy services, including ICT strategy, telecommunications, networks and project management for sustainable support of projects and organisations
- Top down development of internet connectivity implementations and sustainability planning of internet deployment in new areas.

Date   :   **1998 – current**
Client   :   **Large US Governmental Health Organisation**

Scope   :   Malaria research network – extensive research in the field of overcoming and mitigating this disease.

Project management, installation, commissioning and support for the roll-out of 12 sites, many in remote areas, using VSAT to provide internet connectivity, allowing researchers to send and receive email, search medical literature and databases, or share files and images 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Permanent access to information is moving researchers in Africa toward a more efficient way of working with colleagues around the world. Sites range from a few 10's of users at field stations to over 250 users at the main head-quarters in Nairobi. The network was designed to allow hundreds of researchers in Africa to share satellite bandwidth, maximizing the usage of satellite capacity and minimizing cost per site.

The network had evolved significantly from its initial two sites sharing a 64kb satellite link, to the end of 2003 with 12 sites sharing approx 2MBps of in-& out-bound capacity, plus other direct links through local ISPs.

AfriConnect continues to provide VSAT connectivity and support directly to 4 key sites across Africa now that the initial malaria research network itself has evolved into a world-wide information network.

Date	:	**2004 - current**
Client	:	**UK Medical NGO**

Scope : AfriConnect are this organisations preferred supplier for Non terrestrial communications involving the provision of BGans and VSATS, with sites in Africa (Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) and further countries are planned for 2010.

AfriConnect provide consultancy services, hardware, satellite installation, satellite bandwidth, security, monitoring and control, training and all necessary services.

Date	:	**2003 - current**
Client	:	**French Medical Research Organisation**

Scope : VSAT network, initially4 sites in Africa (Cameroon, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic) and 3 planned in Vietnam. Ultimately the network was to be made available to all organisational sites globally, totalling 23 sites.

AfriConnect provide consultancy services, hardware, satellite and other ICT installation, satellite bandwidth, voice services, web design, security, monitoring and control, training and all necessary services.

Equipment deployed at each site included the AfriConnect SatWise integrated terminal equipment: VSAT, Managed Switch, Linux Server, Firewall Mail server (SMTP / POP3 / Webmail) with virus scanning, Intranet host.

Date	:	**2003 - 7**
Client	:	**Group of Military and International Health Organisations**

Scope : Study programme in a rural area of Northern Ghana where a VSAT system was already deployed.

Improved connectivity was required in order to support a planned malaria vaccine trial. The requirement was to ensure that mobile nurses, field workers and clinics must have wholly reliable communications, both voice, messaging and Internet access when in villages which have no power supply or conventional means of communication.

Date	:	**2004**
Client	:	**Large College in Malawi**

Scope	:	Development of an ICT Strategy for the college to cover the next three years following the mandate to quadruple the number of students trained as doctors in order to support the Malawi Ministry of Health.

Date	:	**1996 – current**
Client	:	**Large African Trade Organisation**

Scope	:	Design, consultancy, training, telecommunications / networking, e-commerce, and support services. Implementation of organisation website and its transition of a bi-lingual (French/English) user driven content managed portal, their Secretariat network infrastructure and Internet access.

AfriConnect provide domain management, mail far-side scrubbing, website hosting for several of their websites including mirroring primary servers in Africa on the Internet in Europe.

AfriConnect are designing and implemented an intranet web portal for use throughout the organisation in Africa.

Date	:	**2007 - current**
Client	:	**Large College in Malawi / US university**

Scope	:	One of southern Africa's most powerful research infrastructures for studying tropical disease together with top-of-the-line laboratory facilities had been given a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Scanner.

A whole new unit was established, in its own building, to house the scanner and the associated clinic support staff and servers. Quality fast Internet access is a pre-requisite for the operation of the scanner, both in terms of getting images back to the USA for analysis each day, and also for the remote online maintenance of scanner itself using a VPN.

AfriConnect was approached to provide the VSAT connectivity together with a local internet capability and ability to use the VSAT as a back up to other crucial connectivity needs in the College should the main VSAT malfunction – or as happened in early 2010 when the main ISP connection into Malawi was disrupted and subsequent deployment of fibre ased on connectivity from the east coast of Africa.

Date	:	**2003**
Client	:	**Medical Research based Organisation, Gambia**

Scope	:	Needs analysis and appraisal visits to organisations research sites in the Gambia. Preparation of detailed Request for Proposal for organisation, to enable it to tender for broadband VSAT Internet connectivity at their two research sites.

Expansion to two further VSAT sites is expected as a secondary phase to the project.

Date	:	**2003**
Client	:	**Large US-Funded International Health Organisation**

Scope	:	Complete review of the organisations communications needs in Kenya for the next 5 years.

Scope included: fixed and mobile Internet access for research and field workers based on satellite, wireless, GSM and conventional connectivity options.

Date	:	**2000**
Client	:	**Global NGO, Uganda**

Scope	:	Project to design and tender for a VSAT network designed to provide Internet connectivity to 15 secondary schools in rural Uganda, some of which had onwards wireless connections to further locations, and where significant expansion was possible.

Date	:	**2003 - 2009**
Client	:	**Scientific Publications Organisation**

Scope	:	The organisation is a cooperative network of partners tasked with enhancing the flow of scientific information between countries, especially those with less developed systems of publication and dissemination.

Following concerns over bandwidth available at Universities in Less Developed Countries, the organisation commissioned a study to provide bodies seeking to optimise Internet access with sources of information, and potential solutions and cost reducing measures. This detailed 265-page report provides practical suggestions and recommendations for improved management of Internet applications, so that existing bandwidth can be made more productive. It includes eight case studies drawn from Africa and Asia to highlight best practice in maximising bandwidth.

Subsequently AfriConnect have been involved in designing and delivering Bandwidth Management and Optimisation hands-on workshops to Universities in Africa and South America as well as providing material for a free guide on using open source software for Bandwidth management and optimisation.

Date	:	**2001 - 4**
Client	:	**Large College in Malawi**

Scope	:	Initiative to improve ICT and in particular Internet connectivity, with the installation of a wide area network to providing internal communication and full Internet access to around 100 PCs throughout the college.

The WAN, which utilises 'permanently on' broadband wireless networking, was commissioned in April 2002, linking together all departments, which in turn connected to the local Internet provider, as well as across to their own satellite link to the Internet backbone. Departments that did not already have a local area network also had one installed at this time. All computers were effectively joined in one wide area network (WAN) that now links over hundreds of PCs used by both staff, students, administrators and researchers.

Subsequently the campus LAN and WAN were extended and upgraded with a fibre backbone infrastructure in line with AfriConnect recommendations.

Date	:	1999-2000
Client	:	Global NGO, Zambia

Scope	:	This project provided a new computerised management system for hundreds of microfinance projects around Zambia, complete with connectivity from nine regional capitals giving access to a common database. The scope of work was to specify the system, tender, recruit staff, build the associated website, provide initial connectivity and train staff.