

1.0 Facilitate Access to Information

Information is not just necessity for people, it is an essential part of healthy life. Access to information is a human right. The Majority of the people in Africa are starved of information. In these days of advanced information systems, the Internet can serve as a platform for debate and the exchange of ideas, creating an information culture.

Many African people cannot access valuable information, so their actions are ill-informed and out of date in today's ever-changing world. Millions of South Africans in rural areas are far behind the global information highway. Even teachers and local leaders do not have the privilege of using computers to enhance their knowledge. The right to information includes access to telephones, e-mail, the Internet and other telecommunications systems, and the Government must work towards this goal by setting up more information technology centers. Rural communities have a right to information.

It is even difficult for tertiary students from rural areas to cope with their academic demands because they do not have the background of Internet use. Universities and technikons should also play a role in providing Internet services to students. The scarcity and need for information has led to a booming business of Internet cafes in urban areas of South Africa

The challenge for the Government is to monitor education institutions. Although they are autonomous, it is worth trying to negotiate a deal in the interests of the public. South Africa would then be able to keep up with the world and set an example to our neighbors and fellow African countries.

(Goodman Chauke, Programme Officer MISA-SA This article first appeared in the Sowetan on 3 February 2003.)