Quality is key for Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is starting to become truly connected, with high-speed connectivity and full diversity options becoming more widely available. The launch of the WIOCC-EASSy cable in July 2010 marked the beginning of international submarine diversity for most of Africa’s east coast. EASSy is now delivering improved reach and high-quality connectivity into coastal and landlocked countries throughout the eastern and southern half of Africa.

WIOCC is Africa’s carriers’ carrier and the largest shareholder in the EASSy system (30%), delivering cost-efficient, scalable, low-latency connectivity to Africa, within Africa and from Africa to the world. In addition to being the largest investor in EASSy, WIOCC has made strategic investments in two new high-capacity submarine cable systems - EIG and WACS - enabling it to extend its existing ‘east + west coast’ diversity proposition to address customer demands for a high-capacity, one-stop-shop resilience offering.

WIOCC’s global network provides seamless international connectivity to/from 100 cities in 29 countries in Europe and more than 700 cities in 70 countries globally. WIOCC uses this network to deliver affordable, reliable, high-speed internet access to African carriers and ISPs, as well as network extension and improved international voice and data services for African and international carriers.

‘EASSy continues to deliver the most direct routes to Europe and the internet from Africa’s east coast, and we are now investing in two new, high-capacity, low-latency systems on the west coast and Europe-Africa-Asia routes’, explains Ryan Sher, WIOCC’s Chief Operating Officer. ‘This minimises response times for customers’ applications and offers ISPs a way to differentiate themselves in increasingly competitive market places. In addition, our extensive global reach offers African and international service providers the opportunity to interconnect customer locations wherever they are in the world.’

WIOCC is implementing a high-capacity ‘ring around Africa’ and seamless end-to-end services, which enables it to address key service quality issues for carriers. It maximises connection performance by taking advantage of the most direct route to Europe and the internet and minimises the risk of customer-affecting outages through the design and operation of the EASSy system and its integration with other systems - such as WACS and EIG - to deliver diversity. With quality becoming the key differentiator for African carriers and ISPs, WIOCC is the ideal partner in Africa, interconnecting customer locations wherever they are in the world.

Feedback on this first issue would be welcome, so please contact us at info@wiocc.net with your thoughts.

Chris Wood, CEO
Terrestrial rollout gathers pace in Africa

According to Hamilton Research, operational terrestrial transmission networks in Africa are reliable, protected rings are progressively being deployed. As these networks grow rapidly with the increasing demand for capacity and optical fibre, linking more than 400 towns and cities in 20 African countries.

As these networks grow rapidly with the increasing demand for capacity and reliability, protected rings are progressively being deployed.

According to Hamilton Research, operational terrestrial transmission networks in Africa grew by 12.5% - to over 694,000 km - during the year to December 2011. Growth is set to continue, with more than 68,000km of planned fibre already under construction. WIOCC is different in its ability to truly take advantage of this proliferation of terrestrial networks. It is integrating the networks of its 14 African telco shareholders and selected partners to offer high-quality, cost-effective, end-to-end connectivity solutions between an ever-increasing range of locations across Africa and the rest of the world.

As a result, service providers in landlocked countries such as Botswana, Burundi, Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe are now able to take advantage of improved cross-border connectivity through WIOCC shareholders’ and partners’ terrestrial backhaul networks. This provides them with the ability to reach out to neighbouring countries, as well as offering improved costs and enhanced performance. As cross-border connections continue to proliferate, many landlocked countries now have multiple different routes to the international submarine cable systems, improving options for diversity and steadily minimising the impact of individual outages.

Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC), a WIOCC shareholder, has recently completed the installation of its fibre-optic transmission system. The system is designed to deliver high-capacity and bridge the ‘digital divide’ by improving the cost and quality of local and international connectivity and boosting overall service delivery. As well as improving its domestic infrastructure, BTC is also extending its reach beyond the borders of Botswana. BTC now has transit to the borders with Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa and discussions are also taking place to provide transit pricing for Zimbabwe.

Other WIOCC shareholders are also extending the reach of their terrestrial fibre networks. Telecommunication de Mozambique’s network now reaches the borders with Malawi and Zimbabwe, and TelOne in Zimbabwe has deployed optical fibre to the borders with Mozambique and Zambia. Carriers and ISPs in Malawi and Zambia, all landlocked countries, are now taking advantage of international connectivity via EASSy. TelOne is using its improved connectivity to market its broadband service offerings, and ISPs in Zambia and Malawi are starting to exploit their lower-cost, higher-performance internet connectivity to improve their service. As a result, businesses and consumers are already starting to reap the benefits of better connection with the rest of Africa and a direct route to the internet in Europe.

James implements sales and marketing strategies while managing customer relations across Africa. His career spans 13 years in sales, marketing and business-to-business operations. He joined WIOCC from Afsat Communication Group where his roles included General Manager, Kenya, Group and Head of Special Projects over an eight year period. He holds an MBA from ESAMI/MsM, Project Management certification, Chartered Institute of Marketing certification and he undertook his undergraduate studies at JKUAT. His interests include community service, keeping fit and travelling.

Nowhere else is telecommunications growing as rapidly as in Africa. Unencumbered by legacy systems, investment in submarine and terrestrial fibre-optic networks is phenomenal. Deregulation and the resulting competitive environments are driving innovation. New technologies and mobile applications are quickly rolled out and adopted, leading to dramatic increases in mobile subscriptions and usage by residential and business customers - resulting in a huge demand for capacity on terrestrial and international networks.

The rapid uptake of EASSy capacity since the system was launched in July 2010 has driven an earlier-than-expected upgrade. The upgrade, which went live in January 2012, saw the system’s ‘lit capacity’ increase over six-fold – from 30Gbps to 190Gbps - based on using the latest 40Gbps wavelength technology. The acceleration and size of this upgrade reflects the dramatic rise in demand for international capacity on EASSy, driven particularly by the need for diversity and growth in mobile usage of internet applications - growth which demonstrates EASSy has become the system of choice for major telecom operators, ISPs and infrastructure providers.

Deployment of the new 40Gbps technology has also led to the design capacity of EASSy being increased from 3.84Tbps to 4.72Tbps, with each of the system’s two fibre pairs capable of carrying 59 x 40Gbps wavelengths.