



REPORT ON THE FIRST COSITU ANNUAL USERS FORUM,
VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE
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PURPOSE OF FORUM

The number of COSITU users in the English-speaking countries in Africa has increased significantly in the past three years, and keeps increasing all the time. The level of awareness of the potential of the COSITU software is also on the increase.

There are challenges that those who are using COSITU face on a day-to-day basis, including some unusual situations that the model was never designed to deal with (e.g. the hyperinflationary situation of Zimbabwe.)

During the COSITU workshop held in Harare in 2005, participants requested the CoE to organize a Users' Forum, to be held annually, to enable users to come together and share experiences, gain new knowledge on the software, and make contributions to the TAF group on any areas that may need to be considered for improvement of the next version. Zimbabwe has been the most successful user of COSITU to date and its Regulatory framework for cooperation among the players and the regulator is something of a model that can (and should) be replicated in other countries. It was natural therefore to hold this first ever Users' Forum, in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Regulator (POTRAZ) was the workshop host.

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 39 participants attended the Forum. Participants came from Zimbabwe (majority), Zambia, Namibia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Burkina Faso. In terms of organizations, there were regulators, fixed operators and mobile operators. It needs to be mentioned that one country (Malawi), and one operator (Celtel Kenya) withdrew their participants at the last minute preferring to have fully-fledged in-country and in-house training. Training in Malawi will take place during the week 24 to 29 September 2006.



Group Photograph: COSITU USERS FORUM PARTICIPANTS.

FACILITATION

All the COSITU Regional Experts were invited to attend, as this was not a training session but one dealing with some experienced users, and therefore requiring the full complement of trainers to support each other. Unfortunately, one of our key senior Experts, Mr Chris Kemei, was unable to attend due to last minute commitments with his employer. The trainers who handled the Forum were David Ogong, (UCC), Elisha Kimemia and Joel Tanui (TKL), and Hilda Mutseyekwa (POTRAZ).

FORUM PROGRAM AND CONTENT

The Coordinator drew up the program after seeking inputs from the users as to the areas they would want covered in the FORUM. Day one was devoted to an overview of COSITU. This was for the sake of people who have not had much experience of the model, and for the users, this served as more of a revision. Day two was practical hands-on, using the GSM case study. Days 3 and 4 were spent looking at real issues encountered in the use of the software, covering cost issues, traffic issues, and service and technology issues.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

The workshop was a mix of lectures and exercises. It was very interactive, with the participants being called upon to make presentations themselves, to each other. Participants did group work on three major exercises. The first was the GSM case study, where they had to identify the various traffic streams and allocate costs to those streams before calculating the unit costs. The second was to come up with a proposed cost template identifying what they think needs to go into the model and what should be left out. The third and last was on inefficiency, identifying the elements acceptable for treatment under inefficiency and what not to allow.

The feedback on these group exercises was very thorough and every group took its group work very seriously.



GROUP SESSION

On the last day, recommendations were made on how COSITU can be strengthened, and these recommendations have been forwarded to the relevant department in BDT for consideration by the TAF Group.

EVALUATION

There was a lot of satisfaction with the inter-activeness of the workshop. It was gratifying that the participants themselves have actually become COSITU experts, and taking their views and comments into consideration would greatly strengthen the usefulness of the

tool. Participants took the floor to make their own presentations on the areas they feel need to be looked into.

The next (second annual COSITU Users Forum) will be held in Kampala, Uganda, thanks to the Regulator of Uganda offering to play host. All the participants are looking forward to attending, but most importantly, to reviewing how COSITU will have progressed and incorporated some of the changes that they discussed during the workshop.

CONCLUSION

The workshop was a great success, much greater than we had even anticipated.



FULL FORUM IN SESSION