RENU Deploys 300 eduroam Hotspots For Off-Campus Internet Access

Students, researchers and staff of learning institutions connected to the Research and Education Network for Uganda (RENU) will now be able to access their institution Internet beyond their campuses after the NREN introduced the metro deployment of eduroam to enable users to connect to the wireless network while working away from their institutions.

Words: Hastings Ndebvu, UbuntuNet Alliance

eduroam is a secure wireless international roaming internet network which enables staff, researchers and students from higher education institutions to access internet connectivity when visiting another institution using credentials provided by their own institutions.

RENU unveiled the innovation on 1 September after deploying eduroam in over 300 spots in Kampala, Mukono and Entebbe to connect students, researchers and university staff that have challenges accessing the campus Wi-Fi due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Under the initiative, the RENU IT team is helping institutions connected to the RENU network to deploy the secure, wireless network, allowing staff, students and researchers from such institutions to use their devices to connect to the campus network while off-campus.

"Before the deployment, staff, students and researchers could access eduroam only when they were working within the premises of their institution. Now they can access eduroam within the comfort of their residences, malls, restaurants, parks, streets, airports, etc," reads a statement released by RENU.

RENU Communications Officer Caroline Tuhwezeine Kumwesiga says the innovation is one of the measures the NREN came up with to help member institutions cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The world-wide outbreak of COVID-19 has challenged RENU to be innovative and offer alternatives to the education and research communities. Prior to introducing this off-campus eduroam, RENU removed caps on its international traffic to support the research agenda to fight the COVID-19 spread, increased its web conferencing packages to support social distancing and introduced a cloud-based e-learning solution based on Moodle for remote learning and instruction. The NREN continues to cast its net wider for more solutions to enable the education and research community to keep on its feet in the current times," adds Kumwesiga.

Universities in Uganda have remained closed since March 2020 following a presidential decree aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the East African country.

Following the decree, staff, students and researchers that relied on campus networks have been unable to access affordable internet connectivity due to high cost of data bundles from commercial Internet Service Providers.

The metro deployment of eduroam in Uganda, therefore comes as a relief to the users who will still be able to access high speed, secure, dedicated and affordable internet connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The solution will also go a long way to help students to effectively participate in online study which seems to be the most viable option for many learning institutions if they are to pursue their programs while keeping their students and staff safe from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To read more about metro eduroam, visit RENU website at **https://renu.ac.ug/**