

Off-campus eduroam to support secure remote learning: The case for RENU during the COVID-19 pandemic

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eduroam (education roaming) is a world-wide trusted and secure Wi-Fi network for researchers, students and staff of education and research institutions. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, globally, most NRENs typically deployed eduroam only in the networks of their member institutions, whereby users could only access eduroam when they visited any campus that had deployed eduroam. However, that setup does not enable users to continue utilizing this service while away from campus, and this challenge came to the fore at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when all education institutions were closed and students and staff requested to work and study off-campus. In this paper, we describe how RENU extended its eduroam Wi-Fi connectivity to public areas in the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area (GKMA), in a bid to extend free and secure connectivity to students and staff, to support education and research activities off-campus. The paper brings out; the deployment architectures used by various infrastructure owners and service providers, the problems and challenges faced during and after the deployment of the service, the benefits of the rollout, and the observations in traffic patterns and authentication requests. The future plans are also discussed.

Presenter: HNAKAWUNGU KABUUBI, Hellen (RENU)

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