

Company: [Liquid Telecom](#)

Project: [Free Wi-Fi in Nakuru County, Kenya](#)

Project background:

In 2015, Liquid Telecom Kenya partnered with the Kenyan Government to launch high-capacity free public Wi-Fi in Nakuru.

Increased online access has been widely tipped as the key differentiator in Kenya's future economic performance, and has already created 1,000-plus jobs per month in the business process outsourcing sector since 2013, according to the ICT Authority of Kenya.

Given these figures, the government was keen to support the building of internet networks in less affluent areas outside Nairobi.



About Nakuru:

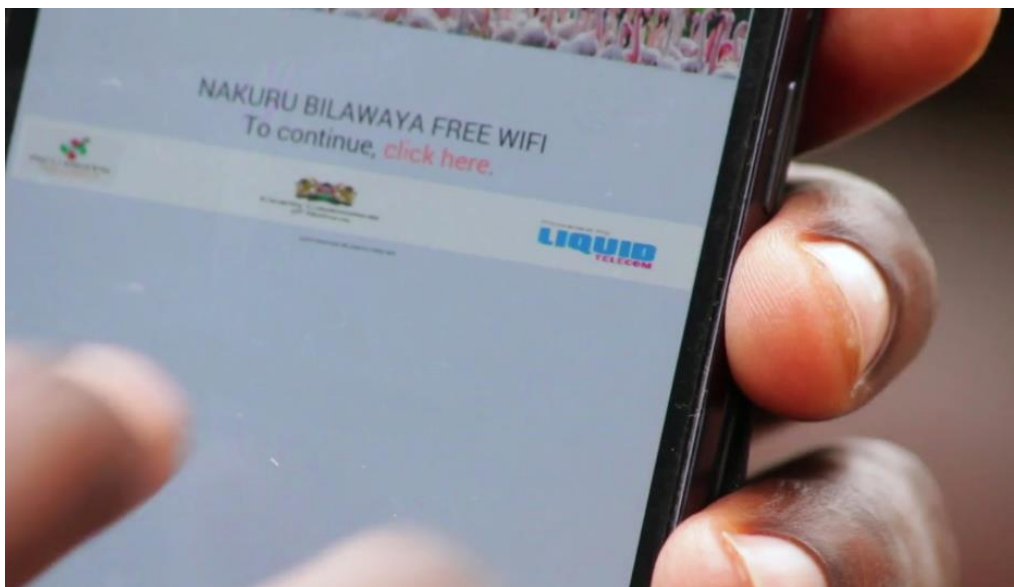
Nakuru is a small market town with a population of 307,000. Farming is the main industry and unemployment is high. Migration to Nairobi is high.



### The Wi-Fi Network:

Launched in April 2015, the Wi-Fi network covers a 10-kilometre radius from the CBD, with a capacity of 1Gbps. It is available in major streets, markets, transport terminus and stadia – as well as the university campuses.

Called “Bilawaya” (Swahili slang meaning “wireless”) it provides Wi-Fi-enabled devices with free access to the Internet (with the exception of unlawful activities such as streaming or downloading of offensive content or content that violates copyrights).



### Benefits to local community:

Bilawaya is not just about access. A portal has been created to provide a wealth of valuable and practical advice for internet novices as well as more experienced.

For job seekers: Bilawaya opens up a world of job and learning opportunities, especially for young people. Through a portal, users can access a huge range of jobs from skilled positions like teaching to unskilled work like data input/ admin. All they need to get started is a bank account (most online work pays by international transfer directly) and an email address - which they can create in a few minutes online.

For business people: Bilawaya is accelerating Nakuru's business growth and enabling its gradual evolution towards an information economy. The portal complements this through increased access to marketplaces, customers, training, staff and resources – as well as access to useful services, from accounting to marketing.

For families: Bilawaya provides access to a wide range of information services – the portal alone provides advice on medications, free learning and books for children, as well as were to buy everything from electronics to clothing online.

For farmers: Farmers now have access to online tools that can increase their yields and income helping them with farm management, providing discounts on seeds, providing diagnosis on plant diseases and calculation of the ROI on irrigation projects and others. These tools are listed on the nakuru wifi website.

For students: JKUAT Nakuru Campus and Mount Kenya University are using Bilawaya. Students can research different academic institutions and courses around the world and apply for funding and scholarships. They can use the service to access study aides and resources ranging from online libraries to document storage and formatting and data collection and collation. They can even enroll for international student work programs. Bilawaya also enables e-learning - which increases information retention among students by up to 60%, according to the Research Institute of America.



### Usage trends:

Through the portal, the county government has been able to communicate with users and gather valuable information on their needs and behaviour – for

example, through Google analytics that measures visitor numbers and other tools that measure bandwidth utilisation.

The analytics show that already an average of around 30,000 unique visitors (10% of Nakuru's population) log into the service every day – and this number will undoubtedly grow as word spreads.

It is also interesting to see what kind of content people access. Of course, the usual Facebook and other social media sites, but also many of the information sites suggested on the portal.



### Next steps across Kenya:

The hugely positive response to the network has in turn triggered demand for Wi-Fi services across the entire country of Kenya.

In fact, Liquid has already been approached by five other county governments to implement a similar solution for their citizens, after hearing of the success and popularity of Bilawaya in Nakuru.

This project is the first of its kind in Kenya, and sees Nakuru join Kigali in Rwanda and Tshwane in South Africa as the first major urban centres in Africa to enjoy access to free public Wi-Fi.

Keys to success for other regions include:

**Collaboration:** The success has been built on solid collaboration between the Government and the private sector – in this regard we recommend that Governments should waive any punitive licenses that discourage private companies from engaging in such projects.

**Awareness:** Internet access empowers the community to take control of their own lives and control their future. Major education is required to help potential



users reap the benefits.

**Technology:** The network designed by Liquid Telecom Kenya is built around the strategic points accessed by the highest proportions of the town's population. Some 51 nodes are already installed, designed to carry huge capacities with the ability to withstand harsh climatic conditions to guarantee maximum and uninterrupted speeds while surfing. Furthermore, thanks to built-in meshing technology in the network systems, users in Nakuru do not experience service interruptions when moving from one point to another.

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Video URL: <https://vimeo.com/161049760>