

An engineer, seasoned ICT for Development Specialist and social entrepreneur with over 35 years' experience in the Information and Communication Technologies sector, Thandi graduated from the University of Sheffield and, after working as a senior manager with one of the leading IT companies in Malawi and as an ICT Consultant for Price Waterhouse Coopers, as Managing Director, established Epsilon and Omega, the first commercial email and Internet service in Malawi in 1994-95. This was to be the first woman-owned ISP in Africa.

Criss-crossing the country to raise awareness and stimulate the adoption and use of email and Internet services in Malawi's virgin market, one of her clients called her and "email evangelist". This strategy resulted in the sensitisation and development of a client base that spanned 13 of Malawi's predominantly rural districts in 1995-97.

She then worked in South Africa as the Executive Manager for the NEPAD e-Africa Commission and subsequently, the Regional ICT Programme Manager for OSISA, the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa covering 10 countries in the SADC region. As a C-level executive, Thandi has also served on numerous national, regional and international Boards and worked across different organisations and institutions, countries and economic communities across Africa.

Over the years, her early contributions to the establishment of the Internet in Africa included ICT Policy and Technical Advisory services and contributions to regional and continental initiatives coordinated and supported by the African Union (AU), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa UNECA, NSRC, USAID, ITU, INET, and IDRC among others and work on the SADC and COMESA ICT policy framework development. At national and regional levels, she served in various capacities as advisor to the Vice President of Malawi, the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), the Malawi Minister of Information and Malawi Telecommunications Limited.

Nationally, she made contributions to the amendment of the 1998 Malawi Telecommunications Act and successfully lobbied for the removal of import duty on computers in Malawi from a prohibitive 65% to 0% and the reduction of telecommunications tariffs to enable broader, low-cost access to the Internet. Was a key advisor and facilitator for negotiations between the Malawi government and USAID for the successful implementation and commissioning of the Leland Initiative National Internet Gateway.

She is passionate about seeing ICTs and the Internet in particular, used more effectively and efficiently as a tool to stimulate greater economic development across the African continent and has mentored and facilitated international training for youth from 9 countries in the SADC region.

As an activist, she established MPOWA, the Malawi Professional Women's Association a women's network to promote professionalism among women in Malawi.

Thandi looks forward to the realisation of her vision to see a more empowered, tech-savvy, innovative, generation of African youth ready to pick up the baton and build on the foundation laid by the Internet pioneers.