A STUDY TO FIND OUT THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON ACCESS AND THE USE OF ICT AND DIGITAL NETWORKS IN UGANDA

BY MARTHA KIBUKAMUSOKE
PINNO IVAN LOUIS
GORETTI AMURIAT
KIZZA RONALD
DELMUS CHARITY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS
1.0 INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................................. 3
2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE.................................................................................................... 3
3.0 METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................ 4
4.0 STUDY RESULTS AND FINDINGS ...................................................................................... 6
   4.1 General information ........................................................................................................ 6
   4.2: Communication Engagement and Advocacy ................................................................. 10
   4.3: Networking .................................................................................................................. 14
   4.4 Policy Programs and Frameworks .................................................................................. 18
   4.5 Challenges and Suggestions ......................................................................................... 19
5.0 CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................... 20
6.0 REFERENCES ..................................................................................................................... 21

Figure 1: sex of respondents................................................................................................... 6
Figure 2: Region of Respondents .......................................................................................... 7
Figure 3: Familiar with the use of mobile phone ................................................................. 7
Figure 4: ICT most used....................................................................................................... 7
Figure 5: Ever been taken through any ICT training ........................................................... 8
Figure 6: Type of training received ...................................................................................... 9
Figure 7: Community group attached to ............................................................................. 9
Figure 8: Duty in group in relation to digital tools .............................................................. 10
Figure 9: Involvement in particular activities ..................................................................... 11
Figure 10: Use of training .................................................................................................. 11
Figure 11: Awareness creation on digital tools ................................................................... 12
Figure 12: Remuneration on awareness creation ................................................................ 12
Figure 13: Frequency of awareness ................................................................................... 13
Figure 14: Organizations helping with digital literacy ......................................................... 13
Figure 15: Empowerment of women and girls to participate ............................................. 14
Figure 16: Participation in government initiatives on the use of digital tools .................... 14
Figure 17: Level of participation ....................................................................................... 15
Figure 18: Type of contribution made ............................................................................... 15
Figure 19: Sustained involvement ..................................................................................... 16
Figure 20: Capacity development ..................................................................................... 16
Figure 21: Knowledge and skills acquired ........................................................................ 17
Figure 22: Use of knowledge and skills ......................................................................... 17
Figure 23: Problems faced using the digital tools ............................................................... 18
Figure 24: Awareness of policies and frameworks ............................................................. 18
Figure 25: Current challenges ......................................................................................... 19
Figure 26: Current and future demands for access and use of digital tools ...................... 20
1.0 INTRODUCTION
Digital Woman Uganda is a Civic-tech and Digital Rights Advocacy organization – operating an ICT powered model to extend the literacy and skills of an eco-system economy that the world currently operates in to a woman/ girl child. Preparing the African woman/ girls to be able to be competitive and self-sustaining in the Digital World.

Digital literacy and digital rights is more important than ever as it’s a path to critical information, services and opportunities available to many people especially the African woman for the first time. However this trend in technology has been remarkably low amongst African women. Despite its importance, mobile access and use remain unequal and un-used by the African woman

Women are still on a larger gap than men to own a mobile phone, and even more less likely to use the internet on a mobile. It’s critical that the mobile gender gap is understood and overcome, as digital literacy provides life-changing benefits to women, their families, communities and the economy. Through Advocacy and Trainings for these women, Digital Woman Uganda came up with an educational tutorial for learning which equips the African woman with the knowledge and skill needed to be able to participate in the Digital eco-system.

A study was also sanctioned to find out if women are aware of and the status at which they are in terms of access and use of ICT and digital networks in Uganda.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Today’s era demonstrates that Information Communication Technology (ICT) is almost being utilized in all aspects of life to enable services of different kinds to be undertaken more effectively and efficiently. ICTs have generally been used to support both the public and private sector but their adoption has differed depending on the different models used. The role of ICTs is expanding to transforming communities in aspects of democracy, agriculture, education and several other societal issues that are meant to improve and reduce costs. When the role of ICT is seen within any service sector it is referred to as an e-service. Advancement in ICT has further propelled the rise in several ideas that the community can use in undertaking numerous services. The ability for ICT to connect people, organizations and businesses across social and cultural barriers in ways that would not be possible through the traditional systems is changing rapidly. Societies have to cope with the changing trends or else they lose out.

In 2001 and 2003, Kent and Facer (2004) conducted a study among over 1800 students in South West England on their use of ICT mainly computers at home and at school to enhance learning. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, it was reported that the boundaries between home and school are less distinct in terms of student's ICT use in particular through young people's production of virtual social networks through the use of instant messenger that seem to mirror young people's social school contexts. The study highlighted the need to have and adopt an effective link between home and school to ensure learning takes place. This means that if students access ICT and use it for learning, they can actually use it solve problems, demand accountability, ensure transparency among their responsible governments.

Chadwick and May (2003) state that United States, Britain and the European Union focused on developing policy statements that would guide their governments to use technologies to interact
with communities especially the marginalized ones. The managerial model of interaction was used to ensure active participation and consultation of everyone.

Russel and Stafford (2002) noted that among the most frequently used and accessed ICTs, the internet holds the first place in sharing and learning. Usage and ownership go a long way where those who own mobile phones share information faster online in comparison to those who do not own. In 2000, the proportion of people worldwide who use internet through their privately owned gadgets like a phone and a computer has increased in comparison to previous years. More people mainly those among the same age groups have influenced others to own gadgets to share information. This therefore shows that ownership highly contributes to sharing information easily and learning on a more frequent basis.

The frequency in the use of internet services can vary between several groups where on average, one can access internet for 5-7 hours a week. However, it is not known if the length of time is used for social sharing of discussion of democratic issues, (Russel and Stafford: 2002).

In developing countries, the use of ICT can be exercised economically, politically and administratively to manage affairs of a particular country. This is what is termed as e-governance and can be similar to good governance. This can be done easily where citizens do not have to queue to get things done but use electronic means. However governments have to use stringent measures like having legal infrastructure in place to ensure information is shared the right way (Basu 2004).

The availability of different forms of ICT has made it possible for people to access information widely, interact with each other and be able to contribute to the democratic process. The civil society can work well with communities to voice out their concerns and provide input to the political process through asking questions, sharing responsibilities and improving accountability and transparency. Civil society can dialogue with and empower communities to support and promote their ideas through modern ICTs like the use of twitter, skype and other social media platforms. Governments solve problems and provide feedback through the creation of useful ICT applications and services based on government provided data like the data.gov website for United States of America, www.ubos.org for Uganda. These open access databases provide government data to the public to provide citizens with information that may ensure transparency and accountability of public services. The community can also be able to submit questions and complaints on service delivery to government representatives. Such services allow citizens who even reside in other countries to access information easily.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The research employed a mixed research methods approach which included the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Relevant literature was reviewed on the use of ICT in the governance sphere from both referenced and grey materials. The literature review was intended to provide a ground context into the subject matter. Given the nature of the study, sources for primary data were purposively selected. According to Tongco (2007), a purposive sampling technique also
known as judgmental sampling, is the selection of respondents based on their unique qualities that make them likely to provide the desired opinions and experiences about a given phenomenon under investigation. For this study, a total of 57 respondents (49 female and 8 male) (~97%) responded to the study; a response rate which was considered sufficient to represent opinions of the wider community of stakeholders. The respondents were in the districts of Tororo (Tororo municipality), Pallisa (Gogonya Sub County) and Bukedea,

**Data collection methods**

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted to collect data. Tools were developed and piloted to assess their reliability. Primary data was collected as well through interviews and online surveys. Data collection tools included the questionnaires and interview guides. The Data collection tools were classified into four themes or sections to enable an in-depth survey of the subject matter. These included: i) Part one- general information; ii) Part two- communication, engagement and advocacy; iii) Part Three-networking iv) Part four- policy programs and frameworks and v) Part five- challenges and suggestions.

**In-depth interviews** were structured based on the evaluation thematic areas tailored to gathering relevant information on respondents’ knowledge of and attitudes towards the Commission’s services especially impact on target beneficiaries.

**Data analysis**

Data collected from questionnaires was be sorted, coded and captured using an appropriate package for data analysis. The data generated was analyzed by using frequency count and correlation statistical analysis with the help of SPSS software package.
4.0 STUDY RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 General information
The study examined the sex of the respondents and below are results in figure 1.

From figure above almost all the respondents were female 85.96%, 49 and male were only 14.04%, 8. The study also found that, majority of the respondents were from Eastern 91.22%, 52 (45 female, 7 male) followed by Southern 5.26%, 3 (2 female, 1 male) and Central had only 3.51%, 2 were all female respondents who took part in the study. This is shown in figure 2 below.
Results in the figure 3 above show that, majority of the respondents were familiar with the use of mobile phone 78.95%, 45 (37 female, 8 male) and 21.05%, 12 of the respondents all female were not familiar with the use of mobile phones. This means that respondents have some level of awareness in terms of digital literacy.
Findings in the figure 4 above reveal that, almost all the respondents used ICT for various reasons with 34.38%, 11 for information sharing, 25%, 8 using ICT for human rights, access to internet with 21.88%, 7, next was safety training digitally having 9.38%, 3 and lastly knowledge at 3.13%, 1; human rights & information sharing, together with human rights & access to internet respectively. This means that respondents have digital literacy in terms of using ICT gadgets which includes the mobile phone.

From the figure 5 above, majority of the respondents 69.09%, 38 (34 female, 4 male) had never taken any ICT training, while 30.91% of the respondents (13 female, 4 male) had ever gone through some training ICT. This further clarifies the level of awareness among respondents.
From the figure 6 above, it indicated that only female respondent had taken training in ICT with majority 34.38%, 11 taking information sharing, followed by human rights at 25%, 8; access to internet with 21.88%, 7, next was safety training digitally having 9.38%, 3 and lastly knowledge at 3.13%, 1; human rights & information sharing, together with human rights & access to internet respectively.

The figure 7 above shows that, most of the respondents 69.09%, 38 (34 female, 4 male) did not belong to any community group, while 30.91%, 17 (13 female, 4 male) of the respondents said they belonged to a community group. This means that members can build their capacity in digital literacy through the groups they are attached to.
Results in the figure 8 above indicate that, all respondents here were females with most of them 18.18%, 6 just being members of the group, and chairpersons respectively, 12.12%, 4 were treasurers of their groups, group mobilizers and group secretaries respectively, 6.06%, 2 were peer educators in their groups, then lastly 3.03%, 1 of the respondents were coordinators, shared information, trainees, ICT consultant of their respective groups.

4.2: Communication Engagement and Advocacy
From the figure 9 above, it’s observed that all the respondents here were female with majority 28.57%, 10 involving themselves in trainings, followed by radio talk shows having 22.86%, 8; involvement in digital meeting was at 20%, 7, communication forums with 17.14%, 6, quarterly involvement was at 5.71%, 2, lastly. This means it is possible for people to build their capacity in use and access of various digital networks easily.

The figure 10 above indicates that, most of the respondents 26.09%, 6 did nothing after the training, followed by those who practiced, sensitized and shared with others at 8.70%, 2 respectively, while all the rest had 4.35%, 1. This means that the use of ICTs is limited to what the network can provide in terms of knowledge.
Findings in the figure 11 above show that, majority of the respondents 69.09%, 38 (34 female, 4 male) said they had not created awareness within their communities and only 30.91%, 17 (13 female, 4 male) of the respondents had ever created awareness within their communities. This means knowledge levels of ICT usage may be limited to a few who belong to groups.

Results from the figure 12 above reveal that, most of the respondents 69.09%, 38 (34 female, 4 male) said they had never created awareness on a voluntary basis while only 30.91%, 17 (13 female, 4 male) of the respondents had ever created awareness on a voluntary basis. This means unless individuals are remunerated, awareness cannot be emphasized.
From the figure 13 above, majority of the respondents 26.09%, 6 all-female created awareness at community level, followed by district level and group level both at 8.70%, 2 and rest had a 4.35%, 1. This means impact at community or grass root level is guaranteed as compared to district level.

The figure 14 above indicates that, most of the respondents 12%, 3 worked with Tororo district youth and smart up factory Uganda respectively, followed by 8%, 2 working with women saving group, youths mission and no organization, while the rest had a 4%, 1 representation. This means that individuals can work with organizations to create ICT awareness.
Figure 15: Empowerment of women and girls to participate

Results in the figure 15 above reveal that, almost all the respondents 83.67%, 41 said the women, youths and girls were empowered to participate while only 16.33%, 8 of the respondents disagreed that women, youths and girls are not empowered to participate. This means that almost all participants can participate to ensure sustainability of information on access and awareness of ICT.

4.3: Networking

Figure 16: Participation in government initiatives on the use of digital tools

From the figure 16 above it was revealed that, most of the respondents 69.09%, 38 (34 female, 4 male) said they had never participated any government initiative and only 30.91%, 17 (13 female,
4 males) of the respondents had ever participated in any government initiative. This means that the government is able to include their ideas in decision making initiatives at grass root level.

![Figure 17: Level of participation](image)

The figure 17 above shows that, the most respondents 14.29%, 2 participated in community engagement while rest of the respondents 85.71%, 12 participated in activities such as; basics of computer, crime preventors amongst others as shown above. This means that members are able to ensure sustainability of an intervention once introduced to the community because they are involved in the different activities.

![Figure 18: Type of contribution made](image)

Findings in the figure 18 above indicate that, majority of the respondents 7.41%, 2 had made contributions by training the community in computer, sensitizing, advising and advocating
respectively, 3.70%, 1 of the respondents made contribution in others like, buying smart phone, carrying out peer education, mentorship, trainings, group works, sensitizing respectively.

Figure 19: Sustained involvement

The figure 19 above showed that the participants ensure their involvement is sustained by ensuring refresher trainings, empowering the community, networking and many others. This is a practice that will attract even those whose levels of awareness is low.

Figure 20: Capacity development

Results in the figure 20 above show that, majority of the respondents 64.29%, 27 (24 female, 3 male) indicated that their capacities had been built, and 35.71%, 15 (14 female, 1 male) of the respondents their capacities had not been built. This means that frequent trainings should be emphasized if the community has to continue engaging and accessing the use of ICT.
From the figure 21 above, the most acquired skills were Microsoft office at 26.09%, 6, followed by 8.70%, 2 for communication skills, life skill management, while the others had 4.35%, 1 acquired skills in advocacy skills, community monitoring, computer training, digital marketing amongst others showed above. This stills implies that consistent trainings should be emphasized to ensure that more knowledge is acquired.

The figure 22 above indicates that, majority of the respondents 60%, 27 (21 female, 6 male) said they used their acquired knowledge and skills, and 40%, 18 (17 female, 1 male) of the respondents had not used their acquired knowledge and skills. This means that for impact and outcomes to be realized, respondents should be guided on how they can use the acquired knowledge and skills to cause positive change in terms of access and use of ICT. Various avenues were mentioned on how
the skills can be used to ensure the use of digital tools. These included being involved in report writing, more interaction with others, training teenagers to act as trainers of trainers and working together as a team.

Figure 23: Problems faced using the digital tools

Figure 23 above highlights a number of problems respondents face while using digital tools. The following were highlighted. No access to any ICT gadget, building capacity of the community members is hard because people keep relocating to new areas, the digital platforms available are not affordable and many others. Members were asked for suggestions to the problems identified and the following were the highlighted. Building more capacity, establishing an ICT hub, more involvement of the government ministry, more trainings and sensitization of members as often as possible.

4.4 Policy Programs and Frameworks

Figure 24: Awareness of policies and frameworks

Awareness of any Policies and Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the figure 24 above it was observed that, most of the respondents 68.89%, 31 (30 female, 1 male) said they were not aware of any policies and frameworks which guide access and use of digital tools, while 31.11%, 14 (9 female, 5 male) said they were aware of policies and frameworks that guided access and use of digital tools. This means that more awareness needs to be created.

However, for those who were aware of the policies, 9.68% mentioned that this happened through the capacity built, 3 of the respondents were aware of setting up ICT hubs, followed by space for ICT, supporting, respectively at 6.45%, 2, and all the rest were at 3.23%, 1 in terms of how they got aware of policies.

### 4.5 Challenges and Suggestions

The respondents were asked about the current challenges they faced while accessing and using of digital tools. The figure 25 below reveals that, majority of the respondents 8.11%, 3 mentioned poor network as being the current challenge, followed by hacking information, inadequate resources, and time management all at 5.41%, 2, while other challenges had at a 2.70%, 1 including, communication, computer misuse, cyber abuse, amongst others.

![Figure 25: Current challenges](image)

From the figure 26 below, respondents were asked if there are any current and future demands for access and use of digital tools. Majority of the respondents 9.68%, 3 site, followed by a 6.45%, 2, building capacity of people, ICT hub support, respectively, and the rest of the demands had a 3.23%, 1 response thus; accessing good internet, data, bridging the gap, amongst others.
The respondents were asked if they had any suggestions to improve access and use of digital tools. Findings indicated that, majority of the respondents 9.68%, 3 suggested setting up ICT hubs, followed by a 6.45%, 2 suggestions of providing space, supporting, and all the other suggestions had a 3.23%, 1 response thus; building capacity, creating platform, more training, trading and sensitizing people amongst others. It is assumed that once these suggestions are considered, access and use of ICT will improve.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study found that there is some form of communication, engagement and advocacy among the respondents. They use the mobile phone as the main digital tools and use it to network with others. Through meetings, advocacy campaigns and involvement in some government activities, participants try to ensure sustainability of activities because there is a sense of ownership. Once a policy is implemented, the participants usually have a sense of what is talked about. Respondents thus mentioned that they were not aware of various policy programs and frameworks because of challenges faced in access and use of ICT. These mainly ranged from the high cost of data, cyber abuse illiteracy, inadequate resources and lack of trainings. The respondents suggested the provision of ICT hubs and training people on how they are used.
6.0 REFERENCES


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