



SMS Campaign on ICTs and Poverty Reduction
Theme: “ICTs: Is your wealth a click away”

Meeting Report

Face-to-Face Meeting
Hotel Protea
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Organised by
Women of Uganda Network (WOUNET – www.wougn.net.org)

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WOUNET Coordinator welcomes participants

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List of Acronyms

ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PFA	Prosperity for All
SMART	Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Time bound
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMS	Short Message service
WOUGNET	Women of Uganda Network

1.0 Introduction

The highlight of the campaign which used the SMS tool and email to generate responses concluded with a face to face meeting to deliberate more on the theme of the campaign “ICTs: Is your Wealth a click away?” The two weeks SMS campaign on ICTs and Poverty reduction was conducted by Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) using a PC-based tool kit. The purpose of the face to face meeting was to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and Communication Technologies (ICT) could bring to societies and economies as well as explore ways to bridge the digital divide.

In preparation to mark the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2008 on 17th May, WOUGNET used this SMS campaign to seek views on the theme 'ICTs: Is your wealth a click away'. Over the two week period 21st April to 2nd May, WOUGNET invited views, examples, testimonies, ideas, recommendations and critiques on what was being done and what was not being done to use ICTs to increase wealth and to reduce poverty. SMSs were sent out on a daily basis with questions for the day and highlights of contributions received. Contributions were also sent in by email, or through the blog on the WOUGNET website.

The purpose of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies, and to find ways to bridge the digital divide.

As a conclusion to the two week SMS campaign a face-to-face workshop was hosted

to further discussion on the key issues arising. This report presents a summary of all the discussions with recommendations from the workshop. The report will be submitted to the Ministry of ICT on the occasion of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

2.0 Opening Remarks by Dr Dorothy Okello Coordinator Women of Uganda Network

The Coordinator Women of Uganda Network welcomed all participants to the forum and extended her sincere thanks to all the people who had participated in the campaign and managed to come for the face to face meeting. She appreciated the time, money and thoughts that had made this campaign successful. She gave a brief background to the campaign and asked participants to introduce themselves and share briefly with everyone their experience of the campaign.

2.1 Opening Address

By Hon. John Alintuma Nsambu - Minister of State for ICT



Hon. John Alintuma Nsambu opens meeting

In the opening address the Minister of State for ICT, Honorable John Alintuma Nsambu emphasized the need for ICTs and the opportunities they offer to reach the most rural sector of the communities. He recognized that the civil society sector was doing much more than the Government in reaching out to the communities

in the use and application of ICTs in various sectors of the economy. He commended WOUGNET for the innovative initiative and emphasized that as government they were challenged. He recognized and congratulated the WOUGNET Coordinator upon her appointment to the Strategy Council of the UN Global Alliance for ICT for Development (UN-GAID).

He noted that, ICT tools could be used to generate wealth and gave an example of a mobile telephone which could be used to generate income. He continued to say that Poverty was a concept in the head. On the question of under spending in the ICT Ministry, a concern that was raised by one of the participants, he responded that this was a media mis-reporting, and all the funds had been utilized. However the Ministry was setting up “State of the Art computer laboratories in a selected secondary and/or technical school in the districts.”

In conclusion he emphasized that with ICT, practical and tangible things could be done with a little innovation. He commended WOUGNET for bringing together and putting a face to the participants of the SMS campaign.

3.0 Poverty reduction efforts and the engendered nature of poverty

By Ms Margaret Kakande – Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

Ms Margaret Kakande, a poverty analysis expert gave an explicit presentation on the current situation of poverty in Uganda. In the Ugandan context, poverty was defined as the lack of basic requirements and was multi-dimensional in nature with aspects of capability, opportunity and empowerment. Ms Kakande gave a brief overview of some of the poverty reduction efforts in Uganda and these included;

- The Poverty Eradication Action Plan- PEAP which has five pillars,
 - (a) Economic Management
 - (b) Enhancing production, competitiveness and incomes

- (c) Security, conflict resolution and disaster preparedness.
- (d) Good governance
- (e) Human Development
- The Prosperity for All, with four components
 - (a) Production and productivity
 - (b) Value Addition (Processing and Marketing)
 - (c) Community Information system
 - (d) Rural Financial services

On the engendered nature of poverty, she said the natural causes and impacts of poverty were different for men and women. Gender inequality was persistent in access to and control of a range of productive, human and social capital assets.

The role of ICT in poverty reduction

In Uganda, the economy had been liberalized and there was competitiveness in every sector, ICT inclusive. There was therefore need to enhance women’s production and productivity in agriculture and the SMEs through provision of information on markets, prices, inputs and other available public services and opportunities.

In conclusion, she emphasized that ICT had the potential of correcting some of the gender inequalities that have been limiting women’s access to benefit from development policies and programmes. The challenge was to demystify ICT such that history does not repeat itself to continue with the marginalization of women.

3.1 Summary of the plenary discussion on Poverty

(a) **Question:** “How far has government gone to enhance the Rural Electrification programme since this was one of the factors that affect use of ICT?”

Response:

Government was implementing the Rural Electrification programme in Western Uganda, Kikinzi district, in the West Nile region at Paidha district and the development of hydro power at Bujagali falls was also in the pipeline. All these are government efforts geared at

increasing the power supply in the country. In addition to the hydro power, enhancement of the use of the solar systems in the different areas of Health, Education and Finance was being promoted. A programme on accessing solar panels at household level was also available, and could be accessed by everyone.

(b) Question: “How do you address the issue of collateral with banks?”

Response:

There was already an Act in place, where removable assets could be used to access loans. Banks were willing to use some of these assets as security; however this depended on the financial institution. However a more practical approach these days was the use of peer groups especially in the rural areas where women mobilize themselves into homogenous groups and act as collateral for each other.

(c) Question: “Could you please elaborate on the lack of Gender dimension in the PFA?”

Response:

Most of government programmes had gender responsive strategies. For example when one looked at the Water and Sanitation programmes where the nearest distance to the water source were short distances from the household – these were some of the gender responsive strategies. Other programmes were the Universal Primary Education and the Universal Secondary Education.

(d) Question: “Children especially the Girl child fail to complete their education.

Are there any strategies as far as Government is concerned to address this problem?”



Discussion in a group session

Response:

The key reason for the high dropout rates in UPE was costs. People cannot meet the feeding costs and scholastic materials. The dropout rates were at two levels; in primary two, it was associated with costs. In primary six, the main reasons were

- Sexual harassment
- Pregnancy
- Work at home.

The alternative solution to this would have been Government giving incentives to schools, unfortunately Government has other priority expenditure areas. Government had made a recommendation that “Girls who became pregnant at school should be allowed to go back to school.” However this met with strong opposition especially from religious leaders.

(e)**Question:** “On the statistics that government uses to measure poverty levels, are these statistics relevant to Uganda?”

Response:

The measure of poverty that the Government uses is not the World bank measure of one dollar but just because it is close to one dollar. According to a research that was done by the Ministry of Finance, people spend a lot of money on Health and Alcohol. It was important to look at the consumption expenditure and two things in particular;

- On what were people spending money on?
- Where were they getting the money they spent?

The research showed that the money was mainly coming from

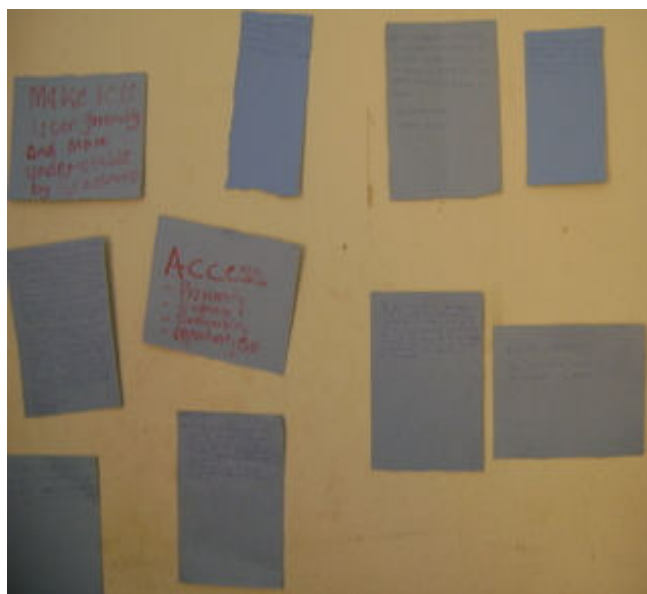
- Transfers from relative abroad and
- Selling off Assets.

It was therefore very important to use other indicators and the MDGs as a measure of poverty.

3.2 Summary of issues arising from ICT and Poverty reduction discussion

The major issues that came out this discussion were categorized as;

- Awareness and access of Government programmes at the grassroot level.
- Awareness and access of ICTs by the poor
- Policy issues
- Integration of disability issues in programmes
- Networking and collaboration among the various stakeholders
- Content and application in ICT use.



Participants' views on ICTs

Table 1: Summary of contributions

1.	Awareness & Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programmes underestimate the issue of creating awareness on access to information ▪ Create awareness on the use of ICT tools and their importance. ▪ Lack of awareness on government programmes designed to reduce poverty at the grassroot ▪ Poverty can be addressed by making ICT accessible to all and need for basic training in the use of different ICT tools given the high illiteracy levels especially among women. ▪ Need to sensitize the media on poverty eradication programmes and ICT. ▪ More awareness campaigns needed especially in rural areas as radio is the only source of ICT and not every home can afford one.
2.	Policy issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government programmes are designed from the top and when brought to communities, end with the Councillors who are the policy makers at district level. ▪ Design gender responsive and inclusive programmes. ▪ .Telecommunication infrastructure development, so that rural areas are not left out in the ICT use. ▪ Government implementation of poverty eradication policies is still limited. ▪ ICT policy should be strengthened by mainstreaming gender.
3.	Disability integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designing programmes that target people with disabilities at the grassroot by all stakeholders.
4.	Content & application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simplifying language and content by ICT implementers.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need for content to be relevant to the target communities and in local language. ▪ Limited use of applying the ICT tools that people already own to reduce poverty and have sustainable development. ▪ Translation of language used into local languages.
5.	Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encouraging networking among various stakeholders. ▪ Need for all stakeholders, Government, civil Society, Private sector to come up with a clear strategy on how to incorporate ICTs in programmes. i.e develop relevant content, avail affordable tools. ▪ ICTs have helped rural women to interact with other people and provided access to business opportunities. ▪ Support of group formation at the grassroots to effectively utilize ICT opportunities.
6.	Other issues raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Issue of access, proximity, cost and sustainability of ICTs. ▪ Attitude change by rural women on the use of ICT. ▪ Prioritizing infrastructure development i.e rural electrification as this would enhance ICT implementation ▪ Functional adult literacy should be encouraged through establishment of rural vocational training centres. ▪ Government should set up an independent body to monitor poverty eradication programmes especially at the grassroots where people are not aware of government programmes. ▪ Involvement of the private sector in improving access to ICTs.

4.0 Open Space Session

4.1 Summary of the spectrogram

The spectrogram was used to seek participants' views on the potential of ICTs to reduce poverty. During this session participants stood either on the two main extremes of Yes and No or in the middle in response to the statement, "In Uganda today, ICTs are the key factor in addressing poverty reduction". A special observer to this session was the Chairperson, Parliamentary Committee on ICT and the Minister of State for ICT as a participant. Below is a summary of each proponent.



Workshop participants stand along the spectrogram

Table 2: Summary of discussions at the spectrogram

The Question for discussion was:

“In Uganda today, are ICTs the key factor in poverty reduction?”

No	Middle Ground	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ICTs were a tool and an additional factor to poverty reduction efforts. ▪ Could help in poverty reduction but only as a tool. First priority should be on educating communities on how to use the tool. ▪ Country still has many other challenges in the fight on poverty reduction. ▪ Need to first create awareness. ▪ Cost implementation of ICTs hindered their potential. ▪ People do not yet appreciate the importance of reading therefore cannot effectively use ICTs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Because information is very vital in use of ICTs yet many people are not aware of the potential of ICTs. ▪ Information was for technology. ▪ Other key factors that are still important like illiteracy levels. ▪ There are equal chances on both aspects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Believe that those who have information are making money. ▪ Uganda is rated as one of the countries in East Africa with the highest number of ICTs.

Observer view

The observer was of the view that “ICTs had a lot of potential in poverty reduction but there were a lot of challenges as well especially to do with culture, ethnics and commitment to development efforts.

4.2 Summary of the Group discussions

Participants were divided into five working groups to deliberate on the following guiding questions;

- (a) How could ICTs be integrated into Development plans?
- (b) What/Which ICT indicators could monitor and evaluate poverty reduction strategies?
- (c) What/which content and applications in ICT use were relevant for poverty reduction?
- (d) How could we strengthen the existing ICT policy to help in reducing poverty?
- (e) How could the Private Sector facilitate the use of ICT by the poor?

4.2.1 Integration of ICTs into Development plans

To integrate ICT into the country's development plan, a "Bottom up approach should be used. There was also need for greater awareness of ICTs if people were to consider ICT related issues in planning. Allocation of resources and using people with skills was crucial. Examples given were the application of ICTs in the Education sector, where it was suggested that ICT lessons should be strengthen in the school curriculums.

4.2.2 ICT indicators to monitor and evaluate poverty eradication strategies

A checklist of indicators were suggested and these included

- Number of ICT based enterprises established in a region.
- Face to face community meetings as a base for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of ICTs.
- Information centres established in communities.
- Telephone usage in the community.
- Number of newspapers accessed and read
- Number of radios in a home.
- Number of radio stations country wide.

4.2.3 Content and Applications in ICT use for poverty reduction

A number of content applications were discussed and key among these was the establishment of local language websites. The content of such websites would include

agricultural information, Weather, Market prices, Pest and Disease control, health information and mobile banking among others. The need for Gender responsive content was also emphasized as well as online update of information at local access points.

4.2.4 Strengthening of the ICT policy to help in poverty reduction

Awareness of the existing policy and finding ways of making the illiterate aware of how ICTs could benefit them was essential. One of the key issues that came out here was that there was need to discuss the existing policy with all stakeholders both the rural and urban communities. There was also need to carry out timely and regular reviews to keep it relevant to the real and actual issues on the ground.

4.2.5 Role of the Private sector in facilitating use of ICT to the poor.

The role of the Private sector was seen more in the context of support to the development of the use of ICT for the poor and enhancing competitiveness to decrease costs.

4.3 Key emerging issues from the Group session.

The key issues that emerged from this session that Government, Private sector and the stakeholders need to continue deliberating upon were in order of ranking as follows;

	Key issues emerging	Frequency
a.	Integration of ICTs into Development plans	29
b.	Strengthening of the existing ICT policy	27
c.	Use of relevant content and application	24
d.	Role of the Private sector	12
e.	ICT indicators for M & E in poverty reduction	10

5.0 Demonstration of the tool kit

SMS stands for “short message service”, a feature of mobile phones. Also known as text messaging, it has become a widely used form of communication, especially because it is cheaper than making a voice call between mobile phone users.

In an effort to reach more people quickly and easily by SMS, a number of applications have been developed to send bulk SMS, that is, a single SMS sent out, but delivered to a number of mobile phones. One of these applications is FrontlineSMS (www.frontlineSMS.com).

FrontlineSMS is free software that turns a laptop and a mobile phone into a central communication hub. Once installed on the computer, the program enables users to send and receive text messages with large groups of people through mobile phones. Unlike many other applications, it doesn't require Internet connectivity to work, since it relies on the GSM signal of your local mobile service provider. In testing the tool, we used MTN and Celtel and both worked successfully. Also, because the software can be installed on a laptop, the tool can be used in remote areas without regular power supply, as long as you have the GSM signal.

Unfortunately, due to technical compatibility problems between the LCD projector and the laptop on which FrontlineSMS was installed, it was not possible to make a visual presentation of the application. However, the process of building the database, sending and receiving of single and bulk messages was clearly explained to the participants and was also demonstrated through an alternative Internet-based BulkSMS tool supported by KPN and Hivos.

Technical setback during the campaign:

As is expected during testing of a tool, challenges arose in the process. To begin with, finding the right hardware was difficult. As a cost-cutting strategy, the tool was designed to work with old model phones which are cheaper; however, the data-cables to link these phones to the computer are not readily available. We eventually solved this problem by using a GPRS wireless modem. The other problem was that as the database grew, the system slowed in delivery of messages, until it got to a point where the system halted mid-process every time you tried to send a message to the 100-strong database of mobile numbers. As such, not every participant's contribution was forwarded to the rest of the group. However, all messages were archived in the WOUGNET blog, so that everybody's opinion was shared with the group. To get around the problem of sending out messages promptly, we used the afore mentioned BulkSMS tool to send out messages, while still using FrontlineSMS to receive.

However, overall the tool is good and appropriate for the local environment in which organisations operate. WOUGNET will continue to help with its development in partnership with the design team in the UK, and encourage other organizations to use it as well for their mass communication needs.

6.0 Closing Remarks

By the Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on ICT, Honorable Edward Baliddawa

As a Policy Maker, the Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on ICT said, "Most times when I am invited for such functions, I prefer to listen and learn from practitioners than to tell." He therefore wanted to hear from the participants, "Which areas of the ICT policy did they want strengthened?" He was convinced that ICT tools were enablers as was exhibited in the spectrogram. However he requested to clarify on the issue of under spending at the Ministry before opening up the discussion.



Hon. Edward Baliddawa closing workshop

The Hon. Member clarified that on the issue of under spending at the Ministry, the media had mis-reported. The sector where the ministry had underperformed was in the “wage sector” and this was interlinked with the Ministry of Public service which handles staff recruitment. If no people were recruited, then no wages could be paid.

Back to the policy issues, he asked the participants their thoughts on what should be the guidelines in the policy. Poverty needed to be tackled as a critical mass, so that a wide population could be reached.

6.1 Plenary discussion on issues arising

6.1.1 Review of the 2003 ICT policy

Hon Baliddawa remarked that reviewing the ICT policy remained the biggest challenge policy makers, as events had long since overtaken the policy and it needed a major overhaul. The ICT policy review needed to be speeded up, but this had been hampered by the understaffing in the ministry. Perhaps in the next financial year, it would be reviewed.

6.1.2 Overhaul of the Communications Act

The Communication Act as it was now had irregularities. For instance how could the responsible ministry have a lesser budget than the commission which it had to monitor and regulate? The current rates (1%) that the telecommunications companies were required to contribute to the commission was not comparable to the earnings that these companies made from the public. In the current Act, UCC was not accountable to Parliament and this needed to be reviewed.

6.1.3 Private/Public partnerships

This has to be embedded within the policy. Without a policy guideline, implementation of such a partnership was not possible, yet CSOs were doing a wonderful job of reaching down to the grassroots. These were some of the issues that have to be considered during the policy review.

6.1.4 Integration of disability in the ICT policy

The issue of disability would have to be embedded within the framework of the policy. There was need to have the marginalized groups participate in the review of the policy framework

6.1.5 Language and content

Examples were given of the Schoolnet programme that was supported by Bill Gates for ten years. After Bill gates pulled out, a year after, the project could not continue. The reason was that the content was foreign and therefore not relevant to the schools. Even when one looked at the website of Parliament, the content was not regularly updated. This was a critical factor that needed urgent attention.

6.1.6 Implementation of the ICT laws

In ICT, there were no laws, simply because no laws have been made. Even then the laws that were in offing had not been passed because they are still with the executives. The ICT Parliamentary Committee chair remarked that as members of parliament they could only

enact laws brought to the house. This was the same case with the National Information Technology Authority.

7.0 Summary of SMS campaign discussion

The two weeks SMS campaign was guided by a different question a day. The following are the questions that guided the discussions.

- ICTs are seen as tools for socio-economic development. But, is this more of a theory than reality? How is ICT being used to reduce poverty? What more can be done?
- How can ICTs be embedded into effective strategies for reducing poverty?
- What is not being done to use ICTs in the fight to reduce poverty, and why?
- Which ICTs are most effective in reducing poverty?
- How can ICTs be used in ways that achieve measurable results in a reasonable time frame?
- How can successful initiatives be scaled up and/or be implemented successfully in other regions?
- What can the private sector do to help facilitate the use of ICT by the poor?
- Are there any examples where there are measurable results of ICT resulting in poverty reduction?

7.1 ICT as tools for Socio- economic development

ICTs as tools for Socio- Economic development can be seen more in the context of support for development interventions, than as tools that directly reduce poverty. One of the main concerns was that ICTs were crucial to the fight against poverty, but to click away one needed to have what to click! The issue of access was one of the limiting factors identified during this campaign. Some of questionable factors that the campaign brought to light included;

- Were the policies in place?
- Were the policies clear?

- Did the poor participate in the policy review and documentation?

It was however still considered a theory because there are many people especially women who could not afford to use ICTs due to lack of access, the inapplicability of the content, illiteracy levels, costs and the general low standards of living. More work still needed to be done in terms of integrating socio-economic issues at policy level.

7.2 Embedding ICTs into Poverty eradication strategies

Awareness on the opportunities that ICTs can offer to communities in poverty reduction was noted as an important strategy and the linkage that it creates to resource access. In Uganda, it was noted that ICTs were seen more in a theoretical context that was not well defined, as it did not have a direct bearing on development and therefore poverty reduction. However, ICTs could be imbedded in strategies to reduce poverty by agencies going down to the grassroots and highlighting the extreme poverty cases for Government and donor interest alike so that governments and donors put the resources to the right use.

7.3 ICTs as effective tools in reducing poverty

Although community radios received the highest ranking as one of the most effective ICTs in reducing poverty, a combination of both traditional and modern ICTs for better results adaptability, cost, practicality and access were cited as yielding the best results.

7.4 Use of ICTs in achieving measurable results

In order to achieve measurable results, the technology must be clear and have useful benefits for the community if it is to succeed and have measurable results. Timely reviews and decision making by all stakeholders was considered to be important. The need for political will to formulate policy and establish functional institutions to promote these emerging technologies was needed.

7.5 Scaling up and implementation of successful ICT initiatives

Regular and timely reviews, documentation of lessons learned, sharing of experiences and circulation of research reports with various stakeholders were some of the factors identified

in scaling up and implementation of successful ICT initiatives. It was suggested that such factors and principles should be properly analyzed to establish whether they are applicable elsewhere, as some of the successes resulted from unique set of environmental factors. It was also important to set SMART targets against which monitoring and Evaluation of the initiatives could take place. Strategic Public-Private partnerships were seen as vehicles for stimulating markets and viewed as affirmative action. Successful models could be replicated through these.

7.6 The role of the private sector in facilitating use of ICT by the poor

It was noted that the private sector like the NGOs were influential in reaching the grassroots, though business oriented. To facilitate the use of ICT by the poor, it was suggested that the private sector eliminates as much as possible business approaches that were not efficient and resulted in unnecessary increase of cost of doing business. Examples given included the inadequate sharing of infrastructure, excessive roll out of new products and services, wasteful promotion and advertising practices that sent negative messages to the communities. As part of their social responsibility, the private sector could support the use of ICTs by the poor by subsidizing prices and supporting initiatives by communities.

7.7 Examples of measurable results

Community radio station, community information centres, MTN village phones, public telephone booths, internet cafes and secretarial bureaus are some of the examples that were cited as ICTs that produce measurable results. Examples included the Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio (KKCR 91.7 FM) and The Internet Cafe; Kubere Information Centre - Radio Apac.

One thing noted though was that ICT sector in this country was now open to several players, all competing with one another. The direct benefit of this competitiveness was that ICT prices would fall while the quality of service would be expected to improve. However there has to be adequate supply of the basic ICT tools

7.8 What was not being done

One of the issues that came out strongly was that the ICT Ministry was noted to be working as a lone crusade in championing the ICT cause. Poverty eradication strategies and ICT implementation strategies were treated as separate entities and were not inclusive, i.e., involving all stakeholders in the design process.

The political will was seen as not being strong enough in championing the use of ICTs for poverty reduction. There were issues of institutional and national change management that have to be addressed. Did government view the business community and citizens as stakeholders?

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The two weeks SMS discussion and the face to face meeting brought to light a lot of key questions on the role that ICTs play in poverty reduction given the infrastructural and cultural environment in Uganda. Both the positive development impact and potential were exhaustively discussed yet so many questions were left unanswered. To further reflection on the outcomes of this report, the following key emerging issues were noted and recommendations given

8.1 Outdated 2003 ICT policy and the Communications Act

In recognition of the need to develop appropriate and deliberate policy and strategies in order to enhance the role of ICT in poverty eradication, the government through the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) initiated a consultative and participatory process to formulate the national ICT Policy, 2003. However with the current development of new technologies and knowledge age there is a need to have an overhaul in the 2003 ICT policy

Recommendation

The Ministry of ICT, together with the ICT parliamentary committee should involve all stakeholders and speed up the ICT policy review process

8.2 Integration of ICT into Poverty Eradication strategies

To integrate ICT into the country's development plan, "A bottom up approach" should be used. People in communities were not aware of the poverty eradication strategies nor where people aware of ICTs and their potential especially among the rural poor.

Recommendation

Awareness campaign strategies should be designed involving the communities by Government, CSOs and the private sector using the various ICT options.

8.3 Public/ private sector partnerships

It was noted that while CSOs were doing commendable work at the grassroots, this was being done in isolation or separate from government support and the line ministries. Most times CSOs were not aware of government strategies and vice versa.

Recommendation:

Poverty reduction strategies created by government and CSOs should be transparent and inclusive, working closely with civil society organisations, the private sector and stakeholders at community level.

8.4 Access and control of Resources by the poor

In 2003 and 2004, the government commissioned three research papers; one on gender analysis of poverty by David Lawson, which found that households headed by women - particularly those headed by female widows and married women - are poorer than others; the second was on gender and growth linkages by Stephan Klasen, who argued that Uganda's high fertility rate - which is closely linked to gender gaps in education, employment, bargaining power at the household level, and unequal access to credit was a major burden for women and reduced their ability to participate in the economy.¹

¹ Canagarajah Roy S. 2005: Uganda: Integrating Gender into Policy Actions.

Recommendation

For women to effectively utilize ICTs and the poverty reduction strategies there is need to strengthen women's and poor people's access to land, address gender-based violence through the judicial system, and increase the percentage of safe water and sanitation coverage in both rural and urban areas. The enactment of the Domestic Relations Bill and implementation of the National Gender Policy are some of the bills that are expected to provide an important foundation for addressing issues of improving women's security, especially in relation to access to and control of resources. These actions provide a solid platform for the more systematic integration of gender issues into policies

8.5 Content and applicability

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer unprecedented possibilities for global interaction and communication. But they are only meaningful if their content reflects local needs and conditions.

ICT can be used to promote, distribute and create local content, moving from one-way media in which poor and marginalised people are information recipients to interactive media, in which stakeholders participate actively in its creation and dissemination. The content offered by most ICTs with the exception of the local community radios was noted to be irrelevant and not applicable to the local conditions.

Recommendation

It was recommended that the issue of content is addressed at policy level, taking into consideration the following questions;

- What content would predominate the local websites?
- Who would create it?
- What was the cultural bias?
- Was Uganda's viewpoints, knowledge and interests adequately reflected?
- How was Uganda portrayed by such content?

These are some of the questions that will have to be addressed relating to content

8.6 Integration of the disability issues at policy level.

It was noted most policies and programmes did not adequately address disability issues at design stage.



Participant with disability poses a question

Recommendation

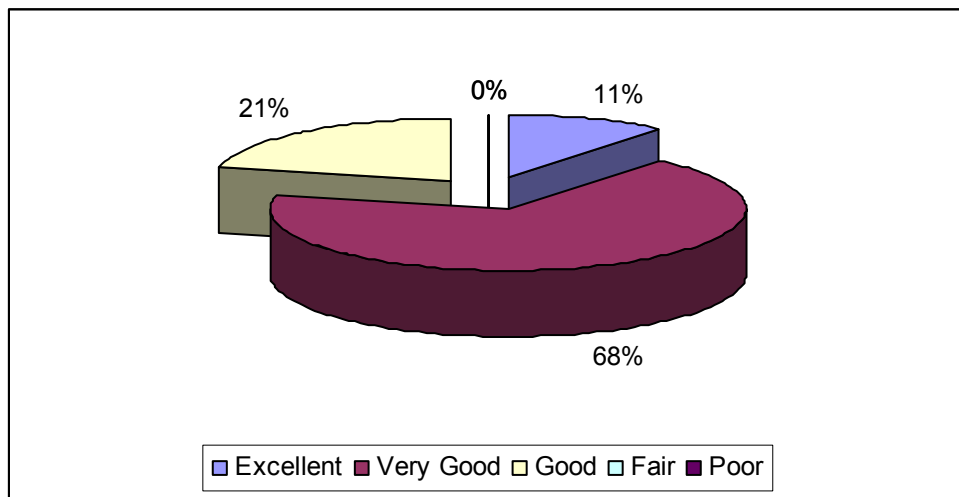
Recommended that disability issues are embedded within the National ICT policy framework and the poverty reduction strategies.

In conclusion, attempts to use Information Communication Technologies for poverty reduction are more effective when embedded and synchronized with other policies and resources. For the poor to be at the centre of poverty reduction efforts, the meeting concluded that technologies must be adequate to the skills of the poor in order to exploit their potential effectively. The content of such technologies should receive as much attention as connectivity, be people-centered, demand driven and in local languages. Ownership by the local communities, partnership and networking were thought to be key to effective poverty reduction programmes using ICTs.

Appendix 1: Evaluation of the Face to Face meeting

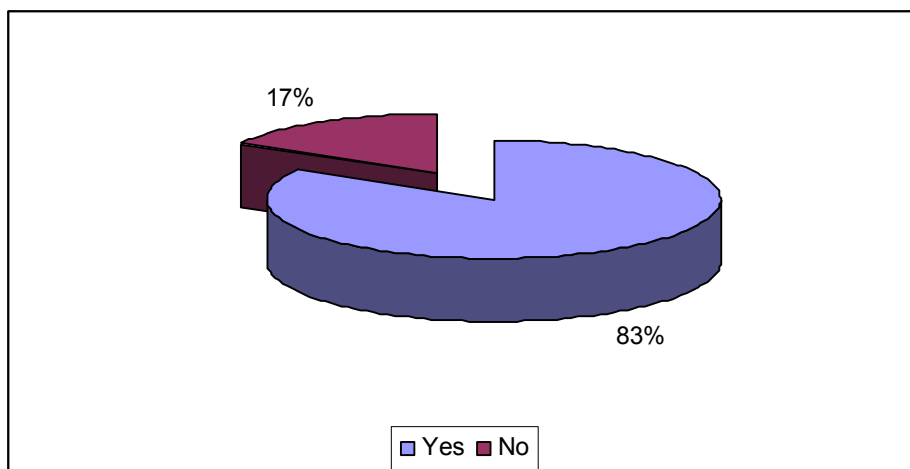
(a) Overall rating of the organisation of the face to face meeting.

The overall rating of the meeting was very good at 68% with participants rating the meeting as having been participatory and the presentations and discussions very lively. The meeting gave a chance for the SMS media participants to further discuss issues that were covered during the SMS campaign.



(b) In your opinion has this activity met the objectives as stated in the invitation?

83% of the participants thought the stated objectives of the invitation were met as the meeting was able to identify key issues.



(c) What were the three most important issues raised in the face to face forum?

In order of ranking, the following were the three most important issues raised.

- (a) Integration of ICTs into Development plans - 29
- (b) Strengthening of the existing ICT policy - 27
- (c) use of relevant content and application - 24

(d) What are your comments about the concluded SMS campaign on the above theme?

Some of the outstanding comments were

- Each region had a chance to share ideas and experiences
- The SMS campaign should involve other languages as well.
- It was good and an informative initiative but not help to the rural people.
- ICTs could be used as a tool to reduce poverty.
- ICTs could be a good step towards reducing poverty if awareness is done at the grassroot level.
- The use of SMS was of great impact
- SMS is a great way to reach people since many people own mobile phones. The campaign was awakening as it raised awareness.
- An interesting and innovative way of using ICTs for advocacy.
- Helps in time and cost saving as many people receive SMS within a short time
- A good tool to apply for bulk messages probably affordable unlike phone messages

(e) Any other comments

- WOUGNET should continue to put more effort in providing information.
- SMS on mobile phones should be continued as most people have access.
- ICT can play a major role in social and Economic development.
- CSOs working within the ICT sector should lobby Government to let people know more about the e-policy and what Uganda is lacking.
- The ICT policy should be simplified.
- Much as ICT is a tool for poverty eradication, it is affected by illiteracy and poor infrastructure coverage
- Ministry of ICT should be advised to carry out consultations with all stakeholders as they will be able to generate many ideas.

References

Canagarajah Roy S, 2005: Uganda: Integrating Gender into Policy actions.
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