Women Shaping the Digital Space
Opportunities and Challenges in
East Africa

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Overview

• Background – About CIPESA
• State of the Internet/ICTs in East Africa (EA)
• Women and the Internet/ICTs in EA
• State of online freedoms in EA
  • Legislative environment
• Potential role of ICT in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment
• Recommendations toward more women in the digital space
The **Collaboration on International ICT Policy for and Southern Africa (CIPESA)**

- Research Centre for inclusive ICT[4]D policy in the Region

- **Focus on:** ICTs for Democracy, Online Freedoms, Open Data and eGovernance and Internet Governance

- **Flagship projects:** ICT4Democracy in East Africa, OpenNet Africa, AskYourGov East Africa
State of the Internet/ICT in East Africa

Telephone and Internet Penetration (% of the population)

Penetration drivers

- Liberalised sectors (except Ethiopia)
- Social media use
- Mobile money
- Government Initiatives to promote access and use including for Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Teledensity</th>
<th>Internet Penetration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>19.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
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Women and the Internet/ICT in East Africa

• There are **few disaggregated statistics** by gender on ICT access and usage
• Rwanda women employment in telecommunications sector – 19%

Facebook Male/Female User Ratio (Social Bakers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Male Users</th>
<th>% Female Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women and the Internet/ICT in East Africa

- A number of **skills development** organisations and initiatives bringing more women (including in rural areas) into the information society
  - WOUGNET
  - Akirachix
  - Association of Women in Business (Ethiopia)
  - Akina Mama Wa Afrika
  - Tanzania Gender Networking Programme
**Challenges**

- Government Policy and Practices that undermine human rights online
- Low levels of Employment
- Lower education attainment
- Cultural norms and practices – exploitation and stalking

**Opportunities**

- Mobilisation and transformation for women’s struggles and powers
  - anti rape campaigns
  - Counseling
  - violence online reporting and support systems
  - Fertility issues
  - Marriage and Divorce
  - Economic independence
  - Maternal Health
  - Education
  - Employment

Women and the Internet/ICT in East Africa
State of Online Freedoms in East Africa

Legislative Environment

Rights Provisions
- Freedom of Expression
- Freedom of the Press
- Freedom of Assembly/Association
- Privacy
- Access to information

Rights Curtails
- Interception of Communications
- No data protection laws
- Access to information: denied
- Surveillance
- Terrorism/Cyber Crime
Potential role of ICT in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment

- Need to understand the dynamics of how & why different demographics use ICTs and why others do not use them
- Constant review of the dynamics and impact

Are women automatically empowered by having access to information and participating in an ICT initiative?
Potential role of ICT in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment

- Recognition that there are some realities that ICTs may not be able to reach
- Identification of strategies to overcome discriminatory practices, and collective action to remove these practices
Recommendations

- Government, Development Actors, CSOs, Media and Academia
  - **Lobbying** for [enactment of] progressive amendments to laws and regulations that promote online freedoms and promote women access to the internet
  - Initiatives aimed at **skills creation and awareness** in recognition of the unique social, cultural, political and economic realities of women internet users in EA
The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)

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