

REPORT ON ENGENDERING THE ICT POLICY PROCESS
IN UGANDA

PREPARED FOR:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APC	Association for Progressive Communications
BROSDI	Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative
CEEWA	Council for Economic Empowerment for Women of Africa
ERT	Energy for Rural Transformation
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technology for Development
IICD	International Institute for Communication and Development
NPA	National Planning Authority
RCDF	Rural Communications Development Fund
UA	Universal Access
UCC	Uganda Communications Commission
UNCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
UWCI	Uganda Women Caucus on ICT
WOUGNET	Women of Uganda Network
WSIS	World Summit on Information Society

Uganda -- Engendering the ICT Policy Process

Executive Summary

The fact that gender determines the social roles, responsibilities and relationships and privileges between men and women in a given society means that all policy-making processes need to be engendered. The Uganda national ICT process was no exception. Although the findings of this research have indicated that there was no clear-cut engendering process distinct from the national process, there is ample evidence there was an attempt to identify and eliminate gender disparities in access and use of such technology.

Based on the analysis of data collected using semi-structured questionnaires and face-to-face interviews, this report indicates that only two women's groups actively participated in the policy process albeit after serious lobbying for inclusion. Like other policy processes in Uganda, the ICT policy process was largely dominated by men. These mostly got involved by virtue of the fact that they were already occupying positions related to policy making.

Using information from the WSIS process and research reports on ICT, however, the few women who were involved strongly argued their case. This is how objective 10 of the national ICT policy—focusing on gender mainstreaming - was adopted. Although the women do not appear to have learnt as much as the men about ICT during the process, there is no doubt that the "social consciousness" about the need to engender the process had been born, among other participants. The publication of "a policy brief on gender issues and gaps in the Draft National Information and Communication Technology policy framework" by WOUGNET is a clear indication that the engendering candle is still burning.

1.1 Limitations of the research

The research process for this project was hampered by a number of limitations:

- The engendering process was not clear-cut during the policy process. This made it very difficult to identify respondents for this particular study. Most of the people who participated in the process were more willing to discuss the general process than the engendering issues.
- The questionnaire used for this study was designed with the view that the engendering process was quite elaborate and would thus solicit a lot of information from as many respondents as possible. However, this wasn't to be as many important questions were unanswered. This was largely because the engendering process was not as 'elaborate' as perceived by the designers of the questionnaire.
- The few respondents who actively participated in the engendering process were not as useful to the study as expected in regard to providing information. Many felt more comfortable discussing the national ICT policy process than the engendering process, which they found to be just "a small component" of the entire process.
- The renowned champions of the engendering process are not very sure of some key details such as the date and month of setting up the Women's ICT caucus, how the Council for the Economic Empowerment of Women of Africa (CEEWA) got involved etc. This can be exemplified by the interview with Dorothy Okello (WOUGNET Coordinator) in which she says: "*I am not sure how CEEWA got involved but I guess they lobbied too...*"
- There was a methodological limitation with regard to the question about the respondents' previous involvement in policy processes (see section 1.9). This was followed by another question on the engendering process, which confused some respondents about what to answer. This should therefore clear any confusion in that section.

1.2 Key recommendations of this report

This section contains recommendations made by the researchers based on fieldwork interviews. They fall into two categories namely; recommendations to the developers of the policy and those to the groups that spearheaded the engendering process. Recommendations to the developers of the policy include:

- The proposed review of the national ICT policy expected this year should include gender experts. This study has shown that the engendering process was not given as much attention as it deserved while making the policy. Gender activists were in fact chasing a process that had already taken off so their input was limited. This explains why WOUGNET, one of the leading champions of the engendering process

only published a policy brief on engendering the ICT policy in 2006—four years after the national policy had been passed.

- There should be advocacy on gender and ICT policy countrywide so that all stakeholders appreciate the need to engender policy making. There is need to sensitise the people in charge of forming the team to review the national ICT policy on the importance of engendering the policy in order to put gender experts on the review panel.
- There is also need for basic training of policy makers in gender and ICT issues. This will make it possible to have the gender campaign on board, rather than the situation where the gender activists have to lobby to be involved in the process.

Recommendations to the organisations that spearheaded the engendering process include:

- *Capacity building:* This research has clearly demonstrated that there is still widespread lack of capacity in ICT policy in Uganda. We therefore recommend that organisations like APC and WOUGNET use publications like the “ICT Policy Handbook” and others to conduct training to demystify their content as a means of empowering ICT policy makers to drive the engendering process to further heights. The “Women on ICT Policy Making in Uganda” published by WOUGNET in 2006 can also be a useful document for training purposes.
- *Take engendering to other groups:* It has also emerged from this study that organisations like APC, WOUGNET and CEEWA mostly tend to work with ICT-related government and non-government organisations in matters related to engendering the ICT policy. There is therefore need to take the engendering process beyond such organisations to bring on board those specialised organisations that do not necessarily deal with ICT. Such organisations include those dealing with persons with disabilities and human rights.
- *Documenting best practices:* APC, WOUGNET, CEEWA and other organisations that are involved in the engendering process should document the best practices in areas/places where the ICT policy engendering process has been successful. This is important for drawing lessons but also providing the much-needed information for driving the process forward.
- *Engendering should be sector-driven:* Organisations involved in the engendering process should take it to specific sectors such as agriculture, health and education to make the required impact. Although a lot of developments have happened in all these sectors over the past decade, there is still to address the ICT-related aspects of gender such as universal access and ICT use, among others. Targeting specific sectors is not only an

effective strategy of reaching out to the relevant stakeholders but also a way of reaching out to as many stakeholders as possible.

- *Promoting Universal Access (UA)*: As discerned from the WOUGNET gender assessment of the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF) report, there is need to streamline gender issues within organizations that receive funding for universal access programmes. The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) should specifically waive the requirement for experience and counterpart funding which leaves out many would be beneficiaries especially the women.

2.0 History of the policy making process:

Through UNCST, government initiated a consultative and participatory process in formulating the national ICT Policy. In 1998, a field survey on information and communication channels was conducted by a Project Team, which was constituted by the then Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. This provided background information for two stakeholder workshops, which were held. It was also part of the consultative process preceding the preparation of a Draft White Paper on Communication and Information for Sustainable Development.

A dialogue for key stakeholders¹ was held in August 2000 to identify and harmonise the institutional and sectoral issues with respect to the development and application of ICT. A national workshop on the theme "Formulation of a National Policy Framework" was held in September 2000 in Kampala. The workshop brought together stakeholders from government, parastatal institutions, the private sector, research and development institutions, training institutions, professional societies, NGOs, CBOs and development partners. The National Forum discussed the background information on the status of development and application of ICT in the country, and identified an institutional framework and the key policy issues that needed to be addressed in the national policy document. At this stage however, gender was not considered explicitly.

The engendering process started when the national ICT task force invited various stakeholders to workshops and seminars to develop the policy. Only two women groups—the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) and the Council for the Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa (CEEWA) - were initially invited to the workshops. It should be clearly noted here that although ISIS-WICCE is listed by WOUGNET as one of the organisations that participated in the engendering process, our discussions with them showed that they were not as involved.

Gorreti Amuriat, a former programme coordinator of CEEWA and now Programme Manager of WOUGNET, summed up the genesis of the engendering process as follows:

"The National Council for Science and Technology would invite us to their meetings and we would discuss the issues of primary concern, namely engendering the ICT policy and policy process. But we were really very few and elements of gender were not fully appreciated by the other members working on the policy. Although seven women were involved, only three were

¹ By stakeholders, we refer to the representatives of government, private sector, academia, civil society and media who were called upon to participate in the policy making process—both national and engendering.

active. At the end of the day, the policy document produced is quite gender insensitive."

Although Goretti said the women often met separately as the gender caucus² to discuss the positions of their organisations, they did so in their own individual capacities as persons knowledgeable about ICT. They were all part of a national effort to develop a policy that would promote the use and adoption of ICT in development programmes.

When the draft national ICT policy was completed in 2001, objective 10 was dedicated to "Gender Mainstreaming".³ It lays down a number of strategies to be employed in mainstreaming gender issues in ICT policy and programmes. The strategies are stated as: to take into account gender information needs and interests of both men and women in all information and communication programmes; develop mechanisms of increasing women's access to information (especially in rural areas), so as to reduce the gender information gap; use non-discriminative gender sensitive language in information and communication programmes; and ensure equal participation in all aspects of ICT development.

3.0 Methodology

This study was largely conducted using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaires were physically sent to the offices of respondents, filled in by respondents, and collected by the CIPESA staff. Three of the persons who filled in the questions were interviewed face-to-face to get additional information to inform the study. In addition, ten other key stakeholders were interviewed using an open-ended questionnaire developed for use by all countries in the study (see Appendix). The study was also informed by the review of the gender assessment of the RCDF by WOUGNET.⁴

4.0 Respondents' profiles

A total of 22 respondents completed questionnaires for the Uganda – engendering the national ICT policy process. Half of the respondents indicated that they work for a national NGO. There were also 4 people who indicated that they work for international NGOs. The other respondents indicated that they work for a wide variety of institutions. Sixteen of the respondents were female.

² This was a group of individuals that were championing the engendering initiative who were largely women.

³ Draft National Information and Communication Technology policy, October 2003

⁴ WOUGNET (2006); *A gender assessment of Uganda's Rural Communications Development Fund*

As for their positions in the institutions for which they work, the majority (13) were either directors or managers while the rest indicated that they were staff members (technical, administrative or support staff). A total of 15 respondents belonged to the civil society stakeholder category, followed by 5 who indicated that they were practitioners.

A total of 13 respondents indicated that they were aged 40 and below, and a further 7 respondents were aged between 51 and 60 years. Nineteen of the respondents indicated that they live in Kampala, the capital city while the rest live in other towns. All respondents indicated that they had reached tertiary education.

5.0 Role of men and women in the process

The Uganda national ICT policy process was largely dominated by men. They dominated by virtue of the positions they held. Since most of the policy making positions in other sectors are filled by men, they ended up dominating the ICT policy making process. So it is not that women were deliberately left out. They were simply not in policy-making positions, which would have automatically enabled them to be involved in the process. The men were therefore vocal because they were the initiators of the policy within which the engendering process was derived as spelt out in objective 10. There were seven active women in the gender caucus but only three actively took part in the working group meetings. These attempted to identify the gender gaps in the policy. Although they spoke of the need to include gender issues, only one of the ten policy objectives focuses on gender.

The most active women's organisation that was involved in the policy process was the Council for Economic Empowerment for Women in Africa (CEEWA), which promotes the economic empowerment of women in the development process. CEEWA was born at the fifth African NGO Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 1994 in one of the workshops that observed that economic policies were adversely impacting on women yet nothing much was being done to address the concerns. The organisation comprises women professionals with academic and working experience in economics, agriculture, banking, gender, statistics, business management and other disciplines related to economic development. Their vision was to follow up on the critical areas of development for the Beijing Platform of Action. CEEWA presented views on engendering the policy process that had been collected from its members through consultative processes.

But critics of the engendering process—who are mostly women ICT activists from civil society--say that despite the above efforts, concerns about access, utilisation and the application of ICT remain largely gendered to the disadvantage of women, particularly the poor. They say gender therefore needs to be mainstreamed in ICT policies and programmes. A large part of

rural Uganda, where 80% of women live, has no telecommunications infrastructure, which directly affects access to ICT for both women and men. Besides, women's participation in planning, implementation and ownership of ICT services is low. In addition, it has been noted that women are not adequately represented at fora where major decisions on ICT are made. While one of the policy objectives is "to ensure gender mainstreaming in information and communication programs and in ICT development", one informant from the civil society noted that the policy framework has "significant holes to plug up to be truly gender responsive."

In response to the need to address gender concerns within the ICT policy framework and implementation strategy, the Uganda Women Caucus on ICT (UWCI) was initiated at the time of drafting the framework of the national ICT policy in 2001. The caucus secretariat is housed by the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET).

Dorothy Okello explained: *"We got involved at the stage of drafting the ICT policy framework, and we subsequently sat on some sector working groups like the one on e-information and e-government. We were a small group so we strategically lobbied to be put on three sector working groups – e-commerce, e-information and e-government. We got onto the others but not on the e-commerce group."*

Today, UWCI is comprised of women and gender practitioners (including at least one man) working on issues of women and ICT in Uganda. Its mission is to engender ICT policy processes in Uganda, including policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Activities undertaken by UWCI include a review of the national ICT policy framework and identification of the gender issues therein, and a review of the ICT policy implementation stakeholder matrix.

Some respondents argued that it is not proper to dwell too much on the number of women who took part on the policy level, even if that is an important aspect too. Dorothy Okello explained:

"I think that more importantly, we need to ask whether the people who were part of the process, both men and women, had skills in gender analysis; whether they recognised the link between gender and ICT. If you look at the Uganda Women's Caucus on ICT, which aims to engender ICT policy processes from planning, designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, our most active member is a man. So we should ask whether there were men who understood gender concepts on the group that worked on the policy. Were gender experts involved? It is in recognition of this that on the Gender Caucus, we have women activists and gender experts."

In her work, Dorothy said they have considered how to make policy-making processes more gender sensitive in various ways. One way was to ensure that there are more women policy makers. They have since realised that it

could be more realistic and easier to provide gender skills to people who are already involved in the policymaking, whether they are men or women.

6.0 Sources of information for the policy making process

Respondents to the questionnaire got information for the process from various sources. The responses below relate specifically to the engendering process. The sources included:

- Field experiences
- Research reports based on studies done in Uganda and internationally
- Association for Progressive Communications (APC), where WOUGNET has been particularly active in the APC Women's Networking Support Programme. The website and publications were said to be particularly useful.
- Valuable information was also provided through APC's website and Chakula publication.
- The World Summit on Information Society Summit (WSIS) process that took place during the ICT policy formulation process also proved a vital source of information on gender aspects, among other things for the national task force members who were involved in both. In some cases, the task forces got useful information from the WSIS preparatory meetings that took place in Africa and Europe as they interacted with many experts in the ICT policy making process from all parts of the world.
- A gender assessment of RCDF by WOUGNET report.

6.1 Involvement in, and satisfaction with the process

Of the questionnaire respondents who were included in the study, 19 indicated that they were involved in policy processes before. More significantly, half of them said that they got involved in policy processes before as part of their job responsibilities. These were closely followed by those who said that they got involved by invitation of IICD/APC or their partners to their respective organisations. There was also a good number who got involved in engendering the national ICT policy process by government invitation to their organisation as part of the overall policy process in which the engendering process fell.

Overall, the study revealed a low level of satisfaction with the frequency of participation in the policy process. Only 6 of the respondents claimed to be satisfied with the frequency of their participation. The rest (16 respondents) indicated that they would have liked to participate more. A number of reasons were given for their limited participation. These include:

- Not informed about meetings and other opportunities for participating (12 respondents)

- Not given information in adequate time (4 respondents)
- Not given sufficient information (3 respondents)
- Not available at the times when the process was happening (1 respondent)
- Costs involved were too high (1 respondent)
- Did not have the necessary knowledge or expertise (1 respondent)

Another significant finding of the study was that all 16 female respondents indicated that the main objective in participating in the ICT policy process was to learn about ICT. This probably shows that there is still a very low level of awareness about ICT in Uganda, particularly among women. Other reasons given for participating in the policy process were:

- Ensuring that the policy addresses a particular issue
- Representing the interests of their professional or social community
- Ensuring that the policy addresses broad development needs
- Wanting a role in implementing the policy when it is finalised
- Learning about policy making

6.2 Achieving policy objectives

All but one of the respondents involved in the study indicated that they had partly achieved their objectives in the following ways:

- (i) *Awareness of gender issues:* Participation in the engendering process has created a lot of awareness particularly on the kind of policies that need to be in place to address issues of gender inequality. This has been especially promoted by the initiatives of WOUGNET who have championed the gender cause in many policy areas. Issues of gender are now considered for all policy process, which was never the case before the engendering process.
- (ii) *Skills development:* Participants in the engendering process acquired skills to develop policy briefs on gender issues and other issues. The same process also empowered many to develop proposals with other stakeholders on the creative use of ICT, among other important issues.
- (iii) *Government recognition of the sector:* The national policy process in which engendering was enshrined literally led to government's recognition of ICT as one of the main tools for development. Following the passing of the draft policy by Cabinet, there was liberalisation of the telecommunications and broadcasting sub-sectors leading to the emergence of many radio and television stations countrywide. The telecommunications duopoly regime was also dismantled paving the way for the licencing of a third national operator, which will certainly push rates down and improve the quality of services. Government also integrated the Rural Communications

Development Fund (RCDF) into the overall national development goals such as the Energy for Rural Transformation (ERT). Above all, government set up a fully-fledged ministry of ICT to streamline the implementation of ICT4D initiatives and guide general policy in the country.

- (iv) *Policy as a process:* The engendering process has made stakeholders realise that policymaking is a process and not an end in itself. The fact that organisations like APC, WOUGNET and CEEWA continue to raise gender-related issues for incorporation into the policy is an indicator that there is need for continuous revision of the policy.

The study also revealed that the engendering process fell short of meeting the respondents' objectives in many ways. The general, non-gender-specific, ways include:

- The policy does not address the high cost of bandwidth and infrastructure issues.
- Internet costs are still high
- The national ICT policy has not been fully implemented.
- Some key programmes such as universal access are not yet gender sensitive.
- The government has not facilitated the process of reviewing the national ICT policy to cater for the gender concerns.

The gender-specific ways include:

- Policy makers have not fully responded to the ICT policy and gender focus meetings.
- The gender component in ICT has not been fully addressed, as there is inadequate information on gender and ICT.

6.3 Way of participation in the policy process

All respondents indicated that their participation in the policy process was by way of attending workshops and/or consultations. A total of 12 respondents however indicated that they also did advocacy work outside the main process. This was mainly due to the fact that they came from organisations/institutions that were involved in various advocacy activities whose platform they used to conduct their activities

It is, however, important to note that 14 respondents participated in the policy process as part of a women's organisation namely:

- Uganda Women's Caucus on ICT
- Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)

Others participated by maintaining contact (by e-mail or telephone) with all the stakeholders, doing research and preparing, writing or editing draft versions of the policy document.

The study also revealed that men seem to participate more often in ICT policy processes than women. While about four-fifths of the men said that they participated monthly or weekly, only 19% of women participated this much. In fact, about one-third of women said that they had not participated at all over the last three months, against about one-fifth of men. This could be largely explained by the fact that few Ugandan women were involved until the early 1990s when government took deliberate efforts to involve women in policy making processes. So it was mostly the men who occupied such positions.

6.4 Missing stakeholder groups in the ICT policy process

Respondents identified the following groups of persons or organisations/institutions as among those who were missing or had not participated enough in the ICT policy process:

- Persons with disabilities or their representatives.
- Local leaders
- Government representatives
- Civil Society organisations
- The rural communities, especially the youth and women.
- Community-Based Organisations (CBOs).
- Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

6.5 Champions of the ICT policy process

Six in ten of the questionnaire respondents involved in the study indicated that government took the lead in the ICT policy process. The main actors in government mentioned include the following:

- The Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCS&T).
- The Ministry of Works, Transport and Communications (before the creation of the Ministry of ICT).
- Parastatal bodies such as the National Planning Authority (NPA)
- The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC)
- The Ministry of Health
- The Uganda Investment Authority (UIA).

Donor agencies, notably the IICD and USAID, were also mentioned as leading actors in the ICT policy process. In addition, there was also mention of international institutions such as International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

6.6 Level of expertise/knowledge of the policy area/issues of participants

In terms of level of expertise, the research showed that respondents are most positive about donor agencies and International organisations. Consultants and facilitators also score high while elected political representatives are valued less.

In terms of the level of influence of each of the sets of actors in the policy-making process, the study showed that while the elected representatives are ranked as being among the most influential, they are seen to have the least expertise. Women labeled the influence of government officials higher than men did.

6.7 Learning through the policy process

More men than women indicated that they have now gained the skills and knowledge to understand the viewpoints of other stakeholders. Whereas the absolute numbers are the same –5 men, 5 women—this is four-fifths of the total of men, but for women it is only a third. Respondents interviewed indicated that this was because men were more involved in policy making from its inception through the entire process than women. They therefore came out with more skills than the women who joined the process at later stages. One respondent explained: *“There were more men involved from the start than women who jumped onto a moving bus.”*

This was corroborated by the key informant who said that, ...” If you look at the Uganda Women’s Caucus on ICT, which aims to engender ICT policy processes from planning, designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, our most active member is a man”. (see p.8).

All but one respondent indicated that the outcomes of the policy-making process would affect them in their work lives and/or in their family/personal lives. Such an effect would be felt in the following ways:

- (i) *Skills acquisition:* The outcomes of the policy making process would enable participants to work more efficiently as they would use the experience they obtained to develop other policy papers. The fact that this was the first major policy making process in which they were involved provided a learning experience that also provides the springboard for developing other policies.
- (ii) *Affordability of ICT:* A key outcome of the policy making process is that its implementation would lead to a reduction in bandwidth costs especially with the implementation of projects like the East African Submarine Cable System (EASSy). This is particularly relevant to those who own ICT-based companies like

Internet cafes. Many such entrepreneurs have been driven out of business; so, the implementation of EASSy would play a major role in making connectivity affordable. The same outcome would apply to civil society organisations and individuals who now find it quite expensive to pay for their Internet costs.

- (iii) *Business Opportunities:* The implementation of the policy would create a number of business opportunities such as e-commerce. Many people in Uganda find it difficult to transact business online due to high costs of connectivity and other related problems thus missing out on one of ICT's latest innovations. The policy would however make it to overcome such problems and thus afford them the opportunity to do such business and other related matters.
- (iv) *Regulation:* The policy process has already culminated in a conducive environment that provides for the removal of the telecommunications duopoly. This would provide another chance to get affordable and reliable services.

6.8 *Satisfaction with the process*

Respondents indicated varying levels of satisfaction with the various aspects of the policy process. Overall, men were more dissatisfied than women with the level of participation by different stakeholders in developing the policy's vision and goals.

In terms of facilitating the process, one third of the respondents felt that the facilitators are trusted by the participants. These were followed by those who felt that the process used a bottom-up approach and had a well laid out structure (developing) for the content policy. In addition, one in seven respondents indicated that the overall facilitation was done in a way that encourages participation by all stakeholders.

Respondents also noted that they were satisfied with their on participation in the policy process. This was because their contribution was taken on board/valued, the process was participatory, the different views of the respondents were valued and the process was transparent. One in five respondents however disagreed with the view that the different views of the participants were valued.

Although in every ten respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the fact that the key decision makers are committed to the policy process, nearly the same number of respondents disagreed strongly. One in every respondent also indicated that they were satisfied that the right people are leading the process and the policy makers are trusted by the stakeholders.

There was however a gender difference in ratings in that more women than men (partly) disagree that practical experiences such as pilot projects have been used to feed into the policy.

7.0 *The Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) Gender Assessment of the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF)*

In November 2006, WOUGNET undertook a gender assessment of the RCDF in fourteen districts purposively selected where projects with support of the RCDF had been implemented. These included district portals, multi-purpose community telecentres, Internet cafes, school-based telecentres and ICT training centres.⁵ One of the aims of the assessment was to establish the extent to which the fund had provided universal access to rural communications and whether the implementation process had taken into consideration any gender concerns for the equitable benefit of men and women. The focus was on the utilization and uptake of services offered by RCDF supported projects by men and women.

Using a “qualitative and participatory” approach, the assessment showed that there a few isolated examples of RCDF beneficiary organizations that are addressing specific gender needs. One of such examples is SchoolNet—an NGO that is involved in activities to address gender needs of female and male teachers. According to the report, School does—as part of its internal gender sensitive programme implementation policy—ensure that all training activities incorporate both men and women in its training activities. Consequently, a number of single sex schools have benefited from training and material support in form of computer hardware. Other notable beneficiaries were the Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI) which innovatively uses ICT for rural development (specifically targeting women and girls) and the Arrow Computer Training Centre in Kumi town which provides ICT training scholarships to poor and often orphaned, girl children.

On the other hand however, the assessment also revealed that the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) policy stance that governs the RCDF does not take explicit cognizance of the fact the rural areas constitute the poor—the majority of whom are women. In effect, the Universal Access (UA) strategists have no direct provision for addressing the gender gaps in ICT access.

Although the assessment does not clearly discern the policy’s specific objectives and their potentiality for gender equality, it notes that any effort aimed at increasing access and bringing ICT nearer to the rural people has the potential of reaching the poor and the women. However, focusing on the sub-county headquarters and basing on a criterion of five thousand leaves out many women who are tied at home and other responsibilities and may not have the time and opportunity to travel to the sub-county or district

⁵ WOUGNET (2006); *A gender assessment of Uganda’s Rural Communications Development Fund*.

headquarters to access ICT services. In addition, the assessment further shows, the provision of ICT services in the rural areas is a limited objective in that, as is even admitted by the very proponents of the policy, the hard to reach areas are unlikely to be profitable. There will be need to focus on the social benefits rather than profits to reach the majority of the poor—especially women. Therefore, the provision of communication services as a profitable business and from a purely economic perspective though specific is a limited objective.

From the above findings, it is evident that RCDF—one of the national ICT policy initiatives is not gender sensitive. In addition to the fact that gender sensitivity is not a requirement for application for funding, the selection criteria also alienates many would be beneficiaries especially the women. As noted by WOUGNET in the report, taking into account the requirement for experience and counterpart funding certainly excludes the poor and women’s organizations that may not have the experience and money for counter funding. This explains why nearly all the beneficiaries of the RCDF are not only male registered but male dominated in their day to day running. Inevitably, they also tend to focus more on general programmes with only a few taking into account their deliberate internal gender mainstreaming undertakings that have benefited a few women.

8.0 *Other initiatives to engender the national ICT policy*

Although there is ample evidence to show that there were no deliberate efforts to engender the national ICT policy during its formulation process, there are some organizations that are, through advocacy and other programmes, become key actors in the engendering process. In this section, these initiatives are highlighted with specific focus on the gender-based programmes:

(i) *The Council for Economic Empowerment for Women in Africa (CEEWA)*: For the last 12 years, the CEEWA-Uganda chapter has used ICT to promote the economic empowerment of women in development.⁶ Having played a lead role in the national ICT policy making process, CEEWA is currently involved in several initiatives to implement aspects of the policy. In addition to conducting a baseline study on economic empowerment of women through the use of ICT in Uganda, CEEWA also produces a quarterly ICT project monitoring report with specific focus on gender issues within the policy. With funding from Humanistic Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos), CEEWA continues to sensitise and create awareness among women entrepreneurs in six project districts/sites about the role of ICT in empowering and strengthening their ability to run and manage their lives and businesses. The project, implemented under the Women and Entrepreneurs Development (WED) programme enables rural women entrepreneurs and

⁶ <http://www.ceewauganda.org/> -- Primer on CEEWA Uganda.

women organizations that promote enterprise development explore ways and means of exploiting ICT for community economic empowerment.

(ii) Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET): Following its participation in the national ICT policy making process, WOUGNET has continued to develop the use of ICT among women as tools to share information and address issues collectively.⁷ WOUGNET held the Uganda women's flag during the preparatory and regional meetings in Africa for the Tunis 2005 World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). Prior to leading a strong contingent of Ugandan women to the Summit, WOUGNET co-hosted the Africa WSIS Gender caucus in Kampala on May 4, 2005 to "brainstorm" on ways of bridging the gender digital divide through strategic partnerships. Earlier, the organization had been nominated member of the Uganda National WSIS Task force to coordinate the country's input to the Prepcom II, Geneva. The organization also led an online discussion among stakeholders on the key issues for discussion at the Summit.

WOUGNET is also involved in several ICT4D initiatives in HIV/AIDS prevention and care, business development and agriculture, among others with specific emphasis on women empowerment.

(iii) Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI): Over the last four years, BROSDI has established itself as one of the leading ICT4D initiatives in Uganda with gender-specific programmes in education, health and agriculture (see CELAC below). The education program was developed to advocate for the educational rights of the orphaned and vulnerable school-going children in the rural community through the use of ICT tools/methodologies to bridge the gap between the urban and the rural through advocating the use of knowledge Sharing and Information Management.⁸ Through its associated projects, the programme integrates with the ICT department and focuses on the use of traditional, new and emerging mobile technologies, including laptops, computers, projectors and digital cameras, Music Dance and Drama, participatory methods as tools to enhance students' ability to have ownership and control of learning, to enable the children know that they are in charge of their own destinations. Girls, who make up the majority of the orphans and vulnerable children, have been the major beneficiaries of the programme. The most notable health programme is the Hope Childrens Club (HCC) which targets empowering the rural children, especially the orphan child realize their potential, build self esteem and self confidence while targeting to improve their livelihoods for self and community enrichment. Again, women and girl orphans have been its key beneficiaries.

⁷ <http://www.wougnnet.org/> -- Breaking down barriers to information inequality with strong emphasis on women.

⁸ <http://www.brosdi.or.ug/>

(iv) Collecting and Exchange of Local Agricultural Content (CELAC): A project of BROSDI, CELAC uses ICT methods and knowledge sharing to enhance poverty reduction and food security with specific emphasis on women.⁹ The project uses ICT methods and knowledge sharing to enhance poverty reduction and food security with specific emphasis on women. With a network of farmers in 17 districts in Uganda, CELAC targets improving farmers' livelihoods and food security through engaging the government and civil society in knowledge sharing and development of local content using ICT. Information is disseminated using the project website, online and offline newsletter, phone short text messages (sms), radio call in programmes and music, dance and drama to portray the farming practices and their challenges. Although all these programmes target the entire population, there is no doubt that the major beneficiaries are the women who constitute the largest percentage of farmers in rural Uganda.

9.0 Recommendations for enhancing the engendering process

The recommendations for enhancing the engendering policy include:

- The review process should put more emphasis on engendering. The fact that engendering had only seven (7) key players, with just three (3) active women in the process was a let down.
- Policies designed to implement the national ICT policy should adopt a gender sensitive approach for funding.

⁹ <http://www.celac.or.ug/> - About CELAC

Appendix: List of respondents for the APC evaluation survey

A: Respondents to the questionnaire:

	Name	Organization
1	Juliet Were	Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Cross Exchange
2	Ednah Karamagi	Busoga Rural Open Source Development Initiative (BROSDI)
3	Goretti Karuhanga	Council for Economic Empowerment for Women in Africa (CEEWA)
4	Samuel Senfuka	Council for Economic Empowerment for Women in Africa (CEEWA)
5	Rosette Ndezi	Council for Economic Empowerment for Women in Africa (CEEWA-U)
6	Suzan Bakesha	Development Alternative consult
7	Vincent Musubire	Vice President's Office
8	Berna Ngolobe	Women of Uganda Network
9	Humphrey Mukooyo	Ministry of Education
10	James Wire	Linux Solutions
11	Ruth Ochieng	ISIS-WICCE
12	Natalie Kimbugwe	I-Network Uganda
13	Susan Mubala	Women Engineers, Technicians & Scientists in Uganda (WETSU)
14	Cissy Nyarwa	Ntulume Village Women's Development Association (NVIWODE)
15	Monica Rukundo	Action for Development (ACFODE)
16	Hilda Twongere	Uganda Women's Writers Association (FEMRITE)
17	Fred Kintu	Information Society Foundation (ISF)
18	Ruth Musoke	Private Sector Foundation
19	Rita Mujumbi	Uganda Development Services
20	Isaac Kasana	Uganda Christian University
21	Winnie Lawoko	MTN Uganda
22	Hellene Karamagi	ICTARD

B: Key informants to open-ended questionnaire:

	Name	Organisation
1	Zerubabel Nyiira	National Foundation for Research and Development (NFRD)
2	Paul Mugabi	Uganda National Academy for Sciences
3	Dorothy Okello	Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)
4	Constantine Bitwayiki	National Planning Authority (NPA)
5	Julius Torach	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
6	David Turahi	Ministry of ICT
7	Ismail Barugahara	National Council for Science and Technology
8	Elisha Wasukira	I-Network
9	Dr. Johnson Nkuuhe	UNDP
10	Gorreti Z. Amuriat	WOUGNET