

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

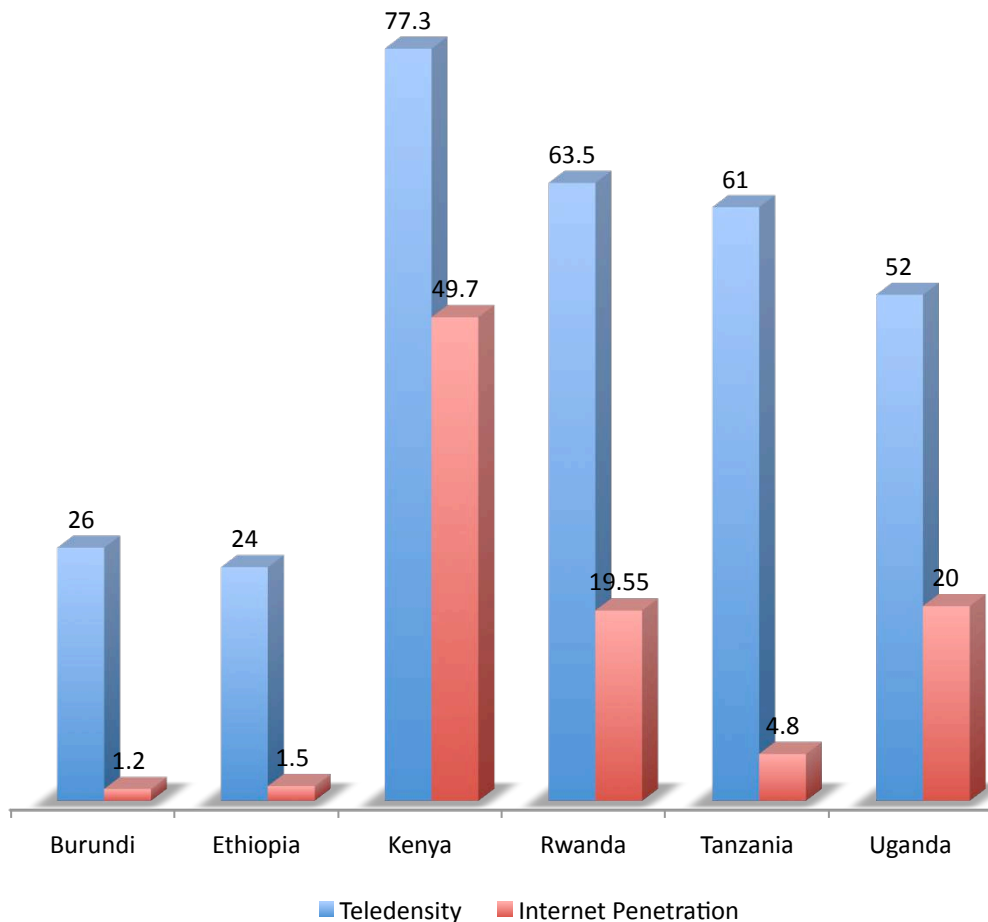
Background

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



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)

Country	% Male Users	% Female Users
Burundi	67	33
Ethiopia	73	27
Kenya	65	35
Rwanda	69	31
Tanzania	71	29
Uganda	68	32

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

Women and the Internet/ICT in East Africa

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

Challenges

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

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

THANK YOU

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