



Department for Empowerment, Sida 2009

ICTs for Democracy

Information and Communication Technologies for the
Enhancement of Democracy – with a Focus on
Empowerment

Preface

The aim of this study is to provide Sida and other stakeholders in Swedish development cooperation with documentation and information of ICTs for the enhancement of democracy with a focus on empowerment and specifically

- to provide information and assessment of ICTs for the enhancement of democratic processes with a focus on empowerment, including a situation analysis and estimated future potential
- for the planning of ICT related development activities and support
- to propose possible future areas of ICT for democracy support.

The results from this study provide information that can assist in the planning of development cooperation activities and propose possible future areas where democratic processes can be enhanced by ICTs. The study is composed of a theoretical overview and three country studies. The theoretical overview offers an analysis of the main issues in relation to the use of ICTs for the enhancement of democracy and empowerment, in relation to the relevant target groups. It then presents a context-specific description and analysis of the possibilities and challenges of ICTs in advancing democracy in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

Globally, huge investments are made in ICT as an undisputed and essential component of almost all activities – state and corporate. It is also an integral part of international development cooperation. The rapid spread of ICT – particularly the internet and mobile telephony – is making information available instantly and at low cost to a degree unprecedented in history. It can be used to seek, receive, create and impart information by anyone, at any time and for any purpose. The innovative use of the media has created new forms of citizen journalism which give space to a diversity of voices. In this way, ICT enhances freedom of expression and the right to information, and increases the possibilities for citizen's participation in decision making processes.

Sida supports the integration and strategic use of ICT in development cooperation in order to achieve development goals. The objectives include promotion and strengthening of good governance and ICT as tools for empowerment, including the free flow and access to infor-

mation. The overall objective of Swedish development cooperation is to help create conditions that enable people living in poverty to improve their lives. Poverty entails, in addition to economic poverty and lack of physical resources, also lack of information, possibilities and power.

ICT is used by citizens and civil society for networking and enhances advocacy and mobilisation, locally and globally. Blogs, Facebook and online communities create new modes of social interaction. The rapid and wide spread of affordable mobile telephony points to the role of mobile phones as a digital bridge and a new mass medium. This includes the use of mobile phones for documentation of human rights violations of election processes and the use of SMS for networking and mobilization.

In government, ICT may increase accountability and transparency, and counter corruption through more efficient administration and increased flows of information. This may also strengthen good governance and improve interaction between government and citizens.

Our aim is that this study will be read and used in relation to the objectives above, and that the recommendations will serve as fruitful direction for actors and stakeholders of development cooperation for the promotion of democracy and human rights.

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This study was conducted as a consultancy for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). It contains recommendations which are those of the authors and APC and should not be construed to be those of Sida.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

APC	Association for Progressive Communications
APKN	African Parliamentarians Knowledge Network
CCK	Communications Commission of Kenya
CIPESA	Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa
COSTECH	Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CSOs	civil society organisations
DENIVA	Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
HDI	Human Development Index
ICTs	information and communications technologies
IXP	internet exchange point
ISPs	internet service providers
IT	information technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KICTANet	Kenya ICT Action Network
KPTC	Kenya Posts and Telecommunications
Kbps	kilobits per second
MPs	members of parliament
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
PCs	Personal computers
RCDF	Rural Communications Development Fund
RCDP	Rural Communications Development Policy

Sida Agency	Swedish International Development Cooperation
SMS	short-message service
TAMWA	Tanzania Media Women's Association
TEAMS	The East African Marine System
TOR	terms of reference
TV	television
UCC	Uganda Communications Commission
UNCTA	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
USD	United States dollar
WAP	wireless application protocol
WGI	World Governance Indicators
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
3G	Third generation

1. Executive Summary

The democratisation process is often uneven and rocky as the power dynamic shifts between governments and their respective constituencies. In practically all cases, however, governments hostile to citizens' civil and political rights have both the resources and power to withhold these rights. It is therefore imperative that support be channelled to governments to deepen their awareness of citizen's rights and the processes needed to ensure they have access to these rights. Equally important is support to civil society groups so that they can demand their civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights from their governments. There is ample evidence of the importance of "demand side" approaches for ensuring the longevity of a human rights culture.

In the cases of young and emerging democracies, it is essential that institutions, processes and mechanisms be installed to support and underscore national efforts to strengthen democracies. Evidence over the last three decades suggests that strides made towards democracy can be reversed, and countries can revert to less democratic practices and cultures. Failure to support efforts to install and/or deepen democracy in countries with little experience of how to nurture such processes is to leave democracy to chance, or in many cases at the mercy of unchecked and rampant abuse by the very governments who might profess respect for its citizens' civil and political, as well as their economic, social and cultural rights.

This report examines the potential of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for advancing democracy and empowerment, with a special focus on Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Access to and the strategic use of ICTs have been shown to have the potential to help bring about economic development, poverty reduction, and democratisation – including freedom of speech, the free flow of information and the promotion of human rights. Based on signs of current democracy deficits in the case study countries, it is crucial that ICTs be made central to development cooperation and to approaches to advance democracy in the three countries.

Governments in the three countries are currently¹ not adequately equipped for – and in the cases of Uganda and Tanzania, disinclined towards – any critically engagement with civil society and public efforts to deliberate with government around issues of national importance. In Tanzania and Uganda, though nominally multi-party states, the emergence of a viable political opposition is thwarted through limited state support for political parties, and political activism by NGOs and CSOs is discouraged and even sanctioned by “banning” critical NGOs to operate in certain social sectors. To remedy this and advance democratic practice within governments, the institutions for promoting democracy – including the parliaments – need to be strengthened so they can demand greater transparency in governance structures and hold governments accountable to their respective mandates.

Although civil society structures in the three studied countries are diverse and relatively well organised, they do face challenges. Civil society organisations are generally expected to be in the service of their governments and to not question the priorities, strategies and implementation successes or failures of their governments. In Uganda and Tanzania specifically, most NGOs and CSOs are engaged in service delivery and in many cases are in contractual relations with the national government. Over time, this has created NGOs and CSOs with limited scope and capacity for advocacy. In contrast to Uganda and Tanzania, the rights discourse has emerged quite strongly in Kenya since the shift from one-party statism in the 1990s. While politically driven CSOs and NGOs exist in Kenya, they do however need stronger institutional capacity in order to achieve longevity and sustainable impact. In all three countries, the challenge lies in increasing civil society capacity and scope to use the political and public space to engage and influence their governments’ decision-making and democratic practice. This entails both acting horizontally as citizens, with other civil society actors, as well as with government. Access to and effective use of ICTs in the three countries are uneven across the rural/urban divide; between better educated men (with better access to resources) and lesser educated and often non-literate women; and between the rich and the poor. Across both urban and rural populations, the predominant tool for communication is the mobile phone, while access to the internet is largely limited to urban areas. The high cost of international internet connectivity – itself a consequence of dependence on satellite connectivity in Uganda and Tanzania especially – means that even within urban areas internet connectivity is the purview of a small well-to-do elite.

The slow growth of internet uptake and usage is also attributable to limited infrastructure, including fibre-optic cable and electricity in rural areas; low internet usage by government, schools, and health and agricultural institutions; low ICT literacy; a lack of local content on the internet; and low income levels. However, the region is poised to gain

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access to broadband fibre, with a number of projects underway to link these countries to undersea fibre-optic cables off the East African coast. Broadband connectivity will be more available in the region within the next two years, and could become more affordable to the broader population with the right policy frameworks and regulatory measures in place. In all these countries, access to broadband must be made a national priority – to reach even the smallest village – in order that the most marginalised geographic spaces and social groups can participate in national debate and deliberation on issues and decisions that impact on their day to day life.

The report concludes by making a set of recommendations of possible strategies and actions to support democracy efforts in the three countries, though the use of ICTs. Three strategies are proposed as priorities:

- Raising awareness and building understanding of (i) the potential of ICTs, particularly in the context of the vast numbers of people who are now able to connect in some way through mobile phones; (ii) democratic principles and practice; and (iii) the potential of ICTs for advancing democracy.
- Institutional strengthening of CSOs, NGOs and media practitioners to engage critically on issues of democracy as well as institutional strengthening of state actors to enhance transparency and good governance.
- Strengthening community voice in public debate and decision-making and in maintaining transparency and accountability by government.

These strategic interventions are primarily directed at civil society actors and building “demand” for greater participation and democracy. It remains important, however, for Sida to investigate modalities for impacting positively on the political and regulatory framework within which civil society actors operate. Thus, it is also important to consider how to support initiatives that build stronger state institutions – such as an independent judiciary and politically diverse parliaments – that can exercise oversight and positively impact on their constituencies’ capacity for informed participation on decision-making on issues that affect their quality of life, including affordable access to the communication platforms and tools.

2. Introduction and Background to the Study

The aim of this study is to provide Sida and other stakeholders in Swedish development cooperation with comprehensive information of ICT for the enhancement of democracy with a focus on empowerment in relation to relevant target groups.

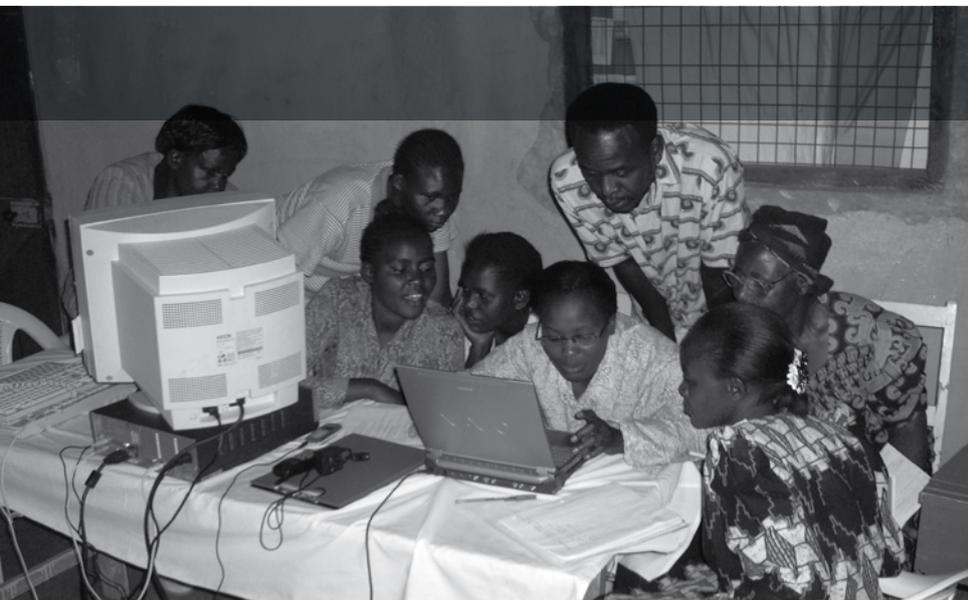
The fundamental objective of Swedish development cooperation is to contribute to the capacity of people living in poverty to improve their living conditions. In this formulation, the inability of the individual to exercise power over his or her life is to live in poverty. Poverty is conceived as being “not only about inadequate socio-economic development and material security; [but] also about the lack of political power at the individual level and the inability of citizens to influence decisions that affect their lives.” This power to influence the factors that impact on an individual’s life – and safeguard individuals against poverty – is best secured under a democratic political system.²

Support for democracy and the promotion of human rights are key to the prevailing notion of development, and are central components to Swedish development cooperation: “Democracy is rooted in values based on respect for the equal worth of all human beings. By the same token, compliance with human rights presupposes a democratic society.”³ Democratic practice assumes a fair exchange of ideas, which in itself is only attainable when the following conditions have been met within a political system: leaders are elected, elections are free and fair, everyone has an equal vote, everyone has the right to stand for elected office, and there is freedom of information, expression and association.

The democratisation process is not a linear, one-way process from an authoritarian to a democratic system. Instead, the process is often uneven and needs ongoing nurturing and support. Evidence over the last three decades – from Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa – suggests that strides made towards democracy can be reversed, and countries can revert to less democratic practices and cultures. To this effect, the Freedom House annual surveys suggest that in 2007, freedom in the world declined.

² Government of Sweden, Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2008) Freedom from Oppression. Government Communication on Swedish Democracy Support, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.



The Lukwanga community knowledge centre in Kenya serves 7,000 people spread across eight villages. The centre is equipped with one computer and an internet connection through a mobile phone network. Information on tree planting and building modern chicken brooders and granaries for maize storage has already had a clear impact on local livelihoods. Photo: Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN)

Within Swedish development cooperation, support for democracy can take various forms: support that strengthens key institutions, administrative processes, as well as key actors such as political parties; and support for a wider array of democracy-promoting initiatives by a more diverse group of actors including political parties, human rights defenders, civil society, opinion-making organisations, and actors in political life. Regarding the latter, lessons learnt from democratisation processes in different parts of the world underscore the importance of grassroots movements for democracy in bringing about social change.

As part of its strategy for advancing democracy, Sida has acknowledged the integration of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in development cooperation, with a view to promoting economic development and broad poverty reduction. ICTs have the potential to contribute to economic development and democratisation – including freedom of speech, the free flow of information and the promotion of human rights – and poverty reduction.⁴ Sida aims to:

- Support the strategic use of ICTs as a tool for democracy, human rights and social development.
- Support a rights-based approach to development, and aim ICT activities at poverty reduction in general, and the promotion of social equity, gender equality, a higher quality of life, and cultural diversity in particular.⁵

This study was commissioned by Sida with the purpose of providing Sida and other stakeholders in Swedish development cooperation with comprehensive information on ICTs for democracy, including a situation analysis and estimation of their future potential. It is envisioned that the results from the study will provide information that will assist in the planning of development cooperation activities, and propose possible future areas where democratic processes can be enhanced by ICTs in general and specifically in the three countries. The study is composed of two distinct parts; a theoretical overview and three country studies.⁶

⁴ Sida (2005) Strategy and Action Plan for ICT in Development Cooperation.

⁵ Sida (2003) Digital Empowerment – A strategy for ICT for Development for DESO.

⁶ See Appendix 3, Terms of Reference – ICT Democracy Study, Sida 2008.

The theoretical overview offers an analysis of the main issues in relation to the use of ICTs for the enhancement of democracy, democratic processes and empowerment, and in relation to the relevant target groups.

It then presents a context-specific description and analysis of the implications, possibilities and challenges of ICTs in advancing democracy in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, which includes:

- A country-level analysis of the context that considers the factors that shape access to ICTs, including ICT infrastructure, costs of access, skills and capacity to use the technology, ICT policy and policy changes.
- Factors that define and shape the democratic culture, including access to civil and political rights and other human rights more broadly (such as access to information and freedom of expression).
- Social-cultural norms and practices. For example, this looks at access to education, the rural-urban divide, and how these shape different social and economic groups' access to resources and the fruits of democracy. This analysis integrates a gender perspective.
- A discussion of the main opportunities and risks of supporting the use of ICTs for the advancement of democracy, as well as what kinds of interventions will be most strategic for advancing democracy and empowerment through the use of ICTs.

Finally, an analysis of the factors of major interest for the promotion and use of ICTs for democracy among major target groups for Swedish development cooperation is presented in matrix form. This includes interventions which will be most strategic for specific groups of actors and stakeholders in the countries (or the region more broadly), such as individual citizens, civil society structures (like issue/interest groups, minority/religious and indigenous groups), and media.

Two perspectives are central throughout the research and the analyses of the situation in the three countries: (i) a rights-based perspective, and (ii) the perspective of people living in poverty.⁷

Overall the study is intended to not only assess civil society's use of ICTs for outreach, advocacy and campaigning but to provide insight into how, at the societal level, ICTs are advancing access to democratic processes. To this end, this study includes discussion of different governments' e-democracy initiatives and their use of ICTs for democracy, where this impacts on civil society's ability to participate in democratic decision-making processes and social processes more generally.

⁷ Sida (2006) Current Thinking on the Two Perspectives of the PGD. November 2006. Department for Policy and Methodology. Working Paper 2006:4.

3. Methodology

This study combines desktop and field surveys of the issues at hand with stakeholders in the three focus countries. The field surveys were conducted over the course of a week respectively in Kenya and Uganda, and over a longer period in Tanzania.

In addition, Sida staff in the three country offices and in Stockholm were interviewed. The purpose was to include their understanding of opportunities and stumbling blocks for harnessing ICTs for democracy in regions around the world as well as more broadly, to include their experiences and/or perceptions of ways to advance democratic practice in developing country contexts.

APC had the option to sub-contract components of the study. To manage the workload within the six-month time frame for implementing the study, it was appropriate to divide the work into smaller components. The theoretical review was conducted separately from the three country studies presented below. These components were contracted out, while APC developed a common framework for the different pieces of work and provide overall guidance and quality control.

The Sida terms of reference specified that the country studies should be conducted by in-country researchers. APC approached specific researchers resident in the three countries – as well as nationals in the diaspora – to conduct the studies. It was decided not to approach APC members in the countries as they were also stakeholders whose views the study needed to capture alongside Sida partners and other stakeholders.

The call for participation in the research specifically asked for researchers either working in or with experience in the fields of human rights, democracy, public participation, media development and ICTs, with proven research, analytical and writing skills.

For various reasons it was not possible to hire in-country based researchers in Kenya and Uganda. Instead the study drew on researchers from the region with relevant skills and research backgrounds, and who were familiar with the country contexts.



Left: Omolayo Samuel, became a role model for women in ICT when she became the first female technician to climb a 45-metre communications tower in northern Nigeria in August 2007. Photo: Fantsuam Foundation



Right: Alali Efenga from Oruma and Ifie Lott from Environmental Rights Action documenting an oil spill in Oruma community in the Niger Delta. Photo: Lars Johansson

3.1 Country-level research process

The researchers were tasked with two components of the country-based research: (i) field surveys, to garner the views of different stakeholders about the viability of using ICTs for furthering democracy, as well as their views on priority ICT interventions; and (ii) desk research that would recount:

- Factors that define and shape the democratic culture, including access to civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights more broadly.
- Structural and systemic factors that shape access to ICTs, including ICT infrastructure, affordability, literacy and capacity to use technology, ICT policy and policy changes.
- Prevailing dominant social-cultural norms and practices, looking for example at access to education, the rural-urban divide, and how these shape access to resources and the fruits of democracy by different social and economic groups.

In the interest of consistency between the country studies, the use of particular indices produced by international agencies that monitor the state of democratic practice globally and the state of civil society in the focus countries were used. With respect to democratic practice, the review included reports from Human Rights Watch, the World Bank governance indicators,⁸ Transparency International reports for the three countries, the Freedom House reports, and if available, the Civicus Civil Society Index.

In the case of the research on the state of access to ICTs in the different countries, two specific reports were used: (i) the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) 2008 report *Measuring Information and Communication Technology Availability in Villages and Rural Areas* and (ii) a report

⁸ For an explanation of the World Bank's governance indicators, please see <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>

titled African Telecommunication/ICT Indicators 2008: At a crossroads.

In the interest of generating comparable information, the researchers were provided with the same terms of reference for the country level research. The consultant (APC) assisted the researchers with identifying relevant individuals and organisations to target for interviews, drawing on the Sida stakeholders and well as other ICT actors in the respective countries.

The majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face using an interview schedule. Key target groups included: individual citizens, civil society structures (such as issue/interest groups, minority/religious and indigenous groups), and the media.

3.2 Limitations

This study experienced at least three limitations.

Firstly, it was the intention of the study to a limited extent include political parties and members of parliament (MPs) as representatives of their constituencies, even though not included in the main target group. The researchers had very different response rates from politicians and government representatives. Only in Tanzania was the research able to draw in members of the opposition parties.

Secondly, the views of business or the private sector were not included in the scope for this study. The insights and aspects of telecommunications operators and other investors in the ICT sector are important in order to understand the interface between ICTs for democracy and development, and particularly for economic opportunities and job creation.

However, the groups above were deliberately excluded from the scope of the study and the lack of input from government and the private sector does not detract from the findings and quality of the study. This research primarily focuses on input, perspectives (quite literally) and needs of citizens and civil society.

Finally, the time factor. This study was designed as a qualitative investigation with desk research and face-to-face interviews as the main approaches to data gathering. The sample of people interviewed in the agreed timeframe of one week is not sufficiently large to allow for statistical generalisations about different stakeholder group positions. It is relevant to state that the study notes a tendency of convergence of opinions between different stakeholders in the three countries about the potential value of ICTs for democracy. The analysis therefore primarily identifies the different themes that arose in the interviews.

It is important to mention that although the issues above are limitations, the study adhered to the terms of reference's definition of major stakeholders and target groups.

4. Theoretical Study – Democracy and ICTs in Africa

4.1 Introduction

Democracy is a set of societal arrangements, structures, social values and practices that has developed and evolved over centuries, and takes a variety of forms in states across the world. The formal democratic system has a potential of bringing just and equitable rights and possibilities for all citizens to freely express their opinions and to participate in, shape and influence the political direction of their nations, by casting their votes in regular general, regional and local elections. However, extending democracy and its structures and practices to societies in the developing world and to post-colonial states is not a simple process, which decades of international development cooperation has demonstrated.

This theoretical review sets out certain key arguments about democracy and its processes, their relationship to media and to ICTs, and how these issues have been examined and debated in relation to the global project of democratisation in Africa. That is, the analysis is concerned predominantly with the nature of the relationship between structures and representatives of the state on the one hand, and its citizens on the other. It also examines arguments about the role and value of ICTs, specifically with respect to their value in advancing development and democracy.

In Africa, democratisation has had limited success. The first experience African people had of institutions associated today with democratic states – such as judiciaries, media, parliaments, and the like – was generally linked to colonial subjugation, and overlaid on other social systems, beliefs and practices. The process of decolonisation for the states of Africa has been a conundrum that required both moving away from systems imposed by colonialism, while simultaneously retaining them, and has been marked by a suspicion of Western interventions that are perceived to serve economic neo-colonialism. However, there is also a strong desire within many states for democracy, which is being supported, campaigned and worked for by social movements, trade unions, and community organisations amongst them.

Advancing democracy in African countries through ICTs therefore enters into a context fraught with contradictions. For this reason, it is important to look critically at notions and issues associated with democracy, civil society, media and technology.

4.2 Key concepts: ICTs and notions of democracy

By definition, new ICTs include electronic networks – embodying complex hardware and software – linked by a vast array of technical protocols.⁹ ICTs are embedded in networks and services that affect the local and global accumulation and flows of public and private information and knowledge. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, ICTs cover internet service provision, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology equipment and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centres, commercial information providers, network-based information services, and other related information and communication activities.¹⁰

It is also not uncommon to find definitions of ICTs that are synonymous with those of information technology (IT). For example, Foster¹¹ defines IT as “the group of technologies that is revolutionising the handling of information” and embodies a convergence of interest between electronics, computing and communication.

In this study, the terms ICTs and IT are used nearly synonymously and in a broad sense. The terms designate the information processing interaction between providers and users of information, and also the development and application of information-processing systems that may not be regarded as part of the development of telecommunications per se. ICTs in this study mainly denote the internet and mobile phones, but may include hybrid solutions, such as the combined use of conventional media like newspapers, radio, TV and ICTs. It is important to emphasise that these technologies only provide new mechanisms for handling an already existing resource, namely information, whether this is already codified or tacit knowledge untapped for wide public consumption and debate.

Democracy has been defined in a number of ways; primarily, though, as a political arrangement in which “the institutions and procedures of government express the actual will of those governed” and in which the people have the power to vote out those governing them. How that should or does operate in practice is much debated and theorised, and there is no one agreed approach. Further, as Guy Berger points out in his essay *Theorizing the Media-Democracy Relationship in Southern Africa*:

“Many writers (but not enough) have sounded warnings about lifting concepts like media and democracy from western conditions and

⁹ Mansell, R. and Silverstone, R. (1996) *Communication by Design: The Politics of Information and Communication Technologies*. Oxford: OUP.

¹⁰ Economic Commission for Africa [ECA] (1999) *An Overview of ICT Trends and Policy in Africa*. UNECA: Addis Ababa.

¹¹ Foster, F.G. (1994), “Introduction” in Drew, E., and F. G. Foster [eds.] (1994) *Information Technology in Selected Countries*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. Available at <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu19ie/uu19ie00.htm>

applying them unthinkingly to Africa. The quest, therefore, is for universally applicable concepts, which are relevant and explanatory for media and democracy in Africa, and which designate broad processes and functions rather than specific institutions like parliaments and the press”.¹²

He goes on to argue that the functioning of democracy can be defined as the decision-making power of the majority, in which participants have equal rights. In other words, he makes a distinction between broad democratic principles and structures and the processes by which the people are engaged in decision-making in society. He also points out that this extends democratic functions beyond the “political” arenas into more “private” spaces, such as the family and community, which he argues is particularly important in Africa.

Even where there is broad agreement on what democracy is and what its component structures are, there is no guarantee that democracy will work effectively. For this, one has to examine the way the concepts of democracy are understood and acted on in societies. For democracies to function, there needs to be a set of processes and practices, an engagement by individuals and by sectors of society in its operations, and a range of practices that fall under the heading of “democratic engagement”. Engagement of the individual, in turn, needs prerequisites, like systemic access to health and education, to be in place. We examine first the theory and research around what constitutes democratic engagement generally, and then we examine it in relation to media, including ICTs.

Even where there is broad agreement on what democracy is and what its component structures are, there is no guarantee that democracy will work effectively. For this, one has to examine the way the concepts of democracy are understood and acted on in societies.

4.3 Democratic engagement

A great deal of attention has been given to the processes and practices necessary for democratic engagement. The fundamental question here is about the nature of active citizenship: what is it, and what makes it happen? A population needs to take up such citizenship to give substance to the forms of democracy, such as bills of rights, elections, parliaments and the other components of the state.

Tambin¹³ has argued that there are four key transactions for democracy: information access/provision; preference measurement such as referenda, polls and representation, in which the views of the people are consulted; deliberation, in which citizens actively discuss issues and form opinions; and will formation/group organisation (i.e., organising interest groups and lobbies). Gerodimos,¹⁴ on the other hand, identifies access (the entry into the political space within which citizens contribute to political debate and the decision-making process), citizen’s engagement with the political process, deliberation, and impact on public policy as important aspects of democracy in action. Although

12 Berger, G. (2002) Theorizing the Media-Democracy Relationship in Southern Africa. *Gazette: The International Journal of Communication Studies* 64(21), pp. 21-45.

13 Tambin, D. (1999) New Media and Democracy: The Civic Networking Movement. *New Media and Society*, 1(3), pp. 305-329.

14 Gerodimos, R. (2001) Democracy and the Internet: Access, Engagement and Deliberation. *Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics* 3(6), pp. 26-31.

they highlight different aspects, both writers focus on the importance of engagement and deliberation by citizens. Access to information and to the space of debate is necessary for this engagement to take place, and is almost always associated with media, which are assigned this responsibility in most societies.

4.4 The public sphere

Public deliberation has long been seen as essential to democracy, a way in which the citizens of a nation can engage with issues of common interest, and hold the state accountable. But debates about what constitutes the public sphere and whether it exists in particular societies are ongoing. Jürgen Habermas attempted to detail and define the operations of “publicity” in his theories of the evolution of “the public sphere” (from the German term *öffentlichkeit*, meaning publicness), which he described as a space between the people and the state, in which citizens could debate issues of common interest to society.¹⁵ Newspapers were historically an important element of this public sphere, which also encompassed coffee shops, parliaments and other spaces for discussion, and was linked to changing economic, class and social conditions. Habermas’s conception of the operations of the public sphere made a distinction between private and public spaces, and saw debate as essentially rational and critical. An important criterion of the public sphere was that it provided a shared common arena for all segments and citizens of society in which issues could be engaged.

Habermas’s vision of this central deliberating space has been critiqued by many theorists who have argued that not all individuals and communities have access to the space, and that the exclusion of the “private” and the insistence on rational-critical also excludes segments of society, most notably women. Nancy Fraser argued that it may be necessary for marginalised or excluded publics (such as gay and feminist activist groups) to form “counterpublics”, in which they can develop their own positions and arguments and from which they can enter into the so-called mainstream public sphere. Fraser and others took issue with the normative aspect of Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, arguing that one unitary space for discussion was either illusory or not advisable.¹⁶

Cowling and Hamilton point out that whether an actual public sphere exists or not, “the operations of modern democracies assume the existence of a viable public sphere.”¹⁷ And what Habermas describes as the components of the public sphere directs us to the importance of the dynamics of debate and discussion, the importance of equal access to the debate, and the historical connection of access to media and other channels for communication to deliberation.

WHETHER AN ACTUAL PUBLIC SPHERE EXISTS OR NOT, “THE OPERATIONS OF MODERN DEMOCRACIES ASSUME THE EXISTENCE OF A VIABLE PUBLIC SPHERE”.

15 Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

16 Fraser, N. (1992) *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy*. In Calhoun, C. (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 109-141.

17 Cowling, L. and Hamilton, C. (2008) *Thinking Aloud/Allowed: Pursuing the Public Interest in Radio Debate*. *Social Dynamics* [forthcoming].

At a local level, the global public sphere does not displace or supersede debate and deliberations of national and local public spheres, but is supplemental to – and can add more voices and experiences to – a national and local public sphere.

The advent of ICTs, especially the internet and mobile phones, has added a new global dimension to the operations of modern democracies. Manuel Castells and other social scientists, have documented and theorised how these technologies and related modes of communication, including networking, and the development of platforms like wikis and blogs, expand the debate and deliberation ordinarily conducted between local and national governments and a national body politic to the global level. This new “global public sphere” – or global civil society – is both fed by and feeds into multiple national public spheres. Often global civil society is supported by transnational initiatives and structures that share or support the values, deliberations and activities within that sphere, and demand greater accountability and good governance from political actors. At a local level, the global public sphere does not displace or supersede debate and deliberations of national and local public spheres, but is supplemental to – and can add more voices and experiences to – a national and local public sphere.¹⁸ Hence the “glocal” dimension has been added by the internet and its various platforms. This dimension challenges the notion of what is centre and what is periphery, as well as the boundaries of the nation state.

For some theorists this shift to the global may require a reconstruction of “democracy” that will allow for the notion of “rule by the people” in a contemporary society that is progressively organised in terms of “transcalar” (or not country-based) geography, polycentric rather than statist governance, and plural rather than nationalist collective identity.¹⁹

4.5 Democracy and “old” media

It is argued that the people in democracies cannot exercise their rights without access to information, which enables them to make informed decisions at the ballot box. An independent media sector is considered crucial to provide quality and accurate information. Such normative approaches to the media also see them as being extremely significant, if not central, to public deliberation on issues of social importance.²⁰ Sean Jacobs writes that the “dynamics of democracy are intimately linked to the practices of communication, and societal communication increasingly takes place within the mass media.”²¹ We see then that ideas of the media’s role in society tend to draw on public sphere conceptions of society, with the media imagining its role as providing a space for public debate, and as holding the state accountable.

However, this understanding of the media as accountable to the public, as holding powerful interests, especially the state, accountable, and as representing the people, rather than powerful interests, is a particular ideology that does not always reflect the actual operations of media.

18 See Castells, M. (2005) *Global Governance and Global Politics*. PS, January.. Also, Marginson, S. (2008) *The knowledge economy and the global public sphere*. Paper presented at the Beijing Forum 2008, “The Universal Value and the Development Trend of Civilization”, 7-9 November 2008.

19 Scholte, J. A. (2008) *Reconstructing Contemporary Democracy*. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 15(1), pp. 305-350.

20 See Wright Mills (2004), Habermas (1989), Fraser (1992), McQuail (1994).

21 Jacobs, S. (2003) *How Good is the South African Media for Democracy? Mapping the South African Public Sphere after Apartheid*. In Zegeye, A. and Harris, R. L. (eds.), *Media, Identity and the Public Sphere in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Brill Academic Publishers.



Women activists in South Africa have become some of the most innovative users of ICT for campaigning and social change. Photo: APC

Studies in South Africa, for example, have shown that most advertising in the media is directed at one-third of the population, the affluent and educated, while the other two-thirds, who are mostly black, rural and poor, are targeted much less, leading to much fewer media options.²² It follows that for these people to be served with information and given an opportunity to engage in debate, alternatives to mainstream commercial media would be necessary.

In sub-Saharan Africa, except South Africa, there are few commercial and independent papers, and they are generally poorly resourced. There is no commercial television outside of South Africa, and radio and television are generally controlled by the state. The regulation and ownership of these resources by the state has led to situations in which the broadcasters are more or less dependent on the government. This means that although they can provide developmental and civic information, they are often unable to be critical of the government of the day, or to provide a space for oppositional views.

Community media, particularly radio, have been seen as an alternative to both the commercial media and state broadcasters, where a larger proportion of citizens can access a space where they can engage in debate and deliberation. However, these also face a range of inhibiting factors in meeting the needs of communities. In South Africa, for example:

Community radio, introduced as a corrective to a commercial media seen to serve urban and affluent audiences, has floundered, as many community stations do not have the skills or the resources to operate without funding from foreign NGOs. The ideal of the community speaking to itself through the medium of radio has also proved difficult to implement – the lack of skills and resources, as well as a tendency for stations to be dominated by particular groupings, have been an obstacle.

While acknowledging the differences in practical experiences of the media in many developing countries, there is evidence that “old” media do

²² Cowling, L. (2004) *The Rising Sense of Unease*. Rhodes Journalism Review 24, pp. 34-35.
²³ Cowling and Hamilton (forthcoming), op. cit.

play a constructive role in helping advance democracy by bringing forth independent information, opening debate on political alternatives, and providing a channel through which the public can demand accountability from (a receptive) government. However, the role of old or mainstream media differs depending on the political system in which it operates, and requires different kinds of support systems and channels (and perhaps audiences) in order for it to continue playing the critical role in holding governments accountable to the extent that it does and can.²⁴

4.6 Hybrid media: adapting the old by using new tools

Creating so-called “hybrid media” interactive platforms is fast proving one of the more successful ways of simultaneously reaching young, tech-savvy as well as older, more traditional audiences. At the same time these create vibrant cross-media platforms for debate. Hybrid media platforms include combining capabilities like short-message service (SMS) to conduct live polls and solicit comment with traditional media such as radio and TV. In this way audio-visual media actors are able to move fruitfully into text broadcast. Conversely, interactive newspaper websites, some of which include podcasts, are offering traditional print media ways of “broadcasting” audio and visual content.

New media creates spaces for publication and debate in contexts where access to independent media and freedom of expression is limited.

The explosion of citizen journalism – unedited, uncontrolled, and largely and openly biased online content posted by individuals or organisations onto lists, websites, blogs, etc. – has offered a voice to individuals, communities and marginalised groups. This potential has been leveraged by some mainstream media organisations, creating a new relationship with the audience/listener. The new audience/listener has now effectively become a co-creator of the content he or she consumes.

At the same time, the new media simultaneously create spaces for publication and debate in contexts where access to independent media and freedom of expression is limited.

The benefits from a rights perspective are clear. Hybrid media offer an opportunity to expand and enlarge the voice of marginalised people, and to raise issues and expose violations of human rights, on mainstream platforms. The possibility of debate effectively expands the public sphere, and holds the potential for enhanced democratic interaction.

4.7 Overview of ICTs in Africa

There is now a growing body of evidence that, in the 21st century, ICTs are the engine of economic and social development. Furthermore, it is argued that there are scenarios in which aspects of poverty will not be successfully addressed without sufficient emphasis on information and communication processes and the use of ICTs to facilitate them. In particular, ICTs present an opportunity for geographically remote and poor communities whose access to information and social

24 Government of Sweden, Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2008), op. cit.

services can be dramatically enhanced through ICTs.

With the exception of a few countries like South Africa and possibly Kenya, the bulk of sub-Saharan African countries still need strong support to develop their ICT sectors – including infrastructure and policy frameworks – to facilitate the uptake and effective use of ICTs by all people.

A major challenge faced by policy-makers in Africa is that to create truly national, integrated information infrastructures, there has to be the simultaneous acceleration of the use of high-tech and low-tech information services.²⁵

Since the 1970s, much has been written about the potential of radio to spread information and educate the poor. With the advent of new ICTs, radio appeared to be overtaken by the wave of fresh possibilities they introduced. Therefore, it is interesting to find many advocates²⁶ who continue to expound on the benefits of radio for reaching marginalised communities and social groups.²⁷ Much of the analyses about the value of radio for connecting poor and marginalised communities hold true as the roll-out of new ICTs and their application in Africa often lags far behind the need for information and communication.²⁸

Nevertheless, access to ICTs in Africa has undergone significant change in the last five years. Since the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003 and 2005, African governments have been far more proactive in pursuing policies and public-private partnerships that will bring affordable connectivity to their countries. Though in some countries the number of fixed lines has actually declined over the last five years, mobiles are now accessible to between 60% and 70% of the continent's population. While the internet is still only accessed by 12% to 15% of the population,²⁹ there are currently (February 2009) three submarine fibre-optic cable projects underway on the east coast of Africa alone that will significantly lower connectivity costs, from as early as the middle of 2009. All are due for completion in 2010, and will significantly increase available bandwidth, with plans in place to connect landlocked countries like Uganda and Rwanda.

However, the goal posts are constantly shifting, and the teledensity targets set a decade ago are no longer adequate if the continent is to make significant development strides. This is how the ITU put it:

Africa is at a crossroads. While there has been strong growth in access to ICTs, much more needs to be achieved. A second wave of regulatory reform could really unleash growth and investment in Africa. It is essential to find the right mix of policy, economic and technical ingredients and committed entrepreneurs that will not only sustain growth in ICTs across the continent, but boost access to the level of other regions.³⁰

25 Wilson, E. J. III (1996) *The Information Revolution Comes to Africa*. CSIS Africa Notes 185, June.

26 Authors such as Jensen (1999), Lamoureux (1999), Buckley (2000), Kole (2000) and Kenny (2002).

27 Jensen (1999) and Lamoureux (1999) represent IDRC-funded studies. Jensen provides a guide to using low-cost radio communication systems for telecommunication from an African perspective. In a book on evaluating telecentres and a specific focus on Radionet, Lamoureux illustrates how community radio and telecentres can be used to enhance development.

28 ECA (1999), *op. cit.*

29 Southwood, R. (2008) *Bandwidth, the Petrol of the New Global Economy*. In APC, *Global Information Society Watch 2008*.

30 International Telecommunication Union (2008) *African Telecommunication/ICT Indicators 2008: At a crossroads*. Geneva: ITU.

4.8 Enhancing democracy and human rights through ICTs

The second wave of democratisation in Africa coincided with the development and spread of new information technology, notably the use of computers and the internet for communications and information management purposes.

In general, one can distinguish between three levels of ICT use to advance democratic processes at the national level:

- e-Government: ICTs within government, with a view to improving efficiency in interactions and information flows between government departments and state organs.
- e-Governance: ICTs in the interface between government and citizens, with a view to improving interaction and feedback between government and citizens.
- ICTs for empowerment of citizens and civil society organisations.

E-Government can be narrowly defined as “e-administration”, where ICT serves to streamline inter-governmental relations and flows of information with the view to improve government services, transactions and interactions with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. e-government can facilitate better service to citizens by:

- offering information via government web pages;
- facilitating access to government services, like online tax submissions and payments, and online passport applications forms; as well as
- developing depersonalized services which reduce risk for corruption.

With respect to the advance of democratic practice, e-government can entail more efficient registration of state employees and of citizens in general, as well as the collection and centralisation – and analysis – of facts and statistics for planning purposes. Increased registration of human births and of girls in particular increases the possibilities of women and men to attain identification documents and to participate in general elections, to receive credits and loans, to buy, own and inherit property – in short, to enjoy their political and civil rights.

E-Governance: In turn, e-governance describes the interface between government and citizens, including increased citizen participation and political influence. E-Governance entails a strategic and conscious use of ICT for the purpose of enhancing democratic participation in addition to increased services.

Examples of e-Governance practice include, among others:

- enhanced communication between government, parliamentarians and citizens.
- electronic publication of proposed bills and legislation using the web and SMS in order to enable feedback from citizens.
- electronic election systems.

- deployment of community information centres.
- citizens' and civil society's use of ICT for influencing opinion and political decision processes.

ICT for empowerment, a third level of ICT use to advance democratic processes, is the use of ICTs to create new and improved possibilities for horizontal communication and networking, between individuals, civil society and other groups. ICTs also create improved conditions for influencing opinion, independent of and outside the control of the traditional nation state locally and globally, as well as sitting just beyond the influence sphere of mainstream media channels.

The internet also provides unique possibilities for individuals, organisations and small-scale media for low-cost autonomous publication, independent of official media channels. Both users and producers bypass traditional and official channels of information and communication. This is particularly relevant in contexts where access to independent media and freedom of expression is limited.

The political uses of these media mechanisms may still be less significant than their role in serving citizens in non-political arenas, but activists are increasingly using the internet and mobiles to network and mobilise for specific purposes, whether it is contacting elected representatives or organising public protests.

The internet's challenge to news agencies comes mainly from two factors: its multimedia capacity, as well as its democratisation of information production, access and distribution, through the wide spread of affordable and simple ICT tools. Fatoyinbo asserts that the monopoly enjoyed by news agencies in the collection, processing and distribution of news no longer exists.³¹ News and information can now be packed not only in words, but also in sound, pictures and moving images. This is a far cry from the one-dimensional process of information flow through news agencies and its single-medium mode of distribution.

Limited though their implantation and impact in Africa might be, new technologies have facilitated communication and networking in ways that threaten the erosion of monolithic control of information and communication.³²

Electronic access can erase disparities of distance and geography, minimising the rural-urban divide that has had – and continues to have – significant political implications in Africa. By empowering citizens to participate more directly in their political system, electronic communication increases the role of citizens in the policy-making process at the expense of the political “middleperson” who has historically provided the forum by which ordinary citizens could make their interest on specific issues known. Not only this, but electronic communication and participation in politics can lead to a more direct democracy in which general participation is increased.

31 Fatoyinbo, A. (2000) The Evolution of Mass Media in Africa. ADEA Newsletter 11(2).

32 See Nyamnjoh (2005, p.5); Bourgault (1995, pp. 206-25); Franda (2002, pp. 18-26); and Leslie (2002).

4.8.1 *What is new with the “new technologies”?*

While the marketing hype around the new media has often been inspired by neo-liberal ideologies,³³ enthusiasm for its potential in a range of other areas like transparency and governance, education and economic development has also been pervasive. Although much of the optimism has been tempered by more realistic expectations of what these new technologies can achieve, their usage in democratic processes seems to be increasing.³⁴ Not only do these new media technologies facilitate efficient administration, citizen services, transparency, accountability and formal political participation (e-governance), but they also provide the means for social movements, activist groupings or minority groups to engage with these processes on a global level. As Rheingold³⁵ points out, new media technologies bring about affordable interactive, “many-to-many” communication that has provided opportunities – and in some cases, problems – for activists in three key areas: dissemination of alternative news, creating virtual public spheres, and organising collective political action.³⁶ Wasserman argues that for a variety of reasons, including their potential to shift power balances between states and citizens, to enable countries to “leapfrog” stages of infrastructural development, and the democratic participation that might be stimulated by their interactivity, new media technologies are often seen as a development tool for African countries.³⁷

When oppressive regimes put a stronghold on the local media, and actively set out on campaigns of misinformation, activists turn to whatever tools they can to try and redress the balance. Increasingly, in Africa and elsewhere, these tools are becoming mobile-based: camera phones which capture images of beatings and civil rights abuses, and text messages coordinating and informing citizens are just two examples.

The advent of new ICTs has created myriad possibilities for advancing democracy:

- The rapid spread of ICT has created tremendous opportunities in making information available instantly and at low cost. It can be used to seek, receive, create and impart information and ideas by anyone, at any time and for any purpose, including demanding information and transparency from governments and demanding that they deliver on their mandates.
- No one and everyone is in control of the internet, and attempts by anyone – and especially governments – to block and hinder access to “sensitive information” on one platform can be circumvented through the use of multiple formats for disseminating rights infor-

33 Lister et al. (2003) *New Media: A Critical Introduction*. London & New York: Routledge, p. 11.

34 Baber, Z. (2002) *Engendering or Endangering Democracy? The Internet, Civil Society and the Public Sphere*. *Asian Journal of Social Science* 30(2), p. 287.

35 Rheingold, H. (2003) *From the Screen to the Streets*. In *These Times*, 28 October.

36 Burnett & Marshall (2003, p. 47) outline the different aspects of internet communication as one-to-many (similar to traditional media); many-to-one (enabling random selection by individual users); and many-to-many (enabling users to also produce information). Appropriation of new media in African contexts might necessitate modifications to this model.

37 Wasserman, H. (2003) *The possibilities of ICTs for social activism in Africa: An Exploration*.

mation, including text-messaging via mobiles, internet-based web sites, social networking sites, as well as blogs.

- The global network allows for an exchange of ideas with people far beyond the rural village or city and country borders. Instead, the global context – and global ideas and strategies – enter local contexts and vice versa. We can constantly learn about new ways of organising and advancing rights struggles in our local contexts by drawing on international experience.
- One is able to access information on issues – including important health issues, birth control, HIV/AIDS-related information - that within local communities and contexts may be considered taboo and sensitive and therefore subject to sanction.
- The user of the media is transformed from passive to active user and producer, with the capacity to create and share information, as well as to choose what to see when. More importantly, users create content, and the use and content actually develop new applications and in turn invent and give rise to new technology. The innovative use of the media has created new forms of citizen journalism, to a degree unprecedented in history. This has had the effect of giving space to a diversity of voices and issues that historically may have been ignored.
- The overall decline in the cost of launching advocacy campaigns and developing a profile in the media has fed into and supported the emergence of numerous single issue groups and movements with a shift away from large or mass-based citizens rights movements. At the same time it allows for easy communications between groups so as to facilitate cross-sectoral and cross-issue networks for change.

4.8.2 Mobile phones and empowerment

With mobile phone subscription worldwide nearing an estimated four billion at the end of 2008, there is an explosion of activity related to the use of mobile phones to access information, express opinions and produce and consume media. There are many individual innovations and creative uses of existing mobile platforms. We are also seeing new applications that facilitate the generation and broadcasting of mobile content. Like other ICTs, mobile phones and related software applications are new tools in the global effort to improve communications and to capture, access, and share information. They are also often the only technology to which people in low- and middle-income countries have access, due to their wide availability and low cost of use.

The innovative use of mobile phones for film and photo documentation and the use of SMS for networking and mobilisation are important aspects of ICT in democratic processes, and point to new ICTs as important tools which strengthen and in some ways guarantee freedom of expression and the right to information. Interesting examples include the use of mobiles by civil society to monitor national elec-

WE NEED TOOLS THAT WILL EMPOWER US TO ACHIEVE OUR POTENTIAL. THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH MASS MEDIA – INTERNET AND MOBILE – ENABLE THE EIGHTH (US). NOW IT'S UP TO COMPANIES TO SHIFT THEIR FOCUS TO... BREAKING THE USABILITY BARRIERS THAT HOLD PEOPLE BACK FROM CREATING AND INTERACTING WITH CONTENT

tions in Kenya (December 2007), Belarus (2006) and Ukraine (2004), as well as the Sudanese protesters in Cairo (2005-2006). A particularly striking case was seen in the Philippines as far back as 2001, when text messages helped topple the government by directing 700,000 demonstrators to the People's Power shrine to demand the resignation of President Estrada. More recently – in August and September 2007 – Burmese monks and citizens used email and mobile phones to document and disseminate eye-witness accounts of the military junta's violent crack-down of protests to denounce the sharp hike in fuel and food prices as well as the 40-year military rule. Burmese citizens became citizen journalists as they fed an "underground" information supply line to exiled Burmese journalists and pro-democracy activists working in the region and internationally, sending photographs and videos of the protest and the army's response. In the words of an Burmese activist – noting that the Burmese pro-democracy protestors did not prevail in 2007 - "Nobody won in September because it's not finished."³⁸

Tomi Ahonem³⁹, a commentator and author on new media and social media, has called the mobile phone the "seventh of the mass media". He argues that the convergence of mobiles combining voice, video, audio and a host of applications pose an "inherent threat" to mass media channels, similar to the introduction of the internet before it. Social media theorists anticipate that all content will converge on the mobile phone, and that this will make the mobile "at least as disruptive as the internet." Already a number of applications are available specifically targeted at mobile users to encourage mobile blogging (or "moblogging"), and mobile social networks like myGamma have emerged. Others have developed this idea and proposed that the internet and mobile convergence has created the eighth mass media: people. In this schematic, people are the producers and consumers of information but:

We need tools that will empower us to achieve our potential. The sixth and seventh mass media – internet and mobile – enable the eighth (us). Now it's up to companies to shift their focus to... breaking the usability barriers that hold people back from creating and interacting with content.⁴⁰

This vision is still some way from being realised in the developing country context, where although the use of mobile phones has escalated at an unprecedented rate, and more smartphones are in use, lack of affordable broadband deters most mobile phone users from accessing and using media-rich services, and the majority are restricted to voice and simple SMS. For developing countries and many African countries specifically, broadband is the new digital divide.

Still, with lower cost and broader accessibility, mobile phones create possibilities for enhanced information and productivity among small entrepreneurs, which in turn affect their financial situations and indirectly increase their capacity to act and participate in democratic pro-

38 McGreal, C. (2007) Spies, suspicions and empty monasteries – Burma today. *The Guardian*, Saturday 15 December.

39 Ahonem, T. (2009) Mobile As The 7th Mass Media. *Futuretext.com*.

40 Salz, P.A. (2008) We are all publishers. *Econtent: Digital Content Strategies and Resources*, December issue.

cesses, as “empowered” citizens. This applies to the rural population as well as to people in the informal sector in large cities in developing countries.

The rapid and wide spread of affordable mobile telephony in developing countries points to the role of mobile phones as a digital bridge and a new mass medium.

4.9 Implications for human rights and personal integrity

The growing pervasiveness of ICTs in our lives has given rise to a new set of issues for us to contend with, among others: privacy protection, including digital identities, and the importance of upholding integrity, privacy and anonymity for the realisation of freedom of expression. In the aftermath of 9/11, governments in both the developed and developing world have initiated measures to monitor internet traffic and retain private information.

Human rights activists have strong concerns that some fundamental freedoms of people using the internet and mobiles are being violated, in the interest of ensuring a secure internet environment. Specifically, they are concerned that there is an imbalance between measures taken to ensure internet security, and those taken to ensure human rights on the internet.

Another concern about violations of users’ freedom of expression is a tendency of states to regulate internet content and to censor sites, often based on arguments that these sites threaten national security.

The combined effects of tracking and retaining private information, content regulation and censorship include the violation of human rights principles, the stifling of freedom of expression, and the thwarting of people’s rights to access information, knowledge and communication.

While new ICTs make human rights violations possible by states, corporations and individuals with fraudulent intent, these violations are not inherent and inevitable consequences of the technologies themselves. Rather, the new forms of human rights violations are the effect of (politically) expedient decisions by states and non-state actors to impact on ICT users in this way, and are similar in intent to violations experienced in traditional media. This makes the state vulnerable to countervailing actions and campaigns – such as the emerging internet rights campaigns – to bolster human rights in the information society, using international protocols and human rights instruments and policing mechanisms.⁴¹

41 The APC Internet Rights Charter outlines some of the key human rights that need to be reinterpreted and secured in the information society. Available at: <http://rights.apc.org/charter.shtml>
The Internet Governance Forum, IGF, is an international platform with a mandate to follow up the agenda from the UN World Summits of the Information Society, the WSIS process.

4.10 Critical issues in using ICTs for democracy

The research and literature of democracy and ICTs demonstrate that there are a number of complex issues to be confronted when considering the use of ICTs to promote democracy. This makes it difficult to develop one set of rules and general recommendations. However, there are some critical points made in this study, and below follow factors that need to be considered in the use of ICTs for the promotion of democratic empowerment:

- *Analyse the socio-cultural power.* Structures determining access to resources and power, including the impact of gender and ethnicity, need to be understood.
- *Understand the democratic context.* It is important to understand the democratic context, particularly the state of democratic engagement in the country. This also means understanding the shape of the public sphere including the legal, regulatory and social/cultural context, and other crucial issues such as literacy levels, access to information and knowledge, practices of deliberation and group action, and so on.
- *Identify and support already existing democratic practices and initiatives.* These can be nascent, as in information-provision, but with the potential to empower citizens to make decisions about their daily lives and communities.
- *Consider the ways in which people (already) communicate.* Which channels and fora are used, by whom, and under which circumstances? Who is the sender, receiver, initiator participant, included, excluded, etc.?
- *Support civil society groups that are actors of change and function as watchdogs.* ICTs can be used to support democratic practices and organisational structures by enhancing communication, networking, discussion and consensus-building.
- *Understand the media context.* Is there an independent media sector or media initiatives in the society? Is the society media-rich and media-literate enough to constitute a public space for discussion that goes beyond narrow elites?
- *Understand the ICT context.* Infrastructure issues, such as bandwidth, could seriously affect the potential for the use of the internet. However, even more crucial is the existence or lack thereof of an ICT culture. How widespread is a familiarity with and access to computers, mobile phones, and other ICTs?
- *Consider the ways in which people understand and use technologies.* In order to understand the impact of ICTs, including the socio-economic effects of applying new technologies and systems to society, the everyday use of technology including ICTs, must be understood.
- *Invest in existing technology sectors or media that is already familiar,* if possible, and expand on those using combinations of old and new media.

5. Country Studies

5.1 Uganda

5.1.1 *National context*

Uganda has an estimated population of some 31.3 million people,⁴² of whom around 50% are under the age of fifteen. Approximately 80% of the population live in rural areas, mostly made up of smallholder subsistence farmers.⁴³ The 2003 estimate for the overall literacy rate stood at 70 percent, with a 63 percent literacy rate for women and 77 percent for Ugandan men. The 2006 data show an increase in overall literacy levels to 66.8 percent.⁴⁴

The country as we know it today stands in stark contrast to its tumultuous past, characterised by a succession of military coups and civil wars.⁴⁵ Regular general elections have become the norm, although this achievement is clouded by persistent doubt over the credibility of the whole electoral process.⁴⁶

5.1.2 *Governance and democratic culture*

Available evidence suggests that there has been a steady decline in voice and accountability in Uganda since 2000. Harassment of media practitioners by government agencies is quite common – this, despite Uganda's jump in the 2007 press freedom ranking from 116 to 96.⁴⁷ On the 2006 elections, Human Rights Watch pointed to the ruling party's privileged access to state resources and media, selective prosecution of opposition leaders and flaws in the Electoral Commission's work.⁴⁸ A culmination of several factors ranging from armed insurgency, to a weak knowledge of law and lack of appropriate institutions

42 31,367,972 as of July 2008. United States Census Bureau Data Base: <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country/ugportal.html>

43 Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries: <http://www.agriculture.go.ug/>

44 UNDP Human Development Index 2007/2008, available at <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/3.html>

45 The History of Uganda website (<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=al>) traces the extent of Uganda's tumultuous political legacy. Insurgency continues in the northern part of the country at heavy human and economic cost.

46 Human Rights Watch (2006) *In Hope and Fear: Uganda's Presidential and Parliamentary Polls*.

47 Freedom in the World Report, 2007 and 2008: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

48 Human Rights Watch (2006), *op. cit.*



Mural paintings outside Uganda Electoral Commission. Kampala, Uganda.
Photo: Johan Hellström

for the enforcement of human rights, predisposes many to human and civil rights violations and inhibits their capacity to seek remedies.⁴⁹

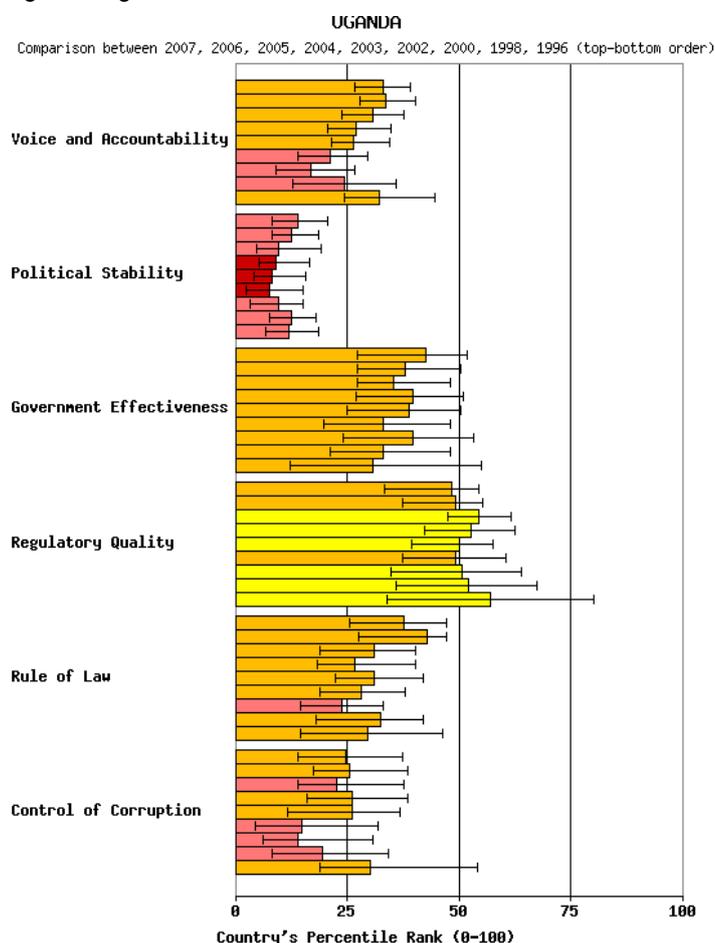
Despite relative calm in most of the country, armed insurgency continues in the northern part of the country.⁵⁰

According to the World Bank governance indicators, Uganda attains an average rating of -0.47 (on a scale of -2.5 to +2.5, where the extremes represent low and high government effectiveness respectively) for the nine-year period to 2007.⁵¹ This low rating is the outcome of a centralised government paradigm that is characterised by weak public infrastructure and bureaucratic framework, high operational costs and labour inefficiencies.⁵²

49 Human Rights House (2003) Shortcomings in the Enforcement of the Law Relating to Civil Liberties in Uganda.
50 Freedom in the World Report 2007.

51 World Bank Institute (2008) Governance Matters 2008: Country Data Report for Uganda, 1996-2007.

52 Birungi, H. et al. (2000) What Makes Markets Tick? Local Governance and Service Delivery in Uganda. Asian Review of Public Administration XII(1), January-June.

Figure 1: Uganda – World Governance Indicators

Source: Kaufmann D., A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi 2008: Governance Matters VII: Governance Indicators for 1996-2007

Impunity to legal prosecution, particularly for the political class, remains a problem in Uganda's body politic. Adherence to the rule of law is inconsistent. According to Amnesty International, cases of attacks on the independence on the judiciary are not uncommon.⁵³

The 2007 corruption barometer of Transparency International⁵⁴ indicates that Uganda's position dropped from 105 in 2006 to 111 in 2007.⁵⁵ According to Global Integrity, corruption exists in most spheres, including the private sector, the courts, health.⁵⁶ This perception is confirmed by a 2007 survey by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics.⁵⁷ The Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda, a local NGO, claims that the situation is worsened by public tolerance.⁵⁸ The World Bank estimates losses resulting from corruption and procurement malpractices at about USD 300 million per year.⁵⁹

53 See Freedom in the World Report 2007. See also Amnesty International (2008) The State of the World's Human Rights

54 See the Transparency International CPI Rankings for 2002-2008 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption_Perceptions_Index

55 The number of countries surveyed went up from 163 in 2006 to 179 in 2007.

56 Global Integrity (2007) Global Integrity Report 2007.

57 2007 survey by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

58 Anti-Corruption Coalition - Uganda

59 World Bank Institute (2008), op. cit.



Women face significant barriers to accessing and benefiting from ICTs. Gender evaluation looks at how women and men use cell phones differently, women's levels of access, and whether gender is adequately incorporated into projects' design, implementation, and monitoring. Photo: kiwanja.net

There is evidence of effort on the part of the Ugandan government to improve the key indicators above. This has, in particular, led to considerable improvement in the area of economic regulatory reform. There has also been improvement in government effectiveness. However, the effort is yet to translate into markedly better service delivery for the citizens of Uganda.

While the country may have registered improvement in the corruption rating as per the 2007 Transparency International rating,⁶⁰ there is still a widespread perception locally and internationally that corruption remains within the fibre of Ugandan society. The overall picture regarding consolidation of a democratic culture in the country, is challenging.

5.1.3 ICT landscape

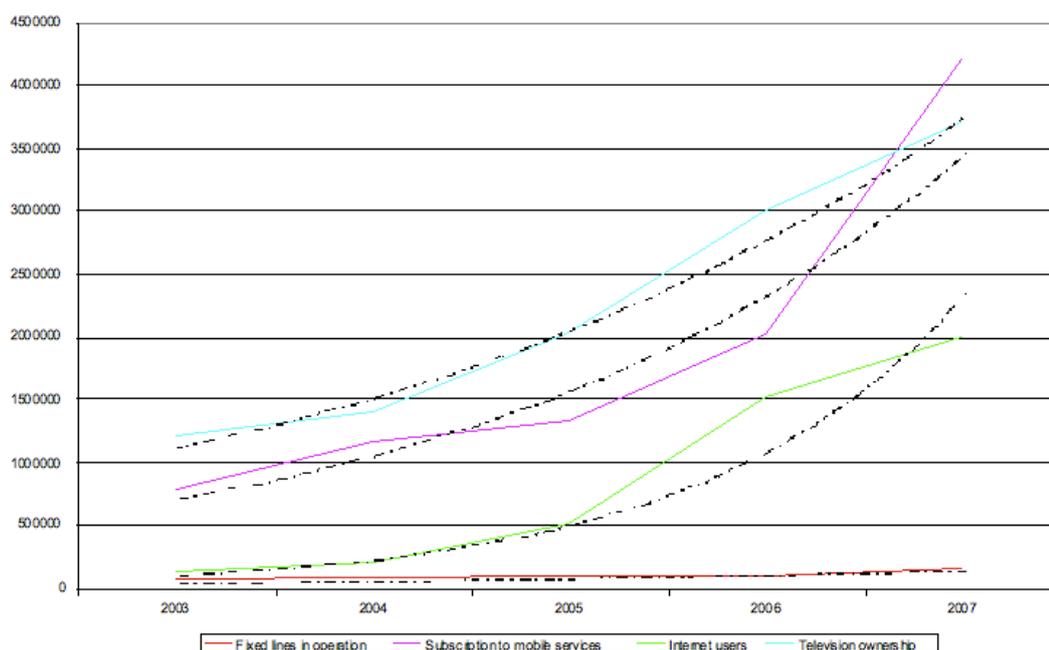
Because Uganda is landlocked, it relies exclusively on satellite for international connectivity, which increases the costs of being connected and partly accounts for the slow growth in the number of internet subscribers. Only about 1.5% of Ugandans have access to the internet. The number of fixed internet subscribers stands at less than 20,000, while the estimated users are close to two million⁶¹.

The slow growth is attributed to high start-up and usage fees;⁶² the high cost of computers; limited infrastructure, including fibre; low internet usage by government, schools, and health and agricultural institutions; low general and ICT literacy; a lack of local content on the internet; low income levels; and an electricity shortage in some parts of the country. While 35% of universities have internet access, only 40% of this access is through broadband connectivity.

⁶⁰ Transparency International (2007) Transparency International Country Study Report: Uganda, 2007.

⁶¹ International Telecommunications Union: African Telecommunication/ICT Indicators 2008: At a Crossroads

⁶² Such as USD 99 for a dial-up 64 kilobits per second (Kbps) link for 20 hours per month.

Figure 2: ICT growth trends in Uganda, 2003 – 2007

The take-up of mobile telephony continues to exceed projections, with a current estimate of 5,704,506 subscribers, while the number of fixed lines in active use is presently estimated at 166,552 lines.⁶³

From a policy perspective, Uganda has acknowledged the potential of ICTs to transform all aspects of human development, and has made a concerted effort to reform the telecommunications sector. A visible outcome of this effort is the markedly improved telecommunications infrastructure – said to have moved from being among the least developed in the world prior to 1996, to rank among the most progressive in the developing world.⁶⁴ The liberalisation of the sector has created a very competitive environment and pushed prices to their lowest levels ever. The regulatory environment is now seen by commentators as being responsive to communication needs of the citizenry.⁶⁵

Regulation and law has played a key role in creating a more conducive environment.⁶⁶ Some prominent examples include the Telecommunications Sector Policy, the National ICT Policy Framework, and the Rural Communications Policy.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, legislation in relation to ICTs is at best still in a state of development due to the novelty of ICTs as well as their application in Uganda.⁶⁸

Two important pieces of legislation currently govern the sector. The Uganda Communications Act deals with a wide range of issues such as setting up of the commission, as well as licensing procedures and requi-

⁶³ Status of the Communications Market, March 2008: <http://www.ucc.co.ug/MarketReviewMarch2008.pdf>

⁶⁴ Uganda Communications Commission: <http://www.ucc.co.ug/rcdfPolicy.pdf>

⁶⁵ Masambu, P. (2005) Capacity Building for Consultancy in the Telecommunications Sector.

⁶⁶ For more information see: <http://www.itu.int/dms pub/itu-s/md/03/wsispc2/c/S03-WSISPC2-C-0086!!PDF-E.pdf>

⁶⁷ Uganda Communications Commission

⁶⁸ Obot, D. et al. (2005) The Uganda Knowledge and Information Society: Early Lessons from ICT Projects. In Etta, F. and Elder, L. (eds.), *At The Crossroads: ICT Policymaking in East Africa*. Ottawa: IDRC.

rements, while UCC regulations broadly cover postal services, radio communications, equipment approval, practice and procedure, tariff and accounting, fair competition, licensing, universal services and inter-connection.⁶⁹

In addition to existing regulatory instruments, certain initiatives within the public and development sector domain have played a critical role towards broadening the goal of universal ICT access in Uganda, more specifically for purposes of development. A fitting example is a universal service fund called the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF), which breaks down the rural communications policy (mentioned above) into measurable and achievable action points at the grassroots level.⁷⁰ The RCDF has been used to set up phone booths, internet cafés, ICT training centres and websites for districts, among others. However, RCDF managers point out that Uganda's teledensity growth mostly exist in urban areas. Further, although RCDF support has facilitated the further spread of ICT facilities and services to less privileged areas and communities, women have benefited less than men. The RCDF lack specific analysis of gender issues.⁷¹

5.1.4 Opportunities for using ICTs to further democracy

There is a relatively strong potential for ICTs for democracy in Uganda. Examples of potential benefits cited by respondents include enhanced access to public information; real-time communication; enhanced service delivery (by government) and storage and analysis of data – all of which go a long way towards entrenching a culture of transparency and accountability.

The effective application of ICTs could improve service delivery in Uganda. Currently, government and other institutions mainly keep records on paper. Most interactions with authorities entail major administrative measures and difficulties in following up. Increased digitisation and use of database structures would significantly enhance the interface between government and citizens.

ICTs also present great opportunities in the area of governance, especially in enhancing transparency and accountability in state operations. The intrinsic quality of anonymity provided by ICTs enables citizens to take leaders to task over issues that are of interest to them, without fear of victimisation. Further, ICTs are thought to have lessened impunity in Uganda's body politic, by increasing transparency through the power of community radio.⁷² Further, through radio people are more aware of their environment, their rights and the constitution.

This general awareness of social and civic rights has been enhanced by the mobile phone.⁷³ Mobile services present the greatest potential within the current economic and political context. Mobile phones are

⁶⁹ Uganda Communications Commission.

⁷⁰ Uganda Communications Commission: <http://www.ucc.co.ug/rcdf/default.php>

⁷¹ Amuriat, G. & D. Okello (2005) Women on ICT policy making in Uganda. In Florence Etta & Laurent Elder (Eds) *At the Crossroads: ICT policy making in East Africa*. Ottawa: IDRC.

⁷² Field interviews with Vincent Bagire (CIPESA) and Elisha Washikura (i-Network).

⁷³ Field interview with James Wire (Linux Solutions).

versatile and offer capability for real-time interactive communication, knowledge and advice. About 20% of the population in Uganda has a mobile phone.

While high subscription figures do not necessarily translate into an equal number of handsets, through “shared access” the number of individuals who directly and indirectly take advantage of mobile services increases three or even fourfold. Mobile phones also remain the most affordable of all new ICT technologies, thanks to growing competition in Uganda’s telecommunications sector.⁷⁴

In the case of CELAC,⁷⁵ a portal project dealing in agricultural information, the information is sent by SMS to 150 people and this is distributed using the village phone – a megaphone mounted on a stick.

Multimedia platforms are also showing promise in promoting citizens’ voices. For example, the online newspaper *New Vision* uses multiple forms of ICTs to draw wider public participation to online debates. Audiences may be requested to “call in” to radio programmes or send emails and text messages from their mobile phones. Discussions are subsequently developed into topical articles and printed in the newspapers for wider circulation.

Davis Weddi – editor of the web site of the Ugandan newspaper, *New Vision* - claims that political topics seem to generate the greatest interest among participants in the forum.

Online platforms are very effective in enhancing a culture of free speech, particularly in a context where public discourse appears to be limited or heavily monitored.

However, Ugandan respondents observe that computers lack the advantage of versatility. The cost of acquiring, operating and maintaining computers is considerably higher compared to other ICTs. Erratic power supply and an unreliable telecommunications network further undermine the use of computers in Uganda, as it undermines use of all electrical equipment. Ali Ndiwalana, an end-user support manager at Makerere University, estimates that at most 50,000 PCs are likely to be operational in Uganda at any one time.

Judging from the success of *New Vision*’s online forum, Weddi is convinced that real-time and interactive communication are essential tenets for a thriving democracy. This is a view that is shared by Johnson Nkuuhe, an MDG support advisor, who also highlights the fact that these benefits are realised at a minimal cost. Essentially, besides enhancing the flow of information in Uganda, ICTs have the potential to ensure that such communication occurs at a significantly reduced financial cost.

Multimedia platforms are also showing promise in promoting citizens’ voices. For example, the online newspaper *New Vision* uses multiple forms of ICTs to draw wider public participation to online debates. Audiences may be requested to “call in” to radio programmes or send emails and text messages from their mobile phones. Discussions are subsequently developed into topical articles and printed in the newspapers for wider circulation.

⁷⁴ Interview with Johann Hellström, an independent ICT consultant based in Uganda.

⁷⁵ See: <http://celac.or.ug>

5.1.5 Risks and challenges

The risks in deploying ICTs for advancing democracy in Uganda vary from potential physical harm to advocates of ICTs for democracy by politicians fighting to retain the status quo, to technical risks linked to the operation of ICTs such as breakdown of machines and lack of spare parts as well as loss of information. Also mentioned by respondents in this context are issues related to invasion of individual privacy, for instance, through tapping of private phone- and mail conversations and such practices as spamming, largely associated with web-based email, but increasingly common with mobile phone services. Related to this is the potential abuse of ICTs to spread false or malicious information. Lack of appropriate content and the issue of sustainability also pose considerable risk.

Within this context, key limitations that may impact on the ability of using ICTs to advance democracy in Uganda are listed below.

Leadership and political will: Visionary and committed leadership is a critical element to ensuring the adoption of ICTs for democracy. The ICT policy and regulatory environment is changing for the better. However, lack of strategic and visionary leadership of the sector has resulted in the current situation in Uganda where bandwidth is almost exhausted through arbitrary allocation to speculators without pre-conditions. Such pre-conditions may include commitment by potential investors to infrastructural development in marginalised areas or preferential consideration of rural areas.

Another aspect of weak leadership may be a one-sided approach to introducing new ideas to a context or country, including Uganda. The involvement of local intermediaries with a sound understanding of the immediate context is critical for success.

Affordability: For ICTs to become a viable way of advancing democracy in Uganda equipment and connectivity costs must be affordable. In spite of decreasing costs for mobile telephony and a fast increase of subscribers, current 5,7 million, widespread uptake of ICTs across the country is likely to be undermined as long as the majority of the population remains in poverty. This implies that efforts to boost uptake and ready application of ICTs by the general population ought to go hand-in-hand with poverty eradication programmes.

Awareness: There is widespread consensus among respondents that a general lack of awareness of ICTs by the public undermines uptake, adoption and continuous application of ICTs. However, the current popularity and affordability of the mobile phone and the radio present enormous opportunities. The use of mobiles for interacting with live radio and television programming increases citizens capacity for expression opinion and engaging in public debate.

Corruption: Corruption continues to permeate every sector of Uganda from the private sector to the courts to health care. The World Bank estimates losses resulting from corruption and procurement malpractices at about \$300m per year. The situation is worsened by public tolerance of the vice and renders poor delivery as “the norm”. Citizens’ lack of knowledge of their constitutional rights make them subject to the whims of corrupt politicians, from the village level to parliament. It is therefore imperative that citizens become knowledgeable about the institutional mechanisms and administrative processes for resolving their day-to-day crises and provide them with the mental and political space to develop a critical, engaged voice on public matters.

Literacy: Currently adult literacy levels stand at 68 percent and UNICEF projects that Uganda will reach 75 percent adult literacy by 2015. While the literacy ratio between men and women are improving, the majority – up to 65 percent - of rural women are only functionally literate and is just barely able to read and write.⁷⁶ To improve the uptake of ICTs for democracy and for citizens – especially rural women - to derive real value from ICTs, literacy and education levels generally need to be improved. Moreover, notions of literacy need to include computer literacy.

Capacity is necessary for the sustainable implementation of any ICT initiative. However, capacity in terms of the existence of a critical mass of individuals with technical knowledge to support the development of a robust ICT sector, capacity is lacking. This is in large part due to the negative association of computers and automation with job losses. Albeit slowly, this capacity is growing.

Socio-cultural factors: Many societies, including Uganda, embrace practices and ideas that intentionally or inadvertently marginalise segments of society, especially women and girls. This is often accompanied by misconceptions about use and access to resources, including technology. Access to ICTs constitutes no exception, a fact which undermines the equal uptake of ICTs. Traditionally, women’s roles were subordinate to those of men, despite the substantial economic and social responsibilities of women in traditional Ugandan societies.⁷⁷ There is a risk that women withdraw from ICT (also within development projects) because their male relatives object to emerging shifts in gender relations at the community and household levels.

These social norms also find expression at a national level in the relationship between non-state actors like NGOs and CSOs on the one hand and the Ugandan government on the other. The 2006 Civicus Civil Society Index (CSI) assessment of the state of Ugandan civil society notes that while there is extensive participation of civil society, this is largely in community and church groups as well as mutual help

⁷⁶ Amuriat, G. & D. Okello (2005)

⁷⁷ See: <http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/Uganda.html>

associations. While socially inclusive, the groups are not political or “activist” in their agenda. In turn, the mostly urban-based NGOs are mainly engaged in service delivery and often in a contractual relationship to government. Their stance to government is thus more likely to be collaborative than confrontational and few NGOs have developed advocacy skills or campaigns. The Ugandan government in turn has been ambivalent about advocacy activities, especially in the political arena.⁷⁸

However, the role of NGOs and CSOs in Uganda is shifting and “[t]he voice of civil society is beginning to be heard more loudly on issues, including human rights, basic needs and people’s marginalisation,”⁷⁹ so that Ugandan civil society may be seen to be at crossroads:

Will it confine itself to a somewhat docile role, focusing on service delivery and sub-contracting from government? Or will it further develop its capacity to question the socio-political make-up of Uganda, striving to augment its autonomy, its sense of independent identity, its cohesion and its local ownership?⁸⁰

“[t]he voice of civil society is beginning to be heard more loudly on issues, including human rights, basic needs and people’s marginalisation,”

5.2 Kenya

5.2.1 National context

Kenya has an estimated population of 37 million people.⁸¹ The majority of the population (55.2%, 20.9 million) is of working age – 25 to 64. The country has at least 42 ethnic groups⁸² and about 58% of the country’s population live in rural areas. The average national life expectancy is 56.6 years while the adult literacy was estimated at 73.6 percent.⁸³

The country gained its political independence from British colonial rule in 1963 and until the late 1990s was in effect a one-party state ruled by the Kenya African National Union (KANU), led first by Jomo Kenyatta and then by Daniel Arap Moi. Kenya adopted a multi-party political system in the late 1990s and KANU’s rule came to an end with the first multi-party election in 2002.

Since 2003, the Kenyan government has shown greater willingness to respect various civil and political rights. The removal of KANU from power in 2002⁸⁴ demonstrated that the political terrain had altered fundamentally, and that future governments will find it more difficult to operate in the oppressive manner of their predecessors.

78 Tiwana, M. S. (n.d) Uganda: Legal framework restricts civil society, available at: <http://www.civicus.org/csw/csw-reports-a-publications/4/408-ugandaanalysis310708>

79 DENIVA (2006), op. cit.

80 Ibid.

81 Republic of Kenya, 2008.

82 Encarta, 2008.

83 2007/2008 Human Development Report available at <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/3.html>

84 Since at least the mid-1960s, there has consistently been agitation by civil society activists, opposition progressive academics and students, and even opposition MPs against political repression. This agitation gained momentum in the 1980s with the formation of underground resistance groups, which were however ruthlessly crushed by the KANU regime. In the early 1990s, KANU gave in to extensive local and international pressure and eventually allowed some political reforms.



Communications activists are trained how to make digital stories, using ICTs to improve the impact of their reporting and documentation of violence against women. Digital stories – short videos using images and sound to tell a personal story – hold tremendous power for bringing about change. Photo: Assétou Diarra

5.2.2 Governance and democratic culture

Freedom House's 2008 report on the status of Kenya's civil and political rights regime demonstrates clearly that respect for individual rights and freedoms is still a matter of concern. The report points out that on a scale of 1 (the highest) to 10 (the lowest), Kenya's political rating declined from 3 to 4 due to significant irregularities in the December 2007 presidential election. The election resulted in the killing of over a thousand people, the internal displacement of almost a million individuals, and the destruction of millions of dollars worth of property. While the presidential election was the immediate precursor of the violence, far deeper reasons including tribalism, poverty, inequality and political elitism constitute the basis of this conflict.

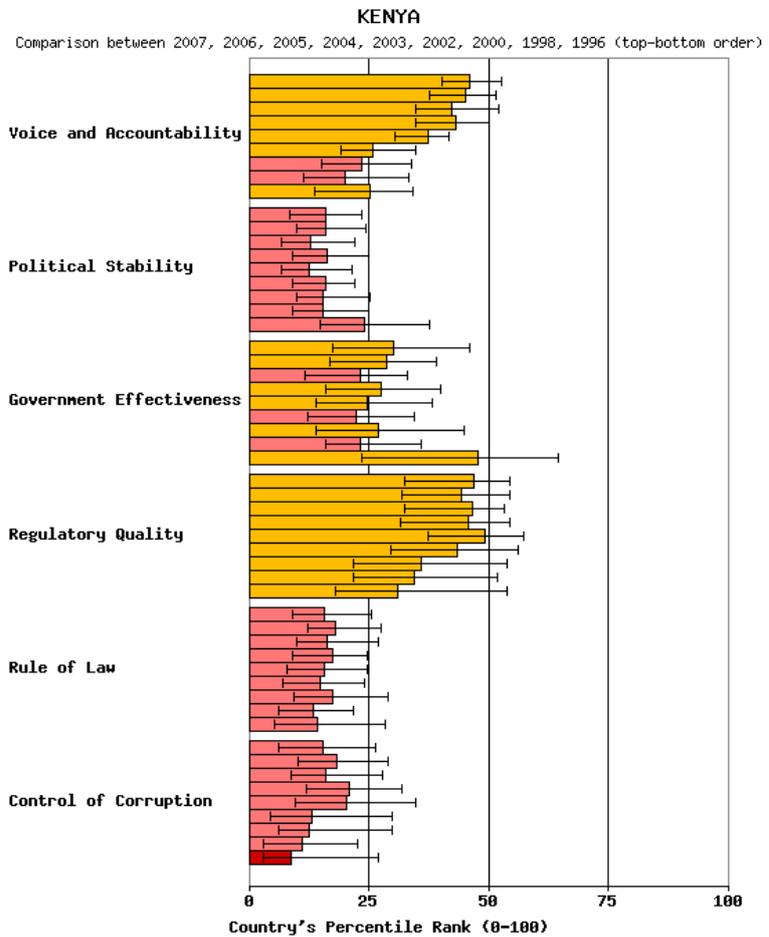
Since 2003, the Kenyan government has shown a willingness to respect the various civil and political rights. Concerns remain nevertheless in the areas of corruption, judicial subservience to the executive, increasing crime due to the proliferation of small arms, violation of fair trial rights, including extrajudicial killings, and gender inequality.

With respect to the World Bank Governance Indicators, Kenya is perceived to be performing relatively well in regulatory quality (42%.1) and voice and accountability (34.4%), but extremely poorly in political stability (16%), the rule of law (15.9%) and control of corruption (15.2%). Perceptions about government effectiveness are slightly above a quarter at 28.3%. See Figure 3.

Since a multi-party government came to power at the end of 2002, there has only been real change in relation to two indicators: voice and accountability and regulatory quality.

Transparency International's latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) places Kenya at 147 out of 180 countries. Out of Africa's 50 countries for which it collected and indexed data in 2008, Kenya is rated the 15th most corrupt country on the continent. Grand and petty corruption have become endemic and contributed to Kenya's poor development record, and since at least the late 1980s a number of major corruption scandals have been reported and debated extensively in the local and international media.

Figure 3: Kenya – World Governance Indicators



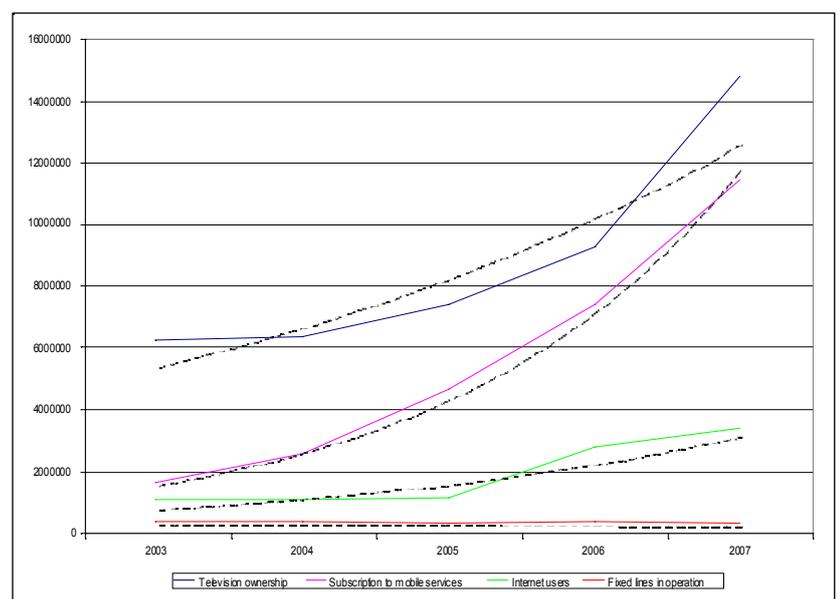
Source: Kaufmann D., A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi 2008: Governance Matters VII: Governance Indicators for 1996-2007

Without serious political will and an effective legislative system, it looks uncertain whether corruption will ever be tackled effectively in Kenya.

5.2.3 ICT landscape

The mobile sector is expanding rapidly in Kenya. The number of subscribers has grown from 5.3 million in 2005 to 7.3 million by December 2006, an expansion of 36.5%. By March 2008, the number of subscribers had risen to 11,989,007 with a penetration rate of 32.25%. In contrast, the number of land-line subscribers is gradually dropping. Telkom Kenya has 330,000 lines, with a teledensity of 0.16% in rural areas and 4% in urbanised areas.

Figure 4: ICT growth trends in Kenya, 2003-2007



However, the cost of connecting to and using mobile phone services remains expensive, if not unaffordable, for the majority of the population. The development of the internet in Kenya has not been as robust as the mobile sector. The Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) internet study found that there are 1,650,000 internet users, even though the internet was introduced in 1993.

At the policy level, ICTs have remained on top of the Kenyan government's development agenda since 2003.. This is evident in various national plans and initiatives, such as The East African Marine System (TEAMS, 2007-2009), the Digital Villages project, and the e-Government Strategy (2004-2009). The Kenyan ICT sector is now fully liberalised (2009), offering opportunities for the country's economy and opening up access to rural areas. The sector has been described as optimistic: civil society and business are proactive in the field, and the government's commitment to ICTs has achieved regional and international recognition.

The Kenya e-Government Strategy provides a road map for the implementation of ICT initiatives and outlines a process for the modernisation of government. This is likely to impact on the interface between citizens, businesses and government, and provide opportunities for increased transparency, accountability and efficiency in government operations.

The reform of the telecommunications sector in Kenya began in 1999 with the implementation of the 1998 Kenya Communications Act. The main policy objective of the government was to optimise the contribution of the communication sector to the development of the Kenyan economy as a whole, by ensuring the availability of "efficient, reliable and affordable communication services" throughout the coun-

try.⁸⁵ Two operators were licensed to provide mobile phone services, accounting for rapid growth in mobile usage.

More recent ICT legislation introduced by the government deals specifically with the issues of privacy and security as a means of building citizens' security and confidence in the internet. These include the Kenya ICT Bill 2007, the Consumer Protection Bill 2007, and the Electronic Transactions Bill.⁸⁶

5.2.4 Opportunities for using ICTs to further democracy

While both mobile telephony and television offer important opportunities for the use of ICTs to enhance democracy in Kenya, key opportunities in the country are seen more generally to reside in the areas of transparency and accountability, including service delivery; freedom of expression; fighting corruption; as well as strengthening the public sphere. In particular, lessons can also be drawn from Kenya's 2007 elections.

"The new forms of communication technology do not lend themselves easily to state control".⁸⁷

The communication of ideas goes to the very heart of a democracy and ICTs make such communication possible. The "marketplace of ideas", or a viable public sphere, is only possible where there is a diversity, multiplicity and plurality of voices. As Al Kags, Programme Officer at the Kenya ICT Board, puts it: "ICTs enable freer platforms for freedom of expression and political debate... they play a fundamental role in raising social, economic and political consciousness among the public."

ICTs can enable people to participate fully in the political process and democratisation of any country by enhancing greater access to information and by doing so, help create a better and much more informed citizenry.⁸⁸

For participatory monitoring, citizen journalism can be a central pillar to efforts to produce independent recording and documenting of events – including elections – and extracting accountability from public officials and the public at large, especially at the local level where poor people are most vulnerable to power monopolies and its abuse.⁸⁹

Access to information will enable citizens to understand how taxpayers' money is being used and by which state department. ICTs are important tools against corruption when internet blogs and chat rooms are used to expose corrupt individuals without fear of retribution. Furthermore, an increase in the use of ICTs means that publications like the Corruption Perception Index will be easily accessible through

"The new forms of communication technology do not lend themselves easily to state control"

ICTS HAVE "CHANGED FOREVER AND FOR THE BETTER THE WAY ELECTIONS ARE CONDUCTED IN KENYA".

85 Ibid., p. 50. The opening up of the Kenyan telecommunications market led to the creation of two segments: a fixed-line segment subject to exclusivity for a period of five years (ending in June 2004) for Telkom Kenya to recoup its profits and pay off its debts; and a liberalised segment that was fully opened up to new players to provide services such as value added services, very small aperture telecommunications services, internet and mobile telephony.

86 See the Kenya country report in Global Information Society Watch 2008: <http://www.giswatch.org/gisw2008/country/Kenya.html>

87 Interview with Christopher Wambua, Assistant Public Relations Manager, Communications Commission of Kenya.

88 Interviews with Peter Aluvale (Senior Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication) and Alice Munyua (KictaNet Coordinator).

89 Interview with Helena Bjuremalin, Regional Advisor on Democracy and Human Rights, Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi.

the internet.⁹⁰

The 2002 and 2007 general elections saw individuals and parties make extensive use of different forms of ICTs, including radio, television, email, internet and mobile phones. During the 2002 election, opposition poll agents communicated the election results to their headquarters as soon as vote counting had been completed. This halted the historical practice of state agents stuffing boxes with ballot papers during transportation to the national vote counting centre. In the recently concluded 2007 election, the extensive use of mobile phones, including video technology, to immediately communicate election results, informed the electorate about who had won at the constituency level.⁹¹

ICTs have “changed forever and for the better the way elections are conducted in Kenya”.⁹²

During the 2007 elections, radio, television and even mobile phones played a big role in informing the public about the issues under contest, as well as in exposing a lot of malpractices by political players. It also allowed the public to scrutinise the efficiency and impartiality of institutions like the Electoral Commission of Kenya.

In recent years, ICTs have increasingly been used for the delivery of government services such as identity document and passport application forms and billing for municipal services. However, the existence of manual methods of service delivery (e.g., birth, marriage and death certificates, land registration documents,) makes Kenya a country that has yet to fully embrace e-government.

ICTs have been shown to play a significant role in fostering greater understanding between people, cultures and ways of life. Internet blogs have become powerful social tools for networking, information sharing, political debate and contesting discourse. In the past decade, online platforms such as Kenyansabroad.com, Mashada.com and Kumekucha.com have turned into open virtual spaces for social and political dialogue. These forums are important mediums for lifting people out of their contextual cocoons and exposing them to different ideas, cultures and ways of thinking.

A young and technology-savvy electorate that has greater understanding of ICTs leads to a democratic practice that was unimaginable only a few years ago. Even historically marginalised areas, like the North Eastern Province, saw heightened political involvement from scores of young people.⁹³ In this way, ICTs are increasingly dismantling the spatial and political barriers between urban and rural, and between old and young.

This is a theme which Tom Kagwe of the Kenya Human Rights Commission finds to have great relevance and application to Kenya’s political praxis. ICTs can be used to improve the entire electoral pro-

90 Interview with Felgona Otieno, Programme Manager for Communication and Advocacy at Transparency International Kenya

91 Interview with Alex Twinomugisho, Africa director for the Global e-Schools and Community Initiative. See also <http://www.gesci.org/>

92 Ibid

93 Interview with Njonjo Mue, Kenya Human Rights Commission.

IN THIS WAY, ICTS ARE INCREASINGLY DISMANTLING THE SPATIAL AND POLITICAL BARRIERS BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL, AND BETWEEN OLD AND YOUNG.

cess; from voter education, registration and vote counting, to the communication of election results. Furthermore, the use by parliament of live broadcasts has enabled citizens to understand how their elected representatives operate and the issues and formal democratic processes they deal with. Kenya's ongoing transition to democracy therefore owes itself to not just popular activism, but also to the use of ICTs to catalyse political change.⁹⁴

5.2.5 Risks and challenges

Kenya, as other countries, is exposed to the serious risk of ICTs being used to ignite and promote conflict. Without exception, all respondents mentioned that internet blogs, mobile phones and FM radio stations were used extensively to disseminate (false) information and incite violence in the run-up to and immediately after the 2007 general election.

Other risks include cybercrime; conflict between national security on the one hand, and the respect for the individual right to privacy on the other; and ensuring the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, from crimes like pornography and human trafficking.

In addition, globalisation and multinational corporations have given businesses financial power, to drive their agenda at the national level, with limited inhibition by institutionally and financially weak post-colonial states. A big challenge facing democracy in Kenya, is ICT development mainly driven not by the state and the citizenry, but by business, including big telecommunications operators. The challenge remains to safe guard that ICTs benefit the majority.

Within this context, key limitations and preconditions that may impact on the ability of using ICTs to advance democracy in Kenya are listed below.

Leadership and political will: Many politicians, the majority of whom are from the KANU era, have not changed from their one-party mode of thinking. The central state makes decisions about policy and practice and is in many cases motivated by individual political interests. In this model of governance, citizens are reduced to mere spectators and recipients of development.

Affordability: Policy reforms in the telecommunications sector have undoubtedly increased availability, accessibility and affordability of ICTs. However, not all can afford to take advantage of the new technology. The majority has to make hard choices and spend whatever little income is available on basic needs. In turn, this threatens to widen inequality - those with access are able to use ICT to improve employment and other income-generating activities.

⁹⁴ Interview with Felgona Otieno, Programme Manager for Communication and Advocacy at Transparency International Kenya

Corruption: Poverty, inequality and weak state institutions may explain in part the high level of corruption in Kenya. Poorly paid state functionaries including police officers, municipal personnel and employees of important state departments such as the lands ministry, need little motivation to engage in corrupt practices.

Awareness: In urban areas, the employed and those earning income, are able to enjoy the benefits of ICTs. In Nairobi's rapidly growing malls, one is likely to see young professionals sitting in cafés using laptops and mobile phones. At the same time, only a stone's throw away, are the massive slums like Kibera, Mathare and Korogocho whose citizens will require a coherent and well-funded policy and government programmes to ensure they gain access to ICTs that goes beyond voice and SMS.⁹⁵

Literacy: Kenya has a relatively well-informed population but a fairly low level of literacy, especially in the poorer rural provinces – such as the Northeast Province with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.285 (compared to an HDI of 0.773 in Nairobi). For a non-literate population it is both a challenge and a possibility to take advantage of ICTs to improve their lives, and to participate in democratic processes. Traditional forms of ICTs such as radio remain a strong tool for information dissemination, education and knowledge development, and the potential of internet connected mobile phones is enormous.

Illiteracy can lead to technophobia, but people may feel hesitant of ICTs for other reasons. Professionals, state functionaries and others, may fear ICTs will undermine their authority or render them jobless.

Socio-cultural factors: In societies where men in general have a dominant social, political and economic status, they are more likely to access important resources, including ICTs. Kenya's low Gender-related Development Index signals that women are likely to be poorer in comparison with men, more likely to be engaged in insecure work, and likely to be dependent on men for their day-to-day survival.

The 2008 Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) report *Profile of Women's Socio-Economic Status in Kenya* identifies gender inequality as a barrier to Kenya's development.⁹⁶ Despite the fact that women represent 51% of the Kenyan population, their representation in post-primary education, wage employment, enterprise ownership and decision-making processes is limited. In addition, they are adversely affected by traditional and social practices, poverty and domestic violence. Kenyan society has made limited strides towards bridging the inequality gap, in large part due to the prevailing political system as well as to cultural

⁹⁵ In Kenya farming has been on the decline for years and service sectors such as trade and tourism have become the new engines of economic growth. Rural areas are therefore deprived of skills which could be used to transform local economies, while in the cities, the young job-seekers continuously join what has now become a huge and expanding army of the unemployed.

⁹⁶ Available at: <http://www.ieakenya.or.ke/viewdocument.asp?ID=155>

norms and attitudes that condone gender violence. Improving Kenyan women's profiles in all sectors, and reducing gender disparities, will enhance women's capacities and their access to opportunities.

Kenyan civil society has grown substantially in number and influence over the past decades. Still, there is insufficient consultation by government in the forming of national policies.⁹⁷

A 2007 report commissioned by the Embassy of Norway into the state of Kenya civil society notes that the more established NGOs and CSOs – who attract much of the donor funding – have been less than innovative and must be encouraged to reinvent themselves and re-engineer their approaches. At the same time, organisations that struggle with institutional issues have been more innovative in their approaches to issues of governance, democracy and anti-corruption, and should be supported to build their institutional capacity.

5.3 Tanzania

5.3.1 *National context*

Tanzania has an estimated population of 40.1 million (2007), with 68% of the population below the age of 25. Life expectancy at birth is estimated at 51 years.⁹⁸ Of the total population, 75% lives in rural areas. Based on 2006 data, the 2007/2008 Human Development Report reports the literacy rate at 69.4 percent.⁹⁹

Since 1992, Tanzania has been in transition from a single political party system to a multi-party democracy. Major reforms were ushered in by the Nyalali¹⁰⁰ Commission in 1991. The Commission identified 40 oppressive laws that impact on human rights, freedom of expression, the media, the constitution, freedom of association and democracy. Its bold recommendation was the adoption of a multi-party system, which came into effect on 1 July 1992. By November 1993, thirteen political parties had been registered.

However, many feel that multi-party democracy is still not well established in Tanzania. The general elections in 2000 and 2005 have seen the ruling party consolidate its power for both the presidential as well as legislative seats. Opposition parties argue that their poor performance is due to restricted political space, especially access to resources and government-owned media. Opposition parties and civil society activists agree that the National Electoral Commission is partisan, favouring the ruling party.

97 Mulama, J. (2008) Kenya: Civil Society's Policy-Making Role a Work in Progress. Inter Press Service (IPS), 16 June.

98 United Republic of Tanzania (2007) Poverty and Human Development Report (PHDR) 2007.

99 See <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/3.html>

100 Former Chief Justice.



5.3.2 Governance and democratic culture

According to the World Bank's governance indicators, there has been an improvement in voice and accountability in the country. In 1995 the country scored in the 30 percentile rank, but it rose 13 points to 43 points in 2007. One reason for this is that Tanzania has taken a bold step towards media freedom. There is, for instance, significant diversity of media in the country that has provided channels for voices from sections of the society that earlier were unheard.

The political stability indicator, however, has not been very promising. There was significant improvement up to 1998 from the 35 mark to 42; this was followed by a sharp decline in 2000 (at the time of the second multi-party election) to the 30 mark. Thereafter, performance has been improving slightly to almost the 40 mark in 2006 and 2007.

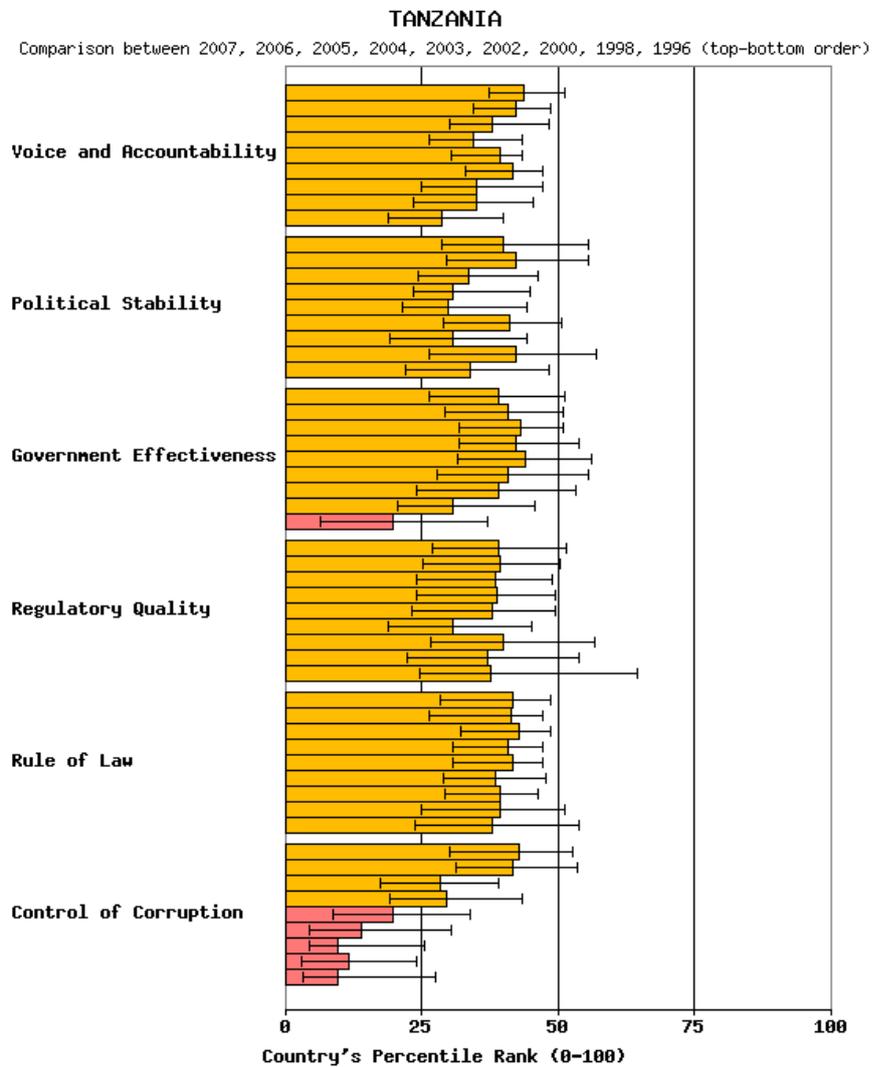
Tanzania has, however, shown significant improvement in the area of government effectiveness over the period, increasing its score from the 20 percentile mark to 30. This can be attributed to ongoing reforms including the Local Government Reform Programme, Public Service Reform, and increasing the public-private-partnership culture. See Figure 5 below.

Freedom House rates Tanzania as only "partly free", indicating that the country is not an electoral democracy and the ruling party dominates political life. Every citizen has the right to be informed, yet public servants have no obligation to provide information.

Left: Nata village, Bunda district. Bunda district is one of the poorest districts in Tanzania. Access to local broad band has initiated development processes in local government, schools and health institutions. Photo: Björn Pehrson

Right: The rural areas are slowly getting connected, here with satellite connection in Lugoba, Tanzania. Photo: Helen Belcastro

Figure 5: Tanzania – World Governance Indicators



Source: Kaufmann D., A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi 2008: Governance Matters VII: Governance Indicators for 1996-2007

The majority of Tanzania's citizens live in the countryside and the activities of the local media, legal aid providers and grassroots organisations only extend as far as the regional town centres. As a result, radio serves as the predominant means for many citizens living in rural communities to obtain information. Efforts to educate and inform citizens about their rights must be sensitive to the fact that while systems exist in urban centres to inform the public, these may not extend easily to all parts of the country. Solutions are needed that ensure information is distributed equitably to all citizens.

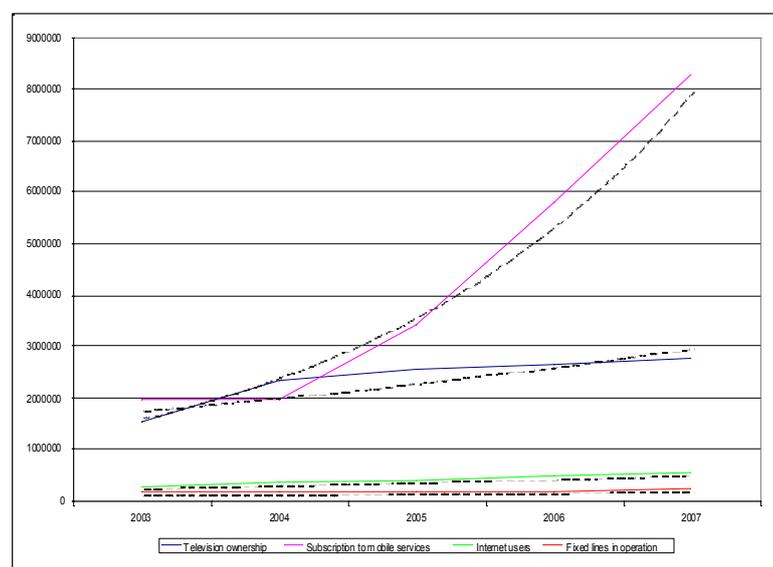
Corruption, while not as high as in many other African nations, is still perceived to be significant according to the Transparency International CPI. For the 2008 CPI, Tanzania had a rating of 3 out of 10 (with those with a score of 1 perceived as the most corrupt).

5.3.3 ICT landscape

Mobile ownership in 2007 stood at 62.8% in Dar es Salaam, 42.5% in other urban areas, and 13.9% in rural areas. Fixed-line phones show a similar pattern: 2.8% in Dar es Salaam, 1.9% in other urban areas and 0.6% for rural areas. In June 2008, there were seven licensed mobile phone network operators with an estimated subscriber base of about 10.28 million, or approximately 24% of the population.¹⁰¹ The net effect of competition has been a downward trend in tariffs, though they still can be regarded as very high. The usability of mobile phones has improved as well, and mobile internet access is available.

The main challenge regarding the internet is the low penetration rate. It is estimated that only one out of a hundred people have access to internet.¹⁰² The number of people in Tanzania who used the internet in 2000 was 115,000,¹⁰³ compared to 400,000 in 2008. The ITU puts the usage figure at 1.1% of the entire population. All international voice and data traffic in Tanzania is routed via satellite. This has been an obstacle for the greater development of the sector, as prices remain comparatively expensive.

Figure 6: ICT growth trends in Tanzania, 2003-2007



101 Alison Gillwald (2008) notes however that in absolute terms the number of subscribers is lower than reported by network operators due to (i) subscribers having more than one SIM card and (ii) subjectivity of the definition of who is an active subscriber. It is reported that the average number of SIM cards per subscriber in Tanzania is 1.16, deflating the possible subscriber base to 8.86 million.

102 Data from <http://www.internetworldstats.com>

103 According to <http://www.internetworldstats.com>

Online forums provided an avenue for posting issues that otherwise would have been risky using conventional ICTs such as radio or TV.

There are, however, small but commendable strides in making the internet more accessible for Tanzanian citizens. For instance, the Tanzania Internet Service Provider Association launched the country's first internet exchange point (IXP) in 2003, which was soon followed by IXPs in Arusha, Mwanza and Dodoma.

5.3.4 Opportunities for using ICTs to further democracy

Tanzania shows potential for developing online information channels, mobile telephony, as well as traditional media in order to support and sustain a democratic culture.

Online forums or communities of practice are becoming one of the most efficient and effective ways of empowering people in certain areas of competency. Despite the limited access to the internet in Tanzania, online forums have contributed significantly to giving a voice to the unheard.

In early stages of the online forums, the Tanzania diaspora used the Jambo forum to air critical views about the development of the country.¹⁰⁴

A country does not necessarily need to have internet in every household to benefit. Instead, what is important is the relevance of the information, as well as how other media interlink with this information.¹⁰⁵

Most of the main print newspapers are available online for free.¹⁰⁶ The main audience of online newspapers are the diaspora, who rely on the internet to keep up to date on what is happening at home. Students constitute another segment. Newspapers use the websites as an interface for people to contribute to content development, and in that way serve as an outlet for the public to express their views.

ICTs can be an invaluable tool for enhancing people's participation in the development of policies, laws, strategies and other documents that shape their destiny as a country. A good example has been the development of the country's ICT policy and an e-strategy, two processes that have been made available online for stakeholders to input their views.

Rose Haji, National Director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa-Tanzania (MISA-TAN), underscores the strategic role ICT plays in furthering their work. The office interacts with about 200 individuals and 15 institutions on a day-to-day basis. The internet is used extensively for online forums, publishing an e-newsletter, collaborations in developing critiques of bills, legislation and policies, and to host the organisation's website.

Online forums are perhaps one of the more advanced uses of ICTs by MISA-TAN. A topic is selected and discussed extensively for about two to three weeks, with the discussion moderated by an expert, and emerging issues are compiled, printed and shared. Topics that have

104 Interview with Dr Suma Kaare, senior policy analyst.

105 Interview with Beda Mutaghywa, Managing Director of the University Centre.

106 These include www.btl.co.tz, www.ipppmedia.co.tz, www.mwananchi.co.tz, www.newhabari.co.tz and www.freemedia.co.tz.

been discussed in the past include HIV/AIDS, rights of people with disabilities, gender violence, human rights, and youth.

Growth in access to mobile phones has been phenomenal in Tanzania, and have impacted positively on the ability to provide social services. Monica Luwondo from the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) is of the view that her organisation would not have the intimacy it has with people if there were no mobile phone services. TAMWA normally receives distress calls from women in need of legal or media attention from all over Tanzania. It can provide advice over the phone or dispatch one of its members in the vicinity to investigate and advise on appropriate actions.

Mobile phones have been used to mobilise voters to improve turnout, and their use during elections contributed significantly to the performance of parliamentarians who used mobiles to mobilise votes. According to Zephania Mposo, campaign manager for one of the 2005 parliamentary candidates, they provided free handsets for about 115 village, ward and division coordinators and provided them with training on efficient and effective ways of using the phones, such as SMS, toll-free "call me" services, rates at different times of the day, safety and security, and so on.

Further, mobile phones have enabled people to participate in various live debates taking place on radio and TV. Notable debates are hosted on shows such as Kipima Joto on ITV, Hamza Kasongo Hour on Channel Ten, and Pambanua on Channel 10. On the radio, programmes include Power Breakfast on Clouds FM, and Kahawa au Chai on Radio Tumaini. The popularity of TV shows suggests an important role for the combined use of traditional and new media in furthering democracy in the country.

5.3.5 Risks and challenges

One of the biggest hurdles to properly implementing ICTs for democracy in Tanzania is the urban-rural divide. ICTs in Tanzania are primarily orientated towards the urban setting, which gives urban populations a comparative advantage over rural areas in participating in informed discussions, networking and processes that shape the destiny of the country.

The implication of this divide is that the rural population, which is the majority, is marginalised and less empowered through limited access to information and knowledge. The lack of communication between the rural population and key policy-makers and implementers limits their participation in the social, economic and political sphere. If this communication is not improved, the application of ICTs for democracy in the country will be limited.

Below are key limitations that may impact on the ability of ICTs to advance democracy in Tanzania.

Growth in access to mobile phones has been phenomenal in Tanzania, and have impacted positively on the ability to provide social services. Monica Luwondo from the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) is of the view that her organisation would not have the intimacy it has with people if there were no mobile phone services. TAMWA normally receives distress calls from women in need of legal or media attention from all over Tanzania. It can provide advice over the phone or dispatch one of its members in the vicinity to investigate and advise on appropriate actions.

Leadership and political will: The development of ICTs in Tanzania has not registered significant achievements despite the opportunities, due to a lack of political will. There are indications that political will is growing, as demonstrated by new institutional arrangements, e.g., forming the Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology with two departments for overseeing ICTs. However there is strong concern among civil society activists as well as opposition parliamentarians that the dominant party will not promote any initiatives that might culminate in its power and influence being diluted.¹⁰⁷

Affordability: The cost of acquiring and maintaining internet connectivity is relatively high for individuals, under-funded organisations, or rural-based business enterprises. ICT interventions also require investment in human capacity, basic infrastructure, hardware, software and content generation and management. It is common to have donor funds kick-start a project, just to be followed by downscaling as local funds become unavailable. With respect to the cost of calls on the mobile networks, the increased competition in the industry and the battle to increasing to capture and retain its customers has created a downward trend of tariffs, Network operators are focused on both getting new customers and retaining existing ones through offers that in net terms has helped increase the uptake of services. Currently the networks have adopted a lock-in strategy to retain customers. There are offers for intra-network (“on net”) calls of as low as USD 1.2 per 24 hour day. While these costs are still high, it is clearly a positive development for Tanzanian consumers. Besides the growing affordability of mobiles for communication and information dissemination, community radio and public access Internet points such as telecentres – especially in rural areas - remain key to any strategy to a build broad awareness of the strategic importance of ICTs. The interface of mobiles with traditional radio and television broadcasts also increase the capacity for citizens to engage on the critical debate about their rights.

Institutional and legal framework: According to one analyst,¹⁰⁸ “there was no serious political competition under the one-party state. Now one party has polarised power and party interests are deemed supreme to national interests.” He adds, “There are no incentives for the ruling party, with an 80% majority in the legislature, to change the status quo, and the multi-party system has had little effect.” There is urgent need both to strengthen the traditional media with a view to them empowering citizens with information, as well as strengthen the capacity of Tanzanian citizens and civil society groups to occupy the political space more effectively.

That being said, changes in the institutional framework are necessary. In order to develop democracy in Tanzania it is critical that con-

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Hemed Rashid Mohamed, leader of opposition parties in the Tanzanian Parliament.
¹⁰⁸ Interviewee requested anonymity due to his position in public office.

stitutional and legal reforms provide a fertile ground for political parties to compete fairly and freely. The reforms should include a non-partisan electoral commission, repealing electoral laws that breach basic human rights and rights enshrined in the constitution; fair access to public resources including the media, and the freedom of expression and assembly.

Awareness: A low awareness among people in general and decision-makers in particular, of the potential of ICTs as a key input into development processes, is an important limiting factor. The leader of the opposition party in parliament, Hemed Rashid Mohamed, posed the question, “If one can’t understand how ICTs can help education, how possible [is it] he will be able think ICTs can be useful for democracy?” Raising citizens’ awareness of their constitutional rights as well as their rights and responsibilities vis-a-vis the media have long been neglected. It is important that these are addressed in order to negotiate the increasing power of the dominant party over citizens’ lives.¹⁰⁹

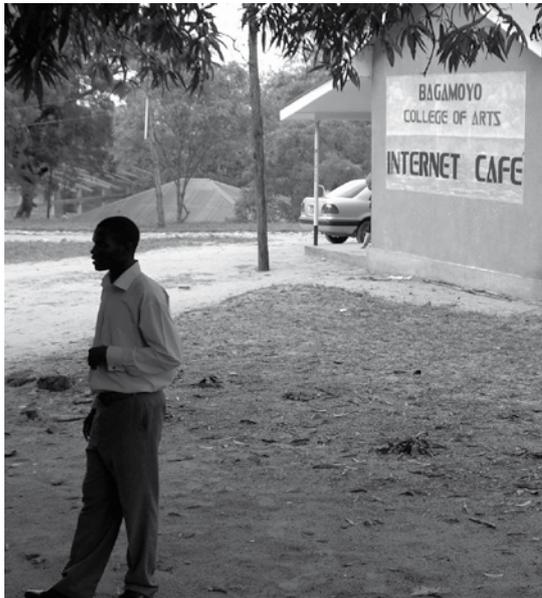
Literacy: The literacy rate has not improved significantly, in 1991/92 it stood at 75.1%, and over a 10-year period it decreased slightly to 74.8% to rise again marginally by 2.13% between 2000/01 and 2007 (HBS, 2007). While literacy is crucial in making effective use of ICT – especially email and web content - lessons from usage of mobile phones show that even those who can’t read and write can effectively use ICT in audio and video modes. A follow up on TV and radio programmes, shows that mobile phones have enabled illiterate people to participate in public debates.

Socio-cultural factors: Tanzania is a very young multi-party democracy, and with the shift from a one-party socialist state, there is more space for civil society organisations to work on political issues and get involved in the shaping and monitoring of state policies.

However, the public sphere is still very controlled by the state, and while the state recognises CSOs as partners in poverty alleviation and creates space for their involvement in policy processes, at the same time it also creates laws to control civil society and especially CSOs involved in activities considered “too political”. More than a decade back, the National Women’s Council (BAWATA) – which was working for women’s inheritance rights and the right to own land, and advocated for women’s unity regardless of their ideological affiliations – was de-registered in 1996 on the basis of being too political. Another NGO which drew attention to the gap between education policies and actual practices was banned to conduct activities related to education.

One of the key challenges for Tanzanian civil society is the legal framework within which it is operating. There is also a need to challenge arbitrary control by state actors, and to advocate for freedom of expres-

109 Interview with Rose Haji, Executive Director of MISA-Tan.



Left: The computer lab at Bagamoyo College of Arts is also used as an Internet Café. Photo: Helen Belcastro

Right: Young people receives training in computer skills at Bagamoyo College of Arts, Tanzania. Photo: Helen Belcastro

sion and association. Further, few NGOs and CSOs have the capacity to use ICTs strategically in the limited public sphere in order to engage critically with government to influence decision-making. There is an urgent need to build capacity of NGOs and CBOs operating at national and sub-national levels to reorient themselves to also becoming advocacy organisations alongside the current focus on service delivery.¹¹⁰

Another key challenge is the lack of gender equality in Tanzania, which will be difficult to remedy given the lack of systematically collected gender-disaggregated data. Access to ICTs, like to all important resources, depend on access to power. A 2005 report on the African Women and Gender Scorecard for Tanzania notes:

Although both the mainland and the Zanzibar governments have attempted to create a legal and policy environment that promotes gender equality, there remain legal relics which are discriminative against women. In the context of Zanzibar, the Spinsters, Widows and Female Divorcee Protection Act (SWFPA) of 1985 embodies clauses infringing on the basic rights of women...while in the mainland, customary laws in matters of marital rights and inheritance bear discriminatory elements. Through there are some ongoing efforts towards reviewing of laws...this questions the commitment of the state in promoting gender equality.¹¹¹

110 Haapenen, T. (ed.) (2007) *Civil Society in Tanzania*. Helsinki: KEPA

111 Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (2005) *Report on African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) – The Tanzania Report*.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has sought to investigate the possibilities for ICT to enhance democracy and empowerment. The study contains a theoretical overview and discussion of relevant areas concerning ICT for the enhancement of democracy and empowerment in general, and in relation to specific target groups. In addition the study includes a description and analysis of the implications, possibilities and challenges for advancing democracy in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, using new and hybrid information and communication technologies.

With its focus on empowerment the analysis and recommendations are slanted towards mechanisms and processes geared towards strengthening – and empowering - the citizenry and civil society using a rights perspective and the perspective of people living in poverty. The theoretical overview underscores the importance of public debate and deliberation on political choices in a viable public sphere – that is, an active and critical public domain - for the full realisation of a democratic culture. It is especially important to cultivate the capacity for public deliberation among a cross-section of civil society actors in order to nurture an open dialogic space in which social groups with divergent interests can have a voice and opportunity to hold government – the public service - accountable to its mandate.

Governments should cultivate and embrace a culture of openness and transparency at the different levels of operation – national, regional and local – rather than being threatened by dissent and critical debate. ICTs for e-government and e-governance provide possibilities for more efficient administration and better targeted service delivery as well as government engagement with citizens and civil society. A key component of fostering transparency and accountability is by facilitating access to public information – and being open to scrutiny by citizens and social change advocates in particular. These tasks fall within the scope of “supply” side actions that governments should take to advance democratic practice.

However the evidence suggest that - over the long term - democracy is best advanced by simultaneously developing a “demand” from civil society for adherence to democratic practice and culture. It is therefore crucial to

ICTs are more than simply a tool. New communication technologies change the way in which people work and interact. They change the notion of business, trade, civil society, the media; they enable direct democracy and non-traditional forms of advocacy and engagement between citizens and the state.

support initiatives that – from an empowerment perspective – build the capacity of citizens to take a critical stance within the political space.

The theoretical review further points to the increasing potential of new and hybrid ICTs for advancing democracy. The combination of traditional and new ICTs can help bring about an inclusive public sphere where all citizens can participate equally in critical debate – without fear of repercussion - using a multitude of communication platforms. Most importantly, the new technologies allow civil society organisations, activists and ordinary citizens to circumvent geographical, financial, social and cultural barriers to voice and erode bottlenecks and monopoly control – including government control - over information and communication channels.

In turn, the three country studies indicate that while access remains a challenge, it has increased sufficiently to render ICTs - used with caution and consideration of local contexts - one of the most powerful tools to promote democracy. While access to mobiles are already high, internet will become more available in the region - also with the mobile as the major communication platform - with several fibre-optic cable project already underway and planned to land in the next two years.

Furthermore, the country studies reveal that – with the exception of Kenya - civil society structures are largely silent on critical policy and governments' debate and track record of stifling the emergence of a democratic society. The study illustrate that civil society in Uganda and Tanzania lack sufficient awareness of processes for participation in a democratic society, as well as knowledge, access and capacity for strategic use of ICTs and of their constitutional rights. Finally, and importantly, the field surveys in the three countries indicate that in spite of progress, stakeholders in general have low confidence in governments' will to consistently move towards greater democracy.

In this context, it is therefore imperative – a priority – that initiatives to advance democracy on the region and specifically in the three countries target both civil society and parliaments in their roles as representatives of citizens to stimulate the demand for democracy.

APC recommends development actors, including bilateral donors, to establish the capacity adopt an approach in ICT that is rooted in strategic communications and information and in the promotion of democracy and empowerment. ICTs are more than simply a tool. New communication technologies change the way in which people work and interact. They change the notion of business, trade, civil society, the media; they enable direct democracy and non-traditional forms of advocacy and engagement between citizens and the state.

APC suggests that the priority areas for any intervention should be focussed on building the capacity of both non-state and state actors to engage critically with the prevailing national and local level political and social-cultural practices. Naturally, building the capacity of all state actors is important, still APC would advice that support directed at *non-state actors and parliaments* will make the most viable sustainable contribution to strengthening democratic culture.

Strengthening demand for public participation, accountability and transparency has the potential to contribute to democratic practice over the longer term, while isolated efforts aimed at building the state's capacity risk being interrupted by changes in government and internal political processes. This does not decrease the importance of interventions targeting government for sustainable democratic development.

Three priority areas emerge:

- Raising awareness and building understanding of (i) the potential of ICTs, particularly in the context of the vast numbers of people who are now able to connect in some way through mobile phones; (ii) democratic principles and practice; and (iii) the potential of ICTs for advancing democracy.
- Institutional strengthening of CSOs, NGOs and media practitioners to engage critically on issues of democracy, combined with institutional strengthening of state actors to enhance transparency and good governance.
- Strengthening community voice in public debate and decision-making and in maintaining transparency and accountability by government.

These strategic interventions above are primarily targeted at civil society actors. It remains important, however, for Sida to investigate modalities for impacting positively on the political and regulatory framework within which civil society actors operate. Thus, it is also important to consider how to support initiatives that build stronger and politically diverse parliaments that can exercise oversight and positively impact on their constituencies' capacity for informed participation in decision-making on issues that impact on their quality of life, and to have affordable access to the communication platforms and tools to do so.

The above three priorities are among seven recommendations which APC believes could frame development interventions over the next five to ten years. These are outlined in the table below, along with strategic interventions, suggested activities and target stakeholder groups.

The remaining four recommendations do not stand completely isolated from the project of advancing democracy in the study countries. Stakeholders in the three countries also highlighted the importance of creating a policy and regulatory environment that will impact positively on both the ICT infrastructure and the social and political climate - including freedom of information and expression - for a more democratic society to evolve. This requires that government is included in development interventions and initiatives in order to enhance understanding of, advance and consolidate, democracy through state interventions.

For development partners, the challenge is to explore how to integrate elements that advance democracy and strategic communications using new and hybrid ICTs across all sectors of development support – in order to strategically harness ICTs for democracy.

Recommendations	Strategic Intervention and Rationale	Activities to facilitate access to and use of ICTs and information for democracy	Stakeholders to target
Raise awareness of the potential of ICTs to enhance democracy	<p>People need a practical understanding and appreciation of the opportunities that ICTs present.</p> <p>Ground awareness-raising of the potential of ICTs in building understanding of the notion of democracy, public participation, transparency and accountability</p>	<p>Multi-stakeholder policy dialogue</p> <p>Workshops/consultations on how strategic communications and the use of ICTs can enhance democracy</p> <p>Produce a short booklet, with examples, of potential application of ICTs in enhancing democracy</p> <p>ICT-enabled civic education initiatives</p>	<p>Political parties</p> <p>Civil society organisations involved in promoting democracy</p> <p>ICT service providers/trainers</p> <p>ICT regulators</p> <p>Government, particularly local government</p> <p>Media actors</p>
	Promote understanding and appreciation of the notion of democracy within society	<p>Build basic understanding of democratic practices and culture among citizens through civic education/public awareness initiatives</p> <p>Support voter education as well as human rights education initiatives</p> <p>Build awareness of the key characteristics of democratic processes in specific national and local contexts</p>	<p>State actors</p> <p>Civil society organisations</p> <p>Parliamentarians</p> <p>Media actors</p>
	Stimulate demand for ICTs through appropriate/relevant content	<p>Support initiatives to build relevant content development with a view to building interest in ICTs</p> <p>Explore in particular the potential of mobile telephony, voice recognition systems, etc.</p> <p>Develop information literacy and ICT literacy training initiatives to build access to and effective use of ICTs</p>	<p>Civil society</p> <p>Development partners</p> <p>Media</p>
Strengthen and build leadership and the capacity of institutions responsible for advancing and supporting democracy	Establish effective leadership across the relevant sectors and cultivate good governance and transparency within state institutions and political parties	Build political capacity for providing oversight and policy-making and legislation to promote good governance and democratisation, with a focus on the inclusion of marginalised communities	<p>Politicians</p> <p>Parliamentarians</p> <p>Ministries</p> <p>Government departments</p>

Recommendations	Strategic Intervention and Rationale	Activities to facilitate access to and use of ICTs and information for democracy	Stakeholders to target
	<p>Institutional strengthening</p>	<p>Build capacity of institutions responsible for advancing democracy, and monitoring transparency and accountability. This has to take place at three levels: general institutional support advocacy skills development strategic communication and ICT capacity Build on existing citizen journalism initiatives to commission new content on rights and democracy issues Facilitate civil society participants' and organisations' capacity for critical engagement about their own political environments (e.g., through initiatives like Mzalendo1 in Kenya) Strengthen parliaments' capacity for oversight of ICT policy and legislation, with a view to representing their constituencies' needs Build capacity of parliaments and an independent judiciary so they uphold democratic ideals and practices through, for example, the use of best practice knowledge-sharing sites</p>	<p>Research organisations Educational institutions Parliament and parliamentary associations Media Consumer rights groups Stakeholder interest groups People with disabilities Civil society organisations working in human rights, gender equality and monitoring of governance, democracy and human rights</p>
	<p>Develop capacity in the use of ICTs for democracy, with particular emphasis on solutions that involve mobile phones, and integration of mobile telephony and the internet</p>	<p>Build a complement of ICT specialists – people with competence across the entire breadth of ICT applications and services</p>	<p>Civil society Private sector Training and education institutions</p>
	<p>Build CSOs' and NGOs' capacity for social change activism and advocacy</p>	<p>Support ICT training initiatives targeted at civil society actors. These should focus on specific skills and outputs such as, for example, the use of social networking sites for social justice and development activism, and building advocacy campaigns on a common issue</p>	<p>Civil society Development partners</p>

Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommendations	Strategic Intervention and Rationale	Activities to facilitate access to and use of ICTs and information for democracy	Stakeholders to target
	Strengthen political diversity and deliberation	<p>Build awareness of the potential and relevance of ICTs for democracy among political parties</p> <p>Support use of ICTs by all legitimate political parties</p> <p>Stimulate demand for integrating ICTs into electoral processes</p> <p>Promote awareness and capacity within electoral commissions to make more effective use of ICTs in civic education and management of elections</p>	<p>Political parties</p> <p>Electoral commissions</p> <p>Media</p>
Strengthen community and citizen voice	Strengthen voices of marginalised groups and communities in public debate	<p>Link human rights and democracy activists with technologies that allow them to add their voices to public debate, such as, for example, SMS interface with blogs and SMS interface with live radio and television debate</p> <p>Explore strategic partnerships with media development organisations and funds to build/deepen coverage and dissemination of human rights and democracy content</p> <p>Build investigative journalism skills to cover human rights and democracy issues, with a focus on the development needs of marginalised groups/communities</p>	<p>Civil society</p> <p>Development partners</p> <p>Community and local media</p> <p>Community organisations</p>
	Increase public participation in decision-making	<p>Use ICTs to facilitate participatory budgeting</p> <p>Develop tools and platforms to facilitate such participation</p> <p>Support civil society networks and public campaigns for access to public information</p>	<p>Policy-makers</p> <p>Civil society</p> <p>Communities</p>
	Increase transparency and reduce corruption	Support initiatives that enable citizens to report transgressions as they interact with the public sector	<p>Civil society</p> <p>Local communities</p>

Recommendations	Strategic Intervention and Rationale	Activities to facilitate access to and use of ICTs and information for democracy	Stakeholders to target
<p>Ensure an enabling policy and regulatory environment</p>	<p>Improve policy formulation through multi-stakeholder policy dialogue that addresses the use of ICTs for democracy and increasing affordable access</p> <p>Review policy and strategy that relate to (i) promoting democracy, (ii) information and communications and (iii) ICT infrastructure development and market regulation</p> <p>Affordable access to ICTs will have a multiplier effect in the sense that as more people are able to communicate and receive information and ideas, the better they will be able to hold government to account and to participate in crucial democratic processes such as elections.</p> <p>Strengthen freedom of information and expression, policy and regulation, and enforcement</p>	<p>National/regional policy dialogues on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> policies that impact on access freedom of information/information rights public participation, transparency, accountability <p>Activities aimed at strengthening ICT regulators' capacity so that they can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure a competitive environment that stimulates infrastructure development effectively regulate pricing and tariffs including interconnection costs Policy advocacy to reduce/remove taxes and tariffs on ICT equipment Advocacy campaigns that create awareness of the potential of ICTs and that lower costs, for example, a campaign to lower the cost of an SMS for pre-paid users to 1 US cent per SMS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications/telecommunication regulators Public policy advocacy NGOs Multi-stakeholder advocacy networks Community organisations Journalists Bloggers/citizen journalists Consumer organisations
<p>Ensure multi-directional integration/ mainstreaming of ICTs for democracy into democracy efforts, and "democracy" into ICT initiatives</p>	<p>Integrate ICTs and democracy into initiatives supported by Sida, bearing in mind that conditionality around adherence to human rights and promotion of democracy needs to be handled with care</p> <p>Integrate ICTs for democracy explicitly into all e-governance initiatives</p> <p>Integrate ICTs for democracy into sector support (agriculture, education, etc.)</p>	<p>ICTs to be made part of national education curriculum, as people will only understand the potential of ICTs for democracy if they understand ICTs and what they can do</p> <p>Government must be a key actor in initiatives such as e-school and e-education efforts. Multiple actors can be involved in building ICT capacity, not just the state.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sida beneficiaries Policy-makers National and local government Business sectors Schools and universities

Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommendations	Strategic Intervention and Rationale	Activities to facilitate access to and use of ICTs and information for democracy	Stakeholders to target
Promote access to information and content development	Increase access to public information	Support campaigns advocating the right to access public information Establish and/or support rural information centres (can be located in existing facilities, e.g., telecentres or libraries) Mainstream access to public information regarding local government development planning	Policy-makers Local government Local communities Citizens ICT policy-making forums such as the regional Internet Governance Forum in East Africa
	Promote development of appropriate content	Develop/support initiatives that build understanding of local content needs Develop interventions that support local participation in building local content (e.g., citizen journalism initiatives to monitor rights violations and positive campaigns) Support the implementation of and use of interactive voice response (IVR) technologies for non-literate citizens to access relevant content by navigating their way through a menu of audio recordings, accessed via a phone call (such as the Freedom Phone application)	Civil society Development partners
Promote evaluation and learning and develop methodologies for a "strategic communications" approach to ICTs for democracy	A primary challenge is to ensure that ICT for democracy initiatives are not "technocentric"; they have to be rooted in a "strategic communications approach". Newer technologies, and combination of ICTs, present new opportunities, and learning is essential.	Develop a simple monitoring framework to assess progress in the use of ICTs to support democracy (linked to assessment of broader progress in strengthening rights and democracy) Develop simple planning tools that integrate a strategic communications and information approach to ICT for democracy projects	Development practitioners Sida staff Implementing agencies Civil society organisations, etc.

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Appendix 1:

Lists of Respondents in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya

Uganda

Name	Position/Organisation
Johnson Nkuuhe	Uganda MDG (Millennium Development Goals) Advisor, UNDP
Christine Johansson	Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of Sweden/Sida
Sempayi John Nakedde	National Programme Officer – Trade, Private Sector & Rural Development, Embassy of Sweden/Sida
Ednah Karagami	Executive Director, Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI)
Goretti Amuriat	Programme Manager, Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)
Elisha Washukira	Coordinator, I-Network
Jasper Tumuhimbise	National Coordinator, Uganda Anti-Corruption Coalition
Vincent Waiswa Baguire	Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)
Davis Weddi	Website Editor, New Vision
Ali Ndiwalana	End-User Support Manager, Makerere University
Hon. Ekanya Geoffrey	Member of Parliament, Forum for Democratic Change
James Lunghabo Wire	Managing Director, Linux Solutions
Johan Hellstrom	Director, UPGRAID

Kenya

Name	Position/Organisation
Helena Bjuremalm	Regional Advisor: Democracy and Human Rights, Embassy of Sweden
Tom Kagwe	Senior Programme Officer, Kenya Human Rights Commission
Onyango Oloo	Social activist
Peter Aluvale	Senior Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communication
Al Kags	Programme Officer, Kenya ICT Board
James Nguo	Regional Director, Arid Lands Information Network
Brian Longwe	Chairperson, Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet)
Njonjo Mue	Principal Human Rights Officer, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
Benson Wambugu	Journalist, Business Daily
Felgona Otieno	Programme Manager, Communications & Advocacy, Transparency International-Kenya
Jane Wanjiku	Junior Programme Officer, Communications Department, TI-Kenya
Stella Chege	Kenya Programme Manager, Fahamu
Edith Adera	Senior Programme Specialist, International Development and Research Centre
Alex Twinomugisho	Africa Director, Global e-Schools and Community Initiative
Alice Munyua	Coordinator, KICTANet, and Director, Communications Commission of Kenya
Christopher Wambua	Assistant Public Relations Manager, Communications Commission of Kenya

Tanzania

Name	Position/Organisation
Leonard Elias	Legal Officer, Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)
Omar Mzee	ICT Programme Officer, Sida, Embassy of Sweden
Ulrika Lång	Human Rights Programme Officer, Sida, Embassy of Sweden
Stephan Kisambo	IT Officer, HakiElimu
Robert Mihayo	Manager – Information Access, HakiElimu
Gervas Zomba	Policy Analyst, HakiElimu
Monica Luwondo	Journalist, Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA)
Mr. Fungaupopo	Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority

Name	Position/Organisation
Rose Haji	Executive Director, Media Institute of Southern Africa-Tanzania (MISA-Tan)
Daniel P. Loya	Executive Director, Tanzania Centre for Democracy
Lawrence Malawa	Finance Officer, Tanzania Centre for Democracy
Marjan Besuijen	Executive Fund Manager, Tanzania Media Fund
John Tendwa	Registrar, Registrar of Political Parties
Hamad Rashid Mohammed	Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament, Opposition Political Parties
Priscus Kiwango	Director, Department of Management Information System
Michael Moshiro	Senior Systems Analyst, President's Office – Public Service Management
Prof. Beda Mutaghywa	Managing Director, University Computing Centre
Zephania Mposo	Campaign Coordinator for a Member of Parliament of Njombe
Dr. Suma Kaare	Managing Director, Impact and Development Management Consultancy
Magreth Nzuki	Manager – Information and Documentation, Economic and Social Research Foundation
Abdallah Hassan	Senior Information Officer, Economic and Social Research Foundation
Dr. Thomas Didimu Kashililah	Chief Parliament Clerk and Parliamentary Consultant, Parliament of Tanzania

Appendix 2:

Interviews with Stakeholders in Sweden

The following section offers a summary of interviews with Sida staff and other stakeholders in Sweden. The issue discussed is stated in italics, followed by the responses.

Practices and institutions in East Africa are most important in promoting democracy, rights and empowerment.

Responses ranged from general (e.g., gender equality, transparency, respect for human rights and building a culture of democracy) to a focus on specific development interventions, such as education, poverty alleviation, to the role of specific institutions like the media and “democracy” watchdogs from civil society. Two respondents emphasised the importance of public financial management (PFM) systems. However, they both acknowledged that PFM is not sufficient in itself. One respondent felt that civic education would have the most sustainable impact on promoting democracy and empowerment.

It was interesting to note that respondents with extensive experience in developing countries were much less ambitious in their expectations. Their approach to democracy was relative, and they emphasised changes that would bring about “some” positive change rather than achieve change on a grand scale.

One respondent summarised what many others implied, and that is that multiple interventions, from a range of actors, are required. He felt that civil society is central to facilitating this process, and that in fact, it is such a process that would constitute a “civil society”.

This view was shared by civil society respondents. One of these, from an organisation that works primarily in contexts where states are more concerned with repression than enabling development, pointed out that working with civil society is the most important means of promoting empowerment and democracy.

Primary obstacles to the promotion of democracy in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Respondents were very diplomatic in how they expressed this, but clearly most felt that the lack of strong, accountable governance was the primary obstacle.

Understanding of using ICTs for enhancing empowerment and democracy.

Almost all respondents felt somewhat uncertain about what ICTs mean. Some see it as “internet”. Others use a definition so inclusive that it is almost meaningless (including radio, TV, telephones, etc., etc.) Nevertheless, most respondents felt that the statement resonates positively. Some felt that ICTs were the key, in contemporary contexts, to promoting democracy and empowerment. A respondent who works within the department of foreign affairs said that he felt that the internet and mobile telephony has “changed the concept of civil society” and that it is now possible for voices from communities and ordinary citizens to be heard. He felt that ICTs are not only a means to enhance democracy and empowerment, but that they are indispensable.

Some respondents were less certain and felt that ICTs were secondary, and just a tool for strengthening more fundamental processes such as enhancing education, civil education, and improved information management.

One respondent pointed out that the internet could potentially degrade the quality of the media as media outlets who already lack capacity tend to “borrow” and “recycle” material found on the net, rather than generate original content.

Some respondents felt uncertain about how to respond and some even admitted that they were not quite sure what was meant by the notion.

Two respondents, including one who has a very long track record in ICT for development, felt that what Sida should be most concerned with is ICT for development, and that ICT for democracy will form part of any coherent use of ICT for development.

Information and communications processes that have the most potential to enhance democracy.

Most respondents felt that access to public information is a basic building block for improving governance and that ICTs are extremely powerful in improving such access. The potential for widening such access through the use of mobile telephony was mentioned by all respondents, but most did not quite know how this could be realised.

Some respondents talked of the importance of citizen-to-state communication, but not many, not because they do not think it is important – they clearly do – but perhaps because they could not quite visualise how this can be improved in developing countries.

The role of the media was emphasised repeatedly, from print to community to online and commercial media.

The role of civil society in monitoring, advocacy and information dissemination was considered important by most.

One respondent felt that information and communication processes are essential in all development work and that there is a consistent lack of strategic communications planning within Sida, both internally as well as in Sida's work in the field. She felt that Sida staff lacked the capacity needed to integrate strategic communications into their work systematically and also that most of Sida's partners need more capacity in this area.

Ways in which ICTs are already being used to enhance empowerment and/or democracy.

About 50% of respondents felt they were making some use. The most extensive range of examples came from civil society organisations focused on promoting human rights in contexts with limited freedom of expression. All respondents expressed an interest using ICTs, particularly mobile telephony, more extensively. Most did not know quite where to start.

Examples in Africa or any other developing context of innovative uses of ICTs to advance democracy.

Most of the examples mentioned were "indirect" in that people felt they might have an impact, but were not sure if the use was really primarily to "enhance democracy".

Someone who had worked extensively in the field had experience of election monitoring and civic education. Another specific example was a Sida project that provided women parliamentarians with computers and internet access and training with a view to enabling them to communicate more effectively with their constituencies.

Other examples included capacity development support for the media and culture sector.

The importance of considering gender in initiatives to promote democracy, and use ICTs for democracy.

Most respondents felt that gender is a consideration. Some felt that women should be prioritised by efforts to promote democracy and empowerment. One person said that the most effective way of having a community's concerns communicated to government (central or local or regional) is through giving the women the opportunity to speak.

Many people felt that lack of gender equality undermines other efforts to enhance democracy. Gender equality appeared to be viewed as a kind of litmus test for democracy.

Ways in which in-country actors can use ICTs more effectively to support empowerment and democracy.

Everyone felt that the potential was great. Examples ranged from government making use of public financial management and public procurement to enhance transparency to using mobile phones in public health education.

Most people felt that civil society can make more effective use of ICTs, in spite of barriers created by cost and lack of sufficient access.

The risks of using ICTs for democracy.

The primary risks noted by those respondents who felt there was a risk were increased surveillance and less privacy. Other risks mentioned were: information overload; false information or misuse of information; recycling of information at the expense of generating original content.

On whether Sida should direct its resources, capacity and inputs in order to advance the use of ICTs for democracy in African countries.

Respondents from within Sida found this question difficult to respond to because of a degree of uncertainty resulting from the recent restructuring. What also appeared to make it hard to respond is the fact that most of Sida's support is channelled through government, and it was not clear how to introduce ICTs for democracy into this process.

However, some concrete suggestions were made:

- Integrate a strategic communications (which includes the use of ICTs) dimension, which should include careful stakeholder analysis into all Sida planning, projects, and the framework for dialogue with national governments on budget support.
- Integrate human rights in budget-support discussion with governments.
- Commission an ICT audit of countries that Sida is engaging with.
- Increase emphasis on transparency and public participation and accountability.

Areas in which support should be focused:

- Human rights (defending, awareness, promotion etc.)
- Media development and diversity
- Civic education
- Use of ICT in education, health and other sector programmes
- Institutional capacity development, particularly for civil society organisations
- Support for institutions that can promote and defend democracy, such as parliaments, parliamentary networks and capacity development of parliaments.

Institutional arrangements:

To effectively address ICTs for democracy in an integrated manner, Sida will need to ensure that it allocates sufficient human capacity to the task. Several Sida partners will be able to play a supportive role, e.g., the Swedish Helsinki Committee, with expertise in human rights, citizen journalism, etc., and Spider, with expertise in ICTs. However, unless Sida sufficiently resources this important area in-house, the enormous potential of information and communications and ICTs to strengthen democracy will not be realised.

List of people interviewed by Anriette Esterhuysen during January 2009	
Afzal Sher	Director, Spider (Swedish Program for Information and Communication Technology in Developing Regions)
Anders Emanuel	Head, Democracy and Public Administration Team, Department for Empowerment, Sida
Angelica Broman	Programme Officer, Civil Society Team, Department for Development Partnerships, Sida
Anneka Knutsson	Director, Department for Human Development, Sida
Astrid Dufborg	Lead Specialist, Knowledge, ICT and Education Team, Department for Human Development, Sida
Christina Dahlman	Media Specialist, Democracy, Human Rights and Political Participation Team, Department for Empowerment, Sida
David Wiking	Head of Knowledge ITC and Education Team, Department for Human Development, Sida
Erik Esbjörnson	Swedish Helsinki Committee, Program Coordinator Eastern Europe
Gunilla Cederqvist	Communication Specialist, Department for Communication, Sida
Hans Persson	Senior Programme Officer for Knowledge, ICT and Education Country Team Tanzania, Department for Long-Term Cooperation Countries, Sida
Helen Belcastro	Policy Specialist, Knowledge, ITC and Education Team, Department for Human Development, Sida
James Donovan	Advisor on Public Financial Management, Democracy and Public Administration Team, Department for Empowerment, Sida
Karoline Beronius	Project Coordinator, Spider
Kristin Olson	Advisor on Communication and Media for Development, Department for Methodologies and Effectiveness, Sida
Lennart Jemt	Country Strategist, Kenya Team, Department for Long-Term Cooperation Countries, Sida
Lina Lindblom	Policy Specialist, Knowledge, ICT and Education Team, Department for Human Development, Sida
Lisa Fredriksson	Head of Human Rights and Political Participation Team, Department for Empowerment, Sida
Lotta Rydström	Project Coordinator, Spider
Magnus Walan	Politics and opinion, Diakonia

Natasha Jevtic Esbjörnson	Swedish Helsinki Committee, Head of Communications
Paula Uimonen	CT Researcher and consultant
Penny Davies	Opinion and lobbying, Diakonia
Per-Einar Tröften	Policy Specialist, Knowledge, ICT and Education Team, Department for Human Development, Sida
Pia Hallonsten	Policy Specialist, Human Rights and Political Participation Team, Department for Empowerment, Sida
Tomas Brundin	Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy, Swedish Foreign Ministry
Ulf Källstig	Head of Global Programmes, Department for Development Partnerships, Sida

NOTE: Most of these people were interviewed, while some shared their insights more informally during shorter discussions with the researcher.

Appendix 3:

Terms of reference

Consultancy Services for Study of Effects and Possibilities of ICT for Enhancement of Democracy with a Focus on Empowerment

Background

Sida supports the integration and strategic use of information and communication technology, ICT, in developing countries in order to achieve development goals. The objective include promotion and strengthening of good governance and ICT as tools for empowerment (of individuals and civil society), including a focus the free flow and access to information. The over all objective of Swedish development cooperation it to help create conditions that enable the poor to improve their lives. Poverty entails, in addition to economic poverty and the lack of physical resources, also lack of information, possibilities and power.

Sida's policy is outlined in the document "Strategy and Action Plan for ICT in Development Cooperation" and "Digital Empowerment – A strategy for ICT för Development for DESO", (see www.Sida.se).

Context

Information and communication technology (ICT) entails both immense possibilities and great challenges. ICT in this study mainly denote the internet and mobile phones but may include hybrid solutions, such as the combined use of conventional media such as newspapers, radio, TV and the new ICTs. Globally, huge investments are made in ICT as an undisputed and essential component of almost all activities – state and corporate. It is also an integral part of international development cooperation, with the ultimate goal of poverty reduction.

Poverty includes, in addition to economic poverty and lack of physical resources, also lack of information, possibilities and power. ICT does not differ from other global public goods, where access is determined by resources, intent and power.

However, the rapid spread of ICT – particularly the internet and mobile telephony – has created tremendous opportunities in making information available instantly and at low cost. It can be used to seek, receive, create and impart information and ideas by anyone, at any time and for any purpose. This makes it possible for users to bypass traditional and official channels of information and communication. It is also a question of everyone's right to freedom of expression and to seek, receive and impart information. In this respect, ICT holds great potential to increase citizen's participation in decision making processes. Consequently, ICT becomes important tools in democratic development and rights based development cooperation.

Though no technology is inherently good or bad, it is probable that the use of any technology will reflect the ideology of a society's dominant power structures, as well as contribute to the very shaping of that society. In sustainable economic and social development ICT is a powerful tool for empowerment, but as far as democracy is concerned it poses both threats and opportunities.

The use of new technologies thus may lead to increased participation in democracy at all levels of society. ICT is used by individual citizens and social movements and is a prerequisite for more efficient and global horizontal networking and enhances civil society's possibility to mould opinion, mobilise politically and to debate and protest locally, and globally.

Applications and uses such as blogs, facebook and online communities create new modes of social interaction and groups of citizen journalists. In addition, the users create and shapes new applications and functions as well as influence and determine the development of new technology. This is a unique aspect of the new ICTs.

The rapid and wide spread of affordable mobile telephony in developing countries points to the role of mobile phones as a digital bridge and a new mass medium. The innovative use of mobile phones for film and photo documentation of, for example, human rights violations and of election processes (sousveillance) and the use of SMS for networking and mobilisation, are great examples of the use of ICT for empowerment.

In government, ICT may increase accountability, efficiency and transparency, and counter corruption through more efficient administration and increased flows of information and communication. This may strengthen good governance, improved interaction and communication between government and citizens. However, the increased possibility for governments to control and monitor may also lead to less freedom for individuals, organisations, interest- and political groups.

Paradoxically, ICTs may also entail diminished possibilities for the nation states to independently lead and control development of society due to economic, political and cultural globalization. The increased speed and quantities of information can lead to fragmentation of discourse and debate as well as increase demand for skills of literacy and critical reading.

There is also a risk of ICT, like all media, be used solely for propaganda and desinformation.

The focus of this study consequently, is on the unique aspects of ICT that in many ways has, and continue to revolutionize information and communication and modes of interaction globally.

Objectives

The aim of this study is to provide Sida and other stakeholders in Swedish development cooperation with comprehensive information of ICT for the enhancement of democracy, democratic processes with a focus on empowerment in relation to relevant target groups, and specifically

- to provide Sida, as well as stakeholders in the developing countries, with information and assessment of ICT for the enhancement of democratic processes with a focus on empowerment, both situation analysis and estimated future potential
- for the planning of ICT related development activities and support
- to propose possible future areas of Swedish ICT for democracy support.

Scope of the services

The Consultant shall conduct a study on the possibilities and effects of ICT for the enhancement of Democracy with a focus on empowerment. The survey shall include:

1. an overview and analysis of relevant areas concerning ICT for enhancement of democracy and empowerment in general and in relation to the relevant target groups below (theoretical discussion)
2. a description and analysis of the implications, possibilities and challenges of ICT in democracy in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.
3. an analysis of the factors of major interest for the promotion of use of ICT for democracy including *major target groups* for Swedish development cooperation;
 - individual citizens
 - civil society including interestgroups, minority-religious- and indigenous groups,
 - media
 - And to a lesser extent also include:
 - political parties, parliament, incl political opposition
 - government; local, regional, central

All analyses must use *a rights based approach as well as the perspective of the poor.*

The study shall include information on forecasted developments in the near term, where applicable. The study should also include analysis of existing and lacking prerequisites for the use of ICT for the enhancement of democracy. It should address the following issues:

- Which are the main opportunities to increase efficiency and speed of the use of ICT for the enhancement of democratic processes?
(Part 1)

- The analysis should include a discussion and problematization of possible risks of supporting ICT for strengthening of democracy. (Part 1)
- Which type of interventions would be most strategic for the enhancement of democracy and empowerment via the use of ICTs? (Part 1 and 2)
- An overview of the existing situation and aspects regarding ICT for democracy in the selected countries (Part 2)
- Which major trends and possible initiatives can be observed in the selected countries regarding the use of ICT in democracy? (Part 2)
- Which are the main obstacles for increased use of ICT for democracy and empowerment? (Part 2)

Methodology

Collection of data should be done from a desk study using theoretical (research, reports etc) sources available internationally and from a field visit. The field visit is estimated to take three weeks and should be conducted in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. In addition the study will include one visit to Sweden for interviews with relevant staff at Sida, see list, in connection with presentation of inception report, plus one visit to Sweden for a presentation of the results of the study for a selected group as well as an presentation in the form of an open workshop seminar hosted by Spider.

The regional survey shall be made in close cooperation with stakeholders in the country where the study takes place. A local contractor shall be subcontracted. Interviews may be conducted with relevant staff at the Swedish embassies,

Reporting

Written reports

The following reports will be produced in English by the consultant, and be delivered to Sida in electronic format:

1. An inception report, mid way, no later than 2008-08-31
2. A draft version of the ICT Study no later than 2008-10-31
3. A final version of the ICT Stud, no later than 2008-12-20

The ICT Study should contain approximately 40-60 pages.

The final version will be delivered to Sida no later than 2008-12-20.

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Sida works according to directives of the Swedish Parliament and Government to reduce poverty in the world, a task that requires cooperation and persistence. Through development cooperation, Sweden assists countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Each country is responsible for its own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge, skills and expertise. This increases the world's prosperity.

ICTs for Democracy

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