Prospects and challenges facing women's use and access to ICT

In Swaziland.

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Research Interests

- Gaining accessibility to the Internet and how various social f(actors) impact the relationship women have with technology in Swaziland

Outline

- Research scope/aims
- Background
- Methods used
- Results from the research

Research Scope/Aims

✳ Scope:

1. Women in Swaziland identified as major economic players.

2. ICT hailed as Africa's hope towards sustainable development

3. To what level do economically empowered women, use ICT? Challenges? Prospects?

Research Scope/aims

- Aims:

1. What forms of access exist for the connected?

2. Are national ICT policies friendly to all?

3. How do the forms of access and policies affect usability/participation?

Methods

- My involvement in ICT development through training programs was my point of orientation
- Previous research on ICT and Africa, demonstrate women use as low
- Quantitative research through questionnaire
- Qualitative research drawn from sample survey
- Case study material as it relates to ICT concerns

Background - Swaziland

- An absolute monarch with King Mswati III – executive power

- Has around 1.2 million inhabitants

- Literacy in Swaziland rated at around 82%

- Swaziland has tenaciously held onto its traditions and Swazi culture despite the infiltration of western ideals and this is all the more explicit in its governance system

- Women's place in society – equality for women does not extend to culture and Swazi traditions.

Results from the survey

- ISPs claim that majority of their subscribers are foreign nationals
- Affordability huge hurdle
- Civil status impacts accessibility (e.g marital)
- Class
- Gender
- Appropriating the technology into their lives - (local content, local language)
- Governance of the technology affects participation

Summary of Experiences as narrated by the women who took part in the survey.

- **Single women usage**
- Want to "*live up to what is societially normal and acceptable*".
- Technical competence is alright if it is secretarial or personal assistant, oriented

Single parent use (women)

- ICT will not feed me, or my family

- Place sustenance of family over gaining entry into the online community

Married women;

- Have the advantage of the technology existing in their home
- However they do not own the resources and have to often seek permission from their husbands to use the computers
- The result is disinterest on the part of the women or as informed by one of my interviewees; *"the service is very expensive let my husband and children use it."*

Summary

- Education, or the presence of technology does not grant women access to ICT

- Challenges to this problem are already occurring but slowly

- Development groups should take into consideration the different social f(actors) that may impact use of ICT for women.

Thank you for your attention