



SPIDER STORIES 2013–2014



Stockholm
University

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Introduction

Our partners, with support from Spider, have had a chance to learn and use digital technologies, Internet and social media in their work to improve democracy, education and health. They have documented failures of social service delivery and created a space for discussions of one's rights and duties as a citizen in settings where democracy and citizen participation are still very weak. Partner organisations have provided crucial health information to pregnant women and new mothers as well as chronically ill, other marginalised populations and made medical research freely available to doctors to improve diagnosis and treatment. Technology has made education more accessible through digital technologies and open educational content that can provide educational material where books are out of date or too expensive to buy.

As 5.3 billion of the world population have access to a mobile phone and about 3.3 billion have access to low speed Internet, SMS and social media can no longer be considered to be the privilege of the few. These technologies can make a huge difference in developing countries where infrastructure is poor and schools, health care or local government cannot meet the needs of citizens through traditional ways of working. Services delivered through mobile phones, such as telemedicine or eLearning, are a faster and cheaper way to provide education, healthcare and to establish a dialogue with leaders and politicians.

Our goal at Spider is to support organisations in developing countries to use the technology and solutions, which are often already there, to do their work more efficiently, reach more people and make a bigger change. Spider supports development organisations to learn how to reach out through digital technologies that a majority of people on earth are already using. It is also important to share what we learn from our projects so that others can build on solid knowledge of what works and what does not. This is why Spider has organised project partner organisations into networks, so that organisations can share their experience and help each other. Spider also supports research on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in development to ensure that knowledge is systematically collected and shared to a wide audience.

Adopting new ways of working, whether it is with digital technologies or not, requires investment of both time and money and is often a process of trial and error. With 10 years of experience in using ICT for Development Spider

supports our partners not only financially but also to adjust the solutions and approaches to their unique settings and needs. As the stories in this volume will tell, the process is not always simple, but rewarding.

An overwhelming majority of the results of development initiatives remain hidden in bureaucratic reports and anonymous statistics. These documents tell us a lot, but far from everything. This volume contains stories from our partners directly from the field. We hope that it can give you an idea of how complex and rewarding development work can be. How things that are sometimes taken for granted in some contexts, can be life-changing opportunities in other.

We would like to thank all of our partners for contributing and welcome you to join us on our continued journey to make the world a little better through ICT!

Director Kerstin Borglin and the Spider team



Cambodia ICT4 Development Network

“Two heads are better than one” is a saying that rings true in many contexts. Allowing organisations to collaborate, share experiences and create a united front provides strength that can reach further than the individual members. Since its establishment in 2012, the ICT4D Cambodia Network has created a platform for civil society organisations to meet and adopt new ways of using technology to improve their results. The National ICT4D Workshops have also become a venue where Civil Society Organisations and government can meet to discuss recent advances and challenges.

The network is located in Phnom Penh and consists of the Spider partners (East West Management Institute, InSTEDD, Open Institute and Women’s Media Centre) as well as other partners such as the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC).

<http://ict4dcambodia.org/>

EAST • WEST MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

East West Management Institute

Spider partner since 2012.

Projects: Promoting Transparency through Open Data and Open Development Cambodia Toolkit and Open Development Network.

Knowing the basic facts about any given situation is a prerequisite to action. Having access to correct information about the world is the first step towards action. Open Development Cambodia (ODC) is an online resource that aggregates and makes publicly available official and verified information on different forms of industrial development in Cambodia. Since its launch in 2013 ODC has provided journalists, activists and politicians with reliable information, graphs and maps.

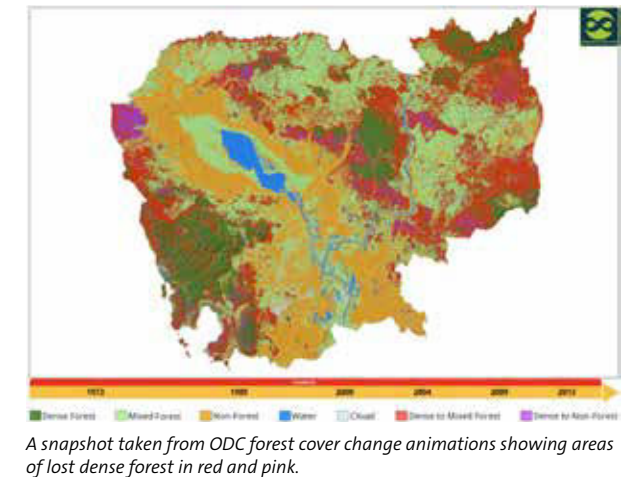
In 2014 the project focused on expanding its coverage as well as the variety of information provided about Cambodia. A regional network of Open Development sites was initiated to cover the Mekong delta and provide a holistic view of the ecology and industrial development in the region.

The project is carried out by the East West Management Institute, which has worked with the rule of law and justice in Cambodia since 2008.

<http://www.ewmi.org/>

Forest cover change maps open new frontier for Open Development Cambodia

On 11 December 2013, ODC published its six-part map series showing forest cover change, along with complementary charts, news, laws and publications. The maps, the culmination of a six-month project, are the first of their kind made by Cambodians and were produced in animated and static form, in both English and Khmer.



Mappers cover new ground

ODC's forest cover change online webpage represents a new technical tool, produced by Cambodians, to help understand environmental changes and to inform development planning. The maps illustrate the extent and rate of reduction in Cambodia's forest cover over the past 40 years. Until ODC launched the page, no attempt had been made to track changes in Cambodia's forest cover over such an extended period.

“The maps, the culmination of a six-month project, are the first of their kind made by Cambodians and were produced in animated and static form, in both English and Khmer.

A well-trodden path

The animations quickly became a popular item on the website; the page was viewed 1,991 times by the end of December, and 26.6 percent of visitors viewed the page in the Khmer language. Since the launch, the page has been visited by hundreds more people in Cambodia and presented by ODC at numerous workshops and events. Several CSO groups from around the country have also presented the page to grassroots groups and wider audiences.

ODC stands tall

Conservation groups praised ODC privately, and the Wildlife Alliance is planning to use the animations in upcoming discussions with the new Minister for Environment. ODC also received academic inquiries, including one from a PhD student at Kyoto University who requested a meeting with ODC mappers to learn more about ODC's mapping methodologies and to seek feedback from the team on his current project. Several organizations thanked ODC for the maps and described plans to use the maps as teaching or advocacy tools. A few groups requested training to understand the maps better and how to present them effectively to others.

The newly published forest cover change maps received positive responses from the media, making headlines in the *Phnom Penh Post* on the day of publication and again the following day in the *Cambodia Daily*. Highlights are included in the table below.

Publication	Date	Title
The Phnom Penh Post	12 Dec 2013	Can't see the forest ¹
The Cambodia Daily	13 Dec 2013	Government drops challenge to official forest cover figure ²
AsiaOne	19 Dec 2013	Deforestation under the spotlight in Cambodia ³
The Phnom Penh Post	20 Dec 2013	Memories of a land unspoiled ⁴
Regional GeoBlog	Published 27 Dec 2012 Updated Dec 2013	The vanishing rainforests (and cultures) of eastern Cambodia ⁵

Clearing hurdles

At the outset of the project, ODC faced technical and political risks that have influenced the development of the maps both before and since they were published. To neutralize potential government criticism, the team followed government definitions of forest cover, thus including rubber plantations in the total figure.

At each stage of the project, work completed by ODC's mappers was submitted to an external expert for review. By taking a staged, iterative



Photo taken from www.ewmi.org, photo by Allan Michaud.

approach to developing the maps, team members developed and honed their satellite image analysis skills with support from a climate change modelling expert at Vietnam's Can Tho University. The Cambodian mappers are now skilled in forest cover change analysis.

ODC also sought feedback from several CSOs in Cambodia before publishing the maps, and received further advice after the page was launched. Feedback received from mapping and conservation experts will contribute to rigorous interrogation of mapping methodologies and validation of image analysis techniques for future projects.

The new skills gained by ODC mappers on the forest cover change project have paved the way for more and better quality satellite image analysis by the team, and updated forest cover maps were released throughout 2014.

ODC's 40-year forest cover change maps, along with accompanying animations, charts, news, laws and publications, can be found at <http://www.opendevelopmentcambodia.net/briefings/forest-cover/>

¹ <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/can-t-see-forest-...>

² <http://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/government-drops-challenge-to-official-forest-cover-figure-49264/>

³ <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/deforestation-under-spotlight-cambodia>

⁴ <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/memories-land-unspoiled>

⁵ <http://regionalgeography.org/101blog/?p=2942>



InSTEDD iLabs Southeast Asia

Spider partner since 2012.

Projects: Interactive Voice Response System for Scaling Grassroots Participation in Humanitarian Programs and Interactive Voice Response System for Scaling Grassroots Participation in Humanitarian Programs.

As a majority of the world population now has access to mobiles, SMS campaigns have become a popular way to deliver information directly to individuals. However, this approach still does not reach the most marginalised populations who often have poor literacy skills. InSTEDD has developed and localised the Interactive Voice Response system, called Verboice, which allows any organisation to deliver informative voice messages to the target population through simple mobile phones. The system allows individuals to seek general information, enter personal information and request personalised reminders.

InSTEDD iLabs South East Asia is a technical development organisation that has worked with technical solutions to social and medical emergencies in Cambodia and the region.

<http://instedd.org/>

In September 2012, with funding from Spider (The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions), iLab SEA introduced and extended Verboice. Verboice projects can start small and scale up, making it possible to improve lives even in communities previously closed off by literacy and technological barriers. Verboice is an ideal solution for reaching out to communities, whatever their level of literacy or technological sophistication.

“Although Cambodia has the lowest prevalence of diabetes in the region, some 8,000 people die due to the disease in Cambodia every year.

MoPoTsyo uses Verboice to help diabetes patients

Established in 2004, MoPoTsyo provides a practical as well as an institutional response to the information needs of people with diabetes. Its mission is to improve access to reliable information and self-management skills for Cambodian diabetics and high blood pressure patients, especially those who are poor. This project is part of BRIDGES (Bringing Research in Diabetes to Global Environments and Systems), a programme initiated by the International Diabetes Federation, and supported by an educational grant from Lilly Diabetes.

Although Cambodia has the lowest prevalence of diabetes in the region, some 8 000 people die due to the disease in Cambodia every year. According to the International Diabetes Federation, there were an estimated 212 000 diabetes sufferers in Cambodia in 2012, with almost another 134 000 estimated to be undiagnosed.

The MoPoTsyo Patient Information Centre, a Phnom Penh-based NGO that focuses on diabetes, registered more than 8 000 patients by the end of 2011. The number had increased to 12 500 by the end of 2012, according to the organization's annual report. Maurits van Pelt,



Photo by Tharum Bun, InSTEDD iLab Southeast Asia



Photo by Tharum Bun, InSTEDD iLab Southeast Asia

director of MoPoTsyo, told The Cambodia Daily that “I am sure the number will go up in Cambodia and I think it already went up since the last survey”. The news article, published in November 2013, also warned that “the chronic disease, which affects 3 percent of Cambodians is increasing due to changing diets”.

To help patients better manage their disease, MoPoTsyo needs to send them timely reminders to keep check-up appointments, take medication, make healthy food choices, and exercise regularly. As Maurits further stated in the interview, “If you have diabetes and you have a very good lifestyle, your blood sugar goes down and the problem is not as severe anymore. We have taken random tests and found that if you have a very good lifestyle your blood sugar can be as low as when you take medication”.

In early 2014, MoPoTsyo’s pilot project aimed to examine if the use of mobile phone communication between people with diabetes and their health care givers would improve existing diabetes self-management. In this project,

mobile phones would be given to people to enable them to call for support. They would receive messages and calls about behaviour changes and results, and reminders about appointments and the taking of medication.

Prior to this, MoPoTsyo had used text messages to its randomly-selected 500 patients. However, patient recipients encountered a number of challenges, including not getting to the SMS inbox to read the message and limited Khmer language support on mobile phones, as well as other language barriers. After the trial, MoPoTsyo then concluded that text messaging was not an effective means of communication with the patients.

“The reason why we changed is that we want to compare the difference between simple SMS and receiving Verboice messages.”

In late 2013, the Patient Information Center started working with iLab SEA to launch the mobile technology intervention project which would make it possible for them to design voice messages to target a selected group of 250 patients.

In an email interview, Maurits wrote that “MoPoTsyo first heard about InSTEDD via James Logerfo, a visiting professor from the University of Washington in Seattle, USA, a couple of years ago, but that was only about SMS. I believe I heard about the interactive voice response also but much later. Either 2012 or 2013, also from him”. On why he decided to implement the project using Verboice, Maurits explained that “the reason why we changed is that we want to compare the difference between simple SMS and receiving Verboice messages”.

As these diabetes self-management programmes are taking place in Congo, Cambodia, and the Philippines, the effects of the intervention on health outcomes, access to treatment and enablement of people living with diabetes will be evaluated for each country, and the differences in effect between countries will be analysed.

MoPoTsyo has trained more than 100 peer educators to help patients in Cambodia’s rural areas and urban slums. It has 7 000 diabetic members in its network and estimates that about 500 000 people have self-screened for the

“We want to cover more health centers, but we also depend on the government to adopt this as a national strategy.”

disease since 2005 as a result of its programmes. However, the peer educators currently serve just 10 percent of the country’s health centers, but there are so many more patients who need more information about their disease and how to live with it. As quoted by Cambodia Daily, Maurits said, “We want to cover more health centers, but we also depend on the government to adopt this as a national strategy”. This mobile technology will also enhance the work of peer educators. Developed by iLab SEA, Verboice is an interactive voice response (IVR) technology that lets organizations create and run applications via voice, thereby overcoming literacy and geographical barriers.

Photo by Tharum Bun, InSTEDD iLab Southeast Asia



People with diabetes usually find it difficult to sustain adequate self-management behaviour. Self-management support strategies, including the use of mobile technology, have shown potential benefit, according to a study published by Josefen Van Olmen at the Institute of Tropical Medicine.

Heang Hen, a Monitoring Officer at MoPoTsyo, says that with Verboice, it’s “faster to send educational voice messages and information to patients”.

This communication technology intervention addresses the problem that the greater part of diabetes management takes place without external support and that many challenges, unforeseen problems and questions occur at moments in between scheduled contacts with the support system.

When asked about future plans after this pilot project, Maurits wrote that “the Ministry of Health told us that we should try to make it sustainable. This means that we have to be careful about the cost because ‘who is going to pay...?’”

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http://peersforprogress.org/idea_exchange_category/mopo-tsyo



Open Institute Cambodia

Spider partner since 2012

Projects: Dialogue on Democracy and Promoting Youth Engagement in Development through the use of ICT

Finding information to form an opinion and freely sharing and discussing your views with others is the foundation of a democratic society, but in many parts of the world this is still very new. Open Institute (OI) has strived to provide the Cambodian people with information, skills to use modern communication technologies and how to find and share information with others.

The project has aimed to create a meeting ground and connection between youth and local government. The project has focused on the needs of youth and Commune/Sangkat councillors (the most local level of government), by teaching them how to find and share information, how to share one's opinions and discuss issues and concerns with others.

<http://www.open.org.kh/en>



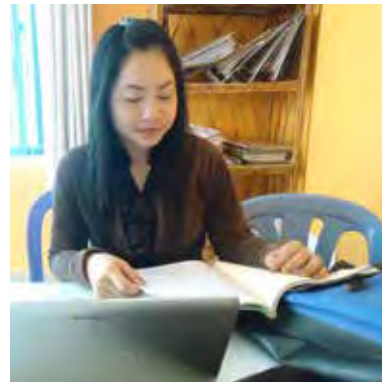
Mr. Sorn Saokhen. Photo taken by the Open Institute.

Story of Change

Sorn Saokhen (aka Khen) is a 19-year-old man and ninth-grade student who attended the Khmer Youth for Social Development - KYSD's Awareness Raising Workshop on the subject of ICT and the role of youth in promoting democracy, on March 13-15, 2014 at Chambok Secondary School in Beng village, Chambok commune, Phnom Sruoch district, Kampong Speu province. "Before I did not know how to write messages in Khmer even though sometimes I tried to type it on my friend's phone. I thought it was too hard to write it. But after participating in this workshop and learning from the facilitator I understood the concepts and could write it to my close friends and colleagues", he said "It's good to know how to write Khmer messages because we can encourage our people to use and raise our national language as well as our culture". He was a hardworking member in the group discussion. In the process of the workshop, Khen focused on three main points: democracy, good government and ICT (how to write a message on a basic mobile phone). He said, "It's a very precious opportunity to study these kinds of topics which make me able to share information with others and I am happy to see my people join in the workshop or other public forums because when they join, they will understand and learn what has happened in the community". He wanted to give his knowledge to others. "I don't want to keep it in my head because after I have studied, I want to teach others in order to help people in my community and I think I am practicing what I have learnt as well as improving myself".

Using ICT for Democracy 1

My name is **Phong MouyLan**. I am a student at the Royal University of Agriculture. Now I am a very active member of the National Youth Senate (NYS) because I think that volunteer work is a good job for me and helps me get experience and will make it easier to find a job in the future. Before NYS, I always spent time with my friends in my free time and never thought about social activities because I thought social activities were for old persons, not youth like me.



Ms Phong MouyLan. Photo taken by the Open Institute.

After I attended the workshop and joint NYS activities this made me change my behaviour and to volunteer, sharing my knowledge with other members from different universities. From day to day I come to KYSD in my free time with other friends from universities to plan for our activities to help the society. Especially after I attended the training on “Role of Youth and using ICTs to Promote Democracy in Phnom Penh” with KYSD, I understood very well the concepts of democracy and good governance, and how to use ICTs to promote democracy in Cambodia in a positive way. I’m very happy to join all activities that can help other friends and youth to get the information because I always share information and update information on Facebook.

“I always share information and update information on Facebook.”



Mr Om Seyha. Photo taken by the Open Institute.

Using ICT for Democracy 2

My name is **Om Seyha**. I am a student at the Royal University of Agriculture. I felt very happy to study the ICT training course organized by People Health Development Association - PHD and held on 13-15 December 2013 in Battambang. This course focused on the ideas of democracy and good governance, and the role of youth in using ICTs to promote democracy and good governance.

ICT is very important because it can help share information quickly and efficiently with other people. Especially, ICT is the new technology for all people around the world and it can make people’s daily lives easy. After finishing this course, I think that I know a lot about ICT and democracy in society. Furthermore, I can use ICT for my studying and can search documents related to my study major, democracy, and good governance also. Therefore, I will share my knowledge about everything that I know from this workshop with my friends and other people who want to know about ICT.

“After finishing this course, I think that I know a lot about ICT and democracy in society.”

ICTs Promote Women’s Participation

Ms. Chea Sipheng, Second Assistant to the Chief of Kor Ki Thom Commune, Kien Svay District, said she initially engaged political activists for human rights to help people to solve problems. This made her more popular in politics and she then became the Second Assistant to the Chief Commune. During the election she battled many men’s advocacy efforts, but she still earned her position. She was delighted that Open Institute provided the opportunity to attend training relating to ICT and added that she was not aware of media practices and did not know how to write news until she received the appropriate training.



Ms Chea Sipheng, commune counselor. Photo taken by the Open Institute.

Thanks to that training she understands the importance of the media as well as the use of computers with Khmer Unicode. After receiving the training, she knows what is good news and bad news; she confirmed that after the completion of this training, she would take the information to the delivery team and her friends. She suggested that Open Institute and other organisations should help to organise other training sessions, especially training council communes in the provinces, and finished by thanking Open Institute and Sponsors.



Women's Media Centre of Cambodia

Spider partner since 2013

Project: Improvement of Maternal Health through Innovative Media Tools

Reproductive, maternal and child health continue to be major issues in many developing contexts, especially among marginalised rural populations where weak literacy skills and insufficient experience with and trust in medical institutions cause high mortality rates. The Women's Media Centre of Cambodia has spread information about the importance of antenatal and postnatal care as well as giving birth at medical facilities through radio, television and voice messages on mobile phones. While the radio and television information is available at fixed times, the phone lines are available at the convenience of the audience and does not require more than an ordinary feature phone.

The Women's Media Centre of Cambodia specialises in informing the Cambodian population, especially women, through traditional media such as television and radio, and more recently social media (YouTube and Facebook) as well as mobile phones.

<http://www.wmc.org.kh/>



Image from WMC's Facebook page.

Case Study #1: Audience access to IVR

Mrs. Yet Mary, 35 years old, lives with her three children in Trapeang Chouk village, Beung commune, Baray district and Kampong Thom province. She indicates that she never knew about family planning as she is illiterate, and as result, she has three unplanned children. One day she heard the announcement on Women's Radio FM 102 about the Interactive Voice Response System, where the public, particularly pregnant women, were made aware of prenatal care, child delivery, and family planning services. She was so happy with this information.

“She indicates that she never knew about family planning as she is illiterate, and as result, she has three unplanned children.”

She says with a smile that she pressed the short code numbers 5151 to learn about maternal health-related information, especially family planning. She is very happy with the Verboice system that makes her more aware of antenatal care and family planning, by just keying in the special number whenever she

needs to know more and the easy short code if she is doubtful about whether certain information is good. She learned that she can use contraceptive methods such as the combined pill, a contraceptive injection or an intrauterine device, available at commune health centres or district referral hospitals, if she does not want to have more children. After consulting with her husband and skilled health personnel, she decided to use the injection. “After using contraceptive injection, I am not worried anymore about having any unplanned children and I have more time for managing my business and taking care of my family”, said Ms. Mary.

“After listening to the voice message on postnatal care, I decide not to follow the old practice, and to eat a variety of nutritional foods and drink a lot of water.

Case Study #2: Audience access to IVR

Mrs. Ren Mony is a private company accountant and lives in Tang Kork commune, Baray district and Kampong Thom province. She says happily that 2 months after the delivery of her first baby, she accessed the Interactive Voice Response to learn about postnatal care and family planning. She claims

the programme is important and useful for her and for Cambodian women in general to be aware of maternal care. “The programme changed my unreasonable belief in traditional dietary practice, as my elders always advised me to abstain from eating some foods, such as fruits and soft drinks. I was allowed to eat only spicy and salty food, prepared with black pepper or ginger for keeping spiciness to heat up the body and strengthen the tendons, and I was told to drink homemade wine with herbs. In addition, they educated me not go to health



Youth club members engaged in a quiz contest. Photo by WMC.

facilities often as it was not good for me right after giving birth to my first baby, and that this would make it difficult for me to deliver more children”. She continued, “After listening to the voice message on postnatal care, I decide not to follow the old practice, and to eat a variety of nutritional foods and drink a lot of water. In addition, I often visit the health centre for midwife appointments to check my health and get baby vaccine injections”. She said that she shared her own experiences with friends about contraceptive use, and that she suggested to her friends to use condoms or the contraceptive pill if her friends select a short-term plan, or to use the intrauterine device for a long-term plan. Finally, she thanks the programme for supplying her knowledge regarding maternal care.

Case Study #3: Male Listener Club Member

Mr. El Sheat, 26, is a listener club member in Trapeang Chouk village, Beung commune, Baray district and Kampong Thom province. He says that “prior to engaging in the club meeting, I was so worried about my wife and baby. I am crazy about how to care for her, what she may do and not do and where she should give birth safely since some people say doing this is good and some people say doing that is bad. Traditionally, I just know that my wife should drink rice wine, herbal medicines, coconut water, or beer, which are all thought to make the baby healthy. She should not shower too often especially at night and avoid eating a variety of meals as these will make the baby fat and difficult to deliver with the traditional village midwife. I do not even know what services are available for pregnant mothers at the health centre”.

Mr. Sheat says that he attended the listener club meeting two times. After participating in the meeting topic on Prenatal Care for Pregnant Women, and watching the educational drama titled “My Husband” produced by Women’s Media Centre of Cambodia (WMC), he is aware that pregnant women should consult with trained health personnel at least four times prior to giving birth, that they should take enough iron



Image from WMC's Facebook page showing how material is used across different media.



Listener's and viewer's club meeting. Photo by WMC.

Case Study #4: Female Listener Club Member

Mrs. Sorn Sros is a 7½ month pregnant woman in Boeung Kandal village, Boeung commune, Baray district, and Kampong Thom province. She participated in the Listener and Viewer Club's meeting one time, at which the topic focused on prenatal care for pregnant women. After attending in the club meeting, she is clearly aware of prenatal care and commune health service for pregnant women. She says women should visit the health centre if they are pregnant, take a total 90 iron pill, receive the tetanus vaccination, avoid carrying heavy things, and eat a variety of foods like green vegetables, meat and so on.

Mrs. Sros marked happily that “I go to the commune health centre for prenatal checks, and a health staff member tells me that my baby and I are better, especially no HIV/AIDs, malaria, or other diseases. My baby will be born on 19th January 2015”. She continues that she has already prepared in advance some of the necessary materials—baby cloth, hat, towel, blanket, baby gloves,

supplements, follow the guidance of pregnancy care and obtain vaccine injections at the health centre, as well as do physical exercise. He says that now he has fulfilled his obligation as husband, he took care of her until she gave birth, prepared appropriate nutritional food, helped with the housework, didn't let her carry heavy things, accompanied her to the commune health centre to have her health checked and her vaccine injection. He remarked that it surprised him that his wife was safe at delivery day and had a healthy baby. Right now, his baby is around 2 months of age. He says he would like to participate in the club meetings to get more knowledge on health care and family planning.

“After attending in the club meeting, she is clearly aware of prenatal care and commune health service for pregnant women.



Women in reproductive age and pregnant women participated in Listener's and Viewer Club monthly meeting. Photo by WMC.

net and so on—as well as transportation means, money for the delivery day and that she is going to give birth at her commune health centre.

She claims that now most women are fully knowledgeable about prenatal and postnatal care as the majority of them always visit the health centres to seek prenatal care service and want to give birth at health centre or district referral hospital. She finally requested to have such a meeting in her village to educate other women and female youth who have yet to learn about maternal and child health care.



East Africa ICT4Democracy Network_____

Since its establishment in 2011, the East Africa ICT4Democracy Network has forged solid synergies among its members, each with varied expertise, to foster democracy through the use of ICT. Network members were unified through their Spider-funded projects. Swedish International Development Agency - Sida chose to fund the network for two years from 2014, as a testimony to the network's hard work and within the ICT4D field.

The East Africa ICT4Democracy Network is internationally recognised through its many engagements. The Network's experiences were recently summarised in a documentary named "The New Wave" which is available on both the Spider and the EA ICT4Democracy websites.

www.ict4democracy.org



CIPESA, The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa

Spider partner since 2011

Projects: iParticipate Uganda and Catalysing Civic Participation and Democracy Monitoring Using ICTs

CIPESA's upscale project iParticipate had the main aim of encouraging civil participation and advocacy for more open governance in Uganda. Open Government Data (OGD) was focal in the endeavour to engage citizens while fostering accountable governance structures. The generation of knowledge on ODG was to enable more communities to engage with leaders and channel information in a way that promotes improved service delivery and accountability through the use of ICT. The upscale project sensitised duty bearers such as national legislators, statutory bodies and local government to see the benefits of open governance and it also documented learning such that it can be made accessible to media and civil society professionals.

www.cipesa.org

iParticipate Uganda promotes Citizen inclusivity through ICT Access

The true potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Africa is yet to be realised, since in many countries the majority of citizens are excluded from accessing the Internet. This limited reach has, however, resulted in the use of alternative means to increase ICT use by citizens both directly and indirectly, especially in remote and rural areas.



NUMEC Journalists collecting stories on PRDP, photo by CIPESA.

The iParticipate Uganda project is one such initiative that, since 2011, has been promoting the reach and use of ICTs for monitoring service delivery and good governance in Uganda. Spearheaded by the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), the project works, in partnership with three grassroots-based organisations, to promote the inclusivity of citizens in the information society.

The three grassroots-based organizations are the Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI) in the Mayuge district (Eastern Uganda); the e-Society Resource Centre in the Kasese district (Western Uganda); and the Northern Uganda Media Club (NUMEC), in Gulu (Northern Uganda). To date, these organizations are working directly with communities to promote the use of ICTs as tools for citizens to engage with duty bearers and demand accountability. The organisations also provide an avenue to conduct exploratory research into the use of ICTs in promoting citizen participation.

NUMEC's iParticipate activities have focused mainly on the service delivery failures of the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP). The PRDP, an initiative of the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda, started in 2009 and seeks to rehabilitate the once conflict-ridden region of Northern Uganda by providing financial investment in the health, education and infrastructure sectors, amongst others. Through NUMEC, citizens and journalists in the



Katese training, photo by CIPESA.



Brosdi training, photo by CIPESA.

Acholi region have been equipped with the skills to identify and report on service delivery failures in their communities through ICTs.

The project's radio debates have reached audiences of up to 1.6 million listeners in the region through Mega FM. Meanwhile, community debates which are also broadcast on radio have played a role in creating awareness of the role that citizens can play in demanding accountability. Besides radio, social media has also been leveraged as a platform for citizen-leader and citizen-citizen engagements. Furthermore, journalists are reporting through traditional print media.

Despite the first phase of PRDP being reported as complete in 2012, there remain many implementation gaps which impact the livelihoods of the intended beneficiaries, including marginalised groups like women and children. Working through

NUMEC, iParticipate has documented these shortcomings and the affected communities in video and a picture story. Journalists in the Northern Uganda region, as well as the NUMEC team and civil society groups, have also benefited from training in the use of geocoded mapping and visualisation using open data as a means of supplementing service delivery monitoring. This has challenged the way in which the media can approach reporting on the PRDP.

The project continues to engage in activities that spark community debates and awareness on the PRDP's progress and the increased empowerment of citizens in demanding accountability.

In Eastern Uganda, local district officials and members in the education sector have benefited from trainings in the use of ICTs as a means to strengthen their engagement. The trainings session which were organised by BROSDI entailed the use of online tools like email, social media and blogs as means of documenting and promoting social accountability in the education sector.

Interactive sessions with a mix of participants which included district officials and educators have explored topics such as the use of e-Governance and Community Participation as Tools to Address Pertinent Issues in my Community, and also provided training on Computer, article writing and blogging, resulting in the ongoing promotion of e-governance and citizen participation in the Mayuge district.

“The centre records an average of 250 monthly users including local government officials, women and students.

Additional highlights of the project to-date include the implementation of the Visualise Mayuge blog which is collecting information that will serve as a resource on education and e-governance in the district. The centre is also using bulk messaging through Short Message Services (SMS) to collect and disseminate information relevant to effective governance of the district.

At the e-society Resource Centre in Kasese, Western Uganda, knowledge sharing, ICT skills capacity building and improving access have continued to be at the centre of the project's activities. The centre records an average of 250 monthly users including local government officials, women and students.

The centre has served as the training facility on the use of ICTs for governance and monitoring service delivery by local government officials, media representatives, community-based organisations and community members. Additional training has included the use of geocoded mapping and data collection to support monitoring and comparison of service delivery in the Rwenzori region. Geocoded maps were created by CIPESA, representing funding allocations in water, health and education sectors at sub-county level based on the 2012/2013 Kasese district budgets.

Ultimately, the outreach of iParticipate Uganda's activities through the three centres over the past three years has extended to outlying community members through religious leaders, women and youth groups who serve as further disseminators of information. In so doing, there has been a wider information reach as well as the opportunity for feedback from various stake-holders on pertinent issues affecting governance and service delivery as well as improved citizen engagement and participation at local government levels.



The Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance: CHRAGG

Spider partner since 2011

Projects: SMS for Human Rights and SMS for Human Rights, Upscaling and Awareness Raising

With support from Spider and the Government of Tanzania, the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance conducted an awareness campaign to raise the awareness about the SMS service where citizens can lodge complaints related to violations of human rights and contravention of the principles of good governance in 2013/14.

During the project implementation, CHRAGG visited 17 regions (15 on the Tanzania Mainland and 2 regions of Zanzibar), engaged with key groups such as school students and staff, community-based organisations and media actors. To build trust and enable rapid response CHRAGG also introduced a toll free number for the service.

<http://chragg.go.tz/>



Photo by CHRAGG.

SMS for Human Rights Helping Citizens to Achieve Human Rights Justice

What started simply as an idea of enabling citizens to submit reports about violations of human rights through SMS text messages today has become a valuable channel for submitting complaints before the Tanzania Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG).

Before the introduction of SMS for Human Rights, CHRAGG had been receiving citizens' complaints by letters through the post office and by word of mouth through those who were able to visit the Commission offices physically.

In order to improve its services to the marginalized citizens in rural areas and to complement the already installed Computerized Case Management System, CHRAGG, with the support of the Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (Spider), devised a cost-effective means of lodging, and following up complaints through Short Messaging Services (SMS) using cellular phones.

The innovation came after realising that the number of mobile phone users is on the increase, this was proven by, among others, the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA), which showed that the number of current mobile phone users is approaching 62 % of the population.

The SMS for Human Rights system was launched on 27th June, 2013. The system therefore is relatively new, and since then the number of complaints verified to be genuine via SMS has reached 4 271 messages as at October 2014. Thanks to Spider's financial assistance to support the awareness campaign, the Commission managed to reach over fifteen regions in the country. Among the many complaints lodged, there are success stories stemming from them, which are worth sharing with our partners and the public. One of these is the case involving a minor girl, aged 13, who was sexually abused by an adult.

The girl was brought to Dar es Salaam in 2012 to work as a maidservant. Her employer mistreated her to the extent that she decided to abscond and return home. One day she boarded a bus back home but she did not have enough money for bus fare. Hence, the bus conductor abandoned her at Chalinze Township, some 110kms East of Dar es Salaam, along the highway to Zambia.

She had nothing to eat and nowhere to go. She fell into the hands of her abuser, who lured her and took her to Bagamoyo. He kept the girl in a reserved house in Bagamoyo Township, about 70 kms away from Dar es Salaam City, where he visited her every evening and raped her repeatedly. In the morning he would go away without leaving provisions for the girl.

Having received information about the situation from other children in the area, the local leadership, in collaboration with the police, laid a trap and the abuser was arrested. He was brought before the magistrate at the Bagamoyo District Court and was charged with rape.



Photo by CHRAGG.

To everybody's surprise the Court released him on bail and he ran away. Similarly, the individuals who bailed him out did not appear again in Court, and there were no efforts to find them.

On seeing that the case was about to be cancelled because of the disappearance of the accused person and his guarantors, a Good Samaritan decided to inform the Commission about the matter through the SMS system.

“...organisations like the Commission, which save mostly poor citizens, must create a means to be accessible, and ensure that the Commission is not seen as another burden to the citizens' lives.

The Commission observed that the report raised a serious issue of violation of human rights as well as child rights, i.e. protection of the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, which required prompt attention. The Commission then presented the matter to the Director of Public Prosecution who requested the case file for scrutiny and ordered the suspect to be re-arrested and tried. The aggressor was re-arrested, tried and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Thereafter, the Commission contacted the Social Welfare Department and sought assistance to see to it that the victim was reunited with her family in the Southern Town of Songea, about 1 000 kms away from Dar es Salaam.

If it were not for the SMS sent to the Commission, justice would not have been served for the victim and she would not have been able to reunite with her family. Instead she would have been a street child!

Many citizens commend CHRAGG for establishing the system that makes it easier for them to access the Commission's services. However, they challenge the Commission to acquire a new toll-free number for the SMS service.

The Executive Secretary Mary Massay said the move to start using the SMS service as a medium for delivering complaints originated as a trial and went through many obstacles until it was adopted. Looking back, there is no doubt that this was a good move as part of the technological age, because organisations like the Commission, which save mostly poor citizens, must create a means to be accessible, and ensure that the Commission is not seen as another burden to the citizens' lives. She noted that the new system has started gaining public acceptance as citizens are now encouraged to use it by submitting their complaints before the Commission. She also noted that the Commission is planning a major awareness campaign in the near future, in which the plan is to visit more than fifteen regions to speak with leaders and citizens.



Transparency International Uganda – TIU

Spider partner since 2011

Project: ICT4Health Service Delivery

The project ICT4Health Service Delivery tackled the high incidence of failure of service delivery in health care in Lira and Oyam in Northern Uganda. The project used a combination of old and new ICT to empower communities to report poor service and absenteeism at local health clinics. A dedicated free call centre was set up and the project received enough recognition and attention to reveal cases of “ghost workers”. The initiative caused a drastic increase in attendance of health staff and facilitated practical solutions, such as housing for health professionals near their places of work, to ensure the sustainability and stability of the provision of health care services. The project also made use of the popularity of radio and social media to spread its message and promote the toll free numbers.

<http://www.tiuganda.org/>

ICT4Health Service Delivery

In Northern Uganda the “ICT4health service delivery” project used technological approaches to empower the communities to engage with and participate in monitoring and demanding better health service delivery. The main awareness media tools that were used included the local FM radio programmes which informed educated and empowered over 7 000 people in and out of the target districts in a period of 12 months. TIU managed a toll-free call centre that the communities used for reporting health care irregularities, for forward action by duty bearers.

Access to health services remains a great need for many communities and the only facilities that many can afford are government health centres which provide free health care services. Most health centres, like Ogur, Aromo and Anyeke in Northern Uganda, are visited by patients who live as far away as 24 kilometers. In most cases they ride bicycles to and from the health centres. It is often disappointing for such a patient to reach the health centre



Staff houses constructed by Oyam district local governance as a result of the project intervention. Photo: TIU.

and find it still locked even at 10:00 a.m. On most occasions, even when the health centre is open, some health workers are absent and many drugs are unavailable. Most health service users allege that the drugs are stolen by health workers, while the health workers allege that they never receive a large enough consignment of requested drugs. However during joint review meetings held in the target health centres between voluntary accountability committee (VAC) members and the health management committee, the latter pointed out that drug supplies had improved both in quantity and delivery period. The delivery period is now one month compared to the 3 months it would take in past years. VAC and health management committee members who participated in verification of delivered drugs confirmed that drug supplies have increased.

“The main awareness media tools that were used included the local FM radio programmes which informed educated and empowered over 7 000 people in and out of the target districts in a period of 12 months.

Before this project intervention, health service users were also given medication regardless of whether they were sick or not. It was the health worker who made the judgment call because the lab testing tools were lacking. The situation is now changing, however, and health centres are now strictly dispensing drugs for diagnoses supported by lab test results. At health centres where either the lab technicians or assistant were missing, efforts are being put in place to ensure that laboratories are fully operational.

Most health centres did not have adequate and skilled midwives in the maternity wards, and they lacked electricity (Agulurude, Barr, Aromo) and alternative power supply units such as generators. The District was blamed for delays in effecting the required facility repairs and provisions. A case in point was that of Harriet who visited Aromo Health Centre III and lamented that “when we come to deliver [babies] at night, the health workers ask us to go and buy paraffin for the lamp which is used in the maternity ward”. Health workers also face challenges that hinder their work. A case in point was Maureen, a midwife at Aromo Health Centre III, who called the toll-free centre and said, “If it were not because of the love for my people and profession I would



Aldina Odongo, a voluntary accountability (VAC) member Iceme (Oyam district) making her contributions during the VAC's review meeting. Photo: TIU.

have left this job. The pay is too little to cater to my family needs, and I work in an area where people do not appreciate what I do for them. I am the only available midwife at this health centre; I have to work for 24 hours without any off-duty allocation. What normal human being can cope with these working conditions?”

In response to this very urgent need expressed by Maureen, Transparency International Uganda forwarded the outcry to the District Health Officer recommending that additional midwives be provided. As a result, two midwives were posted to Aromo Health Centre III. The toll-free call centre helped Maureen to report at no cost the challenges that she and the health centre face.



Toro Development Network – ToroDev

Spider partner since 2012

Project: Converging ICT Tools to Promote Service Delivery in the Rwenzori sub-region, Western Uganda

The Toro Development Network implemented the project “*Converging ICT Tools to promote Service Delivery in the Rwenzori sub-region, Western Uganda*” from July 2012 to June 2014. The project set out to build capacity in advocacy, and to equip and encourage communities to push for public debate, transparent governance and accountable leadership.

Fifteen citizens (youth and women) initiated rural advocacy forums that pushed for change in their communities, with 210 rural monitors raising awareness, reporting service failures and engaging media actors to evoke public debate. Toro Development successfully partnered with a number of radio stations, launched blogs and had experienced, skilled and qualified individuals train the rural monitors in online social media tools, documentation, governance and democratic engagement.

<http://torodev.co.ug/>

Interview with a Policy Maker/Political Leader in the Rwenzori Region, Western Uganda

On January 10th 2014, ToroDev staff (Johnstone Baguma, Solomon Akugizibwe and Kogere Racheal) had an interview with Kabarole District Chairperson Richard Rwabuhinga at the Kabarole District Headquarters to discuss wide-ranging issues on the role of information sharing in improving governance, transparency, accountability and citizen participation in governance.

During the interview, he credited ToroDev for enabling him to win the 2013 Scorecard¹ through inviting him to ToroDev-supported live radio discussions, especially on HITS FM, to provide accountability. He emerged as the best district chairperson in Uganda for the year 2012/2013 because of legislating good policies, showing accountability and enabling the participation of the local population in government planning and budgeting processes. The Scorecard report was organised by Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) and Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA).



Johnstone Baguma & Kogere Racheal (ToroDev Staff) during a courtesy meeting and interview with Mr. Richard Rwabuhinga, Chairperson LCV – Kabarole district in January 2014.

The complete interview appears below:

Q: *In your view, is the demand for information by locals matched with a sufficient supply of information by leaders and development agencies? What can be done to better satisfy their demand?*

A: People want information, people have the thirst and hunger for information but as local government leaders, we are limited in giving this information and basically, it is as a result of the budgetary constraints. Giving information, we usually use two major approaches and one is through the media. I must appreciate ToroDev because they are very good partners in this, they give us radio programmes to give accountability. But, if we were to foot it as a district,

¹ [http://www.acode-u.org/documents/PRS_60.pdf]

it would be an expensive venture. A 2-hour radio programme is about UGX 1.2 million [~USD 415]; if you are going to do that on a weekly basis it translates to about UGX 4.8 million [~USD 1 660] per month. On an annual basis, you will find you are in the range of UGX 50 million [~USD 173 000] and you know as local governments our budgets are limited given the fact that our local revenue base is so limited. The mismatch is that there is a lot of demand for information and yet for us as local government leaders, we are limited by resources in giving this information either through media or going to community meetings. Going to community meetings would require moving with technocrats, will require getting a vehicle and you know these technical people will always demand payment per diem and for fuel. When we go on radio, we speak to people and they also speak to us by calling directly on radio or send messages of the comments, questions and concerns which we definitely incorporate in our planning.

“ I have found this arrangement (radio programmes) quite promising because it’s something that takes us to the people and it’s our key role to reach out to the people as political leaders.

When I go to the community, I can’t just go and talk to them and come back, possibly they have other needs which I need not explain here, so either way it becomes expensive. While there is too much demand for information, on our part (leaders) giving information is quite limited as a result of the limited resource envelope and this is where we certainly need to partner with ToroDev to assist us in those two areas. One, in the media by assisting us with a few more talk shows so that we are able to interact with people and explain to them what we have done and what we expect to do and then get feedback through phone calls. I would also wish a partnership to have these programmes mediated from the field (rural radio debates) because whereas we go to the radio programmes and people call in, many can’t afford to make a call, even if they can afford it, how many people can be received in a given radio talk show? The highest number of calls I can receive is about 30 to 40, but are 40 callers a representation of the people of Kabarole? If we reach a level of the rural radio debates, it would be the best so that we go and debate with the people face to face in the field, they bring out their issues, we provide answers and then we move forward together.

“ We should walk the talk. Many times we have been put to task to be accountable and transparent in our operations as local government leaders but for the three years I have been in office, I have never seen a budget of any civil society organisation.

Q: How do you want ToroDev to improve its information-sharing platforms, especially radio programmes, so that they are more relevant to improving the livelihoods of the local citizens?

A: I have found this arrangement (radio programmes) quite promising because it’s something that takes us to the people and it’s our key role to reach out to the people as political leaders. If you get detached from the people then you are certainly detached from their needs and hence you can’t deliver. My wish and desire in 2014 is for Kabarole District, in partnership with Toro Development Network, to have these debates (rural radio debates) taken to the sub-counties and parishes so that we get a real interface with the people and we present what we have to offer, they tell us what they expect of us, they show us the gaps and together we try to fix these problems.

Q: As the District Chairperson, how can you feel more affiliated to ToroDev and the civil society fraternity on community development and poverty eradication processes? There has been a challenge with many political leaders accusing us (civil society) of not working together. What is the advice you give us in this year of 2014 so that we can feel more affiliated to local governments than in 2013?

A: We should walk the talk. Many times we have been put to task to be accountable and transparent in our operations as local government leaders but for the three years I have been in office, I have never seen a budget of any civil society organisation. For me, even if you wake me up at 2 a.m. in the morning, I will tell you that my budget is UGX 26 billion [~USD 9 billion] for Kabarole District for the financial year 2013/2014, but do I know the budget of ToroDev, do I know the budget of KRC, do I know the budget of Twerwaneho? (KRC and Twerwaneho are also NGOs operating in Kabarole District) While we are working together to promote accountability and transparency, how I wish we saw the same thing taking place in our civil

society (*transparency and accountability*) so that we work together and promote the values of accountability and transparency and we achieve together. However, maybe our Community Based Services (CBO) Department has not done much to mobilize civil society to have a more transparent and accountable collaboration where we can be able to know the resource envelopes for all partners and plan collectively; we will strive to improve that in this year 2014.

Q: We have an approach we are developing to build the capacities of local citizens at sub-county levels through citizen groups called rural advocacy forums to monitor service delivery. As a leader, do you think citizens having this kind of arrangement (organised in groups to monitor service delivery) will improve government services?

A: The answer is yes and no. Yes in a sense that when the group is really focussed and when the group is apolitical. When the group is outside the local politics and only working to improve service delivery, it is quite recommendable. For example in Mugusu, a team of about 40 people led by their leader came to me presenting a problem of water in a village called Magunga² They told me that this village is water stressed; we have schools there, we have children but lack safe water and they came up with a very good concept. We want to assure you, this financial year (2013/2014), we are taking water to Magunga as a result of the intervention of this advocacy forum. To me, that was wonderful, however, sometimes people hide behind political interests.

² [For more information on the meeting <http://torodev.co.ug/e-advocacy-motivates-district-leaders-to-address-local-citizens-priority-service-delivery-needs-in-rwenzori-region-western-uganda/>].



Women of Uganda Network – WOUGNET

Spider partner since 2011

Projects: Promoting and Strengthening Citizens' Participation and Demand for Accountability in Public Service Delivery through use of ICTs, and Empowering Local People and communities to monitor district service delivery through ICTs

The WOUGNET project is an upscale of the “empowering local people and communities to monitor district services delivery through ICTs” project which was implemented in five districts in northern Uganda. WOUGNET took the applied approaches, methodologies and lessons learnt from this project and expanded it to the eastern region of Uganda. The overall goal of the initiative was to empower and help to build capacity in the use of ICT among local people and enable communities to monitor and report poor service delivery, thereby building channels of communication between leaders and their community members. WOUGNET specifically seeks to include women in its projects to help to prevent a gendered digital divide.

<http://www.wougnet.org>

Can women implement change?

WOUGNET conducted the mobilisation exercise for the project “Promoting and Strengthening Citizens' Participation and Demand for Accountability in Public Service Delivery Through the use of ICTs” in three districts: Busia, Tororo and Palisa. Two sub-counties were identified in each district: Masaba and Busitema from the Busia district; Mulanda and Nagongera from the Tororo district; and Apopong and Gogonyo from the Palisa district.



RDC Busia speaking to the participants.

However, during the mobilisation exercise in the Tororo district, WOUGNET staff travelled to the Mulanda sub-county where they were asked to implement the project by the district leadership. It was amazing that despite the prior welcome phone calls made by the Local Council V to introduce the project and welcome the WOUGNET staff delivering the good news to the Mulanda sub-county, the sub-county chief was disappointed to see women arriving and introducing themselves as WOUGNET staff. He had actually been waiting for the visitors for almost two hours at the sub-county compound. But when the women arrived and he realised they were the visitors he had waiting for, he was not pleased. He said, “I thought the visitors were men; they are women”.

It was all laughter for the WOUGNET staff but also mixed feelings about the perception of gender roles in the society of Mulanda. The sub-county chief later mentioned that WOUGNET has a lot to do to sensitize the community to understand and appreciate gender issues. To the WOUGNET staff this was noted to mean that if the community was going to appreciate the project and be empowered to use ICTs, then the majority of those targeted must be women.

The reality of most Ugandan roads

A case in point where the project has had impact is the infrastructure in Eastern Uganda. The roads in the eastern parts of the country are in a bad state. As one drives or moves along these roads, they are characterized by potholes; flooding; broken bridges; incomplete or abandoned road works; and unmaintained, dusty, narrow and bushy roads. This implies that one has to reduce speed as they manoeuvre through these roads. Vehicles get

stuck along the way (especially during the rainy seasons) and the possibility of accidents cannot be ignored. In Eastern Uganda, just as was experienced in Northern Uganda during the project “Empowering Local People and Communities to Monitor Public Service Delivery through ICTs”, among the key issues identified and reported by the voluntary social accountability committees during their monitoring was the poor state of roads as can be seen below.

“It is absurd that the majority of these roads are not maintained, including the community roads connecting people’s homes and schools.

It is important to note that Uganda has four categories of roads, namely, central government roads, district roads, sub-county roads and community roads, which are expected to be maintained by the central government (Uganda National Roads Authority), district, sub-county and community members, respectively. It is absurd that the majority of these roads are not maintained, including the community roads connecting people’s homes and schools.

WOUGNET, through its voluntary social accountability committees, has empowered the citizens to be vigilant and to champion change in their communities through voluntarily monitoring public service provision, identifying the shortfalls, and documenting and reporting them to their leaders, starting from the lowest to the highest levels depending on the magnitude of the problem.

An example was the poor state of Habuleke-Busitema University road (Busia district), which had a broken bridge and was impassable for vehicles, and that little had been done about it. The issue was reported to the Parish chief by the VSACs who then forwarded it to the sub-county authorities. The sub-county resolved to have the bridge repaired by an already contracted construction company (SBI) working on the Jinja Highway and the repairs were done, making the road passable by vehicles.

Similar to the above example is that in the Chawo and Syanyonja parishes (Busitema sub-County) and Mbehenyi parish (Masaba sub-county), all in the Busia district, the VSACs advocated through the parish and sub-county leadership to the district council and had the narrow, bushy, flooded and

unmaintained road network with broken bridges improved upon by the Busia district engineering department.

Also of note is that the VSACs of the Nagongera sub-county (Tororo district) have had the district leaders’ promise and commit during a political rally to maintain roads and reconstruct broken bridges in this financial year of 2014/2015, and the repairs have already started. In the Apopong sub-county (Pallisa district), VSACs have had the district council reconsider a plan to construct bridges on the Apopong-Chelekura road that was initially constructed without culverts and bridges. It would be flooded during rainy seasons and left pedestrians with no other option other than crossing through the floods. Gogonyo sub-county VSACs called for action and Pallisa-Gogonyo-Apopong road works have commenced.

In conclusion, it is very important to involve all project stakeholders right from the initiation, through implementation, and up to monitoring and evaluation of the projects, so as to be able to track changes and create ownership and sustainability. WOUGNET also provided a platform for the duty bearers from the lower and higher local governments to discuss service delivery issues within their communities and also come up with recommendations to improve performance. A lot of information was shared with the VSACs and the leaders pledged to continue working with the VSACs. ICTs played a key role in the success of these projects as they provided evidence for engagement, especially the mobile phones and digital cameras. Radio talk shows created awareness about the role that the VSACs were playing in improving service provision and also in disseminating project results. Social media, websites and Ushahidi platforms were avenues for disseminating the project results to the wider public.



Photos taken by VSACs from Tororo, Busia and Palisa districts of flooded roads after it has rained.



A deep pot hole in the middle of the Atungi Rombi road in Tororo district.



A broken culvert on Busitema road in Busia district.



A sub-county road in Tororo district graded after VSAC intervention.



Network for ICT in Education

The Network for ICT in Education was established in 2013 to facilitate a collaborative platform that enables the stakeholders to share knowledge, experience, good practices and resources which will contribute to ICT in Education efforts in general, and specifically for the successful implementation of Spider-funded projects. The Network engages in dynamic activities such as research activities related to ICT in Education; conducting ICT in education events, seminars and workshops; collaborating with many organisations on ICT in Education issues and sharing project experiences; formulating policies that strengthen ICT in Education practices.

Makerere University acts as facilitator for the network and more information can be found at: <http://networkict4edu.org>



Electronic Information for Libraries – EIFL

Spider partner since 2013

Project: Open Access: knowledge sharing and sustainable scholarly communication in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Most research is published in commercial journals, but high subscription costs mean that users in developing countries are disadvantaged in their access to these journals. Open access is the immediate, online, free and unrestricted availability of peer-reviewed research literature. It provides the means to maximize the visibility and use of research output.

Working in collaboration with libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) enables access to knowledge for education, learning, research and sustainable community development.

The project educated researchers, students, research managers and policy makers, librarians and health workers about changing scholarly communication landscapes and has advocated for the adoption of Open Access policies by research funding agencies, universities and research organizations. It has also built up capacities to set up Open Access repositories and to publish Open Access journals.

<http://www.eifl.net/>

Making research more relevant to the world

“A lot of research has been undertaken over the years in Uganda and many seeming breakthroughs arrived at, however these have not been disseminated and subsequently have not added value to the lives of Ugandans” said Dr. J. C. Muyingo, Minister of State-Higher Education in Uganda.

This revealing statement was made at the very first national Open Access conference in Uganda, which EIFL co-hosted with the Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL) in 2013.

Dr. Muyingo called upon the National Council for Higher Education and Makerere University to put in place a system that ensures that all publicly funded research becomes freely and openly available – asserting that Ugandan academia cannot afford to be left behind. He encouraged researchers to publish in Open Access journals, and institutions to consider Open Access publications in promotion and tenure evaluation.

“Free online availability of research literature, Open Access, is a powerful solution to the barriers that researchers in developing and transition countries face in trying to access and share critical research that can improve people’s lives.”

Free online availability of research literature, Open Access, is a powerful solution to the barriers that researchers in developing and transition countries face in trying to access and share critical research that can improve people’s lives.

The “Open access: knowledge sharing and sustainable scholarly communication in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda” Project educates researchers and students about changing scholarly communication landscapes and advocates for the adoption of Open Access policies and mandates by research funding agencies, universities and research organisations.

The project is implemented in partnership with EIFL partner consortia: Kenya Library & Information Services Consortium (KLISC), Consortium of Tanzania Universities and Research Libraries (COTUL) and Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL).

When the project first began in 2013, Open Access was still a relatively new concept and a variety of different strategies were taken to engage stakeholders in the process. Some of the initiatives included capacity building events; awareness raising and advocacy workshops; setting up institutional and national advocacy groups; and launching campaigns to encourage use and reuse of Open Access content in education, science and research. As a result of this work, over 100 institutions participated in the project and a number went on to launch Open Access repositories and publish Open Access journals.

In 2013, there were 24 fully operational Open Access repositories in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and 27 repositories were under construction (a 527% increase since the beginning of the project). And the number of documents deposited in repositories continues to grow. Eight institutional Open Access journal publishing platforms were in the process of being set up.

These collective achievements with Open Access mean that research that would have previously been hidden and buried is now available, researchers and academics can publish their work online and have it seen around the world more easily, and the latest research results are now available to those who are interested – doctors and patients, farmers and entrepreneurs, educators and students.

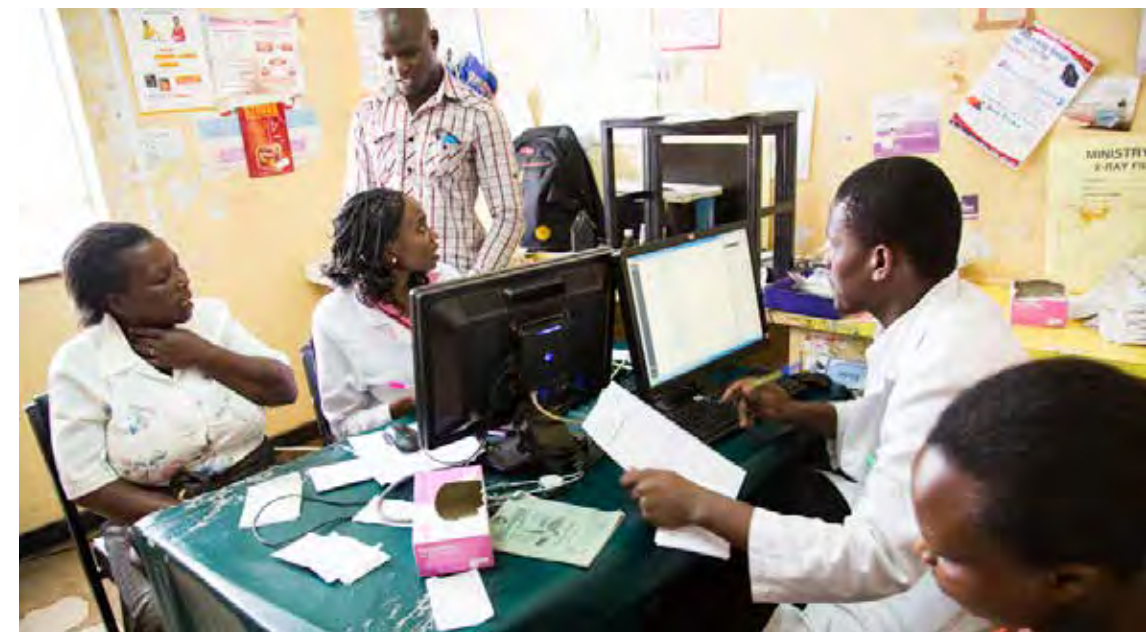


Photo: EIFL.

Improving surgical skills through Open Access research

Dr. Gerald Nderitu, the medical superintendent at Embu Provincial General Hospital, also uses Open Access medical research to help his patients. An experienced surgeon of thirteen years, Nderitu says he often relies on Open Access research output to help his patients.

“It is a challenge to work in rural settings as a doctor, because you are often alone. So when you have a patient, you don’t have a colleague to discuss the patient with”, he explains. “When I have a patient and I am not familiar with their condition, I will go back to the Internet and update my knowledge using PubMed Central”, he says, an Open Access free full-text archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature containing more than 3.2 million articles.



Rosemary Otando, Systems Librarian at the University of Nairobi Library in Kenya won the Electronic Publishing Trust for Development (EPT) Open Access award 2013 for her leadership in establishing the University of Nairobi Open Access Policy, OA repositories in the country.

“Having Open Access provide this research really helps to improve my work, as I am able to get updated information on surgical techniques and patient management quickly”, he continues. “If I have to do an operation, before the surgery I will go back to the Internet, download a video on how it has been done, and it really helps to refresh my skills”.

Rosemary Otando, a systems librarian at the University of Nairobi and EIFL Country and Open Access coordinator, was one of the organizers of the workshop that educated health workers like Mukami and Nderitu about the concept of Open Access.

“If you do a lot of research and you are not communicating or disseminating this information, then it becomes useless”, Otando explains. “Whatever we write and whatever we publish, we also need to share it, just the same way other people are sharing with us”.

The workshop, aimed at improving health research dissemination and maximize visibility and impact of health research output, was part of the “Open Access: knowledge sharing and sustainable scholarly communication in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda” Project.

As a result of the project, 37 regional, national and institutional Open Access awareness raising and advocacy workshops in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have been hosted for faculty, students, research administrators, policy makers, medical doctors, nurses, public health workers, NGOs and agricultural researchers. The events have contributed to increased understanding and awareness of Open Access in all three countries.

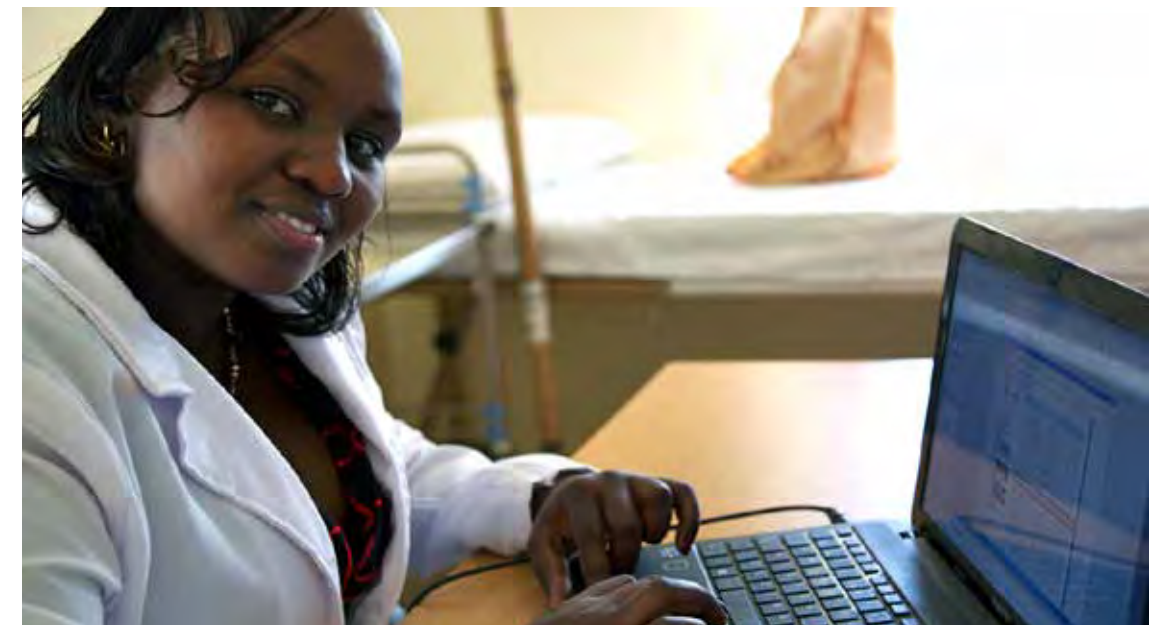
Power of Open Access

Connecting doctors and health care workers to critical health research in Kenya

By Amy Chyan

“We have challenges, a lot of challenges in Kenya”, says Dr. Bessie Mukami, a general physician who serves at Embu General Provincial Hospital, a relatively large teaching hospital on the outskirts of the town of Embu in eastern Kenya. “You have, maybe, one doctor to 10 000 people”.

A newly trained doctor, Mukami grew up in Embu herself and knew at a young age that she wanted to be a doctor. Her relative was plagued by an illness, and



Dr. Bessie Mukami, photo: EIFL

she wanted to help find a cure. Now, she chooses to work in the public healthcare sector, giving back to her community and the people of Embu.

“Africa is growing,” she says, “so we have to be the people that grow it”.

As Mukami speaks, her fingers click the keys on a laptop, moving between pages of medical academic journals made available through Open Access. It has become a powerful solution to the barriers that researchers in developing and transition countries face when trying to access and share critical research that can improve people’s lives.

Mukami explains that subscribing to medical journals is very expensive, and in rural clinics, it can be difficult for doctors to consult each other and share knowledge because of the long distance between hospitals. Through Open Access, important books and medical journals Mukami needs (like the clinical guidelines used by physicians) are all available instantly and at no cost.

“Instead of calling [other doctors for information], the information is open and available, and you search for what you really want”, Mukami says. “It’s actually solving one of the biggest problems I’ve had”.



Photo: EIFL.

Opening up Kenyan research to the world

Because of the project, more and more universities in East Africa are now considering Open Access as a tool to increase the visibility of their research, and Open Access policies are being developed and implemented to strengthen and enhance dissemination of research output. Today there are 31 fully operational Open Access repositories and another 29 repositories are under development in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. 14 Open Access journals have been published and 18 are in the process of becoming Open Access.

“It’s opening up our research, the research that we are doing in our universities, making it available to others”, explains Prof. Lucy W. Irungu, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Production and Extension at the University of Nairobi.

The University of Nairobi recently adopted an Open Access policy and launched an Open Access repository. The policy has been instrumental in helping to populate the university digital repository with 69 867 new documents, opening up a wealth of knowledge from Kenyan researchers to the world.

“The research we do is supposed to be for the public good. We are being funded by public institutions and donors, and I think it’s good to be able to share”, says Irungu.

Mukami, who is going on to her fourth year as a doctor, hopes to return to university to specialize in epidemiology, the study of how often diseases occur in different groups of people and why. “I want to learn more about the causes of diseases and their management”, she says. “I want to be able to help eradicate the common tropical infectious diseases [in Kenya] that can be vaccinated and totally eradicated through health education, proper hygiene and healthy behaviours”.

Mukami has become a strong advocate and user of Open Access. She believes it is particularly useful for doctors in Kenya and other developing countries. “Having the journals and books, it helps a lot to know where the world is at. At least you’re not in your own corner”.

Nderitu agrees. He smiles as he remembers why, despite the challenges; he wanted to become a public health doctor in the first place. “It’s good when you get a patient, and you can treat this patient correctly. The look on their face when you have sorted out their [health] problem. There is nothing better than that”, he concludes.



Fundación La Paz

Spider partner since 2013

Project: Pilot Project for the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in 3 Public Educational Units of La Paz municipality.

Despite the push from the government by providing computers and training guides to make better use of ICT resources in schools, blackboard and chalk are still the key tools for teaching at Bolivian public schools. Fundación La Paz is a non-government organisation working with education projects in collaboration with municipal education authorities.

The project has trained and enabled 100 teachers in the use of software pedagogically within the subjects of mathematic, language, history, and natural sciences. Teachers have designed and developed 1 200 specific applications to be used in teaching and learning in schools within three public education units.

<http://networkict4edu.org/projects/la-paz>

Young people empower themselves through ICT, the Bolivian challenge.

Representative students of three education units share their experiences and advice about the worthy use of ICT.

Fundación La Paz, carrying out a project with students of three education units in La Paz, Bolivia, organized a World Café roundtable to discuss ICT in education with 36 teenagers from 16 to 19 years of age, who are in the last phases of their high school experience. This was done during a morning filled with games, food, and more importantly an interchange of knowledge and viewpoints from people who have been born in a world where handling ICT is mandatory.

The quotes in the following article are taken from the bulletin board where anonymous comments could be posted at the end of the World Café roundtable.

The experience, was used to determine the students' interest in technology, whether they believed they have useful information related to ICT in their schools, what suggestions the students had on “what to learn in computer science,” and how the Internet and social media impact education.

The students of these three education units (René Barrientos, Dora Schmidt, and Copabana) share a background of families of low income, and have a lot of difficulty accessing ICT in their everyday lives, but also demonstrate optimism and are open to the extensive use of technology in their schools. All of them are in high school and have learned the power of social media. They responded on topics that could baffle most of the adults in our midst.

A little bit of context: here in Bolivia computer science is not a regular subject in the public schools, so some students don't have access to learning



Photo: World café roundtable participants. Photo: Fundación La Paz.

computer-related subjects, and most don't even have computers at home.

Now, through the activities of Fundación La Paz in association with Spider and the local government they have computers labs in their schools. And of course, they have semi-regular contact with technology given that they play in the Internet cafés and use Facebook on a regular basis.

“What I'm saying is that technology in education has changed the world. We need to involve ICT throughout education in Bolivia.”

“What I'm saying is that technology in education has changed the world. We need to involve ICT throughout education in Bolivia.”

Considering all the factors, the students concluded various things, including that the education here in Bolivia needs a new vision using technology as an educational tool and the Internet should be a path to consolidate it, and that it is urgent that our government sets more effort in equipping and maintaining the ICT-related spaces in schools, also giving more training to the teachers and more opportunities to the students.

The most hope-inspiring aspect of the encounter is that the students have the total willingness to expand their knowledge in ICT, and they even are asking the authorities to expand the hours of computer science they can receive in school. This is remarkable, especially in light of the fact that there are few students who want to have more classes in a very tight schedule.

“I want Internet and a projector implemented, because it is very necessary at our school”.

“They should put faster Internet in our school, everyone should have access to it, and also as the teacher has indicated we should improve comfort and infrastructure like in Chile and Argentina in the videos they showed here. Also tablet computers should be given to the students. I always wanted a computer in the school”.

They were really happy about this kind of activity being supported by external cooperation, and they want to participate more actively in future projects.

At the end, after a heated debate, the students came to other conclusions. First, that even if we gave all the ICT tools to them we can't replace human creativity and thinking and that most of the dangers of the Internet come from the users. Also, that social media can be harmful.

“In Facebook there are more bad things than good things, especially on the exposure of your personal stuff”.

“The internet is good because it helps us to complement our studies, training our minds”.

Wanting to participate further and expressing thanks for the activity, the students kept on talking about technology and the challenges awaiting them. The future is full of opportunities but we need to double or triple our efforts now if we want future generations to respond to the challenge.

“I thought it was excellent, this interplay of ideas among all peers from other schools. I loved this project which started new thoughts for all of us. In conclusion computer science is a huge help for human kind. I liked it a lot”.

We ended the day with a lot of ideas on what to apply in a unified curriculum for the public schools here in Bolivia. This is just the beginning but with more work from our side, we will have students and teachers capable of using all kinds of software, from word processors to spread sheets to photo editing tools, and maybe even more advanced software like AutoCAD or 3d Max. The future is in our hands.



Photo: Fundación La Paz.



Makerere University

Spider partner since 2013

Project: Makerere MobiClass

To improve the quality of education, universities need to provide access to courses and study material for students in many diverse ways. Thus, online mobile educational material and communication becomes essential. Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda is one of the premier universities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Makerere University's pilot project, an android app was developed, modified and eventually made accessible to the students. A total of five courses in different subjects were implemented. Teachers of the courses were trained in mobile learning and instructional design in order to develop material for the mobile platform, as compared with the existing computer-based learning management system.

<http://mak.ac.ug/>

Mobile Learning

For nearly 100 years at Makerere University the mode of teaching and learning has been face-to-face. The distance learning mode was introduced about 20 years ago. Despite the introduction of the distance learning mode, the main teaching and learning mode has remained the same; face-to-face. This mode is so entrenched that attempts to try other learning modes have been faced with both resistance and a lot of excuses. This mode of teaching and learning unfortunately tends to give credence to the learning theory of behaviourism since the students often assume that the lecturers will be able to provide the bulk of the knowledge they require in their academic advancement. Lecturers meet students in a lecture theatre and teach them as well as dictate notes for them. Students become consumers of knowledge, thus stifling critical thinking and encouraging laziness.

Some students don't care about going for lectures and appear only for exams and tests. The advent of ICT is forcing a paradigm shift in this kind of attitude. Information can be obtained by both the students and the lecturers from the knowledge bank. Therefore the trend cannot be stifled if those who are used to face-to-face method of teaching continue with the status quo.

With the development of the Moodle (Mobile learning) platform at Makerere there has been a fundamental shift in the attempt to embrace ICT into the teaching and learning environment. Some colleges have been very fast to embrace it while others are dragging.

But now with the introduction of the Moodle-based mobile learning platform for teaching and learning, many lecturers are quite reluctant to assimilate. To begin with, most of them do not own smart phones, while their students do. This contradiction is challenging the learning environment or in other words turning the process of transferring knowledge upside down.

Some lecturers are still inclined to the old traditional way of teaching students, and those aged 55 and above feel they cannot adapt easily to the new method of teaching using a mobile phone. They feel students will be smarter than them. There is also the issue of data bundles i.e portions of data capacity for mobile Internet access. One has to have data bundles on their phones everyday which makes it expensive. The life span of a battery charge is short and this is a headache to the user. However, smart phones are here to stay, and who will win the battle as we utilize it for education? That is the next challenge and time will tell.



The Open University of Tanzania

Spider partner since 2013

Project: Capacity Building in ICT Pedagogical Development and Multimedia Integration in Teaching and Learning

At teacher colleges there is an identified lack of teaching modules on how ICT can be pedagogically used in different subjects. Also, there is a lack of the knowledge and skills required to develop engaging online courses that integrate content with relevant multimedia facets, as well as limited amount of multimedia learning material and resources that cater to people with disabilities.

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) is the largest higher learning institution in Tanzania and one of the first universities in East Africa to offer Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

The project has equipped educational technologists as trainers-of-trainers with multimedia, instructions design and ICT pedagogical integration skills, and as tutors at teacher training colleges with the knowledge on how to integrate multimedia and ICT in their practices. OUT online courses have been enriched with multimedia to cater to students with special needs.

<http://www.out.ac.tz/>

Capacity Building for OUT Academic Staff and Teacher Colleges

OUT has a Learning Management System (OUTLeMS)¹. The system has 202 different courses in different formats. Most of the courses were in text format, and through the Spider Project, five workshops were conducted for OUT academic staff on multimedia technology integration. It was through these workshops that 50 online courses become partially integrated with multimedia and are still in the process of being completed.

One of the challenges experienced during this phase, especially with the workshops conducted for academic staff, was the poor attendance due to the OUT calendar and their daily schedules which made them have to come and go during the workshop. Due to this a closed monitor showing the university calendar was kept and it was possible to organise a workshop away from the working place to one of the OUT regional centres.

However, for the teacher colleges the attendance was 100 %, with good cooperation from the people at the Ministry of Education with the project coordination.

Staff that were trained are already benefitting from the added skills, in particular to help students with special needs, as illustrated in the story below.

Inclusive Learning at the Open University of Tanzania

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) is characterised by different kinds of students who not only ascribe to diverse learning styles but who also have sensory deficits like visual impairment. In the past, OUT students had access to online learning environments and although this was a celebrated milestone in itself, the fact that the online content only existed in plain text served as a drawback. In response to this challenge, OUT included as



OUT Academic staff attending workshop at a regional centre.

¹ The system can be accessed through <http://elms.out.ac.tz>

“Although the project greatly benefited OUT students at large, it most assuredly gave advantage to students with special needs.



Tutors from 8 Teacher Colleges attended capacity building workshop.



Visually impaired students receiving ICT Training.

part of the project the integration of multimedia aspects in teaching and learning practices. Now OUT students are privileged to have lecturers that are knowledgeable on how to intertwine ICT in the learning process and develop multimedia facets.

Although the project greatly benefited OUT students at large, it most assuredly gave advantage to students with special needs. Visually impaired students now have the opportunity to attend ICT shorts courses for people with special needs. They can sit in front of monitor and be like the ordinary layman because they can now read e-mails, conduct research on the net and engage in various forums in a global environment. Where previously visually impaired students relied solely on Braille material, they can now access their learning content in audio format. The video element in the newly enriched online content will also stimulate students with a strongly visual learning style to appreciate and engage more with their content. The multimedia development and ICT integration in teaching and learning project has opened the OUT learning doors a bit wider to include the previously disadvantaged group.

Additional Spider Projects

Being a Spider partner many times mean being part of a network. This is an important part of Spider's work and we believe that the network greatly benefits its members, making a total that is greater than the sum of its individual members.

Even so there are some project partners that cannot be provided with a supporting network structure yet. Their stories are shared here.



Centro de Estudios y Apoyo al Desarrollo Local – CEADL

Centre for Studies and Support to Local Development

Spider partner since 2012

Project: ICT for the Construction of Democracy

The project ICT for Construction of Democracy is about informing and enabling the general Bolivian public on topics such as citizens' rights, socio-political and cultural rights. The main target group has been young people that has historically been marginalized and not had the opportunity to take part in or make decisions in society.

The project established participation platforms and defined themes of interest for the participants locally. This was used to increase the technical abilities of the participants and to train them in diverse topics such as human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, local development, citizen formation and leadership.

<http://www.ceadl.org.bo/>

Interview with Ysaura Quispe Díaz, El Alto, Bolivia, participant in the network “Red Vías de Intercambio y Razonamiento de Unión Social” (Red Virus) – part of the project ICT for Construction of Democracy by CEADL

I studied Linguistics and Languages at the university and I really enjoy working with children and young people, coaching them in networks discussing different topics. I started working as a leader at a community centre where I belonged to the dance and theatre group. After a few years I became part of the workshops for human rights and sexual and reproductive rights at my local educational centre Yunguyo. Since then I have been very active, and I have joined many seminars and workshops. I also represented my city at the youth parliament and lately I also have volunteered to activate more young people in my area. I want to give something back to these alternative initiatives which formed me as a female leader. They really focus on topics important to me and other young people and our reality today.



Photo: CEADL

“I want to give something back to these alternative initiatives which formed me as a female leader.

These spaces give you the opportunity to express what you really think and ask questions. We can also exchange knowledge with each other and strengthen ourselves. In my case it was at the local centre for studies and local development where the coaches motivated me as a young woman to become a leader.

I have dreamed about becoming a teacher and working with children and young people, taking part in political movements and helping the population in need. Now I am part of this process and I am reaching my dreams.



Ysaura Quispe Diaz.

The best anecdote I can remember from my earlier experiences as a young leader is the one when I represented my organization at a meeting with young people from Nicaragua and Bolivia. Then I was able to look at my own country from the outside and I could see all the beautiful things that Bolivia has and value my country which is rich in culture, and socially and geographically so diverse. Because when you withdraw into yourself the surroundings start to look monotonous but when you get this opportunity to reach out you start to reflect on and value all that you have.

Our youth organization wants to learn more and then socialize and replicate our knowledge with our peers at the spaces where we meet.

The organization where I am active today is “Red Virus” and it has a coordinator, and representatives from the municipalities. Our coordinator is chosen in a democratic and participative way so that she really can represent us. We meet every two weeks and sometimes once a week.

As an organization we are part of the project ICT for Construction of Democracy with CEADL and we work for the participation of young people in politics, civic journalism and the use of social media. We teach how to influence public opinion through a good use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc. We are also in the process of creating a web page for our organization where we can share with other youth organizations and coordinate activities. We want to use technology so that technology does not use us.

“Technology is always progressing and we cannot fall behind.

Technology is always progressing and we cannot fall behind. We need to enter these new scenes to learn and teach young people about human rights. We need to form alliances with other organizations in Bolivia and in other countries of the world. We need to gather common strengths and raise our voices together.

Junior ICT Expert Story – Qing Gong

Spider and the international student organisation AIESEC has collaborated on the Junior ICT Expert programme since 2009. Throughout this period ICT students and recent graduates have added capacity to Spider partners in various ways. Placements have been diverse as our partners have very different needs, but knowledge sharing has always been an essential part.

The Open Institute of Cambodia welcomed KTH graduate Qing Gong to contribute to their work by leading a system development project for a reporting tool. Both parties were so happy with the placement that it was extended from the initial six months to a full year.

<http://aiesec.se/>



Qing (middle) at Battambang barcamp.

Qing Gong's Junior ICT Expert Programme Story

With Spider's Junior ICT Expert programme, I spent one fabulous year in Cambodia. The experience made me grow both professionally and personally. Professionally, I worked with the task that I've always wanted to work with. Personally, it has changed my life and my view of the world.

My task in Cambodia was to work with the local NGO, Open Institute. Open Institute is an ICT-based organisation which solely or in cooperation with other organisations works to enhance the development of Cambodian society and provide services to Cambodian people. For example, they added Khmer language to Google Translate. They offer the infrastructure of IVR systems which, for instance, can provide health information to rural communities. I am very glad that I can work with such an organisation that truly helps people and makes an impact.

My work in Open Institute was to lead a small system development project. The objective of the project was to facilitate the information flow in Cambodia. Our task was to develop an anonymous reporting tool with a mobile app and a web platform. I was involved in the project from the start. In the beginning, my task was to understand the basic need of such systems and study the

functionality of other tools. We looked closely into the Ushahidi system and made the decision to reuse their database but develop the rest of the system on our own. We talked to the system's potential users and worked closely with our main stakeholders to gather requirements and keep updating them.

“Personally, I feel that I am a different person after this year spent in Cambodia. I view myself and the world around me differently.”

My tasks changed as the project progressed. Apart from updating and communicating requirements, I took the role of project leader. Among other things, I introduced some simple agile project management methods, e.g. daily standup meetings, weekly reports. I found that leading a small project is very different from leading a big one, and learnt to adapt complicated methods to simple ones. After simple prototyping, I also got the chance to work with user interface design, which I have never worked with before. I find the task very interesting. When the development approached its end, I was involved in introducing our system in a conference. To do this, I learnt video making with the help of my colleagues and made a video which demonstrates how our system works. I am very satisfied with the variety of tasks I was able to work with. And I am very grateful that the organisation has an open atmosphere which encourages us to try to work in the way we want to.

Talking about my colleagues, I feel lucky to work with two very talented and hardworking Cambodian girls. They had their education in India and were very responsible and always took initiative when it was necessary. Besides their work in Open Institute, they also used their spare time and weekends to do some work for the UN. Since their work load was quite heavy, we tried different ways to give them more energy and refresh their minds at work. For example, we tried to do several minutes' exercise and yoga after our daily meeting.

Personally, I feel that I am a different person after this year spent in Cambodia. I view myself and the world around me differently. Now when I look at my previous life, I feel that it has faded away and lies far from me. During this year, I met many good friends that I shared the experience with. I met many interesting people who have given me fresh ideas and inspirations. I developed close friendships with some of them and they deeply influenced me.



To send me from Sweden to Cambodia, Spider cooperated with AIESEC. When I arrived, a girl from AIESEC picked me up at the airport and gave me good practical tips about living in Phnom Penh. Later I was introduced to all the other AIESEC interns; we formed a Phnom Penh family. We met up regularly and had trips around Cambodia together.

Cambodian people are very nice and genuine. They make jokes with each other and laugh a lot. It happened several times that I was touched by them. I will give one example. In Cambodia, people think it is very not safe to be out at night, especially for girls. And they consider night to be after 8:00 pm. In our organisation, if we are going to have a company party, all the girls will leave and go home after 8:00 pm. Once I went out with a Cambodian girl to buy a dress for attending a colleague's wedding. We had dinner together and it got late. When we were ready to go home, it was already after 8:00 pm. But she insisted on driving me home with her motorbike even though she was very scared of being out at night. She told me that she would be worried and blame herself if anything ever happened to me.



Open Cambodia participants.



Qing and other students in traditional dresses.

Finally, I will tell something about the city, Phnom Penh. It appeared to be a very different place than I had expected. Apart from the surprisingly messy traffic and the fact that there's no public transportation, the city surprised me with its openness and the level of internationality. Being a Chinese myself, I am impressed that in spite of the country's level of poverty and being governed by the same government for a long time, they have full access to Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other international media. There are also many international NGOs in Phnom Penh and that formed a big expat community, I felt like I was living in two different worlds. There are places where I can experience the local Asian culture, and there are places where I can find a very genuine western culture. I like this kind of mixture in the city.

If you ever have a chance to participate in Spider's intern programme, please don't miss the opportunity!

“If you ever have a chance to participate in Spider's intern programme, please don't miss the opportunity!”

This publication will give you an overview of results from Spider projects initiated in 2013 and 2014 in collaboration with project partners in Bolivia, Cambodia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. In partnership with local organisations we have supported innovative projects in democracy, education and health. We have chosen “stories” as a format to capture the voices of our project partners as well as the ultimate beneficiaries of their efforts: ordinary people in different social settings. These stories are told to describe, reflect upon and communicate experiences, knowledge, and lessons learned.

Spider - The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions, is a resource center in Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) at Stockholm University. Spider's mission is to support the use of ICT to improve accountability, education and health in developing regions. Spider establishes collaborations, shares knowledge and builds capacity through networks globally. Our vision is an interconnected world where ICT enables everyone to have their voices heard and their needs met.