

Social Media, Local Governance and Development in Uganda

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Contents

Abstract	1
Key Messages	2
Introduction	4
Social Media in Uganda: An Overview	5
a. Social Media and Traditional Media	6
b. Social Media, Political Mobilization and Communication	6
c. Social Media for Civic Engagements	8
Uganda's E-Governance Landscape	10
Social Media and Local Governance	12
Local Governments in Uganda Ignoring Social Media at their Own Peril.	13
Case Studies of Project Promoting the Use of Social Media for Improving Local Governance in Uganda	14
Focus of the trainings	16
Insights from the #SocialMedia4LG Project Review	17
Recommendations to improve future trainings on social media for local government officials	20
An overview of the online presence of selected Local Governments in Uganda	21
Social Media for Improving Public Service Delivery, Transparency and Accountability in Uganda	23
Sectoral Analysis of Social Media for Improving Health and Educational Services.	26
i. Health	26
ii. Education	29
Are Websites a Missed Opportunity for Uganda's Local Governments?	32
Case Study: Government Citizen Interaction Centre (GCIC)	34
The Political Economy of Social Media and Governance in Uganda	36
Social Media Policy Frameworks in Uganda	36
a. Open Data Policy	36
b. The Access to Information Act (2005) and Social Media	38
c. ICTs for Disability Policy	39
d. Revenue Stream Versus #ThisTaxMustGo	41
Social Media Shutdown during the 2016 Presidential Elections	42
A look into the Uganda Social Media Guide	43
Social Media for Better Local Governance: A Case Study of Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA)	45
Using Social Media to Improve Water Service Delivery in Uganda: NWSC	50

Abstract

This research paper aims to advance our understanding of social media and its growing relevance for promoting development in general and improving local governance and public service delivery in particular. It explores *why* we need social media to improve local governance; *how* local government units in Uganda can use social media to promote citizen-government engagement and civic participation; *what* we can learn from KCCA, one of the government units actively using social media and how the organization can improve its social media performance. As a key lesson, the paper draws heavily from a recently

concluded ***“Social Media for Improving Local Governance”*** Project implemented by the Centre for Media Literacy and Community Development (CEMCO) in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The primary audiences of the paper are local government officials, various government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), development workers, academics as well as policy makers who are increasingly confronted with the necessary realities of effectively and efficiently adopting better communication strategies to improve governance at all levels.



Key Messages

Active and deliberate involvement of citizens in decision making process is a key development prerequisite.

When ordinary citizens are; actively involved in governance and decision making processes; able to hold their leaders to account; sensitized about government programmes and major policies, etc. service delivery improves, citizens trust their governments more, and the quality of life improves among other positive development outcomes.

Social Media is increasingly bridging the government – citizen divide – and improving local governance

In the recent times, social media has become an invaluable tool for social, economic, and human rights development in Uganda, and Africa at large. Different groups of people ranging from the citizenry, media house, CSOs and the government itself have embraced various forms of social media for expressing themselves, disseminating information and doing advocacy campaigns. Social media facilitates digital governance by providing a platform for citizen participation in governance processes and facilitating channels for improved public service delivery. Digital local governance involves local government units posting online content to inform, sensitize and mobilize citizens.

The social media political Economy Framework in Uganda both promotes and stifles civic engagement.

Government policies and legal frameworks like the open data policy, ICT Policy, Access to information Act among others present opportunities for effective social media engagement on the one hand; but other actions and policies like social media tax, social media clampdowns during elections on the other hand continue to be big stumbling blocks in attempts to promote constructive civic engagements online.

KCCA is championing the use of social media for improving local governance in Uganda.

KCCA provides a classic example of how social media can be used to expand the scope of citizen-government engagement while improving service delivery and public accountabilities at the same time. The highly appealing, interactive and instant feedback nature of social media made KCCA to adopt them as a communication strategy as soon as it was established in 2010. KCCA runs several social media platforms, which are produced and maintained 24/7 by KCCA digital communication team under Public and Corporate Affairs' Press Office.

Recommendations for Effective Use of Social to Improve Local Governance in Uganda

For Central Government

- The Central government should enforce the implementation and localization of the social media policy.
- Attempts must be made to ensure that the key local government leaderships understand the critical essence of social media as a tool for public communication.

For Local Governments

- Local government units should integrate social media communication and capacity building in their annual budgets.
- Focusing on the use of WhatsApp for improving local governance in key.
- District Planners and Information Officers are key points of social media communication at the local level.

For Development Partners

- All local government units should be supported to develop their own social media strategies using the government of Uganda social media guide for MDAs as a blueprint.
- There should be constant follow-up of social media trainings targeting local government officials.
- There is need to include the political wing of local Government in the future social media trainings.

For Kampala City Council Authority

- A social media agency of international repute could be contracted to review and offer recommendations for excellent performance.
- KCCA should also be holding regular quarterly meetings to review the effectiveness of the various social media channels
- KCCA and other local governments should always make council meetings and other very important events live on Facebook.
- KCCA should build an automated system for collecting data from social media.
- KCCA should improve on its technical competence in handling antivirus and antimalware.
- KCCA could open social media accounts, for example, Twitter accounts for each of the department and each of its divisions/ departments.
- KCCA should also encourage city dwellers to make their complaints and requests through their social media sites in case they cannot physically go to the city hall.

Introduction

When ordinary citizens are; actively involved in governance and decision making processes; able to hold their leaders to account; sensitized about government programmes and major policies, etc. service delivery improves, citizens trust their governments more, and the quality of life improves among other positive development outcomes. Unfortunately, for many countries, particularly in Uganda, the level of citizens' participation in governance and decision making processes remains markedly low.

Action Aid Uganda, one of the leading organizations championing civic engagement highlights that the "low capacity of the citizens of Uganda to demand and hold leaders to account for their actions and limited or non-involvement of the governed in decision making"¹ remains a key development challenge. Actions to address this problem can include; building the capacity of citizens to actively participate in decision making processes; putting in place systems and mechanisms to ensure public accountability and transparency among others².

Fundamentally, citizens have a legal right to participate in local government service delivery processes. In fact, this is clearly spelt in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda³, for instance, Article 38 of the Constitution of Uganda guarantees citizen participation by providing that every Ugandan has the right to participate in the affairs of government, and to influence government policies. Article 41 also guarantees the right of access to information, which is a key prerequisite for participation⁴.

Many efforts to expand the demand and widen the scope of citizens' participation in governance processes have been done and still being implemented by both state and non-state actors. For instance, organizations like the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung with its dense networks of local civil society organizations traverse rural areas across the entire country promoting civic education. Many of such civic education programmes play key roles in sensitizing citizens about their rights, the roles and responsibilities of their leaders and what they can do hold them accountable. During election period, government has also runs a number of campaigns especially through print, radio and broadcast media to encourage citizens to vote.

While such efforts are commendable and crucial for creating a critical mass of informed citizenry, a plethora of challenges still abound. For instance, traditional vehicles to mobilize, organize and conduct grassroots sensitizing campaigns are costly both in terms of financial, physical efforts and time-constraints. To address these challenges, technology is opening up more spaces that expand both the demand and supply side of participatory governance. On the one side, the government is embracing digital opportunities to sensitize the public (albeit with slow pace) and on the other side, citizens are actively using such digital platforms to engage the government.

One of the opportunities ushered in by the advancement of technology is in the domain of social media engagement. In the recent times, social media has become an invaluable tool for social, economic, and human rights development in Uganda, and

1 Action Aid (2017). *5th Uganda Strategy Paper*

2 *ibid*

3 GoU (1995). *The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*

4 ISER (2018). *Citizen Participation in Local Government Service Delivery Processes in Uganda*

Africa at large⁵. Different groups of people ranging from the citizenry, media house, CSOs and the government itself have embraced various forms of social media for expressing themselves, disseminating information

and advocacy⁶. Generally, social media has emerged as an important civic-technology tool promoting e-governance, enforcing effective communication and enabling better advocacy.

Social Media in Uganda: An Overview

Blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, social networking, multimedia sharing services, content syndication and virtual worlds constitute the foundations of social media, a Web 2.0 innovation that encourages user-generated content and allows the content to be shared between and among multiple networks. Social media comprises a set of various activities that integrate technology, social interaction and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio. Social media transcends the boundaries of tools & technologies to facilitate human interaction and communication. Social media platforms allow anyone with internet access to connect with other people and publish their own content. Through it, we receive information and interaction with each other. Social Media tools permit instantaneous human interactions and inter-connectivity across space and time⁷.

In Uganda, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp usage continue to proliferate as their dominance in news sourcing and news breaking becomes paramount. By Dec 2018, over 18 million people had internet access, representing 47.4 percent of the population⁸. As of Dec 2018, 1M Ugandans had active Facebook accounts. The growth in online engagement in Uganda is occasioned by a plethora of local and international factors. For instance, in 2012, the

United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution calling its member states to promote and facilitate access to the internet. Access to internet was subsequently made a human right in 2016. In Uganda, several ICT infrastructural projects have also been implemented, even in the countryside. Take for instance, the currently ongoing 4G broadband connectivity initiative supported by Facebook meant to heighten the speed of internet and the pace of its penetration in the Northern part of the country⁹. The rate of access to and use of mobile phones now stands at over 85%, with about 21.9 million Ugandans now owning at least one mobile phone with the number of users of social media apps constantly growing. The falling costs of smartphones and data have greatly contributed to the increase and access of social media in Uganda.

On social media, many Ugandans comment on anything that crosses their path, with opinions as varied as their sources, connecting with strangers and making new friends as well as enemies, lauding heroes and vilifying villains¹⁰. Globally, social media usage continues to soar, for instance, on average 1.49 billion people log on to their Facebook accounts¹¹. It is estimated that the economic impact of social media on organizations could reach US\$1 trillion, which is gained from efficient communication and collaboration within and

5 Enywaru (2018). *What does the Social Media Tax mean for Civic Tech and Governance? Pollicy Blog Article*

6 Ibid.

7 Kaplan, A.M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and Opportunities of Social Media. Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.

8 Post, *Broadcasting and Telecommunications Market & Industry Q2 Report, 2018*

<https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Communication-Sector-Performance-for-the-Quarter-ending-June-2018.pdf>

9 NITA-U(2012) *e-Government Master plan*

10 *Reality Check: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA on Political Communication and Civic Engagement in Uganda*

11 *Global social networks ranked by number of users* <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

across organizations¹². While the Ugandan government has taken some positive steps towards increasing access and reducing the cost of connectivity, for instance through the Rural Communication Development Fund (RCDF) by Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), some interventions have

greatly controlled access and infringed on privacy rights, for instance, the introduction of social media tax in 2018 and the shutdown of social media sites during the 2016 presidential campaigns.

a. Social Media and Traditional Media

In just a short span, social media has evolved to the extent that it gives accounts to the events as they happen. It has disrupted the traditional media and their modus operandi as we know it. According to William Tayebwa, the emergence of social media platforms, notably Twitter and Facebook, has presented several opportunities to conventional/traditional journalism, such as improved access to online resources and the sharing of information, despite professional impediments such as the instantaneous dissemination of unsubstantiated information that may turn out to be outright false or defamatory¹³. But as Tayebwa stresses, conscientious journalism institutions can still exploit the opportunities that social media offer by creating online platforms to source news but also as distribution channels while being cognizant of the pitfalls by, for instance, instituting mechanisms for the verification of online fake news¹⁴.

Recently, Kin Karisa, the Chairman of Uganda Broadcasters Association and the CEO of Next Media Group, one of the conglomerates with the biggest stakes in traditional media in Uganda made a clarion call for media houses to play a leading role in stumping out fake news. He noted that the proliferation of fake news is like a cancer eating away the core of the credibility of mainstream media industry. Thus, "traditional media organizations should have gate-keeping mechanisms aimed at keeping out fake news by verifying information before it is shared with the public", he suggested¹⁵.

b. Social Media, Political Mobilization and Communication

Meanwhile, social media's significance in influencing political communication and activism continues to grow. While only a relatively small percentage of the population

has access to social media, the influence of their hashtags, tweets, memes, posts, and images in political and social campaigns cannot be neglected. For politicians, social

¹² (Chui et al., 2012)

¹³ KAS (2017). *Assessing The Impact Of Social Media on Political Communication and Civic Engagement In Uganda . Reality Check Publication Series*

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Karisa, K (2018). *Let's Stump out Fake News. Daily Monitor Newspaper of June 2018*

¹⁶ Ibid

media has emerged as a key visibility capital and political agenda trendsetter. The discovery of this new media as a political mobilization and organization tool did not only give political elites a platform to showcase and propagate their ideologies, but it also offered ordinary citizenry the opportunity to actively participate in political discussions and interact with each other through Twitter feeds, Facebook posts, 'likes', shares and comments¹⁷. Generally, social media eases political mobilization and makes it cheaper, facilitates a more effective interaction between politicians and their electorates among others.

In 2028, many events happened in Uganda's political scene examples that clearly illustrate the power of social media as a political mobilization and communication tool. When Robert Kyagulanyi, aka, Bobi Wine, a musician cum politician (Kyadondo East MP) was arrested together with other politicians in Arua following a hotly contested by-election, social media provided a crucial political channel through which ordinary citizens expressed themselves. On Twitter, the #FreeBobiWine hashtag was a top trend in Africa for days. The hashtag quickly attracted significant interest, and led to peaceful protests in Kenya, South Africa and at Ugandan embassies around the world. Shortly, dozens of world-famous human rights activists and artists such as; Angelique Kidjo, Chris Martin, Wole Soyinka and Damon Albarn expressed their support for Bobi Wine online calling upon the international community to do something about the situation in Uganda¹⁸.

The various social media calls to free Bobi Wine also gave online momentum to the #PeoplePower campaign, a grassroots political movement championed by Bobi Wine demanding that the political power belongs to the people and it has to be given back them.

In the same vein, the President Museveni also took to social media to make clarifications and emphasizing government actions pertaining to the arrest of Bobi Wine and the people power movement. For the first time in his presidency, the president made over half a dozen key political pronouncements on social media regarding developments around the arrest.

On other fronts, political pronouncements like Mugisha Muntu's break away from FDC and his subsequent New Formation political movement also trended on social media in 2018. During the 2016 Presidential elections, the social media space was filled with political hashtags like #NdiSteady, #SteadyProgress #UgandaDecides #GoingForward and #WesigeBesigye. "Social media, therefore, facilitated live coverage of these campaign rallies, however remote they may be, thereby keeping the rest of the country abreast of what is going on", notes Aine.

Whilst social media contributes towards fostering political dialogue and influencing decision-making in political parties and government in Uganda, findings by Kiranda and et.al argue that the effectiveness and efficacy of such influence still fall short because of contextual variables that include but are not limited to the availability of an inclusive supporting infrastructure, the existence of a technologically savvy society, and organizational capability to meaningfully coordinate the use of social media to a desired end¹⁹. As a result, "political agents and organizations have resorted to using social media platforms mostly for self-promotion and less for deliberations on policy positions and contentious political issues", the report concludes.

17 KAS (2017). *Assessing The Impact Of Social Media on Political Communication and Civic Engagement In Uganda . Reality Check Publication Series*

18 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/22/chris-martin-and-damon-albarn-join-campaign-to-free-uganda-star-bobi-wine>

19 Ibid

c. Social Media for Civic Engagements

Many civic tech tools are being used by differing organizations in Uganda to promote public accountability and improve service delivery. These tech tools provide supporting infrastructures and platforms to enable various organizations, citizens and government in data collection, tracking of public expenditure, citizen journalism, monitoring and evaluation among others. However, Outbox, one of the tech hubs in Uganda notes that a number of these digital technologies have not been fully embraced by civil society organizations in Uganda, their target groups and Government. This can be attributed to the lack of awareness among civil society actors on the tools; less demand vs supply due to limited involvement by target audiences in the development of the tools.²⁰ Despite the underutilization of social media as a civic-tech tool, it has undoubtedly contributed towards the promotion of freedom of speech, access to information and improving communication and feedback between government and citizens in a number of ways.

For instance, because of social media, news now spread much quickly encouraging free speech and expression without fear of censorship²¹. To this extent, it is one of the tools that has offered more effective democratic space for free speech and freedom of expression. For instance, there have been civic duty campaigns under the hashtag #Topowa organized by Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU), sensitizing Ugandans to their right to vote and advising them to honor their votes²². Despite the directives by the Electoral Commission (EC) for the campaign to be halted since it deemed it to be partisan, and its subsequently being banned from being aired, the campaign continued on social

media and there was no way the EC could stop citizens from engaging in it.

Barefoot Law, for instance, has demonstrated how important it is to use civic technology in the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS). Mostly through social media, Barefoot Lawyers provide free legal consultations and services, and to develop information technology and social media solutions to help in breaking the bottlenecks currently faced in the JLOS. One of the organizations projects, the Women's Property Rights Initiative (WPRI) focuses on equipping women, especially the vulnerable and underserved, with information regarding their rights. Barefoot Law Uganda uses a combination of approaches including technology, audio-visual and traditional to provide legal knowledge and assistance to women, especially in relation to property rights. The Women Property Rights Initiative creates opportunities for women to gain legal information and knowledge on property rights and will writing in order to protect themselves and their loved ones²³.

The initiative ultimately aims to Increase the level awareness of women to women's property rights and their enforceability; decrease in the abuse of women's rights; creation of synergies amongst women and property rights organizations; increase in channels for the dissemination of supporting legal information; a referral system through which women requiring further assistance on property rights can be assisted²⁴. Barefoot Law uniquely contributes provides an information technology platform through which women and members of the general public can get responses to a range of legal questions and concerns²⁵.

20 Outbox (2017). *Showcase of Social and Civic Tech in Uganda -Role of Civic Tech in Accountability*. Public Event Concept Note

21 KAS (2017). *Assessing The Impact Of Social Media on Political Communication and Civic Engagement In Uganda . Reality Check Publication Series*

22 *Ibid*

23 Barefoot Law Website: <http://barefootlaw.org/women-property-rights-initiative-wpri/>

24 *ibid*

25 *ibid*

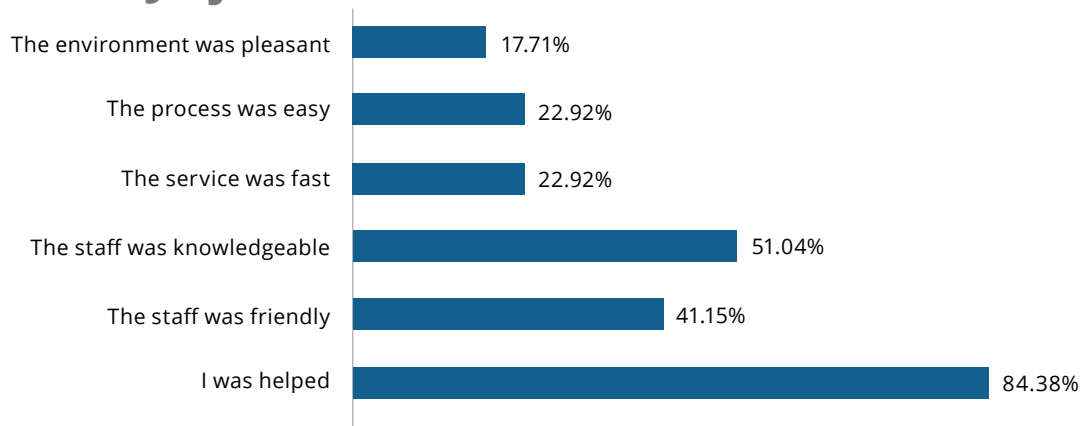
Another platform revolutionizing government-citizen engagement through civic tech is SEMA²⁶. SEMA is experimenting with ways to make this feedback efficient, effective, and meaningful for creating actual change. The organization aims to increase transparency and accountability of public services by gathering real-time citizen feedback. Through the “SEMA System”, citizens can provide data on their public services through a suite of tools, designed for both wide and deep feedback. The organization analyses such data and provide insightful (monthly) data reports and recommendations to public partners to facilitate improvement .

In 2018, SEMA introduced a hardware feedback terminal that collects basic, 1-5 satisfaction ratings of citizens concerning their experience about using a public service in 6 public offices including KCCA and the Uganda Police Force.

They also established an IVR phone line allows anyone, in any language and at any level of literacy, to provide voice feedback. Where necessary, face to face interviews provide an added layer of depth and unlock user stories that drive public service improvements.²⁷

The collected data is then analyzed and shared through SEMA’s various social media platforms to inform and sensitize the general public about what is happening in as far as public service delivery in public offices is concerned. In Nov 2018, for instance, SEMA carried out as assessment of Jinja Police Station to get citizen’s feedback regarding the pleasantness of the police station; the processes they go through to report a case or for a case to be handled by the police and whether or not they were helped. The data is analyzed as show below;

Jinja Police Station



The project is already inspiring change. One Officer In-Charge of a Police Station note; *“As soon as we got our first SEMA feedback report, I called a management team meeting - how can we improve based on this?”*²⁸

For the ordinary citizens, SEMA is profoundly providing alternatives to the communication and feedback lope-holes in public offices. In fact, it hasn’t only eased the processed but also placed citizens as central participants in voicing their concerns to improve public service

delivery in many ways as one Kampala resident noted; “I wish SEMA would have existed way before. There were many instances when I came to the local [police] office and would have wanted to share my opinion about how to improve the service”²⁹. As Nathalie Josephine, the initiative’s Co-Founder noted at the 2018 Swarm Summit in Kampala, SEMA’s approach is indeed a *“feasible civic tech replacement for the now outdated and inefficient suggestion boxes used in public offices”*.

²⁶ SEMA Website: www.talktosema.org

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

Uganda's E-Governance Landscape

The National e-government Framework (2010)³⁰, affirms the Government of Uganda's strong belief that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has the potential not only to revolutionize the way government operates, but also to enhance the relationship between Government and Citizens (G2C), Government and Business community (G2B) and within Government to Government departments (G2G). Despite that conviction by the Uganda government, many gaps still make its realization a farfetched reality. For instance, despite the fact that access to internet was declared a human right by the UN in 2014, access still remains low but growing. Without appropriate tools at their disposal, many citizens, especially those in rural areas still find it difficult to make their voices heard in the governance process. Many Ugandans still lack quick and reliable mechanisms to make government officials aware of urgent needs and/or priority areas. Similarly, most local governments have no established system to get quick and reliable information from their citizens.

Electronic government or e-government is the use of ICT to deliver public services in a convenient, efficient, customer-oriented and cost-effective way. It is also intended to make government more accountable. It demystifies the role of the government by simplifying procedures, bringing transparency, accountability and making credible information available to all citizens in time³¹.

An e-government framework was developed in Uganda in 2010 as an engine to kick start a harmonized implementation of e-government initiatives as one of the facets to transform Uganda into knowledge based economy. Additionally, a National Information Technology

Authority-Uganda (NITA-U Act 2009) was established under an act of Parliament to coordinate and regulate Information Technology services in Uganda. The Authority operates under the general supervision of the Minister of Information and Communications Technology and National Guidance (MoICT).

The United Nations 'e-government Development Index (EGDI) comparatively measures the e-Government readiness of states in terms of the scope and quality of online services (Online Service Index, OSI), the development status of telecommunication infrastructure (Telecommunication Infrastructure Index, TII) and the human capital (Human Capital Development Index, HCI)

According to the UN e-government Survey 2016 Report, Uganda improved in ranked by 28 positions from 156 in 2014 to 128 in 2016. Uganda was estimated to be 36% e-government ready in 2016, which was lower than the World's average of 49.2%. The status has since improved by approximately 10% from 25.9% in 2014, which can be directly attributed to the increasing provision of online services by various MDAs.

In comparison to select African countries, Uganda ranks slightly better than Tanzania (ranked 130), but falls behind South Africa (ranked 76), Kenya (ranked 119), and Ghana (ranked 120). Uganda's online services index has grown significantly since 2014. Overall, Uganda performs above the regional average in the online services index. It is also slightly better on the human capital index (HCI) at 47% compared to the regional average of 44%.

The gradual improvement in e-government in Uganda has followed the implementation of

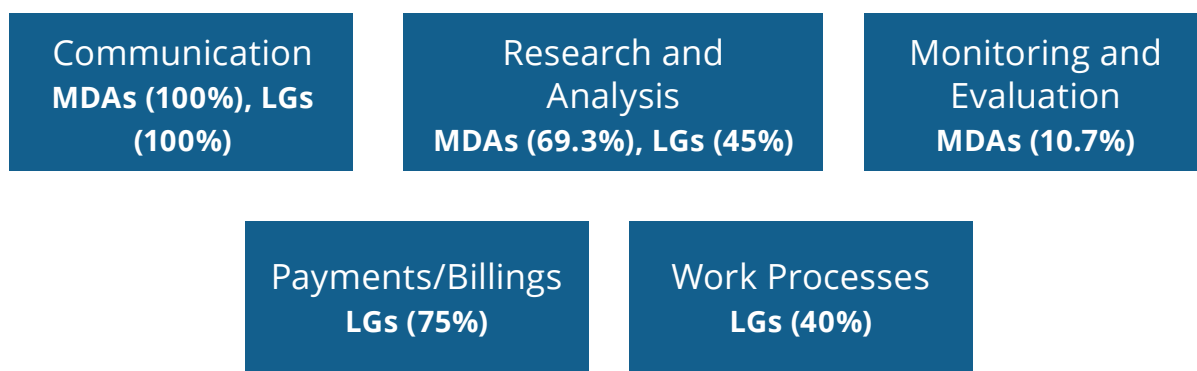
30 MoICT (2010). *National Electronic Government (e-Government) Framework*

31 *Ibid*

recommendation arising from an assessment of e-government in 2012/2013 by Ernest & Young³². Various agencies have set up e-government platforms to support service delivery, efficient transactions and information provision. Examples include; the National e-government portal - that provides information about MDAs and a selection of online services to citizens and potential investors, eBiz-an integrated platform to support local entrepreneurs and foreign investors in the setup of businesses in Uganda, and the e-citizen portal-that provides centralized access to government provisioned online services. Additionally, know Your Budget-helps citizens access and give feedback on budget performance at national and local levels, Ask Your Government-setup by the Office of the Prime Minister and civil society organizations enables citizens to request for information from MDAs, and the

Government Citizen Interaction Centre-that provides citizens with government information and interaction through various channels.

Most institutions in Uganda have computers that are 3 years old and 37.7% of the institutions have Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phones. This is a good sign that there is some existing hardware with the capacity to support e-government initiatives. All MDAs in Uganda use internet for communication via email or MDA website (100%), followed by research and analysis (69.3%). The least activity carried out using the internet is monitoring MDA services at 10.7% (NITA-U 2018), Local Governments use internet for communication (100), Processing payments/billing system (75%), Research and Analysis (45%) and using online applications for work processes (40%).



The core activities used by Internet in the Ugandan Government Institutions based on figures from NITA IT Survey 2018

Since its establishment, the single government portal has been instrumental in the provision of online services from basic information provision, to permit some level of interactivity and transactions. Although most of this is unidirectional, citizens can apply for visas, files taxes, reserve a business name, among others. While many MDAs are embracing the use of e-government services, to ease on the access and provision of services by the citizens, there is still room for improvement especially at a Local Government level.

Government institutions in Uganda allocate a very small percentage of their institutional budgets to ICT. Few institutions also have IT Strategic plans in place. Even for those organizations that have IT strategic plans, their plans are largely not responsive to the overall strategic plans of their respective organizations. This is a clear indication that ICT governance is a key area where government institutions should focus on and improve.

³² GoU, MoICT (2013): *Electronic Government Assessment Survey Final Report*

According to NITA-U, only 37% the staff within the MDAs and a dismal 3.3% in Local Governments have access to computers to use for their work. This justifies the need to have computers for use not only to increase productivity, but also increase equipment to be used to access and support e-government. Although the majority of MDAs have websites, only 25% have access to the internet and over 40% of staff have never had ICT training. This underpins the need to embark on training staff on how to harness the power of ICT as well as increase internet access so as to be able to use and deliver e-government services.

Despite having more than half of staff with mobile phones, and e-banking being ranked

as the highest priority e-government service, very few Businesses and citizens in Uganda are satisfied with the current e-government services. Most citizens seem not to be aware of the government services on offer. This clearly points to the need to provide awareness programs as well as strengthen infrastructure aimed at providing e-government services in a reliable and consumer-friendly manner.

According to NITA-U most MDAs (96.1%) provided institutional email addresses to their employees. Amongst these, 94.6% required employees to use institutional email addresses for official purposes, but only 62.9% of them enforced this requirement.

Social Media and Local Governance

In the digital age, social media is transforming the way we engage at all levels and in all sectors. The private sector has embraced the use of social media as a marketing and customer engagement tool with immense benefits. In the private sector, organizations used social media to build customer relationships, interesting business models, or ways to create competitive advantages³³. In light of the New Public Management thinking which drives investment in the public sector by prescribing ideas and practices using private sector and business approaches, governments around the world have also started paying considerable attention to using social media in many ways³⁴. Governments' investments in public sector information systems have generally been directed towards enhancing efficiency and policy effectiveness as well as achieving broader democratic values³⁵.

Within the public sector domain, social media offers a plethora of emancipatory benefits too. For instance, Local governments world over are mandated to deliver services and infrastructure, as well as to engage the public in its various governance processes. This requires government to communicate to citizens on key matters, from broader planning and policy decisions to service delivery³⁶. Social media transforms power relationships among citizens and organizations to create a more open government³⁷. Popular social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter also provide a unique opportunity for e-government initiatives, specifically with regards to communication between government institutions and citizens³⁸. Social media presents exciting opportunities for facilitating and creating a conducive platform for constructive dialogue thereby strengthening government responsiveness and deepening citizen engagement.

33 (Anderson, 2006; Surowiecki, 2004; Tapscott & Williams, 2006)

34 Sergio P-V, et.al (2011). *Social Media in the Public Sector: Perceived Benefits, Costs and Strategic Alternatives. The Proceedings of the 12th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research*

35 Ibid

36 Elmé Vivier, Et.al. (2015). *From Information to Engagement: Exploring Communication Platforms for The Government-Citizen Interface in South Africa. The African Journal of Information and Communication, Issue 15, 2015*

37 Sergio P-V, et.al (2011). *Social Media in the Public Sector: Perceived Benefits, Costs and Strategic Alternatives. The Proceedings of the 12th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research*

38 S. Hofmann, M. Rackers, D. Beverungen, and J. Becker. *Old blunders in new media? how local governments communicate with citizens in online social networks.*

Social media facilitates digital governance by providing a platform for citizen participation in governance processes and facilitating channels for improved public service delivery. Digital local governance involves local government units posting online content to inform, sensitize and mobilize citizens. This could be through the website or various social media platforms. The effectiveness of social media to be used as a local governance tool to improve service delivery and promote access to information is determined by the policy frameworks and the level of its implementations. Therefore,

national governments should have policies and guidelines as lack of it causes disorientation. There should therefore be mechanisms put in place mechanisms to ensure their successful implementation by the local government units. In addition, the technical capacity and the level of motivation of the local government human resources also determine the success of e-governance. Consistency and quality of content is crucial. This requires a trained and motivated team of local government officials.

Local Governments in Uganda Ignoring Social Media at their Own Peril.

In Uganda, Local governments enjoy a strategic advantage of being closest to the people and are therefore best suited to improve local governance and service delivery which are key contributors in poverty eradication. Equally, it is the beneficiaries of the services delivered by the local governments who are best suited to set the local development agenda and hold local authorities accountable for their actions. This is most often achieved where there is systematic flow of information from the duty bearers to the beneficiaries and access of information and free speech enabled. However, a substantial gap still exists between the demand for information and the ability of most local government leaders in Uganda to routinely provide it (Add some context after reading HIM report).

With the biggest population of citizens living in rural areas (upto about 86%), local governments act as critical channels of development resources to the rural population. However, the apparent weaknesses in the decentralized local government system to effectively communicate, engage, and deliver relevant information to the masses is a clear indicator

that lack of access to information remains a stumbling block to meaningful participation in the development agenda.

The current trends in information and communication have seen many people take to digital tools and platforms to meet their information, entertainment and education needs. Despite this fact, local governments in Uganda are lagging behind and have not fully embraced social media as a new form of civic engagement and a tool that offers immense opportunities to bridge the government-citizen schism. As noted by CEMCOD and KAS, training local government leaders in the effective use of social media for civic engagement will enhance their use of new media platforms for communication and hence promote accountability of duty bearers to local community concerns.

To understand the need for more investments to promote the use of social media as a tool for improving local governance, a reference to the statistics is a good starting point. For instance, a total of 56.7% of Local Government units in Uganda have social media accounts³⁹. Those that

³⁹ GoU (MoICT & NG, National IT Survey 2017/2018)

have embraced social media use Facebook (94.1%), WhatsApp (70.6%), Twitter (41.2%), Google+ (29.4%), Instagram (11.8%) and LinkedIn (5.9%). Local Governments that signed up for social media have similar objectives for using it. Top on their agenda is to publish institutional information (100%), develop their reputations (100%), and exchange opinions/knowledge within the institutions (100%).

Most Local Governments in Uganda (82.4%) have a dedicated person who maintains the institutional social media interaction or presence. These are mainly the Information and or communication Officers. 64.3% of them have at least one fully dedicated employee, followed by those that have a partially dedicated employee (28.6%) and 7.1% use external agency or third party (NITA-U 2018).

Case Studies of Project Promoting the Use of Social Media for Improving Local Governance in Uganda

i. GAPP: Creating an Environment of Accountability

In partnership with UNICEF, in August 2014 GAPP launched a pilot intervention—dubbed U-Bridge—in the Arua District to facilitate dialogue between Ugandan citizens and local government leaders and increasing social accountability. The intervention used an SMS (short message service) platform that enabled communities to send text messages to their local officials regarding delivery—or lack thereof—of social services related to education, health, agriculture, and more.

The project facilitated civic education meetings where citizens learned about their rights to service provision and which government entity is responsible for various services. Following those meetings, more than 5,000 community members registered for the U-Bridge platform, sending 80 messages per month on average to district leaders. As part of the intervention, district officials are provided with tablets and internet access so they can easily access messages.

As a result, Ugandan citizens participating in U-Bridge have been able to make their voices heard and to get results. Increased engagement between communities and their local leaders has resulted in improvements in government services that have included repairs of four bridges, five

roads, and five water boreholes. Citizens have also seen increased staffing at health facilities and improvements in the education system—including a 30 percent reduction in teacher absenteeism and, in one school, a reduction in the classroom-to-pupil ratio from 1:292 to 1:97⁴⁰.

ii. KAS and CEMCOD Building Social Media Capabilities of Local Government Officials

Between 2016 and 2018, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung partnered with the Centre for Media Literacy and Community Development (CEMCOD) to implement the #SocialMedia4LG Project to promote the effective use of Social Media by Local Government Leaders for Civic Engagement in Uganda. The project focused on the use of social media platforms as tools for improving good governance, public transparency and accountability, citizen engagement and delivery of social services.

Altogether, 130 local government officials, most of them, Chief Administrative Officers (CAO), District Information Officers (DIO), Community Development Officers (CDOs), District Planners and political leaders like L.C 5 Chairpersons, Residential District Commissioners among others participated in the training sessions. 34 districts from seven sub-regions of Busoga, Elgon, Ankole, Lango, West Nile, Buganda, Bunyoro and Acholi took part in the trainings.

⁴⁰ GAPP (2015). *Giving Ugandans a voice in local and national government by strengthening basic services and civil society*. Internet access via: <https://www.rti.org/impact/uganda-governance-accountability-participation-and-performance-gapp>



Local government officials from Eastern Uganda during one of the training sessions



Local Government officials from Maksa district with a team together with the CEMCOD team



Panel discussion with public officials from Lango subregion on using social media for improving service delivery

Focus of the trainings

The project's conception was informed by the simple logic that information is the heartbeat of any thriving society. As such, the starting points of the workshops would usually be an initiation into the significance of effective communication and information sharing between the leaders and the population; between government and citizens in these sessions, participants were encouraged to strengthen information sharing with all stakeholders to facilitate inclusivity and participation by all in governance, policy decisions and development projects. The local government officials were thus introduced to the different theories and practices of social media engagement.

The core part of the training was to introduce the local government officials to the social media concept and tools and how they could use such platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc) to engage

with the ordinary citizens and other stakeholders. For Facebook, participants are taken through the process of opening up and managing a Facebook page for official purposes. After the process, participants are encouraged to open up Facebook pages for their respective districts and department. They are then encouraged to keep these pages up to date if they are to attract viewers. The key emphasis here was effectively and consistently posting online content to engage, inform and educate the citizens.

The Twitter sessions were particularly fascinating as most officials were unfamiliar with the platform. In fact, in-house polls among 20 senior local government officials collected before the sessions would begin in all the districts reflected that an average of only 4 local government officials are active Twitter users. An average of 6 local

government officials opened Twitter accounts that mostly remained dormant; while the majority (about 10) thought it wasn't necessary for their work. The Twitter sessions which mostly focused on account opening, security sessions, content production and management were both eye-opening and insightful. At the end of all the sessions, the local government officials would all own Twitter handles and they were implored to actively use it to improve communication of government programmes. They were also encouraged to generate attractive and impact oriented content to ensure a consistent following.

Even though, most officials had Facebook accounts, all of them were so naive about security settings and content management on the platform. Security measures like how to block, how to regulate tags and why it was necessary was thus an important session of the workshop.

Additionally, the project also introduced the local government officials to the world of blogging. This was in light of the fact that most Local Governments do not have websites and yet they have a lot of information to share and enlighten the

general public about. Inasmuch as there was an initiative by the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) to create website pages for a few Local Governments in Uganda, content production and management became a gigantic roadblock to this initiative. During the sessions therefore, the local government officials were taken through the basics of blogging and they were encouraged to blog at individual levels because of their important public status at their respective districts.

However, in all the trainings, participants noted the limited access to internet among the local population in the villages may continue to limit access to information even when shared on social media. They also noted that even for the local government offices, internet access is not reliable which may affect their use of internet and social media platforms. During the workshops, participants challenged their districts administrations to prioritize funds for reliable internet and information sharing among the district departments to facilitate timely update of the websites and other platforms.

Insights from the #SocialMedia4LG Project Review

In 2018, an impact review assessment was conducted to establish the quality of content, the level of consistency and the effectiveness of the social media engagements by local government units that had participated in the project. The objective of the assessment was to gauge and empirically evaluate whether and how the knowledge and skills gained from trainings have benefited local government units to improve service delivery, and contribute towards ensuring public transparency and accountability. It also aimed at gathering evidence that would support the need to strengthen existing strategies for information and communication to amplify citizen voices

and their involvement in local government activities. The scope of the activity was limited to 3 regions where the training was conducted a year ago. These are Busoga, Ankole and West Nile regions and involving a total of 10 districts. The review meetings sought to establish the level of priority social media has taken within budgeting at district level as a result of the trainings; evidence from trainees on sharing of information as well as skills earned. Also of interest were other activities undertaken as a result of using digital platforms, which wouldn't have been possible without Social Media. The audience included both Administrative and Technical staff of the

local Government trained in all the selected regions. The methodology adopted for the evaluation followed the DAC criteria where the assessment addressed the Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability of the intervention.

a. Relevance of the training

Local Government Officials in the regions of Busoga, Ankole and West-Nile have embraced and applied skills gained from the trainings on effective use of online platforms for civic engagement. There was general consensus that the use of social media in promoting local government activities is invaluable. Among the respondents met in the three regions, over 90% appreciate the importance of embracing social media as a way of communication for outreach and feedback on local government programs.

In his own words, the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer of Mbarara District, Mr. Godfrey Tumusiime said that, *“We should not dwell on the negativity associated with social media but focus on tapping into the enormous opportunities that social media presents for effective communication and engagement for transparency and good governance at the local level.”* Most officials also requested for follow up support to the previous training as a way of improving their skills.

The activities conducted after the training indicate at least 70% of the trainees applied the skills with knowledge from the training. All the assessed districts opened Facebook pages and twitter but only few like Kiruhura, Iganga, Luuka, Arua, Jinja have maintained an official Facebook and Twitter accounts. They do have websites developed by the National Information Authority of Uganda (NITA-U) but are faced with challenges of Internet access and limited budgeting to the information and communication docket at the districts. Nonetheless, all districts have adopted internal Technical which they use as supplementary of official communication.

b. Effectiveness of the trainings

What is the effectiveness rate and factors influencing performance after training local government officials on social media engagement? The overall effectiveness of the project is rated at 75% arising from general skill to establish the Social media platforms and provisions for its facilitation within budgets. The bulk of this promising performance is evidenced from Kiruhura, Iganga, Luuka, Arua and Nebbi Districts.

The effectiveness of the performing districts that have embraced social media use like Kiruhura, Luuka and Iganga has been as a result of a fulltime qualified District Information Officer District coupled with a good relationship with the District Planner who is charged with allocating financial resources to the various operating units at the Local Government including information unit of Local Government.

There has been support from the District Chief Administration Officers (CAOs) who set Social media use and feedback on the districts programs interventions. In Mbarara, the people who hold the technical positions like information officer are close to their retirement age and therefore find it a challenge to embrace new media tools.

The effectiveness of social media is to large extent determined by the interest, dexterity and technical saviness of the responsible personnel. The need to emphasise the use of social media in public service in quintessential as noted by Drajiga, the then acting Chief Administrative Officer in Yumbe district; *“While social media is very understandable at senior staff level, many other staff are not taking social media as another means of doing government business, they think it’s only for social issues and there have always been bad impression created about social issues in society. This makes them shy away from using it”*

By the time of July 2017, the CAOs of Kiruhura, Iganga and Luuka had approved

additional resources for allocation to the information officers to optimize the use of social media in increasing information to the public. The setback in performance was mainly from Isingiro, Mbarara, Arua, Jinja district which either lacked resources or had no positive will from the CAO who oversees communication at the districts or were affected by the reshuffle of CAOs who came with new priorities and lacked the basic understanding of the value of social media for local Government. All the District Planners that were interviewed noted that lack of resources to pay a Communication/ Information Officer particularly hampers their progress.

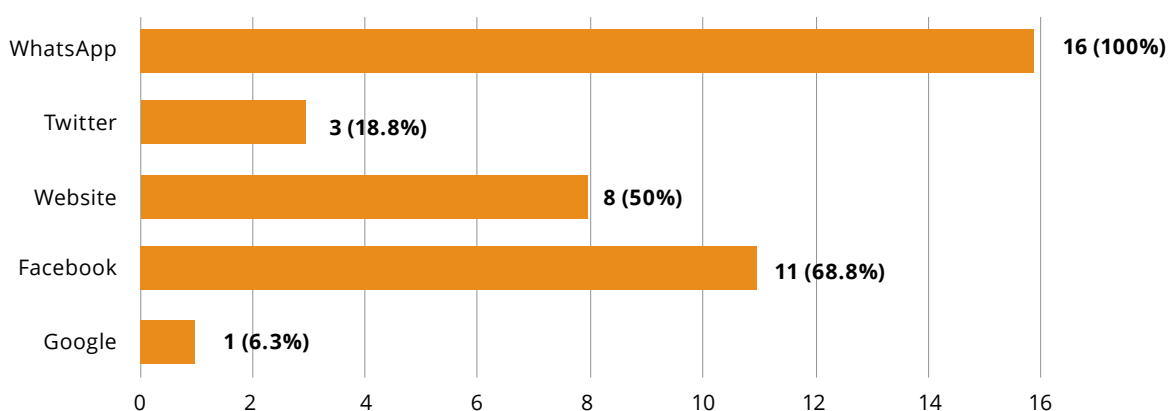
The limited guidance and support from Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) and NITA-U in deployment of social media in communicating local government programmes was a challenge expressed by all.

c. Impact of the Trainings

The assessment found out that Social media has been acknowledged as the fastest way to reach bigger audiences at minimal costs. A number of districts including Kiruhura, Luuka, Iganga District have demonstrated favorable dividends

from people participating and commenting on their service delivery based on the information they share through their various platforms especially Facebook and twitter. They get regular and personal feedback to queries posted by the relevant officers or communication/ Information officers. This has increased confidence and transparency in their actions and decisions according to its information officers.

The district resources for information have been increased after realizing the benefits from stakeholder involvement and people's voice through social media platforms. In Kiruhura District alone, they have a functional Website in addition to 1,300 active Likes on Facebook and 8 followers on twitter and over 200 members on the District Technical WhatsApp group. All these supplement information flow within the District. In Jinja, the District website is fully functional and the district has 1,551 active Likes on Facebook: and 3 different WhatsApp groups for the staff. In Nebbi district, the website is functional with over 11,000 visits; and 516 active Facebook Likes. In 2017, the district allocated 5.9M UGX to communications. The beneficiaries have been able to reach bigger audiences in real time and get feedback on District activities and plans.



Source: Impact Assessment Review Report

The project challenged the long-held narratives and perception that social media is a tool for young people to gossip and engage in meaningless conversations. A comment by the Chief Administrative Officer of Iganga after the training held in Jinja district in Feb 2016 fervently expresses this; *“I’d initially ridiculed social media as a platform for young and idle young people. Because of this workshop, I have come to appreciate social media as a tool to communicate with local citizens and use it to account to them. With my Twitter handle, I now have a platform to become more transparent and accountable by*

tweeting timely and relevant information on government programmes in my district”.

Indeed, the significance of social media for improving local governance, service delivery and public accountability cannot be ignored as noted during one of the sessions in Busoga region by Patrick Kayemba, the L.C 5 Chairperson of Iganga District Local Government; *“There is no better time than now. In fact, local governments are ignoring social media at its own peril. You can’t ignore social media, you can only delay it”.*

Recommendations to improve future trainings on social media for local government officials

There was a general appeal for more social media trainings to help staff be in the know and appreciate the development aspect that the platforms bring especially in terms of engagement, feedback and delivery of services.

There is need to include the political wing of local Government in the future social media trainings in order to make them appreciate the platforms but to also reduce the tension between the administrative/ technical and political sides when communication on issues related to service delivery (that includes district councilors and their chairpersons) at the districts. In this way, the political wings will help level the knowledge and harmonize the workings with their already enlightened colleagues at the technical wing. Also the political wing is in charge of discussing and approval of budgets and their inclusion will enable them appreciate the relevance and prioritization of the information and communication unit during resource allocation.

All local government units should be supported to develop their

own social media strategies using the government of Uganda social media guide for MDAs as a blueprint. All the assessed districts do not have social media strategies. In fact, most of them are struggling with identifying what kind of content to post on their social media platforms. This is explained by the fact that the whole social media concept was only introduced to the district teams by CEMCOD/KAS intervention through our recent trainings. The above also explains the multiple appeals to CEMCOD/KAS to conduct refreshers and more social media trainings to more staffs at the districts.

Local government units should integrate social media communication and capacity building in their annual budgets. While some districts like Kiruhura and Nebbi have integrated the Social Media budget in their plans, others are still struggling to attain this vote within their district budgets. There is need for more awareness and advocacy around budgeting for social media as a complimentary communication and accountability platform at local government level.

Focusing on using WhatsApp for improving local governance in key.

WhatsApp seems friendlier and has been widely adopted by most if not all LGs. The second mostly adopted platform is Facebook while Twitter is minimally used. Refresher and more trainings/engagements will help in this aspect.

District Planners are key points of social media communication at the local level.

The selection of participants rested mainly with the District CAO, and this from review should have involved the district planner for all districts. Where this did not happen the results are less in application and use of social media for local Governance as is the case for Mbarara, Isingiro, Arua.

There should be constant follow-up of social media trainings targeting local government officials.

There was limited support after the training and this meant that there were gaps in skills which need to be

filled to ensure better results. There should have been quarterly and a midterm review and continuous monitoring mechanisms to sustain the initiative. Let alone a bi-annual evaluation of performance given that this is a new concept yet appreciated as very useful, thus requiring fast tracking to adapt. The project should have strengthened its follow-up mechanisms to ensure all the districts engaged are up to the effective use of social media platforms.

The Central government should enforce the implementation and localization of the social media policy.

There is need to actualize the advocacy concerns with responsible government institutions to help the local governments adhere to and gain from information and communication policies and also reduce the aspect of lacking guidelines for use of social media. At the moment, there seems to be a mismatch in policy and implementation framework between the Ministry of ICT and the Local governments.

An overview of the online presence of selected Local Governments in Uganda

Result	Indicator	Verification	Comment
Ankole Region			
Kiruhura Districts	Website Twitter Facebook WhatsApp	http://www.kiruhura.go.ug http://www.twitter.com/kiruhuraLG https://web.facebook.com/Kiruhura-District-Local-Government-450917318419265/?ref=br_rs	1300 Likes on Facebook and 8 followers on twitter. Over 200 members on WhatsApp: Functional Website.
Mbarara	Website Twitter Facebook WhatsApp	http://www.twitter.com/mbararadlg https://web.facebook.com/Mbarara-District-Local-Government-580079735505981/	356 Facebook Likes, 24 followers and over 180 members on WhatsApp group; Website is down
Isingiro District	Website Twitter Facebook WhatsApp	N/A	No website, twitter and Facebook. Only a WhatsApp group of about 100 members.

Busoga Region			
Iganga District	Website Twitter Facebook WhatsApp	http://www.iganga.go.ug http://www.twitter.com/@igangaDlg http://www.facebook.com/kiruhura	Over 1200 Likes on Facebook, 9 twitter followers and over 230 WhatsApp group members; Website is down due to non-payment
Luuka District	Website Twitter Facebook WhatsApp	http://www.luuka.go.ug https://web.facebook.com/Luuka-District-Local-Government-1435403386473293/	562 Likes on Facebook; No twitter handle; Functional website
Jinja District	Website Twitter Facebook WhatsApp	http://www.jinja.go.ug http://www.twitter.com/jinjalg http://www.facebook.com/jinja	1551 Likes on Facebook: Functional Websites and 3 different WhatsApp groups for the staff.
West Nile			
Nebbi	Website Twitter Facebook WhatsApp	http://www.nebbi.go.ug https://web.facebook.com/Nebbi-District-Local-Government-1037767219605415/	516 Facebook Likes; Nebbi website is functional and has over 11,000 visits. With a 5.9 million annual budget to communications
Arua	Website Twitter Facebook WhatsApp	http://www.arua.go.ug http://www.twitter.com/aruadistrictlg http://www.facebook.com/arua.district	166 Facebook Likes: The information office is allocated 4 million annual.
Yumbe	Twitter and Facebook	http://www.twitter.com/yumbedlg https://web.facebook.com/Yumbe-District-Local-Government-770370799814204/	30 Facebook likes; WhatsApp is also viewed as more confidential.
Koboko	Twitter Facebook WhatsApp		Challenges: Power and Connectivity

Social Media for Improving Public Service Delivery, Transparency and Accountability in Uganda

Public sector organizations including Local Governments worldwide are striving to deliver more efficient and effective services in order to meet increasing demands and expectations from the stakeholders mainly the citizens, while at the same time overcoming the challenges of constrained public budgets⁴¹. Social media can help public sector organizations improve service performance, engage with the public and promote accountability and transparency in multiple ways as shown below.

Enforcing a strong sense of belonging and responsible citizenship. Social media applications offer new opportunities for online interaction that could contribute towards the reinvigoration of a stronger sense of belonging and responsibility among local communities⁴². For example, using of community WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms can assist in sharing relevant information and ideas to improve public service delivery and enforce public accountability.

In Uganda, many online social media groups have emerged as a key platform where specific **community members share information about what is happening in their neighborhoods**. Many of these groups have acted as unique security alert tools and giving relevant security information to the Uganda Police Force. In July 2015, for instance, Haruna Isabirye, the Kampala Metropolitan Police commander called upon Kampala residents to exploit social media for security benefits by creating groups where they can share security tips⁴³. In case of attacks, Isabirye noted, the rest of the group members can inform the police to rescue their colleague in danger. One of the

community initiatives that have effectively embraced the use of WhatsApp groups as bridge between the residents and the police is the Kololo Neighborhood Watch. This initiative by Kololo residents, one of Kampala's most affluent neighborhoods hold online meetings via WhatsApp to share security tips and brief the Police about what is happening in their surroundings.

Similarly, Social media can help to improve security services to facilitate regulatory activities, cross agency cooperation, security knowledge management and in law enforcement. For instance, in 2017, a video circulating on the WhatsApp social media platform of a Ugandan youth playing in US dollar bills became a game changer in a financial fraud and money laundering case at Equity Bank Uganda⁴⁴. When the bank's staff saw the video on WhatsApp, they informed the detectives that the video contained straps that were identical to those they used to wrap the stolen money. The video led to trails of evidence incriminating many people who are now serving various jail sentences for embezzlement, money laundering, causing financial loses to the bank and conspiracy to commit a felony⁴⁵.

In addition, social media offers low cost and flexible mechanisms to improve service delivery and obtain effective feedback from citizens more efficiently. Apart from SEMA's example illustrated above, some local government officials in Uganda are using social media to inform their constituencies about key development projects and obtaining effective feedbacks. One of the local government officials in Uganda using social

41 (Osimo, 2008).

42 (Ellison & Hardey, 2013).

43 Waaswa, S (2015). *Police Urges Public to Join WhatsApp Groups*. ChimpReports Online Newspaper of July 24th 2015. Link: <https://chimpreports.com/police-urges-public-to-join-whatsapp-groups/>

44 Andrew Bagala (2017). *Police Use WhatsApp video to Solve Shs4.6b Equity Bank Fraud Case*. Daily Monitor Newspaper of July 16th 2017. Link: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Police-use-WhatsApp-video-solve-Shs4-6b-Equity-Bank-fraud/688334-4017526-fo7oe1/index.html>

45 Ibid

media to inform and obtain feedback is Ojara Mapenduzi, the Gulu District L.C5 Chairperson.

One of the major events that happened in his constituency in 2018 was a demonstration by Gulu Town residents on 19th November 2018, against the constant electricity blackouts and outages in the town. Among many things, the Chairperson was accused not doing enough to solve the problem in his tenure as head of the district. Some said he was bribed by UMEME, the country's power distributor. He wrote back on Facebook highlighting, among others, his attempts to solve the electricity power crisis in his district since he was elected;

“As Chairman, I have been doing everything within my power to compel the responsible offices/agencies to address our problem. I've been to the Ministry of Energy 4 times and have met UMEME leadership, the Chairman of Electricity Regulatory Authority (Rwot Apire) together with the ERA ED in their office in Kampala over the same matter. In 2017 I caused a meeting over the same in Gulu and the UMEME top leadership from Kampala traveled to attend the meeting which was held at the District Council Hall. In this meeting, 12 key resolutions were made and so far, 4 have been implemented”.

Social media can be used by Local Governments to **strengthen the local communities in response to disasters** such as floods and earthquakes by providing users with real time and accurate information⁴⁶ (For example, in Japan, “Open Gorotto” is the social networking portal that is used in Yatsushiro City. “Open

Gorotto” includes the functionality of blog, networking, personal profile, media library, newsgroups and is used for fire alert services and hazard notifications in risky areas⁴⁷. Similarly, during the 2010 Haitian earthquake, social media applications were used as the main knowledge sharing tools between the government and victims of the earthquake.

After the devastating tsunami that hit Japan in 2011, people in affected areas tweeted about their situation, highlighting the importance of social media in life-threatening conditions⁴⁸. During the 2011 flood in South East Queensland, Australia, local government organizations used social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter to organize help and coordinate valid information to local communities affected by the tragedy⁴⁹. It is possible that more lives could have been saved if local government leaders and local people in Bududa district and perhaps the neighboring districts had used social media platforms effectively in sharing safety rescue information of the recent and past landslides that claimed many lives in the Eastern Uganda district. Effort by the Uganda police to take initiatives to partner with local government units to boost resilience during disasters and emergencies and share such information on social media as demonstrated by this post taken from the Uganda Police Force Facebook Page is recommendable.

46 Schellong, 2008; Yates & Paquette, 2011).

47 Ibid

48 (Acar & Muraki, 2011)

49 (Howard, 2012).

Uganda Police Force
@ugandaupf

Home
About
Photos
Reviews
Videos
Twitter
Events
Posts
Community
Info and Ads
[Create a Page](#)

Uganda Police Force
December 26 at 7:51 PM · 🌐

Police in Kigezi region and Rubanda District Development Association headed by its Chairperson one Eng. Kafeza Aloysius today distributed life jackets to residents of Lake Bunyonyi landing sites. Police headed by the Regional Police Commander Kigezi ACP Ecega Richard distributed 150 life jackets to the local communities there for their water safety. In April 2018 five people died at Kyanamukaka landing site when their boat capsized. The RPC mobilised the community to provide jackets to the residents and they complied. Jackets were given to the three Primary schools that is Kyabahinga, Bufuka and Kifuka for the safety of children therein. Mobilization for more jackets from politicians, business community and civil servants still continues. In attendance were the mobilizer of the association, Mr. Julius Buzare, the DPC Rubanda ASP Tai Ramadhan and district leaders.

Facebook Post by Uganda Police Force

Local Governments can also use social media to advertise and inform the public about their recreational facilities and touristic features. Kampala City Festival is one of the best illustrations of how local governments can turn social media into an effective advertisement tool. The Kampala City Festival, an event by Kampala City Authority is one of the most popular social media trends. The biggest street party in East Africa, the “Kampala City Festival is a signature brand that draws multitudes to Kampala every October to celebrate culture, unity and social life. It’s a highly anticipated moment for revelers to share, learn and network while acting as an economic engine for companies, organizations and small

businesses to flourish”⁵⁰. One of the tools the KCCA uses to fundraise and mobilize companies and organizations to support the festival is social media.

One of the missed opportunities for tourism advertisement in Uganda is the ineffective use of social media by local government authorities which have enormous tourism potential. Jinja district, sometimes referred to as the adventure capital of East Africa has grossly failed to update, share relevant information about its touristic opportunities on social media. Despite hosting one of the KAS and CEMCOD social media trainings, a cursory glance at the Jinja District Local Government social media platforms

⁵⁰ Kampala City Festival Website: <https://www.kcca.go.ug/festival/>

reveals the dire need to continue building capacities of local government officials to boost their technical savviness to be posted and share social media contents that are more consistent, accurate, attractive, timely and relevant.

Local Governments can do live video recordings of their activities such as council meetings, project visits and other relevant stakeholder engagements on social media. These videos can be automatically archived and can be referenced for future use such as research purposes and fact checking among others. When citizens watch such videos online, it can contribute to their active and constructive participation in governance processes.

In addition, **Local Governments can make public announcements using social media**; these may be announcements on topics such as health, safety and fiscal tips from various departments. YouTube videos can be a quick and easy way to convey a message, but even images and ads posted to Facebook and Twitter with a caption can be just as effective. Road construction can be frustrating, especially when it affects your daily traffic route. Posting updates about possible delays or alternative routes to use to avoid delays can help to ease your citizens' frustration.

Local Governments can also **post job listings on social media**, especially on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. These posts can include full job descriptions and

instructions on how to apply for such jobs. This will widen the scope of job applicants, increasing the possibility of sourcing more talented and qualified personnel into local government units.

Social media promotes participation and transparency in local government by **improving engagement with the community**. This happens because the use of social media removes the hierarchy of interactions between the local government authorities and the community. An informal type of interaction is generated, which puts pressure on local government officers to adopt a more interactive and open style of communication in order to be more responsive to the views of the community. This is one way to effectively make local governments more accountable to citizens.

The citizens in local communities can also use social media to mobilize themselves and put pressure on their local authorities to demand for the services they feel is necessary for the community or for something which they feel is not going right in their community and demand for rectification. In the same vein, local communities can also use social media to mobilize themselves in community work like building an access road in the village or cleaning the trenches in partnership with the government, thus enhancing service delivery.

Sectoral Analysis of Social Media for Improving Health and Educational Services.

i. Health

The use of social media can greatly empower, engage and educate consumers and providers in health care. Government, private sector and other non-state actors should establish the necessary social media infrastructures and encourage people with

chronic health conditions to use the social media and share their stories with each other for emotional support. Even before internet became widely available, there was evidence that social networks had a positive influence on health. In 1979⁵², a large-scale

⁵¹ Bonson T, et al (2012).

⁵² Berkman, L. F., & Syme, L. (1979) Social networks, host resistance, and mortality: A nine-year follow up study of Alameda County residents. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 109, 186-204.

California study showed that people with the lowest levels of social contact had mortality rates two to four-and-a-half times greater than those with strong social networks.

Since then, research has found that a stable and supportive social network improves health outcomes for people with a wide range of conditions from heart failure to post-partum depression. In addition, social networks have a palliative effect on preoperative pain and anxiety. But patients also benefit from enormous clinical knowledge they gain from participating in

the online community. For instance, people with diabetes in Uganda formed their social network called the ⁵³Uganda Diabetes Association and they have their Facebook page in which they share ideas about living positively with diabetes. They share issues like when and who should inject himself/herself with insulin, what diet their members should take and how often their members should do physical exercises. They also use their Facebook page to encourage their members and non-members to regularly test their blood sugar levels.



What is low blood sugar?

People using blood sugar lowering agents such as insulin should be careful to avoid the scenario of low blood sugar. A blood sugar below 70 mg/dl or <4 mmol/l is considered low and should be treated quickly with fast acting carbohydrate such as glucose.



 **Uganda Diabetes Association**
    **Africa Diabetes Alliance**

The facilitation of social networks through the internet has infinitely expanded the possibilities beyond the constraints of in-person, localized contacts. Users are linked into networks based on shared interests. Doctors working within the local government jurisdiction can meet up online using social media to share quandaries about challenging cases and solutions that work. Social media provide easy channel through which Researchers can come together with patients to learn about side effects in real-time to improve therapeutic

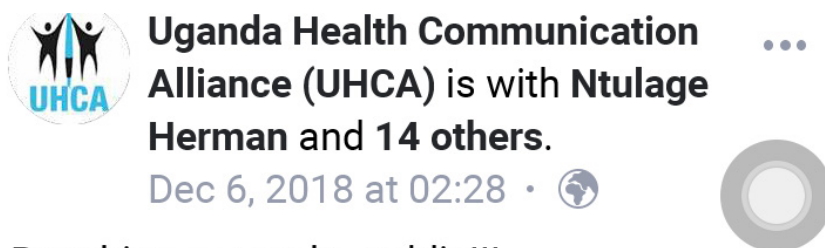
regimens. The more participants there are in a social network facilitated by the social media, the more value they create. This is the phenomenon of positive network effects, it is harnessing collective intelligence.

Social media can be a great health awareness and campaigning tool for health advocates and communicators. People can use social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp to inform the public about disease preventive measures and other healthy behavioral practices such as

⁵³ <https://www.ugandadiabetesassociation.org>

regular check-ups, exercises, good nutrition, responsible sex and proper and respect to proper traffic regulations. ⁵⁴The Uganda Health Communication Alliance (UHCA) uses social media very intensively alongside traditional media and other channels to campaign for healthy living and advocate for health rights. Recently in an effort by the UHCA to raise awareness about the bad effects of tobacco consumption, they

designed and installed the Tobacco death clocks, installed them on street of Kampala and posted the pictures on their Facebook page. They also tweeted it with the hashtag #Tobaccodeaths #TobaccoCtrlUg. This greatly augmented the awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco to the people of Uganda in a much cheaper and effective way.



Reaching out to the public!!!

The tobacco death clock is up and running.

In an effort to increase awareness about tobacco related deaths in Uganda and increase on the public awarn... [See More](#)



By adopting and encouraging the use of social media, stakeholders would be bringing closer health expertise to the local people in a much cheaper way, this is because, social media makes it easily possible to solicit and aggregate information from people all over the world and arrive at a collective decision. By sharing ideas, discussing symptoms, and debating treatment options together, all of these stakeholders gain knowledge that

can ultimately improve patient care.

It should also be noted that overtime; more people will adopt social media as a standard part of care processes⁵⁵. It is therefore imperative for the Local Government authorities to incorporate social media in their health policy planning. Local Government hospitals should incorporate social media in their health marketing

⁵⁴ <https://uhcauganda.org>

⁵⁵ Jane Sarasohn-Kahn (2008) *The Wisdom of Patients: Health Care Meets Online Social Media*

strategy. Physicians in hospitals under the jurisdiction of Local Governments can also use social media to create new models for how primary health care is delivered.

Measuring a clear return-on-investment for the use of social media in health often is not straightforward. However, social media can benefit Local Government health initiatives over the long term in a number of ways: integrating patient care and enabling continuity, enhancing patients' compliance with therapies prescribed by doctors, building goodwill in communities, providing useful health information to people who opt-in to receive it, and averting costs that would be incurred in more acute settings.

But health consumers or concerned individuals can also use the social media to post about quack doctors or nurses or fake drugs in the communities, on the other hand, some may just make such posts due to malicious motives against targeted health service providers. Others also misinform the public by posting health issues in which they are ignorant about,⁵⁶ for example a Facebook user in Uganda once posted that rubber sandals cause cancer, another Facebook user claimed that jackfruit

cures cancer, another claimed marijuana cures cancer. A certain WhatsApp text claims that 97% of chemotherapy fails yet doctors recommend it. These distortions of information have greatly hindered the work of the Uganda Cancer Institute.

However, there are posts on social media that have been very supportive to the Uganda Cancer Institute and the cancer patients, for example social media have in recent years been greatly used to publicize the cancer runs that have helped in raising substantial amount of money to fight cancer in Uganda. Therefore, Local Governments have a big responsibility to regulate the use of social media by the people in their jurisdiction by enforcing appropriate laws related to ensure that social media becomes accelerators rather than decelerators of health care promotion and management.

Last but not least, Local Government authorities especially those at the health departments can use social media to collaborate with other Local Governments to share better ideas for health promotion, management and policy development.

ii. Education

Education is what makes us more vibrant participants in a world seeking fresh perspectives, novel insights, and first-hand experiences. Social media is highly essential in education today because they have the power to foster inclusion, interoperability, sharing, and iteration that are essential human and social capital. Social Media tools help students to aggregate, share resources, participate in collective knowledge generation, and manage their own meaning. For example in the last few years, students in many institutions of higher learning across Uganda have enhanced their learning in study groups by forming WhatsApp groups to share ideas and documents.

Social media platforms are increasingly empowering students to take charge of their own learning hence, there is no arbiter of their knowledge, work, publication, or thinking. While there is growing evidence that social media is increasingly supporting informal learning at home and in the community and that informal learning is becoming a vital element of education for learners of all ages⁵⁷, social media can also help integrate formal and informal learning. This is important because when formal and informal learning is connected, learning is optimized and is most effective.

A result of a study in 2011 by Harrison⁵⁸ that examined whether college student

⁵⁶ <https://www.uci.or.ug>cancer-information-on-social-media>

⁵⁷ Neil Selwyn. (2007). *Web 2.0 applications as alternative environments for informal learning –a critical review.*

⁵⁸ Harrison D. (2011)

participation in a blog helped reinforce classroom learning by extending communication outside class hours revealed that students perceived the use of blogs as an outlet for thinking about class topics beyond the weekly meetings both individually and in collaboration with peers through blog commentaries. The results revealed that blogging helped students direct their own learning, increased engagement in course material, and promoted the development of informal learning communities.⁵⁹Makerere University College of Health Sciences has a blog called 'MakCHS' where medical students post different health topics for others to read and make comments, in this way they are able to get deeper insights into those particular topics.

With the rapidly changing turn of event in technology and how learning processes take place, the government should play a role in encouraging the citizenry especially the youth to use social media tools for example You Tube to enhance their self-directed learning. Academic institutions especially universities should encourage and recognize that students' use of social media tools for academic purposes are extension of the classroom work.

The vast audience and subject monitoring tools that are offered by the social media can also be used to conduct research. Social media provide some of the best platforms to extract data. One can find out how the majority of people feel about a particular topic or how experts perceive and advice on specific issues. This can help students compile and produce useful content for research. Whether students are working on assignment, working on a project or trying to gain more insight on a subject, some of the best information and results can be extracted from social media.

Furthermore, social media tools can be used to connect students to experts in various fields. The great thing about social

media is that a person soon learns who the experts are in particular fields and subjects. When one starts following these experts, he or she learns more and gain useful content from them; this empowers such a person to produce great results. Social media has the ability to broaden a person's perspective on various subjects and gives illuminating, instant content that is new. Thus a person has the opportunity of engaging experts to get answers on topics that one may need help in.

The Ministry of Education and Sports should encourage institutions of higher learning to develop the capabilities to connect with students through social media networks such as Facebook, Google Plus, and You Tube. These channels can be used to communicate campus news, make announcements and provide students with useful information. This builds the engagement between the institutions and students which help tackle many student issues through the group interactions.

Learning institutions can share supportive and positive posts that reach all students that are connected to the networks and pages. Hashtags can be initiated on social media to engage students in online discussions that are helpful. Since videos are prominent tool in social media trends that are effective and useful, they can be shared to inspire students and help them in their course subjects. Through social media tools like You Tube, Facebook and Instagram, engagements between the institution and students can be sustained. It is advisable to be selective about which social media platforms to use for the best practice.

In 2009, Hemmi, Bayne, and Land⁶⁰ examined the use of social media in three courses across two semesters: two on-campus undergraduate courses and one online postgraduate course. One on-campus undergraduate used a visually rich wiki to support teaching and learning, the

59 <https://www.chs.mak.ac.ug>blog>

60 Akiko Hemmi, Sian Bayne, Ray Land (2009). *Journal of computer assisted learning* 25 (1), 19-30,

other used blogs to increase participation in classroom discussions, and the postgraduate course used a range of social media technologies including Facebook, Delicious, blogs, wikis, and Second Life (a virtual world) to support a variety of learning activities. The results revealed that social media engendered a pedagogical shift towards more collaborative modes of inquiry and placed increasing emphasis on the importance of group self-regulation. Academic instructors can augment the effectiveness of what they teach by encouraging students to form social media groups and discuss academic issues⁶¹.

Many Ugandan students are not taking the full advantage of social media to enhance learning. For students to fully take advantage of social media as formal learning tools, they need training. Students need support, guidance, and pedagogical interventions to make the best possible use of social media to support their learning goals⁶². For example, in order to successfully leverage social media use in learning, students must be helped to acquire and apply a set of personal knowledge management (PKM) skills, defined as “the act of managing one’s personal knowledge through technologies”⁶³, ranging from creating, organizing and sharing digital content and information, to higher order or more complex PKM skills such as connectedness, the ability to balance formal and informal contexts, critical ability, and creativity. Therefore, academic instructors should organize additional short trainings for students to instill better ways of using social media for academic advancement.

Learning through social media reassures us that for any crisis or just to satisfy our curiosity, there is a network to support us at any time. Much of what needs to be learned in the modern era are moving

faster than we can create structured learning opportunities, the instant nature of social media come handy in addressing this phenomenon. Traditional training methods may be useful for teaching highly specific tasks or safety procedures, but evolving practices require more ad hoc and self-directed learning which can be facilitated by the use of social media tools and becomes a key strategy when we need to move fast. The new era of learning which centers on information sharing, collaboration, and co-creation implies that the notion of training needs to expand. Learning through social media does not replace formal training. It may overlap a little and complement a lot, but it can address the knowledge transfer that training may never get to.

The use of social media for education may be criticized because some users may post inappropriate content and jeopardize learning. But when a bad object is placed on the door, you don’t remove the door. If someone makes tasteless jokes over the telephone, you don’t take away the phone. People just need to be reminded to participate in the social media learning interactions with full understanding that they bear responsibility to behave appropriately and not offend anybody or leak sensitive information for their organization out.⁶⁴ These problems could be eliminated by putting in place proper institutional mechanisms that regulate guides and teach people appropriate and ethical ways of using the social media. It is because of such measures in place that in August 2018, three students were suspended from Makerere University because they were posting content that were inciting other students to cause chaos at the University. Their suspension due to the right University regulation in place averted chaos that could have interrupted the University activities.

61 *Ibid*

62 Cigognini, Pettenati, and Edirisingha (2011).

63 *ibid*

64 Tony Bingham and Marcia Conner (2010) *The New Social Learning: A Guide to Transforming Organizations through Social Media*

Are Websites a Missed Opportunity for Uganda's Local Governments?

Transparency and accountability, the presence of basic public records on local government websites may provide insight into the understanding and willingness of local leaders to provide access into decision-making and civic participation within their jurisdictions. The availability of these records by local governments on their websites of their own volition may demonstrate and promote transparency and accountability.

The more available information and openness of decision-making, the more transparent an entity is. As more information appears on the local government websites, trusts and confidence in local government leaders tends to be more positive. Transparency can aid local governance in two ways: providing a dialogue between policy makers and the citizenry before decisions are made; and preventing mistakes by officials through the threat of increased and thorough monitoring by interested publics.

The process of transparency occurs when organizations ⁶⁵promote visible decision-making, are open to public input, allow the public maximum choice of services, and work in cooperation with other organizations for common public purposes (Ball 2009). Many Local Governments in Uganda are missing a lot the opportunity to fully demonstrate, nurture transparency and build more trust in their management and leadership by the citizenry since many of them do not have websites and the few that have are not making the optimum use of them.

Websites are easy to establish and use, accessing information from the websites by the public users require basic web knowledge and equipment. Most local

governments in Uganda even with little resources, expertise and funds can put some basic information on line for public access. Information on the websites can also be accessed any time 24 hours a day, 7 days per week at the convenience of the person seeking it. It is therefore a missed opportunity for many local governments in Uganda to provide easy and flexible information to many Ugandan citizenries.

Most of the information often found on the websites is on national and international issues. Therefore the establishment of websites by the local governments can help in providing spaces for local content. It is important for the citizens to also have information in their villages, parishes, sub counties, counties, municipalities and districts on the finger tips using websites. Much as there are many FM radios in many districts throughout the country, they cannot provide all the information some of them graphical into details and with easiness as it would be by websites. The fact that most local governments in Uganda do not have websites makes this to be really a great opportunity missed.

Many Ugandan Local Governments of course miss great opportunities of economic advancement of the citizenry in their areas and for Local Government themselves. This is because many of them do not have websites and the majority of those that have hardly have any information for economic opportunities such as tourism, trade and other services available. Local Governments in Uganda are lagging behind compared to other local governments around the world in the proper exploitation of websites for development; therefore concerted efforts must be made by the Ugandan Local Government authorities to augment the use of websites for development. For example, Apac District website, <https://www.apac.gov.ug>.

65 Stephen J Ball (2009). *The governance turns!* Routledge 24 (5), 537-538

go.ug has almost no any information on economic opportunities apart from information on contracts awarded, when one clicks on the information on tourism, nothing shows apart from the subheading of cultural sites with no any information, yet Apac has enormous economic opportunities such as fisheries and other agricultural products their information are all not loaded onto the websites.

But too much information without much focus can be cluttered, daunting and overwhelming hence confusing the local citizens. Therefore, the designers of local government websites should exercise high level of professionalism and often ensure that they edit the information and make them palatable to the consumers in the easier, accessible way in the right quantity, quality and for the right purpose.

Case Study: Government Citizen Interaction Centre (GCIC)

The Government of Uganda is waking up to the reality that ensuring efficient and effective flow of public information is the glue that holds its relationship with the citizens. That is one of the reasons that Government Citizen Interaction Centre (GCIC) was setup by the Ministry of ICT & National Guidance (MoICT&NG). GCIC was setup to enable citizens monitor service delivery and provide feedback as a way of Open Governance through transparent engagement.

The mission of the GCIC is to provide a platform for timely and cost effective communication between citizens and the Government. Citizens are able to call or send short messages to a toll free number (900). Their queries are sent to the responsible government agency where a feedback is processed and the Citizen is contacted. This then helps in profiling the performance of the sector for which the query was directed⁶⁶.

GCIC has also adopted a robust and consistent social media engagement strategy to keep the Ugandan public updated about major projects, services and other initiatives being undertaken by the government of Uganda. According to Awel Uwihanganye⁶⁷, the Centre's Director, *“adopting social media as a key tool for informing the public is guided by the fact that new media are more efficient and effective because of their quick nature and the inbuilt instantaneous feedback mechanisms”*. Moreover, he posits, “young people in Uganda are yearning for public information and since they are the majority on social media, it is just logical that government uses it to address the information needs of the Uganda's biggest demographic category”.

Of equal importance is GICC's mandate to use Open Government as a strategy to improve service delivery and enhance constructive engagement between government and citizens. Open Government is the idea that government should be more transparent and constructively engaged to fight corruption and enforce civic participation using various technological platforms to make it more open, effective, and accountable. GICC has been promoting the idea of open government by providing relevant information and encouraging citizens to participate in decision making process such budget making forums, corruption tracing initiative and cabinet meetings among others.

Championing the idea of open government in general and using social media in particular is still a gigantic challenge in Uganda, like it is in most developing countries because of multiple reasons. One of those reasons is the rigid bureaucracy many times inbuilt in governments. By nature, systems in government are not keen on opening up simply because doing so means more scrutiny and accountability. *“It comes with enormous responsibility that sometimes our governments fail to rise up to the occasion”*, Awel reiterates.

Similarly, funding is still difficult to come through as many governments are not prioritizing and adopting new media to inform the public at a fast enough pace. Uganda is taking a leap forward though. To Awel, *“there is a lot of political will and political support to push the agenda at the moment”*.

⁶⁶ GICC Website: <http://gic.gou.go.ug>

⁶⁷ Interview with Awel Uwihanganye, GCIC Director.



Government Citizen Interaction Centre @GCICUganda · 11h

.@GovUganda is in plans of adding 5 new vessels to the 10 run under @UNRA_UG.

1. Buvuma-Kiyindi.
2. Sigulu: To connect Sigulu & Lwolve islands to the mainland in Namayingo.
3. Amuru Rhino camp: To connect Amuru-Arua District.
- 4: Bukungu-Kagwara-Kaberamaido.
- 5: Lake Bunyonyi Ferry



🗨️ 10 ❤️ 23 ✉️



Government Citizen Interaction Centre @GCICUganda · Jan 4

In a bid to decongest Kampala and the towns of Mukono, Entebbe, Busega, Wakiso, Gayaza, Portbell and Namugongo, @GovUganda is to import 980 Ashok Leyland buses.

Ashok is expected to assemble their buses in Uganda as well build capacity of local automotives such as @KiiraMotors.



A Tweet by GICC giving update about major initiatives to improve public transportation in Uganda

The Political Economy of Social Media and Governance in Uganda

Using social media to enhance civic participation and improve service delivery, transparency and accountability is inherently a political and policy process involving many stakeholders with varying interests and capacities. At the same time, the behaviors and characters of these actors are shaped by the existing formal and informal institutions and incentives which govern behavior⁶⁷. Incentives are the external stimuli of rewards and punishments that are related to certain types of actions⁶⁸. For example, when data cost increases, the incentives for citizens to e-participate

in governance processes falls; or when citizens do not demand accountabilities from their leaders, the incentive for leaders to effectively provide public goods and services falls; or when voters use social media to engage their leaders, their responses are quicker because effective feedbacks by leaders influence voting behaviors in their favor. Understanding the various political and policy contexts within which social media in Uganda operates is important.

Social Media Policy Frameworks in Uganda

In Uganda, the use of social media is guided by multiple policy frameworks.

a. Open Data Policy

The use of new and innovative technologies and data are changing the world we live in. The evolving use and need of data and improvement of the existing data and innovative ways of processing, presenting, and delivering data have improved government systems and work. Open data policy provides a framework for opening up access to government data and provides governance mechanisms. In addition, this policy highlights the requirements for the successful implementation of open data in Uganda⁶⁹.

Open data policy stipulates that data held by the government shall be made publicly available, with few restrictions on access. The Government of Uganda open data portal shall be the main platform for the public to access open data. Not all data shall necessarily be held on the portal, but it shall be a means of signposting people to the data they require. The portal is designed with both technical and non-technical users in mind⁷⁰.

The policy guides that the data are presented in accessible and reusable formats. When public data is open, it is very important because it would have the potential to enhance and transform the delivery of government services in addition to triggering innovations. Opening up data is a growing trend nationally and internationally. The government of Uganda has made important progress on its open data initiative, for example; there is online publication of the national budget allocations, releases and other statistical bulletins by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED). These data sets provide detailed information on how public money is spent on the provision of public services and goods. There is also the online publication of the Government Annual Performance Report (GAPR) produced by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). The GAPR provides a data-driven tool for assessing Government performance and the online publication of Census and National Survey Reports by

67 David Hudson and Adrian Leftwich (2014). *From Political Economy to Political Analysis*. DLP Research Papers

68 (Ostrom et al., 2002).

69 GoU (2017) *Open Data Policy*

70 *ibid*

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) among over 10 publications by the government periodically.

Open Data for Improving Local Governance

Local Governments have a role in ensuring the promotion of open data by **fueling the dissemination of national data to the local people through sensitizing the people on the existence of such data.** The Local Governments can also create points in which open data can be accessed freely by the people who can access the internet privately. For example the Public libraries in the municipalities must be having functioning internet access for the public to access such open data easily.

Opening up data can help to improve the transparency and accountability of government and better citizens' empowerment. The public sector must aspire to meet the expectations of an increasingly demanding population, improve government services and improve the economy. New technologies have transformed and revolutionized the interface between citizens and government and open data serves to fuel the development of innovative products and services including those offered by Local Governments in Uganda. It is therefore important for the Local governments to set up the Open data policy framework at the district levels to enable its better implementation.

Proper implementation of **Open data policy shall help transform current data management practices and create an 'open data by default' culture** within the public sector by developing ethos that embed publishing open data as a normal part of data management in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Local Governments. However, this is expected to take time to implement so initially only data that is in high demand can be prioritized for publishing.

Local Governments should also make

efforts to **identify data that are of high demand** and try their best to publish them for public consumption as open data. For example District Development Plans and the District Budgets can be published for public consumption to encourage participation and transparency and accountability and the Local Government Level.

Local Government officials, for example the district information officers **should identify data that are restricted and sensitize citizens about it.** They should also be in position to sensitize the public at the Local Government level of the opportunities that unrestricted data available on the open data platforms present for boosting their economic activities.

Since many open data initiatives which are initially successful in publishing data subsequently fail as a result of not being refreshed and updated, all datasets published on the open data platform is mandated by the policy to be refreshed and updated according to the schedule stated in the associated metadata record. At the Local Government level, it is important that a dedicated ICT department is established at the district level **to ensure proper refreshment and updating of public data and information.**

In addition, the policy stipulates for the effort to be made to create a permanent and lasting access to time stamps of data by creating an archiving policy that is aligned to the provisions of the National Records Policy. To achieve this end, **Local Governments can use their Records Departments to ensure that both national and local data published are archived for permanent use.**

For the open data policy to be successful there is need to build skills of the public

officials in the generation and analysis of data. Therefore the policy has integrated the training of the staff, users and the general public in its implementation plan. Local Governments must advance this by making efforts to train their staff and the general public on the use of open data. Local Governments have the potential to make such knowledge and skills to percolate to the majority of Ugandans at a faster rate.

Most of the risks that result from the using open data are due to a lack of communication or a lack of interpretation between the data provider and the data user about limitations, errors or the timeliness of the data. This risk exposure can be mitigated **by introducing clear communication and validation procedures along with**

clear and precise metadata. Specific ICT department within Local Governments should be established to ensure that public sector data related risks are prevented and mitigated.

For the Open data policy to be beneficial to the majority of Ugandans, **Local Governments must be fully involved in the implementation.** Local Governments must be able to collaborate and leverage from each other, the Civil Society Organizations, MDAs and Development Partners to fill their technical and financial gaps that are currently so huge for the effective implementation of the Open data policy.

b. The Access to Information Act (2005) and Social Media

A government which is open and responsive to its people will easily promote democratic growth whilst an ill-informed society is easily manipulated, has no respect for democratic values and is less conscious of human rights. Uganda was among the first African countries to enact a right to information law, the Access to Information Act (ATIA) in 2005 and later the Access to Information Regulations in 2011.

The Act was enacted to promote the right to access to information, promote an efficient, effective, transparent and accountable Government and to enable the public to effectively access and participate in decisions that affect them as citizens of the country. The access to information Act (2005) provides for the right of access to information pursuant to article 41 of the Ugandan Constitution; the procedure for obtaining access to that information and related matters. The access to information Act, 2005 thus states that *“Every citizen has a right of access to information and records in the possession of the State or any*

public body, except where the release of the information is likely to prejudice the security or sovereignty of the State or interfere with right to the privacy of any other person.”

However, in the context of Uganda and many other African countries, access to information is affected by many factors stemming from both demand and supply side dysfunctions. For instance, up to about 60% of Ugandans still find it difficult to access public information according to a report by the Hub for Investigative Media⁷¹. This is against the backdrop that “98% of the populations find/feel that access to information is a crucial part of civil engagement and development”, the report notes. To address this predicament, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Uganda partners with the Hub for Investigative Media (HIM) to create more awareness and sensitize the various sections of the Ugandan public, media and local governments about access to information in general and putting in to practice the provisions of Access to Information (ATI) Act 2005 in particular.

⁷¹ HIM (2017). *The state of Access to Information in Uganda*.

The objective of the initiative is to ensure that government ministries, agencies, authorities, commissions and other public bodies do abide by this law by providing information relating to these organizations and their operations to the public.

The project contributes towards the development of an active and informed citizenry who are able to contribute actively towards the democratic and governance affairs of Uganda⁷². Speaking during a public dialogue to discuss the Act, Mathias Kamp, the country director of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung noted “that the concept of democracy would be a fallacy

without a functional system of access to and usage of information”. *“People who are not informed cannot make informed political decisions - that is why access to information is such an important pillar of democracy”* he stressed⁷³.

Social media provides multiple opportunities for popularization of the Access to Information Law. Through the project, for instance, articles, quotes, infographics are shared via various social media platforms to sensitize the public. Similarly, social media provides a unique platform for public offices to easily share important information with the citizens.



Ugandan Politician, Alice Alaso attending one of the KAS and HIM events to promote popularize the Access to Information Act.

c. ICTs for Disability Policy

Nearly 15% of the world’s population lives with some form of disability and 80% of these live in developing countries. According to NUDIPU, 12.4% the Ugandan population are PWDs, thus making disability a national concern. The Government of the Republic of Uganda is obligated to promote and protect the rights of all people including PWDs.

The Constitution of Uganda also stipulates the need to empower and provide equal opportunities to all citizens including PWDs.

The Government of Uganda (GoU) has concentrated on providing rehabilitation services for PWDs mainly through the provision of health services and

72 Ojok, D (2018). *Access to timely and relevant information is a lifeline of good governance. Activity Report, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Uganda and South Sudan*

73 Ibid.

special needs education among other affirmative actions. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Disability Policy seeks to augment these efforts by providing proactive interventions through the use of ICTs that are aimed at improving the quality of life of PWDs. ICTs play a great role in improving the livelihoods of PWDs by enabling them to have equitable access to information and knowledge thus enabling them to live more or less independently and also reducing their living costs such as fees for hiring guides and sighted readers.

In light of the above, the Ugandan Ministry of ICT and National Guidance (MoICT& NG) has developed the ICTs for Disability Policy to guide the development and supply of accessible ICTs in Uganda. Without a policy, ICT based interventions for PWDs would be limited to ad-hoc, market-led and small private initiatives. Considering that disability is a cross cutting issue in the Public Sector, Business Sector, Civil Society, and Development Partners, this policy shall always be used as a planning framework to guide resource allocation and implementation of accessible ICTs in these sectors. The policy was developed premised on the principles of Universality, Affordability, Availability and Equal participation and Self-representation.

The policy stipulates that entities involved in publishing information ensure that all public information and documents are easily available in accessible formats. This should include formats accessible to mobile phones; text formats compatible with screen readers and screen magnifiers, and daisy content for loading on e-book readers.

In addition, the policy ensures that the ICT Sector is regulated to include supportive licensing for accessible service delivery to be as part of the terms of operators' license agreements or introduce other measures to ensure that affordable and accessible ICTs (computers, mobile phones

and their accessories) are provided to PWDs. The regulatory framework in the policy also ensures the standardization of ICT equipment for PWDs by guiding for identification and adoption of standards on accessibility of ICT devices and services that have been developed by international standards bodies such as ITU, ISO and W3C.

These standards should be adopted into operational guidelines such as the Websites development guidelines and the e-publishing guidelines. The regulatory framework of the ICT Sector also ensures that institutions, schools and NGOs with a disability bias to be identified so that financial and technical support is channeled to them to offer PWDs with digital technology facilities.

Furthermore, the policy guides that, a deliberate effort to implement social support as part of the service rendered by helpdesks and after-sale services relating to ICTs should be made by service providers. This will help people that require emotional support on top of technical assistance to be brought into the digital world. It also guides that, funding must be made available from the universal service fund to ensure PWDs obtain accessible Internet and mobile phones services. This can entail subsidizing the cost of mobile phone handsets, special monthly service packages and provision of assistive technologies.

The policy also stipulates that, agencies in charge of public procurement, such as public procurement and disposal of assets (PPDA) authority and consumer protection organizations should include accessibility of ICTs and related services as a condition for public procurement.

The Government of Uganda is also mandated by the policy to set aside funds for development of low cost assistive technologies for computers and mobile phones. It directs that efforts should be made to ensure these are also adapted to some dominant local languages. It further

guides that ICT firms should be encouraged to offer specialized services for PWDs alongside their usual ICT-related work. For instance, a seller of mobile phones and/or computers could be facilitated with the right knowledge to become a vendor of related assistive technologies for PWDs. In addition, specialized companies that deal only in ICTs for PWDs should also be attracted to set up operations in the country. It also guides for the promotion of website accessibility within the ICT industry and

ensures that all government websites are accessible to persons with visual disabilities.

The success of the ICTs and Disability Policy shall depend on the full participation of multi-stakeholders both in the public and private sector. It calls for strong commitment by the Government, Industry, Development partners and other stakeholders to engage and support the priority policy actions that have been exposed.

d. Revenue Stream Versus #ThisTaxMustGo

At the end of May 2018, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni justified the need to tax social media and mobile money platforms noting that it would discourage the spread of "gossip" and increase revenue to the public coffers. On 1st June, 2018, the Parliament of Uganda passed a 32.4 trillion shilling 2018/2019 budget⁷⁴. It included a new 200 shilling (~0.05 USD) tax "per user per day of access" on "over the top services" (OTTs)⁷⁵ and 1% tax for mobile money transactions, i.e., withdrawals, deposits and transfers. Two weeks later, the president insisted that "Social-media use is definitely a luxury item.....Internet use can be sometimes for educational purposes and research. This should not be taxed. However, using internet to access social media for chatting, recreation, malice, subversion, inciting murder, is definitely a luxury", the president wrote⁷⁶. It will be gigantic hurdle to attain full realization of the freedom of expression without allowing and promoting full access to social media. In fact, access to the internet including social media should be viewed as a Public good not a luxury commodity.

The Social Media and Mobile Money tax promoted nationwide protest, both on-and-offline. A demonstration to protest the

tax was held in Kampala city championed by legislator and musician Robert Kyagulanyi alongside other journalists and social activists but it was cracked down by the police. Hashtags like #NoToSocialMediaTax and #ThisTaxmustGo too went viral. Anne Whitehead Communications, a communications firm in Uganda quickly carried out a survey which found out that 71% of respondents were extremely inconvenienced by the tax. The same report noted that 11% of the respondents had dropped in their overall social media usage since the taxes went into effect⁷⁷.

Human rights advocates also insisted that meant to justify censorship and clamp down on freedom of expression⁷⁸. For instance, Joan Nyanyuki, Amnesty International's Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn, and the Great Lakes posits that "the primary motivation behind [the social media tax] is to silence speech, to reduce the spaces where people can exchange information, and to really be able to control, with the recognition that online platforms have become the more commonly used way for sharing information".⁷⁹

74 <https://www.parliament.go.ug/news/1517/parliament-passes-shs324-trillion-national-budget>

75 *The Excise Duty (Amendment) Act, 2018, defines over the top services as "the transmission or receipt of voice or messages over the internet protocol network and includes access to virtual private networks;" and the levy is listed in 13(b) as "Ushs 200 per user per day of access" in The Excise Duty (Amendment) Act, 2018.*

76 <https://www.yowerikmuseveni.com/blog/museveni/president-responds-feed-back-earlier-statement-new-social-media-and-mobile-money-taxes>

77 <http://ictau.ug/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ugtaxsurveywhiteheadcomm-1.pdf>

78 <https://www.wired.com/story/uganda-social-media-tax-stays-for-now/>

79 *ibid*

Many international actors have called upon the government to halt the tax since social media facilitates freedom of expression which is essential for building sustainable development, political stability and democracy. The Danish Ambassador in Uganda warned that the tax levied on social media could potentially limit freedom of expression of the youth, who are the most regular users of social media platforms further curtailing their opportunity to participate in political dialogue. *“We recognize that Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are popular and widely used in Uganda as means of quickly*

*getting information and people’s voices on a variety of issues from across the country. We, therefore, encourage government, in the effort to increase domestic revenues, to reconsider other options for taxation that do not reduce participation of the youth and other vulnerable groups in development of this country”*⁸⁰, the Ambassador while speaking at the 2018 Nordic Day.

The social media tax was passed and from 01st July 2018, Ugandans have been paying 200 UGX every day to access social media platforms.

Social Media Shutdown during the 2016 Presidential Elections

Twelve hours before 18th Feb 2016, the day of presidential elections in Uganda, all social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and even more interestingly, mobile money was completely locked down. Many Ugandans thought this would last just for one day – the day of the general elections – but to their dismay, it would continue for the next 72 hours. Human Rights activist warned that the ban on social media was part of number pervasive systemic measures by the government of Uganda to limit freedom of expression and access to information during the election period. “At a time when the world’s gaze is on Uganda and the Presidential elections, we call on the Ugandan authorities to immediately revoke the blocking of social media and allow Ugandans to exercise their right to freedom of expression, as well as

their right to participate in a free and open election process,” noted Henry Maina, Regional Director of ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa. To a large extent, the government digital blockade was significantly effective in demobilizing political participation⁸¹.

While the government justified its actions claiming that social media posed security threats during the elections, it seemed like it was an effective crisis management strategy. In fact, empirical research by Philip Howard of Washington University notes that “in times of political uncertainty, rigged elections, or military incursions, ruling elites are sometimes willing to interfere with information infrastructure as a way of managing crises”⁸².

⁸⁰ Pedersen, M (2018). Uganda’s youth can trigger economic, political change. Daily Monitor Article dated June 21st 2018.

⁸¹ Ojok, D (2016). Social Media Lockdown and Elections in Uganda. Africa at LSE Blog

⁸² Howard, N. et.al. (2018). The Dictators’ Digital Dilemma: When Do States Disconnect their Digital Networks? answers this question more succinctly: Brookings Institute Brief

A look into the Uganda Social Media Guide

Due to the significant uptake of social media tools in Uganda, it has become necessary to consider social media in developing any modern, professional communication strategies especially within Government operational domains. But the use of social media without guidelines by government agencies could jeopardize the intended outcomes which are centered in engagement with the citizens, communicating important issues to the public and achieving transparency and accountability in government operations.

It is in light of the above, NITA-U developed guidelines to guide Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in using Social Media as one of the Platforms for engaging with the citizens of Uganda. Some of the guidelines are presented below; MDAs are expected to comply with the guideline and ensure credibility of the information relayed through social media to the public or across agencies by **being accurate, fair, thorough, and transparent**. MDAs should ensure what they publish are consistent with relevant policies, standards and behaviors.

They should only **encourage constructive criticism and deliberations through social media platforms**. Employees within the respective MDAs are encouraged to be cordial, honest and professional at all times. Welcoming constructive criticism and deliberations through social media platforms may result in good ideas that can be helpful to the local governments and the people they serve.

In addition, MDAs in their use of social media should **ensure responsiveness by providing feedback in a timely manner** and likewise sharing insights where appropriate. This enhances transparency and accountability, something very crucial in local government development.

Furthermore, MDAs as per the social media guide should whenever possible **integrate and align online participation with other offline communications**. This is very important for improving better local governance because the majority of Ugandan people stay in the rural areas, with many of them being illiterate; hence there is a critical need for communication not to be exclusively online.

Government employees should also align themselves with the social media guide and disclose their position as local government officials when using social media as this creates trust among departments and with the public.

Furthermore, **Government employees managing their respective entity social media should be good custodians of information** and should ensure that content and messages are checked and posted regularly. They should also ensure that information is created, kept and, if necessary, disposed of in accordance with departmental policies.

MDAs should ensure that their employees **desist from unacceptable behavior such as online harassment, bullying, illegal or otherwise inappropriate activity** whether the Social Media is used as official or private social media account.

In addition, MDAs as per the social media guide should **establish protocols in relation to who is authorized to respond to media inquiries or political enquiries received** via social media. Timeliness in response may mean additional employees may require permission to reply to enquiries via social media beyond normal approval channels.

MDAs are also directed by the social media guide to ensure that their internal policies

are put in place to **prevent employees from disclosure of information, making commitments or engaging in activities on behalf of Government online unless authorized to do so.** The employees should also not make comments that they are not authorized to make especially where the comment may be taken as official comment.

MDAs should ensure that information they post online are **approved by the relevant Authorities within the respective units.** This could be interpreted as an official statement or commitment to some course of action from the Government. Permission must be obtained for any information to be posted or for discussion of sensitive matters not already in the public domain.

If these guidelines are properly followed and executed, in addition to investment into ICT infrastructures and capacity building of government officials shall undoubtedly boost Government-Citizen engagements; promote transparency and accountability and improve service delivery.

Social Media for Better Local Governance: A Case Study of Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA)

In 2010, the Parliament of Uganda passed the Kampala Capital City Act in accordance with Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda⁸³. As the central governing body of the city, the Authority is mandated among others to; administer the city on behalf of the government, including the management of all political, management and policy processes; manage territorial boundaries and development of the city. The Authority replaced Kampala City Council (KCCA) and started operations in 2011, with Jennifer Musisi at its helm as the first Executive Director. As a local government unit, KCCA provides a classic example of how social media can be used to expand the scope of citizen-government engagement while improving service delivery and public accountabilities at the same.

Social media presence in KCCA

The highly appealing, interactive and instant feedback nature of social media made KCCA to adopt them as a communication strategy as soon as it was established in 2010. KCCA runs several social media platforms, which are produced and maintained 24/7 by KCCA digital communication team under Public and Corporate Affairs' Press Office. The official digital outlets include; Twitter; @KCCAUG, @KCCAFC and @KCCAESB, Facebook; @KCCAAUG, @JenniferSMusisi, @KlaCityFestival, @KCCAFC and @KCCAESB, Instagram; @KCCAUG, @KlaCityFestival, @VisitKampala and @KCCAFC, Flickr; KCCAUG, Sound Cloud; KCCAUG and KCCA.

Social Media: The Lifeline of KCCA's Communication

While speaking at the Uganda Social Media Conference organized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in 2016, Peter Kaujju, the Director of Public and Corporate Affairs,

noted that KCCA has a social media rapid response team to respond to queries from Kampala residents that come through social media. He explained that every single inquiry is responded to in kind or through other communication channels such as phone calls and physical visits to the service being complained about. He however called upon Kampala residents to *"offer constructive criticism and be positive, optimistic while online". "Offer solutions and not just blatant criticisms. Point out positive stories as well to motivate the service delivery workers,"* He emphasized.

KCCA once in a while organizes the online engagement with the citizens through a programme dubbed ask the #AsktheED. The programme makes the Executive Director of KCCA to be hosted on the Authority's Official Twitter page. It is held at City Hall's Executive Boardroom and the general public is encouraged to attend and ask questions, get feedback and exchange ideas with the Authority's top management.

KCCA's Social Media Policy

KCCA's social media engagement is guided by the KCCA Social Media Policy⁸⁴ which is in line with the Uganda Government Social Media Policy. The policy ensures that the public gets feedback if they contact the Authority. The organization does this by endeavoring to read all messages and ensure that any emerging suggestions are passed on for discussion and consideration. Through this process, many ideas can be picked and implemented. The Policy also encourages the general public to use online engagements to understand more about the organization, locations of their offices within the city, information on public events organized by the Authority, News and press releases, Official Executive engagements, Institutional projects across sectors,

⁸³ GoU (2010). *Kampala Capital City Act, 2010*

⁸⁴ KCCA (2016). *KCCA Social Media Policy*

Invitations to provide feedback, including surveys and formal consultations among others. Most importantly, the Policy offers guidelines on contents that should be posted on the Authority's social media platforms and must be devoid of abusive, profane, obscene, indecent or offensive language or contain links to such materials.

How Social Media Impacts KCCA's Work

The adoption of social media usage by KCCA since its inception has undoubtedly led to positive impacts as far as access to information, service delivery and public accountability in concerned.

Quicker access to information to city dwellers has been enabled by KCCA's effective online/social media engagement activities. Important announcements on infrastructural projects such road construction and other have significantly been eased by social media. This enables city residents to effectively plan their travel routes.



A KCCA Tweet informing the public about a road construction project in the city

Kampala Capital City Authority - KCCA
December 3, 2018 at 4:25 PM · 🌐

ALERT 🚨 —The signals at Fairway are off due to emergency ongoing works by UMEME on a Feeder Pillar that serves the junction. Power shall be restored as soon as possible. You are advised to drive with extra precaution while approaching and driving through the junction. While they are off, Traffic Police will guide traffic.

Apologies for all inconvenience as a result.

Stick to → [Instagram.com/kccaug](https://www.instagram.com/kccaug) and [Twitter.com/kccaug](https://www.twitter.com/kccaug) for speed photo updates.

Related Pages

- KCCA FC** Sports Team
- Jennifer S Musisi** Public Figure
- State House Uganda** Government Organization

Pages Liked by This Page

- Jennifer S Musisi**

A Facebook post by KCCA notifying the public about a dysfunctional traffic light

Mobilization of the city dwellers for the events organized by the KCCA such as Kampala city festivals have been much quicker and eased using the social media with much greater turn-up. For instance, when it first started seven years ago, the festival attracted slightly more than 1M revelers but the numbers kept increasing in subsequent years peaking in 2017 when over 3M people attended the festival.

In addition, the use of social media by KCCA has resulted into greater transparency and accountability by KCCA as many of the

activities of the KCCA are posted on social media. This has in turn improved the trust of the KCCA management and leadership by many of the Kampala city dwellers. The constant use of social media by KCCA has also resulted into greater engagement of the city dwellers through interactive and instant platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Some of the feedbacks from the city dwellers through these platforms have been incorporated into city planning and administration hence improving the quality of service delivery by KCCA.



Kampala Capital City Authority - KCCA
@kccaug

- Home
- About
- Photos
- Videos
- Reviews
- Invite Your Friends!
- Notes
- Posts
- Events
- Community
- Info and Ads
- Create a Page

November 19, 2018

Hello Friends! If you would like to share with us a concept, suggestion/idea or to simply say hello , do not hesitate to connect with us 24/7 via our Social Media Spaces.

For more information about #KCCAatWork, stick to our 360° #SocialMedia hub — Twitter.com/kccaug | Instagram.com/kccaug | Facebook.com/kccaug | WhatsApp +256(0)794274444 or write to info@kcca.go.ug and make use of our toll free line; 0800 99 00 00.

We hope you have a fruitful week ahead!



A KCCA Facebook post calling upon the public to engage via various on-&-offline platforms

KCCA is also able to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its technologically inspired projects because of social media. In 2014, the Authority won two international awards of its excellence in using technology to collect revenues. The introduction of the automated revenue services (eCitie) which

was popularized using social media has contributed towards efficiency in revenue collection. For example, revenue collections grew by 130% from UGX 30.7Bn FY2011/12 to UGX 70.1Bn FY2013/14⁸⁵.

85 KCCA (2015). For Kampala City Transformation STRATEGIC PLAN 2014/15-2018/19

Key Lessons and Recommendations for KCCA's Effective Social Media Engagement

With its great performance on social media engagement, KCCA could still excel in some aspects noted below;

A social media agency of international repute could be contracted to review and offer recommendations for excellent performance. This can go a long way in making the use of social media more effective in achieving its intended goals. For instance, Roanoke, a city in Virginia, U.S has hires a dedicated social media consultant to advise on the proper use its social media sites and engagements.

Still like Roanoke city, **KCCA should also be holding regular quarterly meetings to review the effectiveness of the various social media channels** to provide more training and show more examples of new social media options and tools that pertains them. These meetings can also act as brainstorming sessions for new ideas.

KCCA and other local governments should always make council meetings and other very important events live on Facebook. Hashtags should also be created on Twitter with the name of such specific events to make Twitter users to easily find them. Such instant broadcast of such events enhances transparency and accountability leading to trust in the authority by the city stakeholders. The use of hashtags, such as, #KCCAAtWork, #AsenteJennifer is excellent initiatives.

In addition, **KCCA should build an automated system for collecting data from social media.** This can help in ensuring a more quick and accurate analysis of the public opinions and provide a more prompt and accurate response.

KCCA should improve on its technical competence in handling antivirus and antimalware. In addition, it should use content filtering technology to either restrict or limit access to social media sites. There should also be frequent updates of the ICT system used for social media engagement. That is how other cities around the world are doing to improve on the security of its social media usage for the safe but effective service delivery. The city of Bandung in Indonesia for example, has an agency called the Information and Communication Agency which is tasked with the responsibility to handle antivirus and filtering technology to restrict and limit access to social media sites. This will go a long way in preventing situations like the recent hacks into the social media accounts of the KCCA Executive Director⁸⁶.

For faster information and greater transparency through social media use, **KCCA could open social media accounts, for example, Twitter accounts for each of the department and each of its divisions/departments.** Still in Bandung city, Indonesia, each city agency/department has a Twitter account and this has made information sharing much faster and effective for service delivery and city administration.

KCCA should also **encourage city dwellers to make the complaints and requests through their social media sites** in case they cannot physically go to the city hall. They should make sure that they make timely respond to such complaints to prevent people from losing morals in using social media to launch complaints. Currently it is possible

⁸⁶ Semakula, J (2018). *Musisi's Social Media Accounts Hacked*. *New Vision Newspaper Article of 20th Jan 2018*.

for the Kampala city dwellers to make complaints through the KCCA websites but this may not be as easy and flexible as using the social media platform. In the city of Phuket in Thailand, the city dwellers make their complaints through the city social media platforms and effort are put in place to ensure that they have quick responses.

Whilst KCCA flares quite well with updating citizens on social media, there is still a

lack of nuance and analytical depth to the updates. For instance, a post, such as the Tweet shared above only highlights what is going on and where it is taking place. In future, KCCA could include a blog section on their website where stories are written with more depth, providing information about the timeframe of the project, which partner/company is involved and why is the project being implemented.

Using Social Media to Improve Water Service Delivery in Uganda: NWSW

With the coverage of over 240 towns and rural growth centres, serving around 600,000 people⁸⁷, the Uganda National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSW) actively uses social media as a cost effective communication channel to engage its customers. The NWSW engages with its customers via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram on a 24-hour basis. On its Facebook page alone, the NWSW has 17,625 followers.

The NWSW prefers using social media to engage its customers because of the instant nature of the social media tools; this allows customers to report water issues as and when they happen. Customers can, for example, tweet about water problems and get feedback instantly. Even its Managing Director can be reached directly by customers using Twitter. The Twitter handle for the Managing Director is @NWSWMD. This has helped providing a platform for instant feedback and giving clients the confidence to believe in the services of the Corporation. NWSW has also created the national water App which simplifies payment and tracking of clients' water bills.

The NWSW social media are linked to other government line ministries like the

OPM (Office of the Prime Minister). This has boosted partnership and cooperation among the government agencies hence improving access to safe and clean drinking water. The NWSW uses the social media to reassure clients that they are ready to be served any time, to advise them to clean their tanks and ensure that their water systems are free from leaks but also to remind them to pay their water bills in time among other information it shares with its customers.

The image shows a screenshot of the NWSW Facebook page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'About', 'Photos', 'Posts', and 'Comm'. Below this, a post features the text: '#waterman is online and ready to address all your water and sewerage related concerns. Here are some #NwswTips for you.' The post includes a circular infographic titled 'NWSW TIPS' with the following advice:

- Visit our branch/area office and get connected onto the NWSW grid.
- Repair leaks after the meter to avoid paying hefty bills.
- Always clean your tanks every 6 months and ensure that your plumbing systems are free from leaks.
- Always clear your bills to zero to avoid disconnection and payment of reconnection fees.
- Get in Touch with us. 0800 200977, 0800 300977
- Follow us on social media: @waterug, @nwswug, @nwswug

A Facebook post by NWSW

87 NWSW Website: www.nwsw.co.ug

NWSC won the Best Utilities/Services Brand on Social Media and Best Customer Brand awards 2018 by the Digital Impact Awards Africa⁸⁸. In both 2017 and 2016, it won the Best Government Agency on Social Media and Best Customer Service award⁸⁹. It also scooped a Beyond Success Award from the World Confederation of Business in 2017,

in 2016 the Corporation was voted the Best African Water Utility for the year and it was its third time in a row⁹⁰. All these awards were tied to NWSC's zeal in applying technologies and innovations in its operation including the use of social media which has made it to offer distinguished service delivery in the water sector.



Photo Credit: PM Daily Newspaper

With its water coverage now at 80%, extension capacity increasing to over 1,000km from 80km in less than a decade and the customer service index of now stands at 88%⁹¹, NWSC is indeed leveraging digital opportunities to improve its client relations and service delivery.

As noted by Fred Mbeya⁹², the success of social media engagement as NWSC is

occasioned by other effective operational actions by the organization. For instance, using internal billing system that is fully integrated with the mobile money payment systems; having a self-service informative and interactive website page; organizing community Barraza and engagements such as the schools' water clubs; taking actions by making quick visits to points where complaints are coming from among others.

88 Okello, G (2018). NWSC scoops top accolades at Digital Impact Awards. PM Daily Newspaper.

89 Ibid (2)

90 Daily Monitor (2014). NWSC wins award for quality service.

91 NWSC (2017). NWSC Crowned Best Digital Customer Care Service in Government.

92 <https://www.observer.ug/viewpoint/37753-nwsc-using-social-media-to-good-effect>

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The Research Paper series provide insights and analysis on the latest political economy and social developments in Uganda. The reports aim to contribute towards a better understanding of relevant development trends, opportunities and challenges in Uganda.

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