Barriers to women’s participation in mobile-phone mediated services

Participatory approaches to technology for social good
Brighton Digital Festival

Dr Rachel Masika
Participation and value-added services

• Mobile phones present low-income groups with opportunities to participate in broader flows of information, the economy, governance services and leisure activities enabled by mobile phone innovations

• M-governance
• M-banking
• M-education and M-learning
• M-health
• M-entertainment
Mobile phone research

- Micro-entrepreneurs on four streets in the central business district of Kampala, Uganda
  - Use of mobile phone-enabled networks
    - Governance and political
    - Business
    - Social and leisure

Source: ITU, 2012
Gender divide – participation in M-governance services and political activities

**Table 1: M-political participation and m-governance services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Services</th>
<th>Women % of women</th>
<th>Men % of men</th>
<th>Combined %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politically activity using mobile phones</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation-m-governance services</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with public officials</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in local-level/community initiatives</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Intention/willingness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention</th>
<th>Women % of women</th>
<th>Men % of men</th>
<th>Combined %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to engage with public officials (KCC)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to engage with local level initiatives (LRCs)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Barriers

- Financial constraints
- Functional and ICT illiteracies
- Information and communication capabilities
- Lack of confidence and political capabilities
- Fear of reprisals
- Socio-cultural barriers
Socio-cultural issues

- Socio-cultural shaping of technology
  - Mobile phones and their use appropriated into existing divisions of labour
  - Time

- Socialization into political participation
  - Politics perceived as not a space for women

- Participatory technology or technology of control?
Enhancing women’s participation

• Identify learning opportunities
• Build political capabilities and confidence
• Engender trust
• Minimise costs of participation (financial and time)