



FINAL REPORT

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL UNSERVED AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

The 15 Districts covered included: Agago, Amudat, Amuria, Bundibugyo, Kagadi, Kanungu, Karenga, Kotido, Lamwo, Moyo, Ngora, Ntoroko, Nwoya, Otuke and Pader

DATE : 19TH JUNE 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), in collaboration with Makerere University College of Computing and Information Sciences (CoCIS) is currently implementing a project aimed at enhancing digital skills in rural unserved and underserved communities. This training initiative is supported by the Uganda Communications Universal Service Access Fund (UCUSAF). The field team has conducted the full training program in 15 districts, including Agago, Amudat, Amuria, Bundibugyo, Kagadi, Kanungu, Karenga, Kotido, Lamwo, Moyo, Ngora, Ntoroko, Nwoya, Otuke and Pader for a period covering April 1st to 19th June, 2024. To date, we have trained a *total of 2,643* participants in the aforementioned 15 districts with a principal objective of empowering the identified villages in digital literacy knowledge and skills. Thus, the team has facilitated the empowerment of rural unserved and underserved communities in line with the current National Development Plan (NDPIII) 2020/2021 as a means to catalyse a knowledge-based economy, particularly in response to recent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The training has been successfully executed with almost all intended topics covered and positive learning outcomes. Participants have expressed great enthusiasm for the digital skills training, and have been requesting for more tailored training of this nature for them to navigate the digital terrain. The training primarily addressed the following topics: *Fundamental ICT modules like computer and mobile phone usage to Microsoft Office applications, internet literacy, online collaboration, e-government services, and online safety.*

Key Observations

i) Ownership of devices (smartphones or basic phones):

A key observation in all the districts where training took place was that a few of attendees had smart phones while the majority had basic dumb phones and a significant number especially attendees in Kotido and Bundibugyo districts had no or did not own phones at all. This has for instance been exemplified in the attendance list of Kotido district.

We were informed by UCC in the call for proposal that they had supplied over 150 smart phones in most of these districts, however over 50% of these participants had faulty or no phones at all. Those who had such phones, expressed their frustration either over limited access to spare parts or cost of repair, hindering their usability. In some of the districts, the available mechanics, lacked technical expertise to repair these particular phones.

ii) Economic activity:

Despite the majority of the participants being either primarily engaged in crop cultivation and cattle keeping, they were grateful that the training easily related to the daily economic activities as most of the examples by the trainers were relevant to their daily livelihood. For example, in Amudat – a border district, one of the participants who appeared in one of the videos, commented that he is able to use the knowledge learnt to compare prices of cattle in the either Kenya or Uganda and decide the best market for his cattle.

Key insights and outcomes from the training include:

- i) Overall the training was successfully executed, with all the targeted key topics trained.
- ii) The training attracted more women than men in the 7 districts of Otuke, Kotido, Karenga, Amuria, Lamwo, Moyo and Ntoroko with the following percentages; 69.5%, 60.6%, 60%, 66.7%, 51.5% and 69.2% respectively. The highest being Otuke and lowest from Moyo districts.
- iii) Participants were very enthusiastic about the digital skilling training and everyone got a chance to use a computer during the session.
- iv) Community involvement and partnerships with local leaders especially the DCO, and LC1 are essential for maximising outreach and ensuring sustained engagement with participants.
- v) The community trained are interested in getting more smartphones especially who originally didn't receive any.
- vi) Although people were interested in the training, it has however become a custom for people to believe that whenever there's a government program, they are entitled to receive money despite the benefits arising from such training.
- vii) Great awareness concerning the current online tax regime and critical services such as NSSF, URA, NIRA, financial institutions, and others.

Key recommendations include:

Based on our findings, we propose the following recommendations should be considered to further improve and motivate ICT penetration in Uganda's underserved/unserved rural communities. We believe these identified needs will significantly improve the overall well-being of the communities.

- i) There's need for the government through UCC to remedy the network connection challenges in rural unserved and underserved communities.
- ii) UCC should plan for additional follow-up training due to an increased need to further enhance the high demand for digital skilling and computer literacy.
- iii) UCC should plan for short-term residential training on skills and knowledge in phone repairs that were previously distributed in the villages. This is the feedback; the team got during the training.
- iv) Some of the identified existing UCC access public centres are not operational e.g. in Ntoroko where the passwords to unlock the supplied computers were lost. In Moyo and Ngora districts access to the centres are very restricted thereby not helping the community.
- v) People in underserved and unserved communities should be provided with solar powered devices since power outages are rampant in these areas.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COCIS	Makerere University College of Computing and Information Sciences
DCO	District Community Officers
ICT	Information & Communication Technologies
LC	Local Chairman
NDP	National Development Plan
UCC	Uganda Communications Commission
UCUSAF	Uganda Communications Universal Service Access Fund
ToTs	Trainer of Trainers

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), in collaboration with Makerere University College of Computing and Information Sciences (CoCIS) and Ssekitto, Kaimanda & Associates (SKA), is implementing a project aimed at enhancing digital skills in rural unserved and underserved communities. The latter partner was particularly instrumental in undertaking the pre-skills Needs Assessment survey and also undertook the training in the western part of Uganda.

This initiative, supported by the Uganda Communications Universal Service Access Fund (UCUSAF), conducted a two-day training program in each of the 15 districts which included Agago, Amudat, Amuria, Bundibugyo, Kagadi, Kanungu, Karenga, Kotido, Lamwo, Moyo, Ngora, Ntoroko, Nwoya, Otuke and Pader. A total of **2,643** participants were trained in those districts with the main objective of empowering the identified villages to leverage them in the digital economy, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The training attracted more women than men in the 7 districts of Otuke, Kotido, Karenga, Amuria, Lamwo, Moyo and Ntoroko with the following percentages; 69.5%, 60.6%, 60%, 66.7%, 51.5% and 69.2% respectively. The highest being Otuke and lowest from Moyo districts. The participants were very enthusiastic about this digital skilling training and hope for more of such training annually.

The main objective of the digital skilling training was to introduce and train participants in basic ICT modules i.e., Basic Computer and Mobile phone use, Basic Microsoft office word, Basic Microsoft excel, Basic Microsoft PowerPoint, Internet and online collaboration, e-government services, and online safety.

2.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Clearly state the objectives of the project, outlining the specific ICT skills to be developed and the intended outcomes.

The main objective for the program is to support the selected communities in harnessing the benefits of the digital economy, reaping the opportunities offered by digitalization and adapting rapidly to the new digital reality during and in aftermath of COVID-19 crisis through improved digital skills and capacities.

The following were the objectives for the field activity;

1. Train and create awareness among the rural unserved and underserved villages on the use and potential of ICTs in various economic empowerment sectors, social life, citizen participation and continuous learning for their social economic transformation.
2. Build their capacity in digital transversal skills aligned with social responsibility and relevant ICT entrepreneurship skills.
3. To make them aware of online safety and security best practices.

3.0 SCOPE

This report covers the period between April 1st and 19th June, 2024 when it targeted beneficiaries in the unserved and underserved villages of Northern Uganda, parts of Karamoja, Teso region and Western Uganda. The training initiative aimed at reaching 165 individuals in each district within the selected regions, providing a comprehensive 2-day training program.

The 15 targeted districts under Lot 1 were; Agago, Amudat, Amuria, Bundibugyo, Kagadi, Kanungu, Karenga, Kotido, Lamwo, Moyo, Ngora, Ntoroko, Nwoya, Otuke and Pader.

The training covered 7 key topics essential for basic digital literacy and empowerment: Computer and mobile phone usage, basic Microsoft Office applications, internet connectivity, online collaboration, and e-government services.

4.0 PROJECT ACTIVITIES / TRAINING METHODOLOGY

The needs assessment survey that informed the mobilisation of participants was carried out and following approval of its report by UCC, Makerere University CoCIS proceeded to the field to start the training activities:

Before the start of the training, participants provided their key expectations as follows:

- 1) To establish a good working relationship between UCC and the community.
- 2) Acquire new skills.
- 3) Receive transport allowance after the training.
- 4) They also wanted to know why they no longer access Facebook.
- 5) Use of two languages in the training i.e., English and the locally spoken language.
- 6) Request that this training is made frequently and repeated annually.

7) Expected to receive smartphones and computers at the end of the training.

4.1 Training Methodology by Makerere CoCIS:

The training methodology for the two-day digital skills program in each of the districts was designed to achieve the outlined objectives effectively. The methodology integrated both theoretical knowledge and practical hands-on sessions to ensure maximum engagement and comprehension among the participants. The following approach was adopted;

The training sessions were conducted in an interactive way, allowing for active participation and engagement from the participants. Facilitators employed a variety of teaching methods, including group discussions, and hands-on practical exercises. Participants were split into two working groups of 83 participants per group in order to manage the training effectively.

One group was assigned a Lead Trainer who speaks English and Luo fluently, an Assistant Trainer from Makerere University who speaks English, and 4 local mentoring champions to assist in explaining difficult concepts in the local language of a particular district during the training sessions.

The second group was assigned a Lead Trainer from Makerere University who speaks English fluently and a locally recruited translator who understands both English and Luo or Madi. Additionally, an Assistant Trainer from Makerere University worked together with another set of 4 locally recruited mentoring champions to assist in explaining difficult concepts in the local language during the training sessions.

In the Western districts of Uganda, Makerere University deployed a Runyakitara speaking translator to assist the lead trainers to explain difficult concepts just as the same happened in the Teso and Karamoja regions where we had Ateso & Karamajong translators doing a wonderful job in Kotido and Karenga respectively. In Amudat Pokot translators worked excellently with us to deliver the training.

Based on the above details, the majority of the participants were able to grasp most concepts in the training manual we customized for them, which constituted Introduction to digital literacy, Basic Ms Word, Basic Ms Excel, Basic Ms PowerPoint and Internet as well as a few e-governance services concepts.

All modules were taught in a hands-on manner from morning to evening, with breaks in between sessions. The morning session tended to end at 1.30 pm while from 2:15 pm till the end of the day constituted the afternoon session. The sessions coverage for day 2 were reserved for Ms Excel, and using either PCs or smartphones to access internet, emails & social media plus online safety and e-governance services.

Furthermore, each training session was carefully designed to align with the stated objectives of the program. Emphasis was placed on topics such as the potential of ICTs in economic empowerment, social inclusion, citizen participation, and continuous learning. Additionally, sessions on digital transversal skills and ICT entrepreneurship were integrated to build participants' capacity in these areas.

Online Safety and Security Awareness was emphasised given the increasing prevalence of online threats. Special attention was given to educating participants about online safety and security best practices. Topics covered included safe internet browsing habits, protecting personal information, identifying scams and phishing attempts, and securing devices from malware.

Continuous Assessment and Feedback: Throughout the training program, continuous assessment mechanisms were implemented to gauge participants' understanding and progress. Feedback sessions were conducted to solicit input from participants, allowing for adjustments to be made in real-time to enhance the effectiveness of the training.

5.0 TRAINING ASSESSMENT

5.1 Training assessment in detail:

i Pre-Training Participant Information Analysis

The initial needs assessment provided a glimpse of the individual district participant requirements. This was further reinforced with answers from participant expectation at the beginning of the training to provide an indicative and overall picture of their readiness to undertake this training.

a) Level of Education

In the Pre-training survey conducted, the results indicated that; the Northern districts of Uganda had the highest levels of education. The assumption was that we would be able to train within the two stipulated number of days. Indeed, this proved to be the case in most of the districts other than Kotido and Ngora districts. However, for Ngora district there were parallel activities taking place which could have affected the actual selected trainees from attending. This included Housing and Population census training of 2024 and two burials of prominent people in the area.

b) Digital Literacy

Whereas the pre-skills survey had indicated that the participants from Amudat district had the lowest digital literacy rate, on the contrary, they together with Moyo and Karenga districts proved to have had the highest and best literacy rates. The rest of the districts were either of medium digital literacy or moderate digital literacy rates. However, Kotido and Bundibugyo districts proved to have had the lowest digital literacy rates.

c) Envisaged participant age

The pre-skills survey did not have proper records on the potential trainees age groups. We expected the majority to be from between 25 and 50 years of age because they would have had a higher interest in being digitally literate since they were the biggest recipients of the UCC distributed phones. In the actual implementation however, we had representation from ages 17 up to 80 who were quite enthusiastic about acquiring the skills and even on their practical usage.

d) During the beginning of training

At the onset of each training session, participants were encouraged to share their expectations, facilitating engagement and providing insights into the demographics of the attendees. The expectations voiced predominantly by participants revolved around establishing a strong working relationship between UCC and the community, acquiring new skills, receiving transport allowances, post-training, understanding the social media usage, advocating for bilingual training (English and the local language), expressing a desire for ongoing learning opportunities, and anticipating the provision of smartphones and computers upon completion of the training.

Additionally, facilitators conducted a quick preliminary assessment to identify participants with smartphones and social media usage, aiming to tailor the training to the characteristics of the attendees. Notably, it was observed across all districts about 5% of attendees possessed smartphones, highlighting the need for targeted digital literacy interventions.

ii Continuous Formative Assessment

The interactive engagement with the participants necessitated using familiar examples within the locality so that practical application of it could be used in the assessment of their understanding of the topic. This served a dual purpose namely that the digital training is practical in its usage and secondly to enable them improve their confidence in using technology for work and in their daily lives.

5.2 Post Training Participant Information Analysis

The post-training participant information analysis involved engaging participants in seeking clarity on difficult concepts for emphasis by the facilitators and sharing their learned skills at the end of each training topic.

Noteworthy across the districts trained was the enthusiasm displayed by participants for the hands-on computer usage experience and the emphasis on online security, particularly mobile money safety precautions.

Tables 1 and 2 show a total of **1,845 and 798** participants who were trained in 15 districts respectively. A breakdown of the statistics is clearly and well categorized below:

6.0 ACHIEVEMENTS AND BENEFITS

6.1 Summary of participant statistics demonstrating the impact of the skilling program

THE 11 DISTRICTS WHERE TRAINING TOOK PLACE IN NORTHERN, TESO & KARAMOJA REGIONS													
CATEGORIES		Otuke	Karenga	Kotido	Amudat	Amuria	Ngora	Nwoya	Moyo	Pader	Lamwo	Agago	TOTAL
PWDS	Female	3	4	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	14	3	39
	Male	2	2	2	3	2	2	5	3	1	7	1	30
Elderly people aged 55 and above	Female	9	2	2	1	5	8	3	8	18	6	10	72
	Male	5	0	2	2	4	7	2	12	10	0	25	69
Adults aged 30-54	Female	60	22	29	8	79	52	53	23	20	40	33	419
	Male	39	22	25	30	54	56	34	25	30	18	28	361
Youth aged below 30	Female	55	59	68	69	13	10	20	52	33	50	21	450
	Male	10	54	36	50	6	28	45	40	57	30	49	405
Total		183	165	165	165	165	165	165	165	172	165	170	1845

Table 1 Data from 11 Districts in Northern, Teso and Karamoja regions disaggregated according to Age

CATEGORIES		Ntoroko	Bundibugyo	Kagadi	Kanungu	TOTAL
PWDS	Female	0	1	2	1	4
	Male	0	0	1	13	14
Elderly people aged 55 & above	Female	0	10	10	5	25
	Male	0	11	11	14	36
Adults aged 30-54	Female	40	55	52	48	195
	Male	32	71	70	87	260
Youth aged below 30	Female	79	13	30	23	145
	Male	21	25	41	32	119
Total		172	186	217	223	798

Table 2 Data from 4 districts in Western region disaggregated according to Age

The districts of Otuke, Kotido, Karenga, Amuria, Lamwo, Moyo and Ntoroko with the following percentages; 69.5%, 60.6%, 60%, 66.7%, 51.5% and 69.2% respectively with respect to female attendees showed that women had the highest number of trained participants. In northern Uganda for instance, despite this good posting, the men equally were very prominent in Amudat, Nwoya, Pader, Ngora and Agago which respectively had 51.%, 52.1%, 57%, Ngora 56.4, 60.6%. The Western districts of Uganda comprising of Kagadi, Bundibugyo and Kanungu had 56.7%, 65.5% and 58.1% respectively.

Tables 1 and 2 also show that the majority of the participants were either youth aged below 30 years or adults aged between 30 and 54 years which is in tandem with the objectives of the training and the potential users of these digital skills.

6.2 Key achievements Accomplished:

- 1) Given that the main objective of the training was to train and create awareness among the rural unserved and underserved villages in the 15 districts selected by UCC in the use of ICTs in various economic empowerment sectors, social life, citizen participation and continuous learning for social economic transformation, Makerere CoCIS was able to train a total of 2,643 trainees who were impacted by the skills.
- 2) Since the training content was designed to cover several key topics, including, Basic Microsoft applications, Internet & online collaboration and e- government services (i.e. URA, URSB, e-passport, UDLS) etc, these topics greatly empowered the learners with skills such as learning how to create emails in a bid to start utilising some of the e-government services that require one to have an email.
- 3) Participants were also instructed on the process of obtaining personal and business Taxpayer Identification Numbers (TINs), resulting in 40 individuals successfully acquiring their TINs. Participants were also enlightened on the different services offered on the URSB online portal, including creating a business name, searching for any existing name and the different requirements for business registration. Participants learned to apply for online passports, understanding categories, eligibility, and costs. With only two passport holders initially, they were relieved to discover the process's accessibility and affordability, dispelling previous cost concerns.
- 4) The training improved the trainees' ICT entrepreneurship skills because it covered Microsoft packages such as Basic Microsoft Office Word, and Basic Microsoft Excel, which tools were purposed to enhance participants' skills in various roles; for instance, teachers were trained in using PowerPoint for class presentations while small business owners learned Excel for stock management, and other individuals gained proficiency in Ms Word for composing letters and producing basic reports.
- 5) Building capacity through ToTs who can help fellow trainees especially the senior citizens and PWDs to continue using skills learned was done through the mentoring champions' system we introduced.
- 6) Comprehensive details on the different ways to achieve online safety and security such as use of passwords on devices, controlled dissemination of information, online child safety, controlled use of public Wi-Fi, use of online reporting services to avoid cyberbullying among others. Three participants were given an opportunity to share their experience on mobile money theft and the ways people can avoid such instances.
- 7) Trainees received certificates of completion from Makerere University. These were meant to encourage participants to keep learning, boost their CVs for those in formal education and also acknowledge the time spent in learning.
- 8) Existing platforms such as the ICT4Persons with disabilities, ICT4Farmers and UNITE were mentioned to raise awareness on how participants can benefit from the existing programs. The training content was successfully shared with a majority of the participants and group team leads.

6.3 Other realised achievements were



- i. Participants showed significant interest in improving basic digital literacy skills.
- ii. Increased confidence among participants in utilizing digital tools for communication, accessing information, and exploring entrepreneurial opportunities.
- iii. To further enrich the learning experience and gather feedback, activity videos were captured during practical sessions, and interviews were conducted with select participants and local chiefs. This facilitated insight into the workshop's impact and areas for improvement, reinforcing the commitment to ongoing community engagement and empowerment through digital literacy initiatives
- iv. Group photos were taken to commemorate the occasion, capturing the collective achievement of the participants.

6.4 Feedback from participants who completed the skilling program

Details regarding participants’ feedback from Makerere CoCIS Trainees were provided through an online tool designed by UCC & is available at <https://forms.office.com/r/tDHASu8qj4>

Some other training feedback was provided as follows:

a. Kagadi

	<p>I was really excited to learn how to get a TIN number for my business. I had tried to do it at a nearby centre before, but they asked for more money than I had. So, when I heard, we were going to learn about using government services online, I was excited. <i>Speaker of the KyanaISOke village.</i></p>
	<p>"I am grateful to the Government of Uganda for initiating this program. Today marked my first experience using a computer, and I acquired skills in MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. Throughout the training, I learned how to draft a letter to the LC Chairman and input my personal details into an Excel document. Receiving a certificate from Makerere University for completing the two-day training was a moment of great excitement for me."</p>



"It was my first time learning how to turn on and off a computer. Afterwards, I learned how to write a letter to the Chairman of Kyanaisoke village, requesting computers. I want to express my gratitude to UCC for providing me with this opportunity."

b. Ntoroko



"Am so grateful for the opportunity to be part of this training and I have learnt to use a computer in my daily life in various ways like making word document, excel and PowerPoint in my computer. I have also learnt much pertaining the security of our devices like the phones and computers. More to that I have learnt how to use a router network and connect to internet and solve to internet problem." - **Tayebwa Balam - Head Teacher of Kibbuku Primary School.**



"Am so happy to be part of this training because it has excited me so much because we have learnt a number of things, and among them are; getting a TIN number and passports. And through that am going to use these skills to help my community because I have been travelling to Fort Portal to acquire these services and it has been costly for me to get these services and my community will be transformed the more." - **Mugenyi Enock – Teacher.**








"Am grateful for training because i was able to learn the Basic concepts of ICT. This training has helped the people especially the farmers in our area, because we have learnt how to navigate the market through the online platforms. And as business people we have been facing different challenges access e-government challenges but we thankful for this knowledge." - **Tusiime Moses**




"Am a student learning Computer science i thank you for bringing this initiative to our community, As a group leader I have been excited to share with my team the skills I have acquired." - **Best Kansiime**

a. Bundibugyo

	<p>Bakasiimba Zakaliya area councillor Bundinyama parish, Tokwe subcounty Bundibugyo district.</p> <p>We are very happy for bringing a second training from UCC. I thank very much the community for participating in the training. Even the elderly now know how to use a computer. As the community we should always take these opportunities to enhance our livelihood's. I am asking that UCC shouldn't stop with us but also traverse the whole of Bundibugyo and take all those opportunities to the whole of Bundibugyo. I remain ZAKALIYA</p>
	<p>Kipapa Tom Chairman LC1 of Bundimugayo 2. I am very happy for the digital training UCC has extended to us. it has given me much joy and zeal because my people have benefited a lot from this training. I ask the government and UCC to always bring these trainings in order to enhance our knowledge scope. I recommend UCC and the government to at least always bring such courses in At least a space of 3 months. This digital knowledge extension will help the local farmers to know how the market is because they will now be able to call directly to where're they sell their cash crop which is cocoa. Those are my few remarks.</p>
	<p>Mugabe Gipson coordinator Bundibugyo district, Tokwe subcounty_ First of all I want to thank the UCC team for considering districts like Bundibugyo for people who are underserved and poor lacking a lot of facilities in the digital skills, specifically this training has helped us bridge the gap in the digitals skills and we have learnt many things like using excel and Microsoft word which is going to help bridge the gap in the use digital devices. Personally, it has helped me learn a few things I didn't know and wasn't equipped in school because this training has touched people who went to school and those who didn't not.</p>
	<p>Kyalimpa Seith Chairperson LC3 – Today am very happy because of this training, and am requesting to train us continuously. I have seen everyone who participated has got a chance of touching a computer regardless if he is educated or not.</p>
	<p>Asiimwe Chrispus Resident of Tokwe Subcounty – In this training I've learnt that many old people in my community have acquired the basic skills in computer like typing for example my mother who is 50 years old has been able to type her name in the computer. Secondly most people in my community have been able to know other usage of social media like WhatsApp, TikTok and how they can use it to market their goods. Lastly this is my first time to see such a training in our community and we have learnt how to use our phones properly and effectively</p>

b. Kanungu

	<p>Zilihi Steven, Vice Chairman LC3 Mpungu Subcounty Kyambeya Cell</p> <p>Our people were really happy to learn how to use a Digital device like a computer and smartphones. We learnt how to use the internet to market our Tea considering we have been. What excited me most as Vice Chairman was that I got an opportunity to use a computer for the first time. We request for more days of training another time you are coming this side.</p>
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	<p>Owembabazi Eunice Teacher, I am very happy for the digital training UCC has extended to us. it has given me much joy to learn how to use Word and excel to balance my sales in my business. Am also very excited about receiving computers and smart phones.</p>
	<p>Ivan Ahimbisibwe, Parish Chief in Mulamba Parish, Mpungu Subcounty_ I happy that the Government through UCC can remember the people in the rural areas and equip them with these digital skills and use their phones to get TIN numbers and Permits. We see that in the time to come Digital Technology is going the future.</p>
	<p>Tumwebaze Nicholas, Teacher – I am so grateful for this opportunity to be part of this training that is not leaving us behind, I learnt how to market my Tea better and also how to make research about my farm products. I also learnt to create a TIN number to operate effectively In my business.</p>
	<p>Natukunda Deborah Area councillor Mpungu Subcounty – I want to thank UCC for these digital skills training we were really enlightened from this initiative which consider all age groups. I personally learnt how to use my email using my smartphone and send information.</p>
	<p>Bakasiimba Zakaliya area councillor Bundinyama parish Tokwe subcounty, Bundibugyo district. We are very happy for bringing a second training from UCC. I thank very much the community for participating in the training. Even the elderly now know how to use a computer. As the community we should always take these opportunities to enhance our livelihood's. I am asking that UCC shouldn't stop with us but also traverse the whole of Bundibugyo and take all those opportunities to the whole of Bundibugyo. I remain ZAKALIYA</p>

7.0 CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Discuss any challenges and obstacles encountered during the project implementation. Describe how these challenges were addressed and mitigated. Provide lessons learned that can inform future ICT skilling initiatives. Share insights gained from the project implementation.

7.1 Some of the challenges encountered in the field included;

1. Poor road infrastructure in some of the regions. On rainy days it was hard to navigate the slippery or rough terrain.
2. Extreme unstable power connectivity especially in the Northern region led to use of generators in all the districts which added extra strain on resource allocation.
3. Poor internet connectivity throughout 11 districts in the northern region which slowed some of the training processes most especially those that required internet use and filling online

feedback forms. However, the teams devised means of ensuring that they have two ISP routers that support both MTN and Airtel.

4. Extremely hot environments in some of the districts e.g. in Moyo, Pader, Lamwo & Agago were very hot which made the training rooms somewhat uncomfortable during the afternoon training sessions.
5. The unexpectedly high turnout in some of the districts which surpassed the initially projected numbers, placing significant pressure on available resources and potentially causing constraints in resource allocation.
6. Time keeping in some of the districts was a problem for the participants, leading to delays in start time.
7. The presence of NGOs in these regions especially the northern region who pay meal service providers and also pay for training halls highly has caused a hike in prices for food & conference facilities for participants.
8. Specifically, in the northern region most women were not at ease with handling the laptops and surrendered that activity to the male participants.
9. A significant number of participants didn't want to participate in group photos at the end of the training (*This is due to lack of confidence among the trainees especially in Moyo district*).

7.2 Lessons Learnt

1. The community is interested in getting more smartphones, especially those that have attended the training.
2. Informing the participants about the training benefits heightened their expectations and served as an effective mobilization strategy. However, the actual turnout in some districts exceeded expectations, resulting in resource constraints.
3. For mobilization purposes of future training, community involvement and partnerships with local leaders, especially the DCO, and LCI are essential for maximizing outreach and ensuring sustained engagement with participants.
4. Although people were interested in the training it has however become a custom for people to believe that whenever there's a government program, they are entitled to receive money even when it benefits them.
5. LC3 chairpersons need to be included in the communication loop because they tend to override the decisions of the LC1s and subsequently cause havoc for the training teams.
6. In Acholi region, the residual effect of the war still manifests itself in a number of places resulting in mental challenges.
7. The absence of training halls in a number of targeted places affected school attendance as these were the only available venues in the location (e.g. in Karamoja region).

8. Food relief is required in some areas of Karamoja as the food served for the participants became a necessity for the community, thereby making it difficult to cater for the intended participants only.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE PLANS

Sustainability measures put in place to ensure the long-term impact of the project:

In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project and maximize its impact beyond the initial training sessions, a comprehensive approach to capacity building and ongoing support was implemented.

8.1 Capacity Building and Community Empowerment

During the training sessions, participants who demonstrated proficiency in computer operations were identified and appointed as group leaders for practical sessions. These individuals were carefully selected based on their aptitude and eagerness to share their knowledge with others. By empowering these group leaders, we aimed to create a cascading effect within the community, where the skills learned during the training sessions would be disseminated and applied in practical settings.

8.2 Continuous Learning and Support

To facilitate ongoing learning and knowledge exchange, the training content was shared with a majority of the participants in soft copy format. This was made possible through the creation of a dedicated WhatsApp group, where participants could access resources, ask questions, and engage in discussions related to the skills they had acquired. By leveraging the convenience and accessibility of digital communication platforms, we aimed to foster a supportive learning community that transcended geographical barriers.

8.3 Community Engagement and Collaboration

In addition to individual efforts, the project also fostered collaboration among participants and community stakeholders. Through community outreach programs and collaborative initiatives with local organizations, we aimed to create a conducive environment for the application and expansion of digital skills. By involving community members, mentoring champions in the planning and implementation of future activities, we sought to ensure that the project remained responsive to the evolving needs and priorities of the target communities.

8.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

To track the progress and effectiveness of our sustainability efforts, regular monitoring and evaluation activities will be conducted. This will include assessing the level of engagement within

the WhatsApp group, monitoring the activities of group leaders, and soliciting feedback from participants and community members. By systematically collecting data and feedback, we aim to identify areas for improvement and refine our approach to ensure maximum impact and sustainability.

8.5 Recommendations for Future Projects

- i) Additional annual training required annually for the trainees who have just benefited
- ii) Source for more resources to enable additional villages and districts come on board.
- iii) There should be a way of engaging additional neighbouring villages as it brings envy among those left out.
- iv) In future, training for remote or underserved areas should be undertaken during school holidays so as not to interrupt school activities.

9.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion the following are the key observations:

1. Overall the training was successfully executed, with all the targeted key topics trained and a high turn up of trainees registered (a total of 2,643 participants had their ICT skills level greatly improved).
2. Participants were very excited about the digital skills, and everyone got a chance to use a computer during the sessions.
3. There is a high need for more digital skills training given that the participants kept on inquiring to know when the next set of training shall be conducted.
4. There is need to improve the Internet connectivity and to find a robust solution to the rampant power outages especially in the whole of northern Uganda.
5. There is need to include the LC3 chair persons in the communication loop to avoid clashes with training teams since they enjoy stamping their authority and overriding LC1 chairpersons' decisions.
6. The levels of poverty are high thus leading to participants heightened demand for a share of the training equipment.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide recommendations for future ICT skilling initiatives based on the lessons learned and experiences gained from the project. Suggest improvements based on lessons learned.

10.1 Key recommendations include:

Based on our findings, we propose the following recommendations that should be considered to improve ICT penetration in such underserved rural communities. We believe these identified needs will significantly improve the overall well-being of the communities.

1. There's need for the government through UCC to remedy the network connection challenges in rural unserved and underserved communities.
2. UCC should plan for additional follow-up training due to an increased need to further enhance high demand for digital skilling and computer literacy.
3. UCC should plan for short-term residential training on skills and knowledge in phone repairs that were previously distributed in the villages. This is the feedback the team has gotten back during the training.
4. Some of the identified existing UCC access public centres are not operational e.g. In Ntoroko the passwords to unlock the supplied computers were lost therefore there's need for UCC to send a technical team to the school to help in unlocking the computers as the desire and need to use the computers is now higher following the recently concluded training exercise.
5. People in underserved and unserved communities should be provided with solar powered devices since power outages are rampant in these areas.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Training materials/manuals

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DT8px8dfir_dFBXMxTRXkMAcyZMcjy/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=116150013258948809993&rtpof=true&sd=true

Annex 2: Participant feedback forms

<https://forms.office.com/r/tDHASu8qj4>

and

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bjFNAkP4-smEARw1LHUaAOgDOGwwvlw2/view>

Annex 3: Training Attendance and Contacts

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1TF64ln02ONhZ8DjNV3_dBMsjrgXspgPs?usp=drive_link

Annex 4: Training In Pictures for The 15 Districts

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tSPS_06CrSXbqlmxw8riSDfXJU64JJe4/view?usp=drive_link

Annex 5: Sample Certificates

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RAEVwWxyFKCOLafII2LEGHeuq6O7zNbw/view?usp=drive_link

Annex 6: Training in Video form

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1582XMnZKHrWI0ciG1wWyWRo8aezDjL?usp=drive_link

Annex 7: Accountability documents (*Original receipts and supporting documents will be delivered in physical form*).