Project Title: A Framework for the establishment of Community Multipurpose Telecenters in Karamoja Sub - Region

1. Executive Summary

In Uganda's development history, Karamoja region remains the least socially and economically developed with 61% of the total population living in absolute poverty (UNFPA, 2018). The poor information amenities and lack of access to information are the major causes of rising illiteracy levels in the Karamoja sub region (Global Poverty Report 2000), which creates an information gap between Karamoja and the rest of Uganda (Mbeta, 2018). This project intended to design a framework for the establishment of Community Multipurpose Telecenters (CMTs) in Karamoja sub region, which are ICT4D innovations that transform rural communities by bridging the digital divide gap that exists between them and urban centers. In the first phase, the project conducted a study that identified the community information needs, factors affecting telecenter establishment and gathered requirements necessary for telecenters establishment in Karamoja sub region. The second phase is intended to implement telecenters and mobilize resources for its sustainability. The findings of this study inform policymakers at all levels the urgency of establishing community multipurpose telecenters in Karamoja sub region.

2. Methodology

The study adopted a mixed research approach with multiple case study design in six districts of Karamoja sub region (Abim, Amudat, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit and Napak). The study benchmarked Nakaseke telecenter for the best Telecenter practices. A previsit that pretested data collection tools, mapped study sites, selected and trained field guides was conducted. A total of 728 respondents were involved in the study who were purposefully, conveniently and randomly selected from the six districts with 84.7% of the respondents from the community and 15.3% were district leaders, health workers, Education officers, and NGOs.
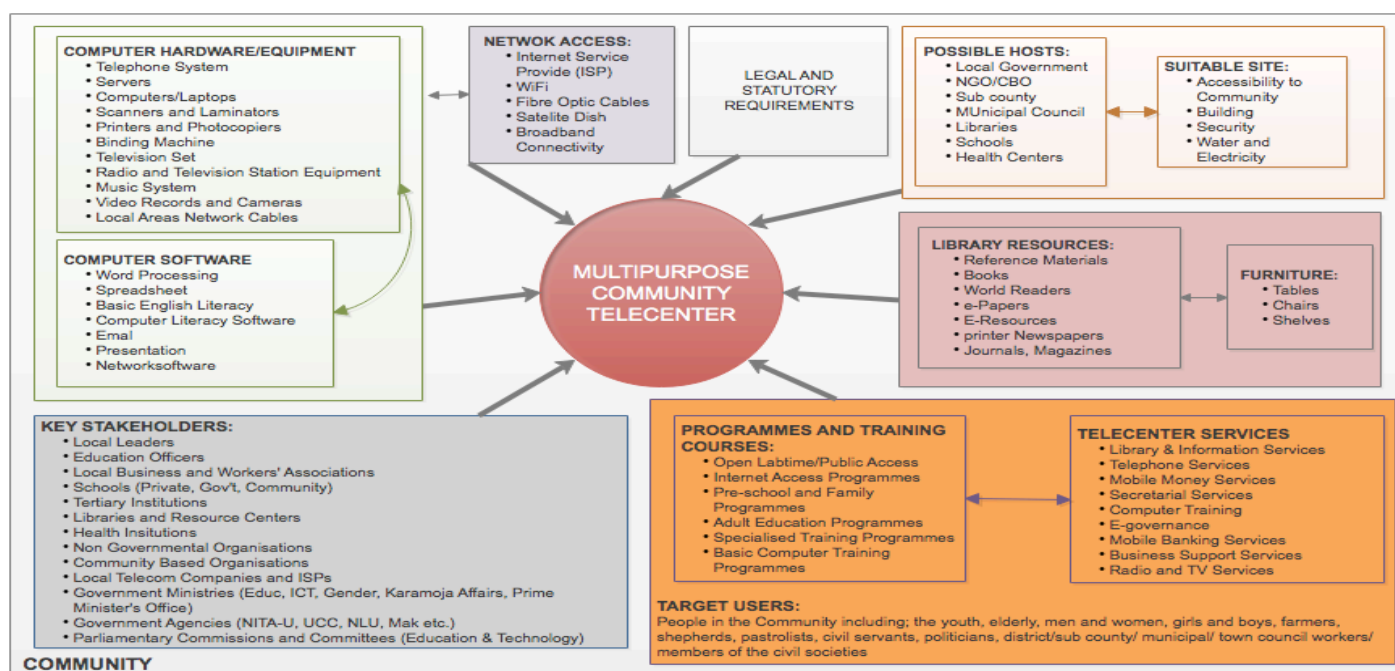
3. Key Findings

The study found out that:

i. 34.5% of the respondents had not received any form of education, 59.7% could read and write in English while 26.3% had hardly attained any level of academic training

ii. 12.4% of female respondents engaged in petty businesses compared to 11.3% male while 4.7% of male respondents were not engaged in any income generating activity

iii. Karamoja sub region which has over 10 districts has only 1 public library found in Moroto district

iv. During National Examinations, schools in Karamoja hire computers from secretarial bureaus

v. People in Karamoja face health related problems, inadequate government services, poor communication networks, early childhood pregnancy, insecurity, poverty and illiteracy.

vi. People in Karamoja sub region need information on health, agriculture, education, governance, income generation and computer literacy.

vii.   Respondents preferred radio and TV services (14.1%), phone services (12.7%), translation services (11.4%), Mobile Money Services (12.3%), Computer training services (10.9%), Internet Services (10.1%), secretarial services (10.4%), library services (9.6%), reading space (8.7%), and e-government services (0.3%)

viii.   55% of the respondents are willing to pay for the services, however, 78.6% cannot afford to pay for the services while 66% prefer the government of service provision.

ix.   95% of respondents were willing to collaborate, host and support not only the establishment but also the management of telecenters in Karamoja sub region. However, they never committed to funding.

x.   Majority get information through community radio services (22.8%) while others through local leaders (18.4%), village/community meetings (16%), newspapers (8.3%), television (6.2%), church announcements (4.6%), phone calls (3.9%), Internet (3.4%), friends (2.4%), noticeboards at subcounty headquarters (2.1%), social media, schools (0.5%), political campaigns (0.5%) and parents (0.2%)

xi.   Majority 87.7% of the respondents owned a mobile phone, however, only 10% had phones that could access Internet through mobile data provided by MTN and Airtel Uganda

xii.   Five radio stations are currently operating in Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Abim and Kotido. No radio stations were reported in Napak and Amudat. In Amudat specifically, people receive Kenyan content due to access of Kenyan radio stations

xiii. Gender restrictions (30%), elders' forums (20%), religious and spiritual practices (15%), early marriages (10%) and apprenticeship (10%) are the major cultural practices that were cited to likely affect implementation of this project.

xiv. 60% of respondents knew failed government projects while 40% did not. Corruption, lack of project management skills, mismanagement of resources, insufficient funding, embezzlement and politics were reported as the factors that crippled the success of these projects.

3.1 Requirements necessary to establish Telecenters in Karamoja sub region

Findings in figure 1 show that a steering committee, a clear project business plan and project proposal are required. Other factors identified included: computer hardware and software together with network access; legal framework, stakeholders – such as district/local leaders, donors, government agencies and ministries among others, library resources and furniture, community acceptance, Telecenter location – that includes accessibility, ready building, security, water and electricity, programmes and services and community engagement are all crucial factors that are necessary to have the Telecenters established in Karamoja sub region.

Figure 1: Telecenter Requirements Model

4. Telecenter Establishment Framework

The framework to facilitate the establishment of community multipurpose Telecenters in Karamoja sub region is presented in figure 2. The Telecenters establishment process is proposed to go through three distinctive stages.

In stage 1, the steering committee shall be established to conduct initial preparations and developments. The Telecenter steering guide, proposal, and a business plan to guide the rest of the processes; will be developed. Community awareness through community – village level meetings aimed at creating awareness and bringing the Telecenter philosophy acceptable to the community will be conducted.

In stage 2, the decisions made from the community – village meetings will inform the establishment of the Telecenter Board with a representative from the community. The Board shall work with the steering committee to develop an embryonic (Nascent) Telecenter that will act as a prototype (Pilot) Telecenter.

In stage 3, the Nascent (embryonic) Telecenter services will be assessed by a team of experts from Makerere University and other key stakeholders to ascertain whether the embryonic telecenter is meeting the objectives under which it was established. In case the nascent Telecenter addresses the community needs, preparations for a Community Multipurpose Telecenter (CMT) will then be rolled out. Even if the government and NGOs/donors may fund initial Telecenter developments, we strongly recommend a community sustainability model.
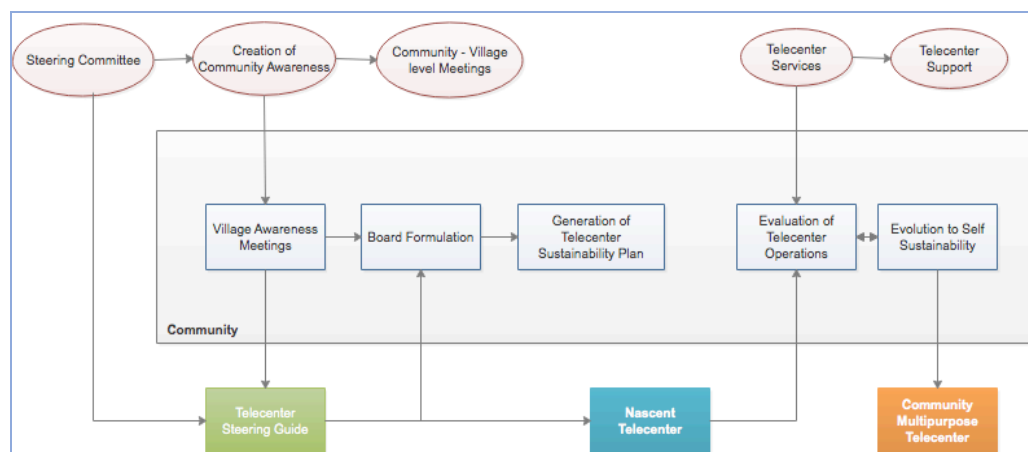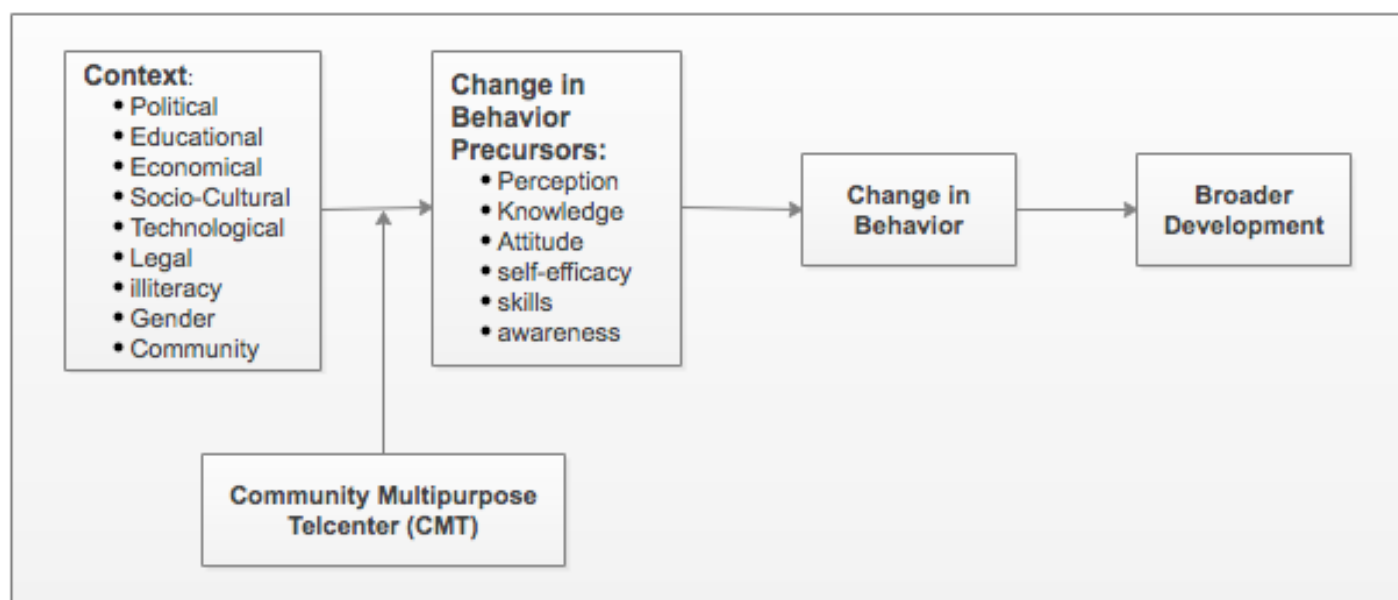
Figure 2: Telecenter Establishment Framework

Figure 3: Behavioral Change Model

4.1 Implementation Model

The project will adopt a blended implementation model depending on the available resources. The project proposes to adopt both a pilot and phased plan where a nascent (embryonic) Telecenter will be established and later phased slowly in other districts. Services, programmes and technology will also be phased into the embryonic Telecenter. This is proposed to allow the community evolve with the technology and engage with it over time.

5. Key Recommendations

We call upon:

i.   The government of the republic of Uganda to set up Community Multipurpose Telecenters in Karamoja sub region as affirmative action to address the needs of the people of Karamoja in order to uplift their social, economic, and technological wellbeing by bridging the digital divide gap that exists between Karamoja and the rest of Uganda.

ii. The government of Uganda through the relevant ministries and agencies together with the private sector, national and international development partners to support the establishment of Community Multipurpose Telecenters in Karamoja sub region

iii. The government of the republic of Uganda to look into the development of public libraries through revamping Public Library legislations, the management and governance models throughout the country.

iv. Makerere University Research and Innovations Fund (Mak-RiF) to offer more funds for further engagement with stakeholders in the establishment of Community Multipurpose telecenters in Karamoja sub region.

6. Conclusion

The study proves that the need for telecenters, which is an ICT4D initiative in Karamoja sub region, is long overdue. Establishing a telecenter in Karamoja will not only bridge the digital divide gap that exists between Karamoja Sub region with the rest of Uganda, but will go a long way to achieve economic development of Karamoja sub region. We therefore call upon the different stakeholders and well-wishers to support and donate towards the cause of establishing telecentres in Karamoja Sub region.

7. Team Composition

1. Mr. Mwanje Ssenono Aloysius   Principal Investigator
2. Dr. Agnes Rwashana Ssemwanga   Researcher
3. Mr. Ekwaro Francis   Researcher
4. Ms. Lois Mutibwa Nankya   Researcher
5. Mr. Kirya Kenneth Erickson   Researcher