



RWENZORI INFORMATION CENTERS NETWORK

A QUARTERLY UP-DATE FROM RWENZORI INFORMATION CENTERS NETWORK MARCH 2012



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Editorial

Hello readers, ever noticed that most times we concern ourselves with less important things around us leaving very little or no regard to the important things going on around and beyond us?

How about I put it this way, you don't like reading; think it is a traditional and cumbersome way of information sourcing, right? Well, I will not argue with you on that but rather challenge you to try out this; the RIC-NET quarterly edition; where you find a lot of educative, exciting and challenging stories on key developments going on in the Rwenzori region and beyond.

In this publication, RIC-NET keeps you abreast with the several ICT developments like the importance of Sim Card registration, the role of ICT in improving service delivery in Local Governments, the impact caused by the Information services offered by the various RIC-NET Information Centers in the Rwenzori region...just to mention but a few...

I implore you to read on and update yourself on the role, relevance and impact of information sharing in the Rwenzori region as implemented by RIC-NET with support from her several partners and funders like HIVOs, and European Union (EU).

And, hey, after you are done with the reading, please, do not hesitate to share with a friend and to also share your observations and comments with us on ricnet@ricnet.info or P. O. Box 916 Fort Portal.

*Mbayahi Alice Mushenene
Information & Documentation
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● An Appeal From The Ric-Net Secretariat.

● As one for her core programs, RICNET seeks to amplify the silent voices of the vulnerable and disadvantaged persons in the community and as thus, RIC-NET works with a range of disadvantaged persons to identify, package and share the forever unattended to, long forgotten or ignored issues in the community with the various, relevant leaders. This is all geared at ensuring equity and equality in the accessibility of resources and exercising individual freedoms and rights in development.

● Are you aware of this:

- 1.1 billion People in developing countries have inadequate access to water.
- 2.6 billion People lack basic sanitation.
- 30,000 children die each day due to poverty, that's 210,000 a week, and almost 11 million per year.

● And they die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world. Being meek and weak in life makes these dying multitudes even more invisible in death.

● At any given time, half the people in developing nations are suffering from health problems caused by water and sanitation deficits. Source: <http://www.globalissues.org>

● In the same vein, we invite you to join the campaign; Voice the Silence and cry aloud against corruption and poor service delivery by our leaders and companies. Save lives from the condemnation of invisible death. "Rushwa ni Adui ya maendeleo" – ("Corruption is an enemy to development")

● Voice the Silence - be our companion.

● Stand out and speak against corruption, your Voice matters!

KASULENGE, A MODEL INFORMATION POINT IN THE MOUNTAINS OF RWENZORI

Kyomuhendo Joselyne-Program Manager

RIC-NET has got a number of Information Centers in the Rwenzori region with several information points in the community. Remarkable about the information centers/points mentioned above is the sustainability measures each point has put in place like operating savings and cooperative schemes, membership contributions and charging small fees on services rendered as video and drama shows.

Exciting events were even established in Bundibudgyo at Semuliki Information Centre (CIS) where RIC-NET learnt from the humble and yet shining work of **Kasulenge Information Point**.

Kasulenge information point is located in Harugale Sub County and hosted by Kasulenge Women Cluster Cooperative Saving and Credit Society limited.



It started in 2008 with the help of CIS and several other community members following the dire need for a point where members would run to for relevant information to address the various information needs in the community.

RIC-NET in February visited this point to learn of how they were faring in their work of information sharing and dissemination. Welcomed by the members led by their Chairperson Mr. Musoki Yokonia, RIC-NET learnt that Kasulenge information point has a membership of 130 persons (30 male and 100 female), and that the Point has an Executive Committee inclusive of women, youth, PWDs and the elderly.

Mr. Musoki Yokonia noted that apart from Information sharing, the point also does savings to sustain their efforts and Center. He revealed that, the members

meet every Tuesday of the week to recover loans and give out loans using Rotating savings and Credit Association system (ROSCA) as a criteria of loans disbursement to its clients.

According to the members, this savings scheme has enabled them to facilitate their information sharing activities like drama shows and transportation of their products to the markets. Wholesomely this has improved their standards of living.

The group also shares information on common plant pests and diseases and how to reduce them through a plant clinic program since majority of the members are farmers and concerned with improving the quality of their produce.

In their sharing the members of Kasulenge Information Point expressed gratitude to RIC-NET



for extending the Plant Clinic Project to Harugale Sub County; and most especially for building the capacity of the Plant Doctor one Mr. Baridi Hussein from Semuliki Information Centre whom they said had opened their eyes on the dangers of crop pests and diseases and how to fight them. This has helped to increase crop productivity and food security.

The visiting team further learnt that in the bid to disseminate information more easily, broadly and effectively, the members hold drama shows in the community on key development issues such as environment protection, food security, and HIV/AIDS

prevention among others. During the meeting the members presented some of their skirts and dances to the RIC-NET team and it was breathe taking.

However, all is not roses for the group, because of a few challenges they are still encountering like, limited markets and lack of value addition that result in selling their products cheaply.

It is evident that Kasulenge information Point has remarkably stood out as a model in the Rwenzori mountains. There is thus need to support this information point such that its efforts are sustained Rwenzori and that it continues to benefit the community and also serve as a learning point for other information points in the region and beyond.

WHEN THE WELL IS DRY, THEY KNOW THE WORTH OF WATER; PROVIDE IT

Mbayahi Alice Mushenene-Information Officer

They were told that hope had finally come, and that in a few months their mourning would be turned into dancing. The women and girls clapped their hands with excitement, while the men sighed with relief for the burden would soon be lifted off their sisters', wives, and mothers' shoulders.

Anxiously they waited till the final bang! The water project is complete; you can finally access water just within your neighborhood. At the cock's crow the next day, every homestead was alive with the cleaning and collection of water containers and off they rushed to the nearest tap stands with excitement to fetch the long awaited safe and clean water. Not surprising that the lines at almost every tap stand were averagely long.

But alas! After one, two, three, ten, twenty people had filled their containers, the taps went to "sleep"..... confident that it was a new project, the women and girls chose to wait for the taps to "wake up"... with no signs of water by evening, someone....some where needed to explain this short lived offer. As hours and days went by, it became clearer to them that the flow was to be at most irregular and at worst non available.

The women cursed and jeered while the girls and children never gave up on lining up at the tap stands for water each day hoping against hope that somehow things will work out. Perturbed by their sisters', wives, and mothers' frustration, the men sought for an explanation from the leaders and CSOs, while others moved up to the Source to establish the cause for the sudden change of events.

This move was the beginning of discovery after discovery about the water project; first, the community learnt that the water project was offered by Amaizi Marungi based in Mbarara, that the project

cost approximately 35billion shillings, is expected to have 436 connection points with a reserve tank at Bwera hospital and that it is expected to serve 35352 people. Unfortunately, this project just like other unsupervised public/government projects was at the verge of hitting a snag.

With continued pressure and plea from the community for water, KALI, RIC-NET, RWECO-CU and BIC undertook serious monitoring and follow up of this project; two field visits to the water source were conducted in November 2011 and January 2012. Several interviews were also conducted with the water user community, the leaders and even the water source attendants. And from these monitoring and follow up activities several findings/anomalies about the water project were established.

These ranged from, *illegal connections, non treatment of water due to non functional/utilization of water system treatment plant, non-payment of*



user fees by the community due to the inconsistency in the user fees charged at water Kiosks, use of small water pipes- accordingly, the original design of the water source pipe (in-let) was supposed to be 12 inches but the team found out that a 6 inch pipe size is what was used instead, lack of maintenance of the scheme i.e the two stone filtration tanks collecting to the main tank were blocked and filled with mud and as thus water could not easily go through to the rest of the tanks, poor monitoring of the scheme by the leaders and Scheme authorities to , non and or delayed payment of water source attendants for over two years, to mention but a few.

Aware that development and improved service delivery require joint efforts, KALI and RICNET with support from E-motive through RWECO organized a stakeholders' dialogue meeting on 29.02.12 at Bwera Sub County to share the monitoring findings and also jointly identify lasting solutions to them. In attendance, this day, were Political and Civil servants, CSOs, and members of the community. Key among these leaders were the Deputy RDC Kasese Mr. Muhindo Aminadabu, Bwera Town Clerk, Mrs Biira Eve, the O.C Bwera Police Station Mr..... and the Superintendent Bwera Hospital Dr. Gatere S. Alphonse among others. Approximately 100 people attended this stakeholder's dialogue meeting.

On behalf of the Community, one Muhesi Nicholas of KALI presented the monitoring report findings that sparked off a hot dialogue between the community and her leaders.

Responding to the raised issues, the Town Clerk refuted most of the raised issues as only allegations. She explained that the water project is currently benefiting over 80000 people in the area and that the water is routinely treated and safe for consumption. She however cited the continued challenge of non-payment of user fees by the community and the different rates charged at water Kiosks by the private vendors.

Adding to this, the Superintendent, regretted to inform the participants on the impact/effects of the poor water that was being consumed by the community. He said the rampant and prevailing cholera in the area that had claimed many lives was largely due to consumption of dirty water and poor sanitation by the community-use of dirty water containers. Dr. Gatere also revealed that, the same water is responsible for the increased cases of intestine perforation which he said was a very bad disease that can only be treated by operating on the victim's intestines.

The Superintendent revealed that Bwera Hospital in the recent past had registered over

cases of intestine perforation. Intestine perforation, he said is common along the hilly areas and reportedly high in Busongora North, Bukonzo East and West Constituencies. He appealed to CSOs and Government to ensure that safe and clean water is extended to the community and that the community is intensively sensitized on proper sanitation practices.



Wrapping up the dialogue, several recommendations that included recalling the contractor to correct the raised anomalies, Police intervention to block illegal connections, institute organized and functional water user committees, strengthening monitoring and supervision of public projects by local leaders, and extending the hospital's social services to the people were made.

Closing the meeting, the Deputy RDC thanked KALI, RICNET and E-motive for bringing out these issues to the leaders' attention. He also expressed condolence to the families of those who lost their loved ones in the recent cholera outbreak in the constituency. He appealed to the community to learn to be more serious on issues of sanitation and timely treatment, saying this is the only way they can keep cholera under check.

The RDC revealed that Government is still committed to the provision of safe and clean water to the community and as thus, they will work closely with Amaizi Marungi and Mpondwe –Lhubiriha Town Council to ensure that the raised complaints are addressed.

With all this said and done, I extend my gratitude to the people of Bwera for their vigilance and bravery in raising their voices about this project. I say bravo, your efforts have saved 35billion shillings public funds from going to waste.

SIM CARD REGISTRATION; LETS EMBRACE TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES

Mumbere Samuel Mkamba

Dear members of the Rwenzori Region, the Ugandan Government through Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has embarked on the new system of SIM card registration this year 2012.



Technology has now become a necessary evil in this dot.com world where everyone is encouraged to adhere to the changes especially in our operations. Therefore the registration process is worth it. SIM Card Registration has an enhanced facility for the protection of customer investment in mobile phones and other devices through voluntary registration of their International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI). The IMEI is a number, usually unique, and used to identify mobile phones. It is usually found printed inside the battery compartment of the phone. It can also be displayed on the screen of the phone by entering ***#06#** into the keypad on most phones.

The IMEI number is used by communication networks to identify valid devices and therefore could be used for stopping a stolen phone from accessing the network. If a mobile phone is stolen, the owner can call his or her network provider and instruct them to "blacklist" the phone using its IMEI number. This renders the phone useless and makes phone theft unprofitable. Thus making the SIM Card Registration even more meaningful for consumers and the people of Uganda.

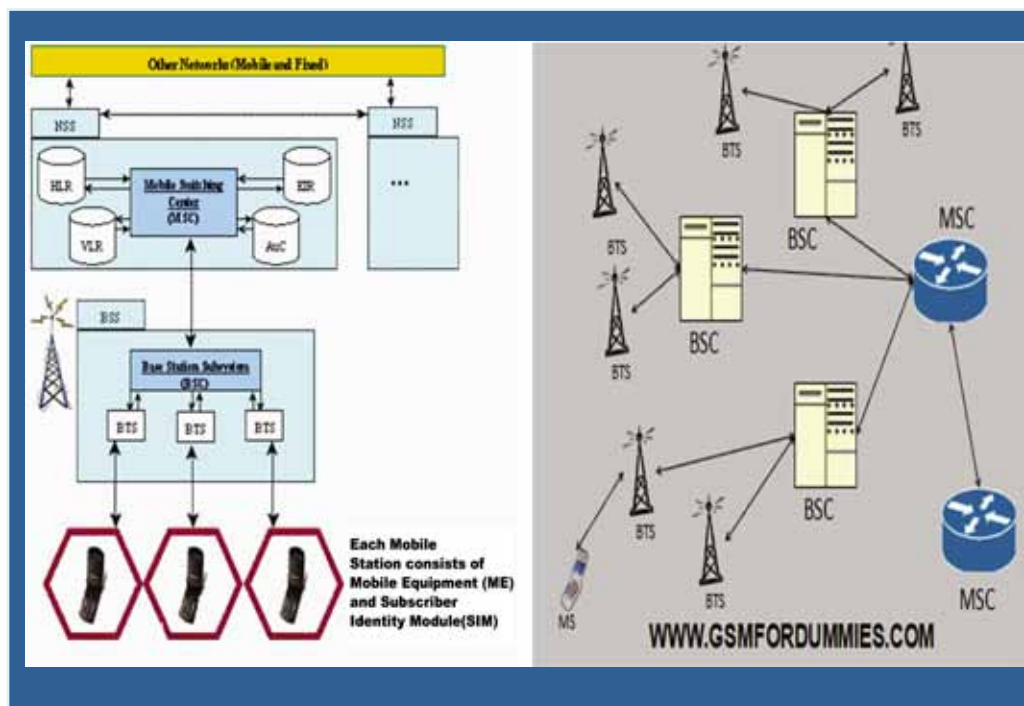
A lot of activities and processes take place during communication on our phones which we the public do not know. Most of these processes are beneficial in our lives while others are also destructive in one way or another. Take a look at the process your phone call goes through as you talk or listen to your counterpart during the call.

The Global System Mobile network architecture illustrated

Therefore, the registration is aimed at increasing subscribers' power of choice in a more competitive market noting that one of the reasons for the registration exercise is to pave way for security and identity.

Therefore, Rwenzori Information Centers network (RIC-NET) as an information analysis, access, sharing and dissemination advocate, expresses appreciation to all telecommunication operators for their co-operation; subscribers for their commitment and the people of Uganda for their support in undertaking the massive SIM Card Registration exercise and thereby improving the opportunity for enhanced phone users experience.

I would like to thank all stakeholders of



the communications industry, UCC and the general public for their support to encourage all phone users with commitment on enhancing this activity. On the other hand I appeal to everyone to embrace and participate in this activity actively.

RIC-NET ACTIVITY UPDATES

Ric-Net Achieves a Reflection of Issues, Diet and Muscles

RIC-NET staff on 4th to 7th January 2012 held a three (3) days reflection at Kasunga Training Center in Kyenjojo District.

Participants who included RIC-NET staff and Board members reflected on the achievements of the past year 2011, the lessons learnt and areas of improvement which finally formed the Annual report.

In addition to this, members also came up with an annual work plan for activities to be conducted in the year 2012.

The reflection was not only a time of academic book warm but a reflection on diet and relaxation of muscles as well.

Staff freely brainstormed on personal lives, made physicals, enjoyed the good food and refreshments and the clear breeze of Kasunga.



Closing the meeting, the Board Chairperson Rev. Isaiah Muchunguzi appreciated the efforts of the Executive Director with the entire staff for managing, directing and selling RICNET's image to the Rwenzori community and the entire nation.



Yes, There Are Gaps In The Education System

Header teachers and District leaders in the Rwenzori region agree that there are gaps in the education system. This was revealed during the leaders meeting held on 23rd March 2012 in Kabarole District to launch the Computers for Schools project.

The project; *"Improving effective teaching- learning processes through ICT enabled innovative methods"* is sponsored by Computers for Schools Uganda [CFSU] in Partnership with Rwenzori Consortium for Civic Competence [RWECO].

The project that has been narrowed down to English language is being piloted in 6 schools in Kabarole and Kasese districts; St. Leos College Kyegobe, Rutete, Kyebambe Girls Secondary schools, Canon Apolo Core P.T.C and Kilembe, St. Charles Vocation, St. Thereza Girls Secondary schools and Bwera P.T.C respectively.

The major objective of the project is to address the Problem of rudimentary traditional teaching methods of Chalk and Talk which according research has contributed to poor performance of pupils/students due to its in-adequacy to effectively pass on information to the scholar. In response to this, Computers for schools under this project intends to supplement the method to increase efficiency in the learning-teaching process.

Under the project, the capacity of 30 English teachers and 4 English Tutors in the teacher training colleges will be enhanced in basic computing. These shall be trained on how to use the innovative method of teaching and learning using ICT, and encourage the

participation of parents and other stakeholders in the teaching-learning process.

Addressing the meeting, the CAO noted that he was grateful that this innovation had come in handy and timely to boost the numeracy and literacy levels in the region which have for long been a challenge. Among the many resolutions made, the participants resolved that the ear marked head teachers should be responsive and supportive of the program. Approximately twenty people who included head teachers, the DEO, CAO, CSO and representatives.



Ric-Net Sets Up Data Center At Dentva

In the same spirit of promoting social accountability and increased access to information, RIC-NET in collaboration with CEW-IT set up a Data Center at DENIVA head offices in Kampala on 17th Jan 2012 and also trained the staff at DENIVA on the use of the e-plat forms created i.e blogs, skype and Huduma among others.

The trainings were facilitated by the RIC-NET and CEW-IT ICT officers Emmanuel Oluca and Baluku Yosia, and the Executive director RIC-NET.

The essence of the training was to introduce the staff to the HUDUMA platform that is going to be used during the social accountability project through which members of the public (Citizens) will be sending service delivery related messages to 6333 a short code that is yet to be procured.

These messages will be approved, sent and flagged to different leaders for attention.

During the training, members signed up to these e-platforms; and three LCDs (projectors) and nine laptops were later handed over to DENIVA for her other data centers.



Ric-Net Reflection Meeting For Information Officers' Ends Successfully

RIC-NET on Friday 20th January 2012 held a reflection meeting of Information Officers from all Information Centers/points in the Rwenzori region. These centers include the following; Kabarole Information Centre (KIC), Bwera Information Centre (BIC), Cemuliki Information Centre (CIC), Kyegegwa Rural Information Centre (KRIC), Busongora Rural Information Centre (BRIC), Mwenge Rural Information Centre (MRIC), and Kamwenge Community Information Centre (KACOICE).

The objectives of the reflection meeting were to learn from experience and good practices of information centers and to establish issues arising from communities that shall form a basis for community dialogue meetings to engage leaders and community members for social accountability.

From the participants' sharing a number of issues emerged and respective officers concerned were tasked to make further investigations and gather reliable data to be shared in the upcoming sub county dialogue meetings. Most of the issues raised in concerned inadequate water supply, food security, education, NAADS, and inadequate medical services.

A number of success stories were also shared, *for instance, one....noted that in Karusandara sub-county-Kasese district, there was a problem of water shortage which had put the lives of residents at stake but with the support of BRIC a community meeting was held with the sub-county leaders and residents demanded for clean and regular water supply. During the meeting, the community members pledged to participate in digging trenches while Leaders and community members worked jointly to arrest the water crisis in the area. Currently the people of Karusandara are enjoying clean water.*

Other Information Officers also reported that they have been collecting sub-county work plans, and approved budgets and sharing them with the community members through public notice boards and meetings. This has accelerated vigilance of the community to critically monitor development activities in their areas.



Ric-Net Launches Second E-Society Center In The Region

With all roads leading to Kabarole District Local Government on a Monday morning of 19th March 2012, the long awaited launch of the second E-society resource center in the Rwenzori region was held. The function that took place at Tooro club Booma was witnessed by the Local Government technical staff from Kabarole, Kyenjojo, Kamwenge and Bundibugyo Districts.

In his remarks the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Kabarole Mr. Juma Nyende expressed his gratitude to RIC-NET as development partners thanking them for all the tireless efforts to see that this dream of the E-society has come to pass.

The Program Manager RIC-NET thanked all members who turned up the function and noted that this ICT hub was among other services going to facilitate information sharing for a poverty free society, and also become one stop center for research now that Kabarole has two Universities.

Summing up the function, the District Chairperson said that the E-Society Center and the Website are the special gifts that Kabarole District Local Government has received in a jubilee year- Uganda's fifty years of independence.

He then launched the Kabarole website "I therefore officially launch this website that is hosted at www.kabaroledistrict.go.ug".



Political leaders of Kabarole District led by the Chairperson LC5 who was also the Guest of honor for the function, CSO and media representatives were also in attendance.

The District Information Officer Kabarole Ms. Lillian Nkwenge introduced the whole concept of the E-society center to the invited guests. She recognized the efforts of RIC-NET for this noble cause right after the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) late last year (2011). She noted that the E-society was going to be one stop center at the District for information sharing, trainings and other related services.



Ric-Net Joins The Rest Of The World To Celebrate The International Women's Day

Eighth March 2012 the International Women's Day was a remarkable one for the women in Kabarole district. The day was celebrated with the theme, "Connecting Girls, Inspiring the Future!" Over 10,000 people turned up for the celebrations at Nyamiseke Primary School, Buheesi sub-county, Kabarole district, where the Kabarole district celebrations were held.

The function was officiated over by Hon. Businge Rusoke Victoria, the woman Member of Parliament for Kabarole District who among other things said and done facilitated the session of awarding of Certificates of Recognition to different women who have excelled in various fields and contributed towards the development of the country such as leadership and education. These included; **Joy to include**



Hon. Businge Rusoke Victoria thanked the Government for recognizing women and giving them an opportunity to participate in various capacities of both political and civil service. She urged parents to educate their children and also given them the scholastic materials as required. Other key guests at the function were the LCV and the RDC who equally urged the community to work together to promote the rights of women and education of a girl child. They urged those who have been violating women rights to repent and live in harmony and avoid negative behavior such as defilement, domestic violence and any other practice that may lead to abuse of human rights.

The leaders appealed to the women to always seek maternal health services in Health Centers, since; the health Centers are now equipped with medical personnel and drugs required. Four RIC-NET staff participated in this function.

Stake Holders Brainstorm On Banana Production

Members from the Government and CSO's in the Rwenzori region held a stake holders meeting on 30.03.12 at Kagote SDA hall in Kabarole Municipality to deliberate on Banana Bacterial Wilt and improvement of Banana productivity in the Rwenzori region. Participants who included NAADS Coordinators, District Agricultural Officers and Agricultural extension workers and CSO representatives from the Districts of Kasese, Kabarole, Ntoroko and Bundibugyo.

The objectives of the meeting were to characterize indigenous knowledge on banana management likely to influence banana yield, factors affecting agronomic practice of banana production, identify the effective sources of social capital to diffuse banana technology, develop a strategy that can enhance banana production in the region and to highlight key policy issues that would require urgent intervention.

Key issues that emerged from the meeting were poor disease and pest control among the farmers which stood at 89.9%, low access to technical information; 32% of farmers access information while 68% do not really access information. There is poor attitude of farmers towards banana management unlike other enterprises like cocoa, maize, coffee and cotton.

The meeting acknowledged that the region has good fertile soils but has been hit by banana bacterial wilt which has affected banana production. Members also learnt that most people in the region at least eat Matooke a day. It was thus resolved that,



Banana production be taken serious as an economic activity and be popularized like other cash crops and that Market information should be availed to the farmers.

Finally the Ministry of Agriculture should work closely with the CSO's and other NGO's to provide information to the farmers.

Rweco Tot Training On Citizens' Manifesto

RICNET with support from 10th EDF of the Democratic Governance and Accountability Program through RWECO on 28.03.12 to 29.03.12 held a training on Citizen Manifesto at Palace Motel in Fort Portal. Participants included RWECO partners' CPFs, RWECO staff and members.

The purpose of the training was to further familiarize participants with knowledge on Citizen Manifesto and to introduce the CM monitoring tool (score card) to the participants.

Among others, the participants were taken through the Citizen Manifesto agenda, Client charters, the Local Government planning Cycle and the roles of the different political leaders in relation to the realization of the Citizen Manifesto and the Monitoring tool. Related to this, participants pre-tested the tool at three levels- Karambi Sub County, South Division and the District with the offices of the Speakers and LCV, LCIII and other political leaders.

Commenting on the impact and applicability of the tool, the Karambi Sub County speaker noted that this would help track and check the performance of all political leaders, saying it would help inform them of their shortfalls and enable them to fill them appropriately.



U-Report: More Still Seek To Be Heard

RIC-NET on 20.02.12 at Canon Apollo Primary Teachers College in Kabarole District met approximately two hundred and fifty (250) people who had gathered to listen, learn and be part of the U-report Platform; these included student teachers, tutors and Primary Head teachers of some primary schools around Kabarole.

The eagerly waiting gathering was taken through the meaning, objectives, mission and importance of the U-report platform by the RIC-NET Information Officer.

In her presentation, she encouraged the participants to not only stop at subscribing to be U-reporters but also work towards recruiting other members of the community and also being active U-reporters.

During the meeting the Principle called upon all the student teachers yet to go out for the training to be active U-reporters when there, and to all the head teachers to go and recruit all their teaching staff and other members in their communities. Approximately 250 persons registered as U-reporters during and after this meeting.

Kabarole Ngos/Cbos Association Holds The 6Th Annual General Meeting

As one of its core objectives RIC-NET promotes public, private sector and civil society partnerships in building the information society and in this case Kabarole NGOs/CSOs Association (KANCA) AGM is one of the partner activity which RIC-NET could not miss attending.

The meeting was held on 23rd February 2012 at Kagote SDA hall. Participants included KANCA member organizations, staff and Board, and partners like RIDE-Africa, KRC, Care International,

Kabarole LG staff, KADD-NET, Uganda National NGO Forum and RIC-NET.

Presenting the Annual report Mr. Itoote Edward the KANCA Coordinator shared some of the key activities for 2012; trainings for members in evidence creation for advocacy, popularizing a self regulation mechanism (QUAM) quality assurance mechanism for the CSOs to combat unethical practices like having one person wearing three coats in organization i.e Chairperson, Treasurer and staff.



He also proudly highlighted the achievements registered in 2011 especially in areas of accountability monitoring like the creation of space for CSOs to interface with local leaders and the community.

The meeting was summed up with elections of a new Executive Board that saw to the election of the following members; Chairperson Mr. Kalyegira Hamilton, Vice-Chair- Ms. Musana Christine, General Secretary- Mr. Byakutaaga Aaron , Publicity Secretary- Ms. Mutooro Resty, Treasurer- Mr. Kigongo Saul, Burahya County- Ms. Baker Christine , Bunyangabu County - Mr. Byaruhanga Archangel and Fort Portal Municipality- Mr. Nyakaana Patrick.

Information Is All You Need To Demand For Your Entitlements

The more the better, the stronger they are made, the more effective they will be. It is a chain, intertwined together, complementing each other's role at different levels; regional, District, County, Sub County, and Parish levels.

This chain of Information Centers and points at the different society levels has curbed the traditional challenge of limited access to information by the community since the main business of these points is information sourcing and sharing/dissemination.



It was also observed that there is a lot of hunger and need for information by the community than the Information Centers and Points are providing; and that the little information that the Centers have provided has most often remained unutilized by the largely semi-illiterate population because it is most often in English.

More efforts should be devoted to understanding the information needs of the community and translating the required information by the community to familiar languages if greater impact must be registered.

Lastly RIC-NET also observed that the use of multimedia pulls more people and appeals to many as opposed to the literature that we most often congest our libraries with.

RIC-NET is complimented by eight County Information Centers and several Information Points across the Rwenzori region that she routinely supports in their information sharing work. Between January and February RIC-NET conducted an evaluation exercise of their work. From the evaluation exercise one major thing was learnt, that, no matter how old one is, it takes just the right information to spur the energy in them to demand for their entitlements.

It is also evident that the various information received and shared with the community has left many informed, empowered and ready to be instruments of change within their own Communities.



Four Hundred Cbos/Ngos In Kabarole District: How Valid And Relevant Are They?

We have four hundred CBO/NGOs in Kabarole District, but not all are compliant to the law and functional” remarked Mr. Tadeo Balisanga the Community Development Officer (CDO) Kabarole District. Mr. Balisanga said this at the NGO evaluation meeting held on 22.02.12 at Mucwa.

Opening the meeting Balisanga noted that his office is mandated to register, coordinate and monitor the operations of all CBO/NGOs in the District. He however apologized for the continued inconsistency in conducting NGO coordination meetings which he attributed to inadequate resources.

Explaining the purpose of the meeting, the Kabarole District CDO Mr. Balisanga said it is to get all the organizations in Kabarole together to share their work with the District because many NGOs are doing work that the Government is not aware of. The meeting was to also remind the different organizations to regularly update/renew their registration with the District every two years.

He added that all organizations are expected to share their reports, budgets, and work plans with the District, asserting that *“if Government can display their work plans and budgets why not Civil Society, I challenge you to walk the talk”*. Approximately 45 members from the different CBOs and NGOs in Kabarole District participated in this meeting.

During the meeting several recommendations/appeals were made by the members. These included;

1. Government to revamp her monitoring system of NGOs; challenging that why has Government always complained of Briefcase organizations yet they have never exposed or closed up any especially in Kabarole District.
2. The District to call for bi-annual coordination meetings of all CBOs/NGOs in the District.
3. The CDO’s office to mobilize/fundraise monies to conduct the coordination meetings from the different organizations in the District in case his office is not in position to facilitate them.
4. CDO’s at the Sub County level should be tasked to also conduct similar meetings and monitoring visits of the CBOs/NGOs in their Sub Counties.
5. The District should consider extending the funds allocated for capacity building to CBOs and NGOs as well.
6. RIC-NET to support the CDO in mobilizing other organizations for coordination meetings through its bulk Sms program.
7. CBOs/NGOs to routinely share their work plans, budgets and reports with the District and the CDO is to develop a particular reporting and work plan format and share it with all organizations for uniformity.
8. All the CBOs that did not come along with their certificates of registration, work plans, budgets and reports should ensure that they are availed to the office of the CDO by end of February 2012.

Closing the meeting the RDC, Kabarole District thanked the office of the CDO for conducting such a meeting and especially for inviting him to this meeting which he said is the first of its kind that he has attended in the Rwenzori region. He said Government appreciates the role and contribution of CSOs and would never take it for granted. He apologized for the poor monitoring and collaboration and promised that he was going to ensure that this weakness is addressed. He however warned that he was going to institute a committee to keenly study the operations and visibility of all the organizations in the District and he will make sure that at least by the end of this year the number has been reduced to 300 only or less because many organizations are not functional any way while some are allegedly undermining Government efforts.

CONNECTING GIRLS, INSPIRING THE FUTURE.

By Asiimwe Emily, Office Administrator RIC-NET

For a long time the future of the girl child and women has remained uncertain, frustrated or even cut short by fate, selfish individuals or even their own ignorance due to the continued lack of access to information, and their low self esteem as created by society.

But this is not all, that should be for the girl child, I believe there is still hope and a future for them, only if you and I can embrace our efforts and purpose to voice the silent concerns affecting the woman. Which among others include; domestic violence, rape, early marriages, early pregnancies, poor access to health information and services.

Related to this, some have been denied the opportunity to go to school by their parents or even concentrate. Many girls, have times without number been denied scholastic materials like books, pens, lunch, pads and uniforms, forcing them to either drop out of school or even have unhealthy relationships with their teachers and or peers who seem to provide some of these necessities. And thus, this has led to poor grades, or even lack of interest in school. Reports indicate that some schools do not even have senior women teachers to guide and support the girl child while some do not even have wash rooms and sanitariums to offer the girl child when need arises, hence leaving her in the middle of confusion, timidity and scorn from the rest of the pupils. The situation is even worse when it comes to the female pupils with disabilities because most schools are inadequately providing for PWDs whether female or male.

But one thing I know is that you and I can inspire these girls and connect them to their intended future by; encouraging them to study and work hard while in school, encouraging parents to provide scholastic materials, lobby government to provide adequate facilities in schools to the comfort of the girl child, sensitize the community on the need to protect the rights of the girl child and women and report any form of their abuse, and to encourage young girls who have dropped out of school to get back after delivery.

On the other hand, information on health and wealth issues should be extended to the women especially the rural woman who has often fallen victim of circumstances due to the poor service delivery issues in these two areas. Largely many women have carried on with illnesses like Cervical Cancer, Fistula, and HIV/AIDs, without knowledge of their existence in their bodies or where to go or what to do about them. This has most often impacted on their productivity, health, and also self esteem. According to the Superintendent of Kagando Hospital, Mr. Kapuru Asingia, the hospital receives over 100 cases of fistula mothers from and beyond Rwenzori region per year. He revealed that victims of fistula suffer from a bad smelly discharge that has left many women isolated/disserted by their friends and family.

Statistics also reveal that several other women are suffering from HIV/AIDs with very little or no access to ARVs and PMTCT services. Related to the above, issues of poor maternal

mortality rate are still very rampant despite the local, national and global efforts towards eradicating the same. I guess we still need to encourage more women to utilize health services; check for cervical cancer, HIV/AIDs and be treated from them and any other killer diseases for a bright future.

On the other hand, women should be encouraged to form groups to enable them to access funds that can enhance development in their homes since most districts receive 2,500,000UGX every month as support for women and to also engage more in innovative Income generating projects and Saving and Credit Schemes.

I personally believe that when, a woman's financial muscle



is made stronger, she becomes more self reliant and less subjective to issues of domestic violence.

As I conclude I would like to appreciate the efforts made by RIC-NET in inspiring the women through its continued information sharing and dissemination on key maternal health, wealth and agricultural issues through her ICT media; phones, radios, documentaries and community meetings.

I equally appeal to everyone to join in inspiring the girl/woman and connecting them to their beautiful future because if women and girls get engaged in accessing information on health and education we shall have achieved a step forward in our communities and homes for sustainable development and prosperity.

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN DEVELOPMENT

Yosia Baluku ICTO-RIC-NET

The use of Information and communication Technology (ICT) in facilitating and accelerating the process of reducing poverty and increasing information sharing and or accessibility across the globe is continuously growing. It has actually become a fact that without the usage of ICT, a society will fall behind in the path of development given the fact that information is wealth.

Governments, private sector, NGOs and other stake holders alike are realizing this which further has contributed to the impact.

A number of issues have been addressed through the use of ICT and thus an impact in development; for instance, timely information access has been realized for example through a number of online resources that the above parties have impressed. Websites, web logs that are easily accessed by nearly everybody in the world have helped the masses get relevant information for their developments.

Communication has also been timely especially through the use of mobile phones, electronic mails other social media like skype, twitter, face book,

yahoo messenger to mention but a few and all this information for development is being delivered.

Unlike in the past where reports and letters had to be written and then shared which would actually take weeks and months before delivery, the use of ICT today has helped deliver information within seconds.

Electronic commerce (E-commerce) has also come up. You can now purchase goods online without necessarily going to the market. One will purchase his car from Japan when he's in Uganda and therefore we need to appreciate technology. All the dollars he/she would have used travelling to Japan will be saved and used for some other developments.

Video conferencing, internet telephony using skype e.t.c; Meetings and discussions have been done without necessarily having all participants in one confined room. People now conduct meetings when seated in their different offices and destinations.

And so the world has been made a global "village" with the invention of technology. Sharing with distant friends and partners

is no longer an issue.

Rwenzori information centers Network (RIC-NET) has also impressed the use of ICT and has helped a number of development partners in capacity building, design of these online platforms like websites that have facilitated information sharing amongst the community.

This in my opinion is great work that has not left both the implementers and the rest of the community the same in terms of increased knowledge in as far as ICT is concerned. All have gained a number of skills and information sharing has been made easier than before.

However one of the biggest challenges still affecting our community in as far as ICT usage is concerned is the negative attitude. So I still believe sensitization and more capacity building trainings can help us curb this problem. In a nut shell ICT for a poverty free society is the way to go. Everyone is capable of being an ICT compliant citizen in as long as the attitude towards ICT is positive.

INFORMATION SHARING INCREASES FARMERS' KNOWLEDGE ON FARM MANAGEMENT.

Kaliba Charles - Community Outreach Officer

Farmers of the Rwenzori region have spoken out with a lot of satisfaction about the role of Plant clinic. This was revealed during the monthly survey conducted by RIC-NET. The survey was carried out in the three districts of Kasese, Kabarole and Kyenjojo from January to March 2012.

A number of farmers who had visited the plants clinics could not hide their happiness on what the plant Doctors had done for them as far as information sharing and how they had transformed their farm management.

Most of the farmers have now learnt how take care of their farms; "I have gained a lot of information on how to distinguish between the effects of different types of mulch and their application, the methods of farm control such as Mulching, and desuckering, soil and water conservation methods, and how to detect affected plants and the use of herbs to

control pests" remarked Masereka Richard of Kamuruli Village, Kisinga Sub County, Kasese. According to Wakame Yozefu of Bunyaruta village and Biira Annet of Kirindi in Bundibugyo District, they are grateful to the plant doctors (names) who visited their coffee farms, diagnosed the affected plants and advised them on how to control the pests and diseases. In her sharing, Annet noted that "we have been able to control pests and disease and increase our yields; our farms are now looking healthy and clean". Accordingly this has encouraged more people to utilize the information shared at the Information Centers.

In a related development, Juliet Walina a Plant Doctor at Kinyabisiki Market Kyondo Sub County mentioned that "when we meet farmers on one to one basis we deal with the real problem. You can't escape the farmers

for they need information and thus I always do research to keep me updated so that I reach and benefit more farmers"

Despite all this, some farmers still have poor perception and low interest in adapting to new technologies. On the other hand, the low levels of knowledge on crop pests and disease management, the poor socio-economic status of the farmers, inadequate financial capital, and land degradation have remained threats to agriculture productivity of the farmers.

In light of the above there is need for joint community action to combat the threat of pests and diseases, introduce high yield banana varieties to the farmers since this is a crop widely grown in the Rwenzori region, enforce local by-laws on food security, and then repackage information for the extension workers.

YOU NEED IT, WE GOT IT!

RIC-NET would like to inform you that it offers a wide range of Consultancy services;
find it convenient to reach out to us for the following services at affordable prices as indicated below;

S/N	SERVICE	UNIT PRICE (UGX)
01.	Computer Repair	45,000= (Complete Programming)
02.	Computer Networking (LANs)	400,000 = per man day (This excludes Professional Fees)
03.	Video and Photography	200,000 =per man day (This excludes Professional Fees)
04.	Publication of IEC materials	
	Newsletters	xxxxxx
	Magazines	xxxxxx
	Brochures	xxxxxx
	Flyers	xxxxxx
	Banners	xxxxxx
	Posters	xxxxxx
	T-shirts	
	With collar (depends on material) Ranges btn	xxxxxx
	Collarless (depends on material) Ranges btn	xxxxxx
05.	Bulk Sms Service 45/sms	xxxxxx
06.	Website development	1,000,000 -3,000,000= depending on size, and design.
07.	Documentation & Rappotuering	200,000 =per man day (This excludes Professional Fees)
08.	Training in; ICT-Computer repair, networking and maintenance, information sourcing and packaging, video and photography, Social accountability ,etc.	200,000 = per man day (This excludes Professional Fees)
09.	Research	200,000= per man day (This excludes Professional Fees)

Note: All price quotations are subject to change depending on the available market prices.

About Us

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