Challenges that Affect Participation of

Women in Accessing and Using Information Communication Technologies:

A Survey of Women Professionals in Information Technology Departments in

Universities within Nairobi

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ABSTRACT

The overall objective of this study was to identify the challenges that affect effective participation of women in accessing and using ICTs and the measures to overcome these challenges. The women here refer to the women professionals working in Information Technology (IT) departments of Universities within 50kms radius of Nairobi.

A census would be appropriate in this case because the population is small. The research instrument that was used in the study was a questionnaire which comprised of open and closed ended questions. The data was analysed using quantitative techniques.

From the findings we conclude that information communication technologies have or can create economic opportunities for women. However, more women should be encouraged to venture into entrepreneurial activities which make use of information communication technologies. ICT can be used as a tool for socio-political empowerment to bridge the gender socio-political digital divide. Women should be directly involved in the content development process. On the basis of the findings from this study the following recommendations were made: The government should get into partnerships with telecommunications companies to encourage or promote universal access. The government should subsidize costs of ICT technologies both hardware and software. Encourage private-public partnerships between government, donors and corporate sponsorships for ICT programs to train women through seminars and forums. Women in the ICT sector should mentor girls through mentorship programs e.g. Junior achievement mentorship programs.

Further research should be carried out on how women can be directly involved in the content development process. That way they may be more responsive. Content should be developed in the appropriate language used by women and this can be made possible through education and training. Further research is necessary to find out if promoting universal access translates to

reduction of costs to access these technologies by women and how training costs can be reduced

to act as an incentive to attract more women.