

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate and identify ICTs that provide access to information, enhance quality of life, and improve the economic standards of rural women by conceptualizing a model for the development, management, exploitation and use of ICTs in an African rural environment. In order to obtain data from the respondents, two research methods were largely utilized, namely the case study and survey research. 400 respondents formed the sampling size, randomly selected from census household data from the two countries. Case study data was obtained from key informants in purposely selected four organizations that work with ICTs and rural women in Kenya and South Africa. Based on the results obtained from this study, it is recommended that women need to be involved in deciding which ICTs would directly and immediately benefit their lives; sensitization and training in the use of ICTS before project implementation is essential; resource centers with skilled human resources and technological capacities to train communities about ICTs are prerequisites; more enhanced collaboration with rural women by being flexible and aware of their needs and requirements; collaborative efforts with other stakeholders at community level; the establishment of intermediary working committees at community level for enhanced communication processes; and a feasibility study that assesses the physical infrastructure and needs assessment survey before project implementation. The study concluded that there is a strong co-relation between the levels of education of a community, types of ICTs used, information seeking behavior, and the socio-economic landscape/environment. It was also established that the enactment of a National Policy on ICT development does not guarantee the efficient and effective use of ICTs, especially by marginalized rural communities.