

# HIGHGLEN ACCESS POINT: MEETING TO INTRODUCE COMMUNITY ICT PROJECT TO STAKEHOLDERS

16 February 2006

10.00-14.00hrs



*Participants at HighGlen Resource Centre during stakeholder meeting*

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## **1.0 Welcome and Introductions**

Mr. Chikoore, the District Education Officer (DEO) based at the HighGlen Resource Centre welcomed the guests. The DEO clearly emphasized and encouraged community-based organizations to utilize resources available at the centre especially with regard to seeking information for livelihoods enhancement. Mrs. Zunguze, the Executive Director of E-knowledge for Women in Southern Africa (EKOWISA) introduced the facilitator for the meeting, Ms Phides Mazhawidza from Y-CAP Consultants to the individuals present. Participants were from OASIS Trust, Mashambanzou, Shooting Stars, Vhuka Africa, People living positively with HIV/AIDS, Salvation for the Disabled persons, Men's Action Group (MAG), Save our Souls (SOS), Together As One, SAFIRE, Clear Vision, City of Harare, Highfields Domestic Violence (Musasa), ZIMCET, ConnectAfrica, Chido Aids Ministries, Voice of Hope, ZNNP+, Huchi Uluju, WAC, Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), Y-CAP Consultants and EKOWISA.

## **2.0 Introduction of EKOWISA and Community ICT Project**

Mrs. Zunguze explained that E-Knowledge for Women in Southern Africa (EKOWISA) is a registered Trustee whose aim is to generate, analyse, translate, repackage and disseminate locally relevant information and knowledge by promoting the effective use of ICTs.

EKOWISA focuses on ICTs because they are becoming widely accepted as an integral means for transforming the path for sustainable development. Statistics describing the growing digital divide demonstrate that, women and girls are at risk of exclusion from the opportunities presented by ICTs to secure better livelihoods and other rights. ICTs will offer a wide range of up-to-date, timely information that may not be available locally.

The Community ICT Project works in partnership with the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE), an organization which serves as a hub for information synthesizing and dissemination under the Open Knowledge Network (OKN) Programme. The OKN Programme seeks to develop the capacities of communities in documentation using ICTs.

The Community ICT Project is currently working with four communities which are Highfields and Glen Norah (urban) and Rio Tinto Mhondoro, Mubayira and Mutoko Central (rural). The project team carried out participatory baseline needs assessments in all four communities and the results acted as a compass to guide the design and implementation of information generation and dissemination strategies that address the information gaps.

During the Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence in 2005, the project team mobilized women, men and youths from Highfields and Glen Norah communities to discuss gender-based violence issues and encouraged survivors to share their experiences by writing unanimously through chatrooms in their local languages.

Community members were engaged in face to face discussions with facilitators on a particular topic before logging online and sharing their experiences of abuse.

The strategies of the project are:

- i) To promote use of video as a communications tool- this involves using a camera to help a community articulate what their concerns are about a particular issue, for example increase in pregnancy cases of young girls which causes them to become school drop-outs. After the video has been produced, the people have the opportunity to discuss together what their concerns are, and articulate them on film. This process might help members of the community to be involved in possible solutions of the problem, (participatory video).
- ii) Involvement of audience in a performance by artists, whereby as the play is being done on stage members in the audience will be approached and asked to say out their views and are part and parcel of the drama, (participatory theatre).
- iii) Hold capacity building workshops in entrepreneurship development and use electronic literacy skills for both communities and community-based organizations

Blending new and old technology:

- a) Local content development through cyber dialogues- community members showed great interest in participating in cyber dialogues where they have opportunities to type in issues concerning their community or nation at large with government officials and experts in the various fields. Community members insisted that cyber dialogues should continue once a month were people discuss on a topic in relation to community's livelihood.
- b) Technology choice- information is passed on in different formats which include make use of digital cameras and video which can record an event or important knowledge from the elderly in the society. This will help preserve vital information which can still be passed on from one generation to the next.
- c) Language and cultural aspects- The Open Knowledge Network (OKN) methodology promotes the creation and exchange of local information relevant to the communities. This means stories and articles may be written in the vernacular languages (Shona and Ndebele) and are published on the website.
- d) Networking- Communities will have a website which has profiles of individuals containing contact details of small businesses run in that community. This assists a community to become united and promote its products.

### 3.0 Experiences of other OKN sites



*Mrs Murota, Knowledge Worker at SAFIRE gives her presentation of experiences of other OKN sites*

Mrs. Murota gave a presentation explaining what Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE) is and how it works with access points. SAFIRE is an environment and development NGO which aims at diversifying options for rural communities. EKOWISA is the urban access point connected to the SAFIRE hub and the other access points nationwide are Nyamazura Old Resettlement Area Primary School, Tongogara Refugee Camp Community Centre, Galaupole Rural Training Centre and Mutambara Commodity Association. The access points function as information generation centres for local communities whilst the hub synthesizes all information, repackage and disseminate to the access points and other users. The hub tries by all means to ensure that information received from the access points is verified especially in health related information before it gets published on the website.

Documentalist Field Assistants (DFAs) assist community members to write short stories, SAFIRE hub then edits the content, sends it to India (the main hub) and then content is downloaded on the world space radio. In the rural areas, computer training is the major activity and focus on women's needs as they seem to be lagging behind in terms of accessing ICTs. In the communities, people visit the access point where they watch videos, DVDs and obtain information that enhances sustainable rural livelihood strategies.

Nyamazura Access Point was noted as being ahead in terms of its progress as it has opened a bank account with Agribank for storage and accountability of financial resources generated at the centre. The community members are able to type their

assignments and pay a minimum fee for printing services. A management committee was elected by the community and it has enabled families to receive counseling and reuniting together creating a peaceful society. The gender aspect is being addressed as women are now seen as strong decision makers in the homes. Ten students who were boarders in a high school are now in day-school as they have access to learn computer skills at the access point and parents are excited as it reduces the burden of having to pay high school fees in boarding institutions.

#### **4.0 Discussion groups and plenary session on questions asked indicating the roles to be played by the centre management team and community-based organizations**

##### Role of the community



*A group of individuals engaged in a discussion session*

- i) To make use of the resource centre
  - Documentation
  - Advertising
  - Learning purposes
- ii) To be responsible
  - Handle computers with care, reporting any unscrupulous behaviour – theft for example
  - Keeping the area clean (toilets, grounds)
- iii) To inform other community members of the project
  - Mobilization- sharing information

iv) Networking with other communities

- Organizing exchange visits

v) Contributing to the development of the area

- Offering voluntary services such as maintenance
- Getting involved in fundraising activities

Role of the Centre Management Committee

- a) To see that community members have access to computers
- b) To make sure computers are well maintained
- c) Security- guarding against viruses picked up from use of damaged floppy diskettes
- d) Develop a suitable timetable
- e) Organize training workshops for the community
- f) Feedback and ensuring accountability of funds within the project's running
- g) Acquiring more resources
- h) Encourage staff development
- i) Network with other organizations who may not be aware of the project
- j) The CMC should attend relevant workshops
- k) The CMC to inform community members of any changes with regard to project activities

Sustainability Measures

- i) Paying membership fees annually
- ii) Income-generating projects : printing services, typing services, browsing fee
- iii) Hire of equipment- video camera, digital camera, video and audio tapes
- iv) Advertisements and agent services - information that includes contact details of individuals looking for employment for example housemaids and gardeners, products on sale from the small entrepreneurs
- v) Operation of a phone shop
- vi) Commission sales – products/ video/audio tapes

Benefits of ICTs

- a) Marketing of products- people can compare prices of vegetables, community benefits in low levels of costing
- b) Finding market – reduce travel costs and harassment for border traders at the border posts
- c) Effective information dissemination
- d) Monitoring and budgeting can be achieved properly
- e) Quality of products increases as there will be competition

- f) Best practices –vital information may be shared
- g) Documentation- knowledge is stored and well kept especially relating to cultural aspects for example, procedures of paying lobola and burying the dead
- h) Utilizing the radio as a means of broadcasting and mobile technology
- i) Information is available from local, regional and international
- j) Reduces the spread of HIV/AIDS
- k) Parents will not need to take time away from home but may carry out their business through online facilities

### **5.0 Analysis of the evaluation forms completed by participants**

There were twenty-four (24) forms that were filled in and returned to the project coordinator

#### How were the logistical arrangements?

Seventeen (17) participants rated the logistical arrangements and said it was good, four (4) left the question blank and did not comment, two (2) agreed that it was excellent and one (1) individual said it was not good. The majority of participants have said the arrangements were fine and one person found it bad meaning there will be need to improve next time though to a lesser extent.

#### What could have been done better?

The responses to this question are as follows:

- Provision of a spacious venue
- Improve on time keeping
- Increased the time of the programme so as to exhaust all concerns raised
- Use of vernacular language(s) on the evaluation form as there were some community members who do not understand English
- In future if one representative is required to attend a meeting it should be so
- Providing juice during the meeting

#### Where your expectations of the meeting met? Please explain.

Twenty-three participants answered that “yes” their expectations were in met and one participant disagreed saying “no” his expectations were not met.

The participants who said “yes” had the following reasons:

- The project was outlined well by the facilitator and program adhered to
- Information was shared by different stakeholders and there was appreciation of the project and its implementation
- It was informing in terms of what ICTs are and how they can be useful to the community for sustainable development
- CBOs were glad to hear that they will get an opportunity together with community members to learn how to use computers and obtain information from the OKN website

The participant who said “no” gave the reason that more knowledge is needed to be placed into structures especially effective communication.

What do you think the project should do to make it more effective?

Responses were:

- The project should be practical and not just remain theoretical
- Seek to acquire more computers for training purposes
- Increase time allocated to the community to access information through the OKN website because four hours pre week not sufficient
- Liase with performing artists to disseminate information through short sketches and offer them a small token of appreciation
- Provide reports and minutes of previous meetings before proceeding
- Involve more youths to keep them busy and leaving them no time to indulge in criminal activities
- Beneficiaries should be community at large
- Organise with CBOs to come up with a workshop for the targeted group so relevant people attend meetings and can feedback to their organizations after the meetings
- Project has to commence its activities as early as possible

How will your CBO be able to work with the project? Please explain.

- Encourage fellow colleagues to attend computer training courses, training workshops organized by the CMC
- Mobilize community members to access the centre and obtain information which then improves their livelihoods
- CBOs will assist in advertising through dissemination of literature explaining the project and its benefits
- Cooperate in ensuring effective communication to the community about the ICT project
- Networking with various organizations giving a platform for wider information dissemination

In conclusion, the meeting was well attended by representatives of various CBOs working in Highfields and Glen Norah communities. The goal of the Community ICT Project is to empower rural and urban communities to enable them to make more informed choices for a better livelihood. The project team works with existing CBOs that can benefit from using ICTs in their work and improve the way they interact with the same community. ICTs provide opportunities for local people to communicate with each other, expressing their own ideas, knowledge and culture in their own language. It is these communication activities that have a role in community building and self empowerment.

## 6.0 Participants' List

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