Chapter 10

The Issues and Prospects for E-Governance in Eastern Africa

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the issues, prospects, and challenges of e-governance in Africa with a focus on the progress of universal primary education in east Africa. It uses Uganda to showcase the need for e-governance of primary school education. The objectives are to describe the current status of the universal primary education, the key issues encountered in an effort to achieve MDG 2, and highlight the prospects of e-governance in achieving education. In this chapter, the authors collate published evidence on the performance of Uganda in implementing the MDG 2. There is a wide rural-urban digital gap, weak ICT infrastructures, and low awareness at the expense of quality UPE. There is limited access to ICT, ICT illiteracy, poor quality education, lack of e-books or ICT instructional materials to cut the costs of school administration like communication. E-governance has yet to achieve full deployment in education service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Eastern African countries (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda) have continued to encounter a series of setbacks in their efforts to achieve the set targets and objectives of the second MDG among others. MDGs are a series of targets and indicators which the 189 UN member states have adopted to tackle Africa’s massive poverty and reduce it by at least half by the close of the year 2015. There are eight MDGs of which MDG 8 (developing a global partnership for development), is the corner-stone for the successful implementation of all the other MDGs in Africa. Most East African states have recorded more challenges than progress on the eve of MDG deadline. The chapter examines the challenges, prospects, issues, and options in the role of e-governance in achieving most of the MDGs including the second MDGs. The focus is on the MDG 2 in Uganda as an EAC state. The MDGs are (Okaka, 2011):

- **MDG1:** Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.
- **MDG2:** Achieving universal primary education.
- **MDG3:** Promoting gender equality and women empowerment.
- **MDG4:** Reducing child mortality.

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MDG5: Improving maternal health.
MDG6: Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
MDG7: Ensuring environmental sustainability.
MDG8: Developing a global partnership for development.

It conceivable that policy strategies that promote nearly adoption and rapid diffusion of ICTs in the East African community (EAC) countries, will spur the vital progress of the MDG 2 targets, that is, to ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary school education in Uganda (UNDP, 2010). The indicators are: the net enrolment ratio in primary education, the proportion of pupils starting grade one who reach the last grade of primary education, and the literacy rate of 15-24 year-old girls and boys. The MDGs are drawn from the targets contained in the millennium declaration that was adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state at the UN millennium summit in September 2000. ICT is a cross-cutting issue here. Most EAC national ICT policies are still in formative stages. The key issue here is that MDG 2 commits East African countries like Uganda to achieve universal full primary school education by the year 2015. Measurable targets have been set for the full attainment of the UN MDG 2 (UN, 2008). Appropriate indicators have been selected to monitor progress for each of the targets. ICT accessibility indicators are still very poor. universal primary education goal requires Uganda to achieve 100 per cent enrolment of 6-12 year old children into primary school education by 2015 (UNDP & GoU, 2013).

ICTs will facilitate the MDG 2 whose specific target is related to social, economic, and environmental indicators which are used to track progress. It is evident that although EAC states have made significant progress in an effort to attain the goal, a lot more remains to be done for them to achieve the entire goal 2 target by the end of the year 2015. The states undertook a process of consultations among the governments, the UN agencies led by the UNDP, EU, the World Bank, international, and other UN agencies, and the civil society organizations (MFPED, 2004). ICT technology enhanced learning skills is a drive of progress. At the moment, the diffusion of ICTs in rural schools is very slow and weak. The Ugandan government’s figures indicate that the number of school going age children enrolled in the program has rapidly shot up annually. Since the inception of the policy in 1997, gross enrollment rose from 5.3 million pupils in 1996 to 7.6 million in 2003 (UNDP & GoU, 2010). In some remote and rural areas, the ratio of pupils to teachers exceed 295 to one resulting in some classes being held under trees across the country. Teacher - absentees are about 30 per cent at any school time. With low ICT skills, the focus should be on early adoption and rapid diffusion of the appropriate ICTs to enhance learning, teaching, management, and research. It is imperative to achieve critical mass access to the ICTs in all the five EAC states of Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda. The main objectives of this paper are summarised below:

- To present the role of ICTs in achieving full the status of the MDGs in the eastern Africa states;
- To review the progress of MDG 2 in East Africa;
- To assess the status of MDG 2 to achieve the proposed implementation of UPE progress; and
- To explain the need for international cooperation and collaboration between Africa, the EU, The World Bank, the UN, and all external developing agencies to ICTs for sustainable development.

METHODOLOGY

In this review, we collated published evidence on the deployment of e-governance (ICTs) using relevant search terms. Information was accessed
www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=86

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