INTRODUCTION

Despite the rapid and revolutionized development of communication and media around the world in the last few decades, which culminated in the term information communication technology (ICT), most of the developing countries are yet to clearly understand its significance or maximize the use of various forms of ICTs, because of other pressing issues such as access roads, potable drinking water supply, electricity and health facilities. This has greatly caused a wide gap between and within countries in the areas of social, economic, political, health and educational developments.

ICTs encompass all the technologies that facilitate the processing, transfer and exchange of information and communication services. Various forms of ICTs exist, such as radio, television, newspaper, telephone, magazine, billboard, Internet, electronic and print media, and so forth.

In the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in knowledge of the importance and developmental trends of ICTs worldwide. ICTs are very important in analyzing one’s existing/potential audience using the most cost-effective way to communicate; evaluating the quality of messages; and making provision for information feedback. ICTs bring about various opportunities, ranging from employment and education to economic, health, social and environmental development.

As a result of the digital divide between and within countries, there are uneven disparities between the economic, social, educational and political status of the international community. This brings about classification of countries into “developed and developing” or “haves and have nots.”

Gender disparity has served as a strong barrier to women’s use of ICTs, considering the fact that women in most developing countries are still considered unequal in status with their male counterparts. This has, thus, reduced enrollment in sciences and technological fields of study. This also is probably as a result of the limited awareness of the full range of opportunities in ICTs other than access to information.

To achieve the goal of universal access to ICTs, there is a need to bridge the gap between men’s and women’s access to the use of ICTs. This can be accomplished by making technology accessible, relevant and useful to both women and men. State policies could be made holistic by taking into consideration women’s needs as well as addressing related issues, such as the urban-rural bias, promoting enrollment of girls in ICTs programs and empowering women to use ICTs for profitable ventures.

BACKGROUND

This survey is being carried out among in-school and out-of-school youths in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Edo State is one of the 36 states that make up the Nigerian federation. It is located in the South-South geopolitical zone, in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. The state is administratively divided into three senatorial districts and 18 local government areas.

Edo State had an estimated population of 2.86 million people as of 1999. The major ethnic groups in the state are Bini, Ishan, and Afemai, who are collectively referred to as the Edo-speaking people.

Benin City, the capital of Edo State, is one of the ancient cities in West Africa, with more than 1 million inhabitants and a male-to-female ratio of 1:1. It is divided into three local government councils; namely, Egor, Oredo and Ikpoba-Okha. These rep-
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