Building Open Learning Communities for Gender Equity with the Support of ICTs

Workshop Report

Date: 14th November 2002

Place: Alexsan Kopano Resource Centre

Time: 10am-5pm

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Background to the workshop

This report documents the workshop held on the 14th November 2002 to decide on the way forward for the *Developing Open Learning Communities for Gender Equity with the help of ICTs* project. The workshop was designed to include mostly youth from Alexandra, as well as UNESCO representatives, and experts in areas identified as important during the participatory needs assessment. Please see Appendix 1 for a list of participants from outside the Alex community and their area of speciality and Appendix 2 for the workshop agenda. It was originally thought that the workshop would run for two days, however, by the end of day 1 it was clear that all the important issues had been addressed and agreement reached on the way forward.

This workshop was the point at which the community could get feedback about the information needs assessment stage of the project, as well as hear about and see examples of the virtual reality (VR) application to be developed as the next stage of the project. As such the workshop was also a point at which the project was handed over to Naledi 3D who will be developing the VR application and so taking the project forward.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Provide feedback to the community about the results of the needs assessments
2. Provide information about VR applications
3. Establish a prioritised list of topics
4. Decide on topics to focus on
5. Obtain initial inputs into expectations of the programme
6. Decide on the primary target group
7. Discuss presentation preferences
8. Specify particular issues to be included within the chosen topic area.

The format of this report follows the structure of the workshop, The body of the report will briefly summarise the workshop proceedings and agreements. Additional details are provided in the appendices and contact details of presenters provided if further follow-up is needed.

Introduction to the project

Holly Luton-Nel Chairperson of the Alexsan Kopano Resource Centre welcomed everybody to the workshop, explained logistical issues and briefly noted the purpose of the day. Following this, an introduction to the *Developing Open Learning Communities for Gender Equity with the Support of ICTs* project was given by Elke Zimprich Mazive[1] from UNESCO Windhoek Office. The project has been developed and implemented by a multi-sectoral team within UNESCO. South Africa and Mozambique are the two countries in which the project is being implemented, at the Alexsan Centre in Alexandra, South Africa and at a telecentre in rural Manhica in Mozambique.

UNESCO has for the past 5 years been supporting the development of Multipurpose Community Telecentres (MCTs) as a means of community development. While infrastructure provision and development has been the focus of many initiatives thus far, this project deals specifically with content.

The specific aims of the project are to:

- Assess learning needs and the impact of ICTs for community development and lifelong learning in selected African communities;
- Develop gender sensitive and locally produced ICT application packages for community development and lifelong learning;
- Share knowledge and experiences about the application development process, which contributes to the creation of open learning communities.

Development in this context is defined as positive change, and open learning communities are concerned with connecting people, their cultures, lives, languages and environments through learning which is relevant to the issues faced in their lives. This is why the project began with a needs assessment research in order to identify the most relevant issue about which people would like to learn in the Alexandra community.

[1] Please contact Elke Zimprich Mazive at e.zimprich-mazive@unesco.org for additional information.

It was explicitly noted that the project is a small, but concrete and ambitious project, with a limited budget. This will only allow for the development of one application in South Africa and one in Mozambique. It is hoped that these two examples would be helpful for later efforts to raise additional resources in order to develop other applications.

Introduction to Virtual Reality applications[2]

The following stage of the project is to develop a Virtual Reality (VR) application as an educational tool to meet the main information and learning need identified by the community. A presentation on VR including examples of VR applications was made by Dave Lockwood and Tebogo Pelo of Naledi3D.

VR is a real time simulation in a 3D interactive environment with the possibility of 'immersion' in a full 3D world. Due to advances in technology it is now possible to experience VR using a personal computer. While there are certainly more elaborate ways of using VR, the focus here is on the personal computer approach, which is most practical in the context of a community application where there are budget constraints. Because the user is given the opportunity to 'do' whilst seeing and hearing a message learning retention is much greater than for other learning activities. This is especially important for people who are illiterate because they are not excluded from learning opportunities since text is not the main presentation format.

Advantages of VR were discussed and these include:

- Visualise new developments
- Show how things work
- Overcome language barriers
- Interact with the world:
    - Re-enforce learning
    - Increase learning retention
    - Motivates learning
    - Recreates lost worlds – our heritage
- Visualise worlds to come.

A series of examples of VR applications were shown and workshop participants were given the opportunity to try out the application. The examples included an application to raise the awareness of water-borne disease and health issues in rural Uganda, a previous UNESCO project, an application teaching one how to construct a shelf, and information about South African heritage. The response to the VR examples was positive, with many seeing VR for the first time being impressed by the possibilities.

During the question time some concerns were raised about the skills needed both to develop the application and to use it, particularly for people without basic computer literacy. In response, Naledi3D noted that part of their role is to train a local person to be able to add and further develop the programmes. With respect to skills for users, it was noted that only basic mouse skills are needed to use the programmes. In addition, in Uganda, facilitators were trained to assist people in using the VR applications and this would also be a possibility in this context if needed. However, the workshop participants who tried out the programme did not have difficulty in using it once they were given brief guidance. A question was also asked about the practical relevance of the programme – would it help people get skills to be able to get jobs. It was made clear in Naledi3D's answer that the programme should be seen as a learning tool and that in and of itself could not guarantee practical outcomes.

Presentation of needs assessment research[3]

Merridy Wilson (LINK Centre, University of the Witwatersrand) presented the findings of the participatory needs assessment research. The presentation began with a background description of the Alexandra Township and an introduction to the Alexsan Kopano Resource Centre. This was followed by a brief methodological explanation. The methodology used was a combination of focus group discussions with three age categories of youth (12 years and under, 13-17 years and 18-30 years) and a questionnaire completed by centre users. The focus groups included within each age category, one female only group, one male only group and one mixed gender group. The aim of this grouping was to assess the differences in information and learning needs expressed by men and women and also to observe the interaction of both sexes in the same groups. Various ranking exercises were

[2] Please contact Dave Lockwood at dlockwood@naledi3D.com for additional information.
[3] Please contact Merridy Wilson at Wilson.m@pdm.wits.ac.za for additional information.

included to prioritise the information needs identified. 6 facilitators who come from Alexandra were specifically trained and conducted the focus groups.

Altogether there were 89 participants in the focus groups and 50 questionnaires were administered, but only 48 used in the analysis because two respondents were significantly outside of the age range for the study. The final sample size was thus 137. For both the focus groups and the questionnaires a higher percentage of the participants were female (62% female and 38% male for the focus groups, and 63% female and 37% male for the questionnaires). Approximately half of the participants had used a computer before.

A series of graphs showing information needs by age and gender were presented.

The table below summarises the main information needs found for each age group.

12 years and under		**13-17 years**		**18-30 years**	
Focus group discussions (no specific order)	**Individual voting (in order of priority)**	**Focus group discussions (no specific order)**	**Individual voting (in order of priority)**	**Focus group discussions (no specific order)**	**Individual voting (in order of priority)**
1. Child rights, rape, abuse 2. School-related (education) 3. Safe sex, HIV/Aids 4.Life skills 5. Computer access/training	1.computer training 2. Life skills 3. Education 4. Abuse	1.Abuse (includes rape) 2. Education 3. Life skills 4. Employment 5. Crime	1. Life skills 2. Abuse 3. Education 4. Crime 5. Computer training	1. Unemployment 2. Crime 3. Education 4. Health, HIV/Aids	1. Employment

Although differences in information needs were found to be greater across the age categories than across gender, the need to address gender issues was also clear from the study. There were gender differences in participation rates in the research itself, with more women than men participating. The need for gender related discussions was also evident, especially in the 13-17 years age group where the girls expressed much anger at men. In addition, there were wide gender disparities with respect to employment status, with 50% of women and 33% of men being unemployed.

The presentation ended with the following 4 recommendations

- Differentiation of target group by age rather than gender is most important

- Classification of information needs (in order of importance)
    1. **Employment** (includes, career information, job searching, and entrepreneurship)
    2. **Life skills** (includes, decision making, how to say No, teenage pregnancy, safe sex, how to keep healthy, how to look after and protect myself, how to be successful, how to be financially sustainable)
    3. **Education** (includes: homework issues, school-related information, information for projects, subject choices, access to further and higher education, information about educational opportunities, information about funding for educational opportunities, what education will help me to find a job)
    4. **Abuse &/or crime** (includes: child rights, rape, general abuse, punishment of offenders, self protection)
    5. **Health** (includes: HIV/Aids, sexually transmitted diseases, general well-being)
- Address the issue of men's participation in the project
- Address the need for sharing and interaction across gender.

Questions and discussions after the presentation addressed the concern about lower levels of men's participation and possible reasons for this were discussed. These included that men have more activities in the township, such as soccer, than women who are thus more likely to attend research and activities at the centre. In addition, the youth desk coordinator noted that a few years ago women's participation was a problem due to the relevance of activities, household duties and teenage pregnancy. As such the centre specifically addressed these issues and has tried to ensure that programmes are of relevance to women too, and this may mean they have become less relevant to men.

Prioritising exercises

After the lunch break, Bernd Oellermann of Naledi3D took over facilitation of the workshop.

In a plenary session, workshop participants were asked to brainstorm the most important information needs from the needs assessment presentation as well as

anything else that they thought was important. Each response was noted on the flip chart (see list below). Thereafter a voting exercise was done to prioritise the issues. Each participant had one vote for the topic they thought was most important. The second column of the table shows the results of the voting.

Information Need	**Voting results**
Unemployment	21
Education	3
Life Skills	7
Health	-
Abuse/Rape	-
Crime	-
Housing/Environment	-

The workshop participants thus further verified the findings of the need assessment research and the participants jointly decided that unemployment issues were the most important information need for the youth, and the topic of choice to be address in the virtual reality application to be developed. It was also noted that several of the other topics were important in terms of employment, including life skills, education, health and crime.

Group discussions on important aspects of unemployment

Having prioritised unemployment issues as the topic of choice the group then had to discuss what it is about employment that is especially important and should be included in the programme being developed. The participants were divided into four groups, each with an outside facilitator (expert in a specific area) and a facilitator from the needs assessment focus groups (local person from Alexandra). The groups were asked to discuss the following three questions:

1. What are the main issues about employment?
2. What are your expectations from the programme?
3. What kind of format would you prefer? (e.g., text, language, etc.)

Workshop participants were randomly divided into groups by Bernd Oellermann as workshop facilitator. The four groups were of approximately equal size (8, 9, 10, 8) and of mixed genders.

Please see Appendix 3 for a full transcription of each group's discussions prepared for the report backs. A summary of the issues is presented in the section below.

Plenary session – report backs and way forward

Each group had approximately 10 minutes to report back on their discussions. All discussion had been noted on flip chart paper (see full transcriptions in Appendix 3). The following main issues can be extracted from the group discussions, presented according to the 3 questions asked. While these summaries are presented here for ease of reading of this report, it is important that the detail and richness provided in the full transcriptions be carefully considered in the development of the application.

1. *What are the main issues about employment?*
    - Learning about self employment and entrepreneurship
    - Finding and maintaining formal employment – this includes many aspects such as CV writing, interview skills, information about types of jobs, work cultures etc.
    - Career information – what education will help to get a job, information about subject choice, range of jobs, how to make career decisions.

2. *What are your expectations from the programme?*
    - Simple, easy to use and understandable
    - Should be information-rich
    - Accessible for all, even those without computer skills
    - Provide skills to get a job/will help us to get a job.

3. *What kind of format would you prefer? (e.g., text, language, etc.)*
    - Available in different languages
    - Should feel real, and provide access to demonstrations and scenarios of things not experienced before
    - Mix of audio, text and visuals.

After the presentations, two main concerns were raised by Naledi3D. These were:

1. The limited budget was noted, meaning that it would not be possible to develop the programme in all the languages that had been noted as important by the groups. Two languages are likely to be the most possible given the budget.
2. People seem to think or hope that they will get a job from this project. However, it is not possible for one programme to provide a solution to all problems. Rather, the aim is to provide as much information as possible, in a format that facilitates learning as a tool in the process of finding employment. It was highlighted that participants should not have an unrealistic expectation that they can be sure of a job after using the application.

Through the discussions it was made clear that all participants understood the constraints and did not have unrealistic expectations, which would lead to later disappointment about the outcomes of the project.

The way forward was explained with a rough estimate of the timeframe, although this would be finalised later. The idea is to develop a framework for a comprehensive VR application that can be added to as additional funding is made available for adding additional content. The first round of the project will focus on unemployment issues, drawing on the specific areas of importance raised in the groups. However, it is hoped that the content will be further elaborated and additional information added over time in order to develop a comprehensive application that would address most of the concerns raised. Having the framework for the comprehensive VR application in place could be used to help leverage additional funding and/or content inputs.

Work on the VR application will begin in January 2003. Community members will be involved in testing the application during the development process. Depending on the detail to be included, the workshop participants were told to expect a 3-6 month period for development. This means that the application would be completed between March and June 2003.

Once it was clear that there were no additional questions or issues for discussion the workshop was closed. Holly Luton-Nel thanked all for their participation in the day, and especially those who had travelled to be there.

Report compiled by
Merridy Wilson
LINK Centre, WITS
21 November 2002

Appendix 1 – List of participants from outside Alexandra

Name	Organisation
Hillar Addo	SchoolNet Africa
Dave Lockwood	Naledi3D
Holly Luton-Nel	Alexsan Kopano Educational Trust Chairperson
Linda Madlala	Provincial GITO – Office of the Premier KZN. South African National Commission Focal Point for IT
Roman Mnqayi	Telecentre Manager KZN
Bernd Oellermann	Naledi3D
Mathabo Nkoenyane	GCIS
Tebogo Pelo	Naledi3D
Natasha Primo	WomensNet
Francois Strydom	Psychology department, WITS
Merridy Wilson	LINK Centre, WITS
Elke Zimprich Mazive	UNESCO – Namibia
Moloisi	Kagiso Educational Television (video team)
Apologies	
Dave Barnard	SangoNet
Ginger Bester	Department of Education
Tina James	Tina James Consulting

Appendix 2 – Workshop Agenda

Developing Open Learning Communities for Gender Equity with the Support of ICTs

Workshop Agenda

Dates: Thursday 14th November (10am to 5pm, lunch is provided)
Friday 15th November (9am-1pm followed by lunch)

Thursday 14th November

10am-1pm

1. Welcome and housekeeping (Holly Luton-Nel, Alexsan Kopano Educational Trust)
2. Introduction to the project by Elke Zimprich-Mazive (UNESCO) (30 mins)
3. Example of virtual reality applications (Naledi3D) (1 hour)
4. Report on the participatory needs assessment (Merridy Wilson) (1hour)

LUNCH 1pm – 2pm

2pm-5pm (This session will be facilitated by Bernd Oellermann)

1. Plenary discussion – what are the main issues (3 or 4) to be addressed by the virtual reality application and why? (1 hour)
2. Break away groups – focus on the specific issues (each group of varying age and background has a focus issue to consider). What are the important aspects of the particular topic, why? (2hours)

End for the day

Friday 15th November

9am-1pm

1. Plenary report back and discussion from the break away groups (2 hours)

Tea Break (30 mins)

2. Wrap-up of the workshop and discussion of the way forward (1.5 hours)

LUNCH 1pm.

Appendix 3: Transcription of group discussions

Group 1

Important issues within the topic unemployment

a. *Self employment*

- To be entrepreneurs, mind mapping, ideas, research, product
- Research – market and product
- Deciding how to register the business
- Business plan
- Financing options – bank, sponsorship, own savings, partnerships etc
- Legal process and ethics
- Investments – inventory, land, buildings
- Project management and sustaining business and product
- Customer care
- Training

Barriers to self employment:

- gender bias – children and issues of being at home
- finances
- teenage pregnancy
- social attitudes
- lack of skills – to even know where to start.

b. *Formal employment*

- Resources – need to be aware of what is happening, media, news adds, Internet etc
- How to advertise yourself – agencies, companies, newspapers
- How to present yourself – CVs, certificates, diplomas, testimonials, covering letters etc.
- Qualifications – with accreditation
- Experience and volunteering, how to get practical experience
- Interviews – skills, what to expect
- Work ethics – rules and regulations within companies, dress codes, rights and laws
- Training opportunities – skills needed
- Career guidance to know what education is needed for the career and also to know about different kinds of careers.

Expectations of the project

- Knowledgeable on how to access information
- Recognition and accreditation
- Ability to express myself in interviews
- Positive attitudes

- Results – to see the pilot project getting off the ground
- Dissemination of information in all languages
- Simple and understandable
- Involvement of community
- Establish relevancy – apply what you have learnt
- Focus and commitment
- Progress and success stories – research. Do these programmes work, and what are the results?

Format preferences

- A story board – with a narrator – e.g. twins who make different career decisions and then see where they end up
- Text combinations with graphics
- Use local people, environment and setting that we can identify with (something familiar)
- Use a scenario to make it real.

Group 2

Important issues within the topic unemployment

a. *Job finding*
    - CVs
    - Peer support – how to support each other when we don't find jobs and to encourage each other to carry on trying
    - Identify information sources on jobs
    - Interviewing skills
    - Conduction research into companies
    - How to follow up on interviews
    - Break down gender stereotypes – information on careers for men and women

b. *Income generation*
    - Customer relations – kindness and cleanliness
    - Market research
    - Costing and developing business plans
    - Managing a small business
    - Information on financing and services for small business

c. *Knowing your work environment*
    - Finding out the values of the company
    - Knowing company policies and national legislation on employee rights
    - Skills building on an ongoing basis

Expectations of the project

- Clear and understandable
- Useful
- Information-rich
- Interesting
- Integrated approach
- Accessible

Format preferences

- Easy, simple and user-friendly
- Immersion of self
- As many possible options
- Mother language
- Demonstrations
- Video scenarios
- Games
- Big font size, text short, sweet and to the point!

Group 3

Important issues within the topic of unemployment

- Good education
- Job creation – by the government and ourselves
- Community projects – e.g. brick making
- Workshops to create awareness
- Training and creation of skills
- Marketing ourselves – job hunting, agencies
- Career guidance – aware of diverse careers and subjects to choose at school
- Self-discipline
- Affordability and ways to encourage investment in our area
- Job retention – upgrading your skills (improvements), customer care, developing a good job attitude (life skills)

Expectations of the project

- Skills to get a job (practical)
- Information on employment, e.g. agencies, requirements, other unique careers so we don't all try to do the same things (e.g. everyone wants to be a DJ now)
- Practical and theoretical skills to change our mindset from job dependency to job independency
- Use money wisely to create a job – including financing for education
- Know more about companies involved in youth development
- To see a good working environment because we haven't experienced this
- Help in other educational information

Format preferences

- Language – English, Zulu, North Sotho (in order of importance)
- Animations – diversity (men, women and children), different environment (e.g. the work environment that we don't know).

Group 4

Important issues within the topic unemployment

- Single parents are unable to maintain the welfare of their kids
- Violence, e.g. family problems
- Experience is required although we aren't given the opportunity to get experience
- Retrenchment
- Lack of motivation, lack of self confidence
- Career guidance – subject choices
- Education – the right kinds of qualifications to get employment
- Lack of finance, bursaries – banks offer loans but parents are unemployed so we can't get loans – need information about loans
- Information on different sectors that offer opportunities we don't know about
- Job searching skills
- Presentation skills, e.g, CVs

Expectations of the project

- Expecting to get a job after matric
- The project should help us to get a job
- Expecting a loan or bursary
- Training
- Job creation and entrepreneurial skills
- Job searching skills
- Life skills
- Information on how to deal with rejection

Format preferences

- Different languages should be accommodated
- Talking of the computer (audio) and pictures
- Tests and questionnaires to choose subjects and careers
- Be able to be used by those who not computer literate.