

November 2020 – April 2021

FINAL REPORT

‘WOMEN IN BUSINESS’ PROJECT

WinB
by GWED-G



**“Feminism isn’t about making women strong. Women are already strong.
It’s about changing the way the world perceives that strength.”**

G.D. Anderson

A project led by



GWED-G
Gulu Women's Economic
Development & Globalization

With the funding support of



**UGANDA
COMMUNICATIONS
COMMISSION**

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INTRODUCTION

The project trained 100 women and girls owning businesses in Gulu City, the training provided deeper understanding of business, entrepreneurship and qualities of good entrepreneurs, this was meant to boost the business of the participants. The women were equipped with life skills required to meet daily demands of their lives as business owners. 45 of the participants were women and girls living with disability.

Methodology used to deliver the training included presentation, brainstorming, role play, question and answer sessions. It was conducted in a classroom setting, to share basic information about business, while using local materials and drawing local context from the participants to relate to the concept for better learning.

Areas covered during this training included understanding what business is, what entrepreneurship is and who an entrepreneur is, incorporating qualities that entrepreneurs need to possess in order to have profitable business. Furthermore, the participants were taught life skills required for effectively leading productive daily lives and proper running of businesses, this included creative thinking and critical thinking, problem solving decision making, self-awareness and empathy, coping with stress and coping with emotions, communication skill and interpersonal relationships.

After this training, the project anticipated that the trained women entrepreneurs would courteously communicate with customers, suppliers, business partners and people they encounter for more sustained business relationships that would eventually result into a boost for their business.

Critical thinking skill empowers the women to make the right decisions and choices on how to package and deliver their products besides coping with stress, challenges and emotions that are faced by business persons. Along the way, the project did encounter challenges of working with visually impaired beneficiaries, however assistance was provided through vivid description of the communication made during the training by the facilitators.

This final report presents the successes and challenges encountered during this project. In conclusion, we have also outlined recommendations that will continue to improve business and ICT skills for women in business in Gulu, and for the general population in the longer term.



MESSAGE FROM PAMELA ANGWECH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GWED-G & UCC BOARD MEMBER

Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) was established by the Uganda Communication Act 2013, as a regulator of communication sector in Uganda, with a mission to develop a robust communication sector that drives economic growth and protect consumers.

Through the Uganda Communication Universal Service Access Fund (UCUSAF), UCC has expanded its mandates to support the underserved communities and increase broadband connectivity, enhance usage of ICT through integration of ICT in Agriculture, Health and E-commerce with targets to empowering Women, Youths and PWDs. This is to ensure that sectors of the population that would be left out benefit from ICT infrastructure and skill training to increase digital literacy. These has been possible through partnership with private sectors and other stakeholders.



GWED-G partnership with UCC is important and timely to build capacities of women entrepreneurs to utilize ICT and expand their business portfolios amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

GWED-G women empowerment strategy recognized that women entrepreneurs at grassroots tend to have micro enterprises and are overrepresented in low-income, low-growth sectors. Considering that, they face unique gender related barriers such as limited time and access to skills training (the dual burden of balancing family duties and Business), mobility restrictions, limited access to information, markets and finance.

In addition, attitudinal and cultural barriers such as perceptions of the role of women and entrepreneurship exist and such gaps can be closed with ICT. The use of mobile phones, computers and internet have become essential tools for business operations, competitiveness and opportunities for all women entrepreneurs.

However, during these difficult times, we managed to support and train women entrepreneurs grow successful businesses, establishing SMS-based information alert services, providing ICT capacity-building skills and support for women entrepreneurs as part of e-commerce to utilize digital platforms and market their products such as opening Facebook accounts, use WhatsApp, emails and other applications to grow their businesses. The bigger picture of these efforts are to leveraging ICTs to enable women entrepreneurs utilize technology and access supply chains, promote their businesses with ease and participate in policy dialogue in relations to e-commerce.

GWED-G therefore will continue to look for resources and opportunities to **scale this program** and **ensure sustainability** through linkages with various ICT sectors, financial institutions to boost women's income and market through a one-stop websites. Noting that there are still **pending ICT gaps** to catalyze women's entrepreneurship in the region, we shall continue to collaborates with UCC for **further supports and technical guidance**.

PROJECT LAUNCH



On November 30, 2020, GWED-G launched the WinB project at Gulu District Council hall. The launch was attended by 61 out of the 100 project beneficiaries that included a diverse group comprising 11 women with disabilities, young, middle and elderly women involved in variety of enterprises ranging from market vending, saloons, boutiques, crafts, agriculture and produce marketing.

The function was presided over by the UCC board member and ED of GWED-G Ms Angwech Pamela Judith. Other invited guests included Ms Joyce Laker, a former district councillor of Gulu now a thriving women entrepreneur with fast knowledge in e-commerce who gave a key note address during the launch to inspire the women. Gulu University ICT department, GWED-G staff, Gulu district Gender Officer and the media constituted the guest list that was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions.

During the launch event, the project was presented to the participants. The project presentation generated a lot of interest among the participants with most voicing the need to immediately embark on the planned activities.

INCREASING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO & USE OF ICT RESOURCES

As part of first tracking integration of women business in ICT, the project designed modular trainings on ICT with a number of 10-15 trainees to run for 10 weeks at a time for effectiveness. A total of 87 women (this includes 40 disabled women) participated in this training.

The trainings typically cover both theoretical and practical aspects of ICT:

- Understanding a computer, name computer parts and start a computer
- What internet is and advantages of on-line marketing
- Opening an email address, composing, attaching and sending files
- Using search engines to look for products online so as to be able to brand and set price.
- Using smart phones for downloading and installing social media platforms.
- Download, install, open, use (post and reply) social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp)
- Building on-line network with other entrepreneurs
- Use search Engine Optimization (SEO) to make their business to get audience.

Development of e-commerce resources is at the core of the shift of the envisage change in doing business from traditional to ICT that the project planned. The project in partnership with an external consultant from Gulu University ICT department has made the following progress in developing an application that will increase women's access to and use of ICT resources:

- User interfaces has been completed.
- Sample products have been uploaded.
- Different categories of products created.
- Customer can order for products.
- Payment methods have been integrated i.e., Direct Bank transfer, Cash on Delivery and Mobile Money through ZengaPay.
- Application development temporary link: <https://ederro.com/>



IMPACT ASSESSMENT AFTER THE TRAINING

In November 2020, a first survey was conducted with 99 Women in Business in Gulu. This showed that there was a need for coaching and training in ICT, Business Skills & Financial Literacy in this population. The 'Women in Business' project was therefore set up by GWED-G to address this training need, with the funding support of the UCC.

As the training was completed in March 2021, a final evaluation was conducted in April 2021 among the women who participated in the project to assess:

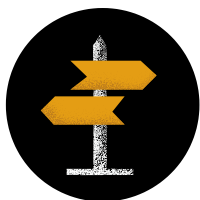
- their satisfaction with the training
- the impact of the training on their professional life
- their suggestions for improvements for future trainings
- any other feedback that would help improve this project

Participants in the final evaluation



- Of the 51 respondents (all female), 31 had completed the training (61%) and 20 (39%) had not. In fact, 76 of the original 87 participants completed the training and received a certificate, which represents a percentage of 87%.
- Of these 31 surveyed women who completed the training, 61% attended all sessions, 6 missed 1 session (20%), 5 missed 2 (16%) and 1 missed 3 (3%).
- These figures show a good level of attendance and suggest that the courses were therefore interesting and appreciated by the participants.

Main reasons given for dropping out of the course

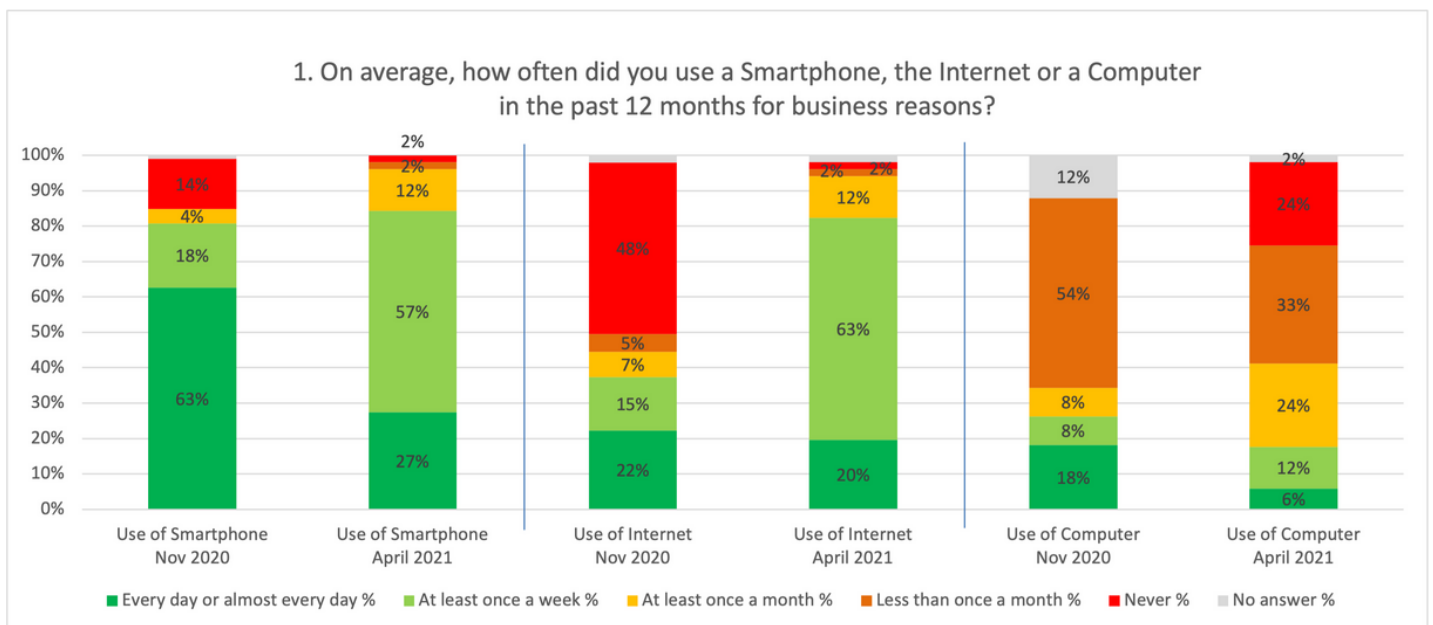


- Transport issues due to long distance coverage, cost of transport too high.
- Own illness or illness of a relative (child, parents, etc...).
- Absence to help in the village, for burials or to take care of relatives (child, ...).
- Communication problem (from GWED-G or due to phone without battery or network).
- Many women work during the week and could not get time off because they were at work.

MEASURING PROGRESS

ICT use before and after the training

This section looks at the areas in which trained women have made the most progress. The aim here is to measure the impact of training on women's ICT and business skills.



This first graph shows a significant increase in the use of smartphones and the internet by the women who participated in the trainings.

- While 85% said they had already used a smartphone at least once a month in November, **after the training they were 96%.**
- **The most important progress is in the use of the internet:** while only 44% used the internet at least once a month before the training, **they were 95% to have done so after the training.** The project has thus enabled **more than half of the women to discover the main ways to use the internet.**
- Due to the short period of training, **only 44% of the women used a computer at least once a month** after the training. We will come back to this point.

95 %

After the training, 95% of women knew how to use the internet, which was not the case before the training.

The following graphs show the degree of awareness, confidence and interest in the use of a mobile phone, Internet and computer by the women.

Use of Mobile phone, Internet and computer

In general, women have increased their level of awareness, confidence and interest in using technological tools to expand their business.



100 %

of women are aware of different ways to use a mobile phone after training.

98 %

of women feel confident using a mobile phone after training.

100 %

of women are aware of different ways to use internet after training.

100 %

of women feel confident using internet after training.

37 %

of women still feel insecure about using a computer after the training.

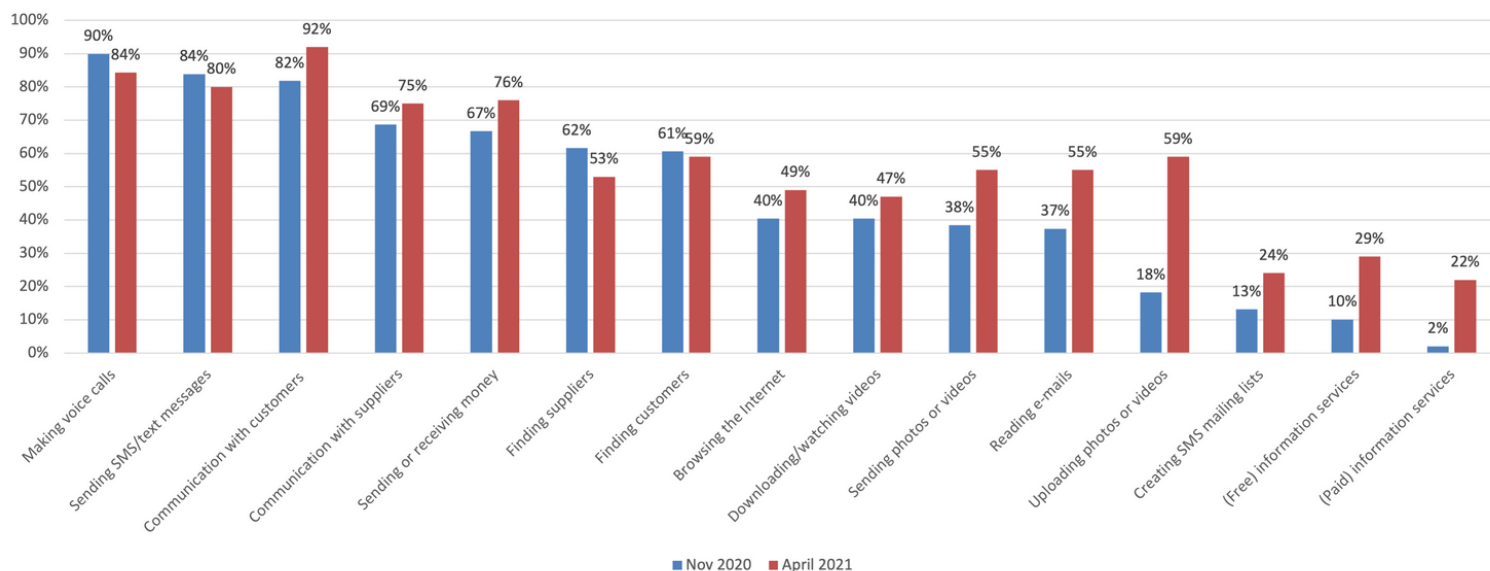
98 %

of them are interested in learning more. This shows the need for future projects in ICT Training.

Use of Mobile phone for business purposes

Women used their phones more for most of their business activities than before the training.

3. For which of the following activities did you use a mobile phone for business purposes in the past 12 months?



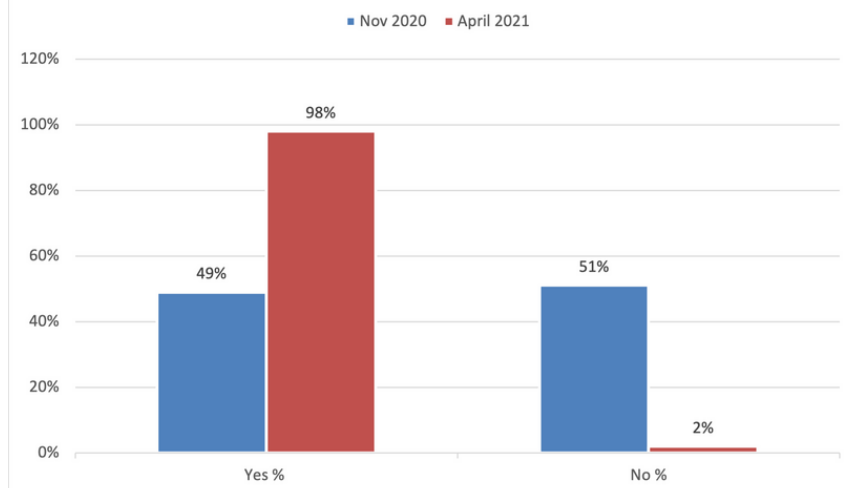
While they have made progress in using their phone in most activities, the activities in which they use it most are:

- Making voice calls, sending SMS
- Finding and communicate with customers and suppliers
- Sending or receiving money

The areas in which they have made the most progress are:

- Reading e-mails
- Sending and uploading photos or videos

4. Do you have an e-mail address?



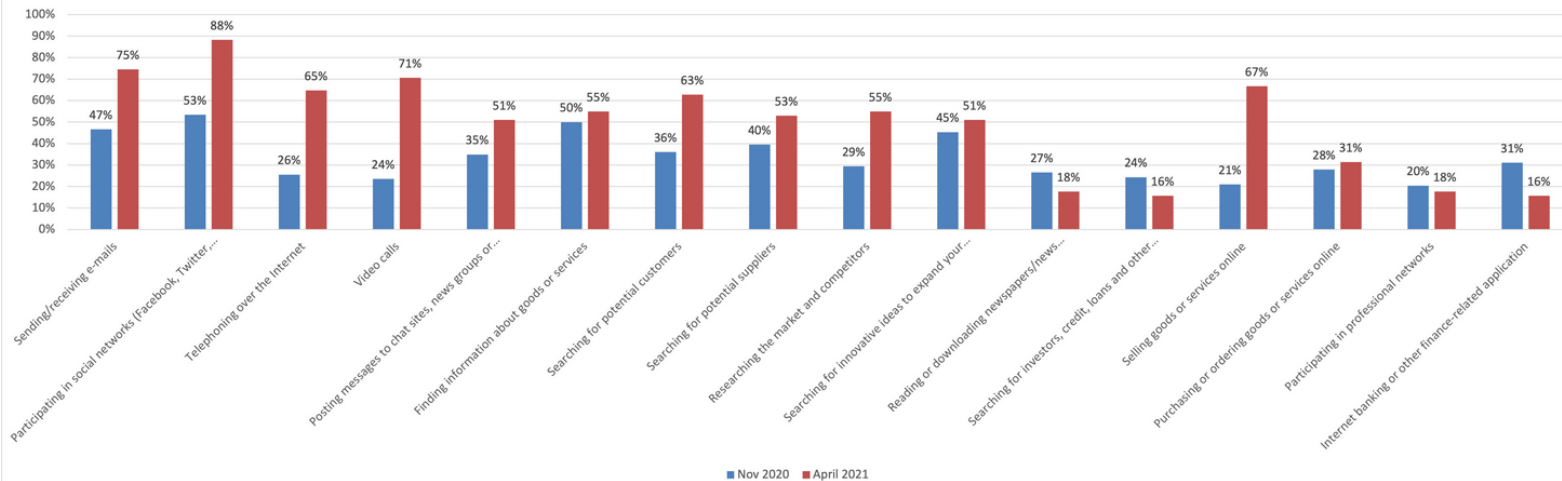
98 %

had an e-mail address after the training. As this represents their digital identity, this first step is positive for their future connectivity.

Use of Internet for business purposes

As for the use of the Internet, women used it more for most of their business activities than before the training.

5. For which of the following activities did you use the Internet for business purposes in the past 12 months?



The activities for which they use the Internet the most are the same as those in which they have made the most progress. These are:

- Sending and receiving e-mails
- Participating in social networks
- Video calls and telephoning over the internet
- Selling goods or services online and searching for potential customers

Usefulness of training in growing business

6. How did the training help you grow your business?



With a view to using ICT to develop their business, the business skills training has been designed to complement favorably the ICT training. This training has proved beneficial as it has enabled the women to significantly improve their skills with their clients and has even improved their income for the majority of them, as shown in the graph.

3/4

of the women participants at least know better how to package their products, feel more confident for managing their business and communicating with their customers. This has even increased the number of their clients, and thus their income.

We also gave them the opportunity to explain in more detail how the training had helped them to organise their business. Here are some excerpts from their answers:

- "I know how to manage my personal finances and calculate my profits and losses, and how to save money."
- "I have learnt how to plan financially and keep a good record. I know how to budget, how to keep records and how to plan."
- "I learnt how to use the internet and smartphones for business reasons."
- "I know how to conduct market research."
- "It has helped me improve the quality of my products and how to display my products better."

Feedback from women's customers

Thanks to better packaging and communication with their customers, the majority of training participants have received positive feedback from their customers (66%) and have increased their revenues as a result. Here are some of them:

Customers appreciate our services and encourage us to continue giving our best like we are doing.

They're impressed with how I am packing my products. Consistent interaction with my customer has increased.

Customers now bring more customers, with positive compliments and recommendation. I know how to welcome them better.

They appreciate products they buy from my business and they demand for more, which I consider as a good feedback.

They now understand why there are certain changes in quantity and pricing because I can now properly communicate with them about these concerns.

I have learnt how to talk to my customers and they love how I communicate with them now. They are also able to see me online posting my products.

I talk to my customers better and offer better services.

Customers appreciate how I handle them, and they say I am an understanding person. They comment about my speed and quality of work.

My customers are praising me for the change expansion of my business and good customer care. They appreciate my services and encourage me to get more stocks.

They give positive feedback about the quality of my poultry. Customers are now open to informing me about challenges they face in keeping chicken that they buy from me, and I give them helpful solutions.

EVALUATION OF THE TRAINING & AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Overall, the participants were satisfied with the training and would recommend it to others. However, most think it should last longer than 10 weeks.

During the 10 weeks of training, the participants showed strong commitment and motivation to learn business and ICT skills. They quickly realised that these skills would enable them to improve their business and thus their income.

Despite the large number of participants in the classes, the two trainers managed to give one class in each area each week to all participants, during two 2-hour sessions per week.

GWED-G would like to thank the participants and especially the trainers for their commitment and for giving so much of their time to make this training as beneficial as possible. These 4 hours per week have significantly improved the women's business skills and the success of this project is due to them. This success allows us to look to the future and hope that the project can be extended to benefit a wider population.

96 %

of the women would recommend this training to others.

84 %

of the women thought that the training was too short and that 5 or 6 months would be a better length.

As explained above, the feedback from the training was more than positive. Here are some more details:

- 88% found **the training easy to understand** and 96% would **recommend it to others**.
- 84% thought **the training was too short** and 16% thought the length was right.
- 67% estimated that the training (the 4 hours per day) was of **an appropriate duration**. 84% agreed that **the training space (the hub centre at GWED-G) was appropriate**.
- 98% of the women surveyed felt that **the trainers were knowledgeable on the topic**, that they communicated the material well and that the training was well organised.
- 76% felt that the trainings in general were well paced (number of hours, logical, etc...) and 80% that **the material/tools were appropriate** to help them learn.
- 94% would be **interested in attending another training** on ICT, 88% on Business Skills and Financial Literacy.
- 98% said they **felt supported during the training** and that it was **helpful for their life**.
- Because of the training, 96% of participants say that **their level of confidence** in managing their business and in using ICT is **better than before the training**. The same percentage think that **their earning will be better than before the training**. Finally, 90% thought that **their future would be better** thanks for the new skills they learned.

90 %

of participants thought that their future would be better thanks for the new skills they learned.

CLOSING CEREMONY



The closing ceremony took place on 27 April 2021 at the same venue as the project launch. It was intended to mark the occasion for all participants who had completed the training. At the end of the 10 weeks of intense work, 76 graduates received their certificates and a WinB t-shirt, much to the pride of the GWED-G staff and their two trainers.

The ceremony was presided over by UCC board member Pamela Angwech and included the speech by Ms Joyce Laker, as well as inspiring speeches by women already active in the online business, to show the graduates that ICT and business skills can indeed help them expand their business in a positive way. A bank employee was present to talk about the financial services that women could access. The director of Bodalivery also took the floor to explain how such company could help women deliver their products more easily.

The ceremony ended with the presentation of certificates to the women, under the cameras of journalists present for the occasion. This day was a beautiful and smiling conclusion to this first project, which we hope will be repeated in the near future.



CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the project was well received by Women in Business in Gulu. The training as it was designed suited the participants both in form and content. It also created a lot of expectations for the women who could not participate in this first phase.



Over 80% of beneficiaries found the training was too short.

- *We recommend a duration of 5 to 6 months for the next training courses.*
- *While the training provided an introduction to the use of smartphones and Internet, it was only a first exploration for most of the beneficiaries. Further training would allow for more in-depth exploration of the different uses of these online tools.*
- *Computer use was briefly covered but not enough in such a short period of time. At least not enough for the beneficiaries to feel comfortable with this tool.*

One of the main reasons for dropping out of training is the cost of travel.

- *We recommend that transport costs be budgeted for in future training.*

The progress in the different areas taught has been impressive, especially in such a short period of time. As many beneficiaries are starting from scratch, the learning potential is immense.

- *It would be a shame to stop there. The benefits of such trainings in ICT and Business Skills & Financial Literacy are numerous for the Women In Business to grow their business.*
- *The feedback from Women in Business in their day-to-day work is positive. The impact of such training could be multiplied in proportion to the number of people taking the training.*

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The progress made can only continue through practice. Making these tools available through grants or free access could allow this continuity.



The training allowed them to discover the use of smartphones but most of them do not have one.

- *We recommend that beneficiaries be given assistance to acquire their own smartphone.*

Almost 90% of the beneficiaries showed interest in further training in ICT or Business Skills & Financial Literacy. This shows the high interest from women (but, by extension, from the general population) to be trained in these very practical areas. Therefore, we recommend a follow-up with the beneficiaries and beyond:

- *In ICT, this could take the form of assistance with the purchase of smartphones and provide free access to computers purchased by GWED-G (once a week, for example) to enable them to continue to receive training in ICT and not lose their skills.*
- *In terms of Business Skills & Financial Literacy, this could be achieved through visits to the various Women in Business shops to advise them in situ on their products, packaging, financial management and customer relations.*
- *It could also take the form of assistance from WinB staff in dealing with banks and telephone companies.*

As a conclusion, let us remember that the first step is always the hardest to take. Now that it has been done, GWED-G believes that the next step is to broaden the base of beneficiaries of this project by continuing in this way that will allow for the success of the greatest number of people and the economic development of Gulu and the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None of this would have been possible without the valuable support of many people and partners. We would like to thank them warmly for their contribution to the success of the 'Women in Business' project.

- UCC, which through its funding support has made this project possible
- The GWED-G Executive Director and UCC Board Member Pamela Angwech for her advice and inspiration
- The Technical Advisor William Oloya for his invaluable care and supervision
- The Trainers Sharon Awor (Business Skills and Financial Literacy) and Befrey Musavi (ICT), who put their heart and soul into this project and largely contribute to its success
- The Communication and M&E Advisor Bastian Collet for his support in the different stages of the project
- The ICT external consultant from Gulu University Patrick Okot
- All the people who helped in any way to make this project happen

And of course, a special thank you to all the women who participated in the project and worked tirelessly to improve their skills. Their motivation and desire to learn made us want to repeat the experience.

We thank you for your continued interest and support of our efforts to contribute to women's empowerment and economic development in the Acholi region.



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