

WOMEN'S DEMOCRACY NETWORK

Empowering Women to Lead

Uganda Chapter

3.1.1. Using new tools of communication to enhance leadership in local councils

Website: Every local government must have a website which it regularly updates. Local government websites are key sources of information to the public on government plans, budgets, programs/services among others.

Social media: Refers to a wide range of tools that enable people and organizations to communicate using the internet based technologies. It includes: email and instant messaging, face book, twitter and blogs among others. Social media enables two way communication enabling people and organizations to share information, pictures, audio or video in a snap shot. For communication to be effective social media must be integrated alongside traditional media like radio and community gatherings among others to increase outreach of information and feedback.

Why is social media important for local councillors?

- Social media allows local councillors to respond to issues from citizens in a fast and cheap manner.
- It can be used as a source of information to inform decision making. For instance if council is debating a matter and has not yet reached a decision, views of citizens on the matter can be sought to inform decision making through social media.
- It enables them to communicate the decisions of council to the electorate
- It can be used to share information on arising issues...for instance if there is an outbreak of an epidemic like cholera, social media can be one of the tools used to inform the public about the outbreak and what they should do to prevent it. In places where there is no local newspaper, it can be an effective tool for local councils to communicate to citizens.
- Through social media messages can be sent to many citizens at one ago and feedback received instantly.
- It can be used to promote an event or activity in which the councillor seeks community participation.
- It enables instant communication at anytime from anywhere. You do not have to meet at a specific location for communication to take place.
- Social media allows council to publish its own message without relying on traditional media to edit and at times mis-represent the issues contained in the message.
- It can be used to direct citizens to source of information. For instance they can be directed to contact the NAADs coordinator of a sub-county for detailed information about NAADs resources and programs for a particular financial year.
- Citizens can use social media to inform councillors of specific problems, breakdown of a service or poor implementation of a service.

Councillors should keep in mind the following when using social media;

- Do not post erroneous information because once a message is sent it cannot be retrieved;
- Citizens expect you to respond immediately to their issues since social media can be used anywhere and at anytime. Doing so builds trust with citizens;
- Adopt a conversational and friendly tone when using social media. It will enable you to develop a good relationship with citizens on social media;

- Social media is particularly effective in reaching out to young people because they are the majority on it.
- Social media must be integrated with other forms of communication like community meetings and radio among others because not everybody has access to it.

3.1.2. Types of social media

Face book

What is Face book?

Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. The website was launched in February 2004, operated and privately owned. By January 2011, Facebook had more than 600 million active users. January 2009 Compete.com study ranked Facebook as the most used [social network service](#) worldwide.

Who can use Face book?

Any one above 18 years of age is free to join Facebook. Joining face book simply needs you to have an email address and yourself created password/pin word.

What can a woman councilor do with Face book?

Facebook is mainly a social networking/interaction site that enables one to;

- Meet with all kinds of people; friends, old schoolmates, professional associates, companies, businesses;
- Exchange information, photos and updates with the above categories of people;
- Join a debate on an issue;
- Ask for opinions and ideas about an issue. For instance if the council is going to discuss the budget and you want to find out what should be included as a priority in a district budget, you can post a question on your face book page and seek for ideas from the people who are on your face book page. They can give you ideas which you can then use to inform yourself and for debate on council;
- You can also use face book to link with organizations to which you subscribe. For instance WDN has a face book page. It is professional and can be used to seek for ideas on leadership and other related issues that make you effective.

How to join Face book:



Email

Practical guide on how to open an email address attached as Annex A to the handbook

Always develop etiquette when using email. Common things to do:

- Acknowledge receipt of an email by sending confirmation to the sender
- Respond to issues raised in the email systematically beginning from the first issue raised by the sender to the last;
- Ensure that your grammar is good;
- Remember that emails are saved and can be retrieved to substantiate future claims or facts.

How can one open an email address

- There are a number of free engines on which you can open your email address including: Yahoo, Hotmail, Gmail, Ymail, among others.
- All you need to open an email address is an internet connection. This can be done at an internet café in your trading centre. If you have access to a computer with internet in your office or home you can also use it to open an email address.
- You open one of the above search engines, and “Sign Up”.
- You will be asked for your details including: date of birth, first and last names, country, etc. It is easier to open an address with your name(s) as this will be easy for you to remember.
- An email address will have a secret word/number or both word and number that is known to only you. This helps you to keep your information private.

What can you do with an email address?

- One can write an email/ “letter” and communicate to persons of your choice;
- You can send pictures to persons of your choice;
- You receive information from anyone who knows your email address; and
- Request for information from anyone.

3.1.3. SMS chat

One of the new tools, cheap and effective methods for communication is the use of SMS. Anyone with a mobile phone can use SMS texting to communicate. As a woman leader you will belong to different groups and will need to communicate with them from time to time. SMS chat is an effective way of communicating within a group. It can be used to send information on any activity or to send a message to a group. For it to be effective one needs to be part of a chat group. A demonstration on how to join a chat group and to use SMS to communicate is shown below. For instance you can identify groups in your electorate who regularly meet on various issues like SACCOS, church groups, farmers groups, youth groups and women's groups. Get the telephone numbers of their leaders and five other members in the group. Once you have an issue that you want the community to know about like an upcoming NAADs remission of funds to interest groups in your electorate, you can send out a group message to the identified interest groups stating in clear terms the issue. You could refer them to the sub-county headquarters for more information on the subject. Through the SMS you would have communicated exactly what you want them to do.

- SMS will ease your communication with the electorate by using the groups as conduits for information sharing. You can also use the SMS CHAT to collect information or organize a community activity like clearing wells or access road maintenance. SMS CHAT is a cheap method that enables you to reach many people at a minimal cost. The important first step is to identify interest groups in your community who regularly have audience with the community, get their telephone numbers and include them on your SMS CHAT.
- During elections, SMS is an easy way of selling your agenda, reminding voters to vote for you, gathering their concerns among others.
- WDN-Uganda Chapter group is providing the councilors with the SMS chat function. Once a group is created, different members who subscribe to the group can receive messages sent out and also send out messages.

There are two chat groups;

- Local WDN chat group; which can be created at the district level. For instance one can have a WDNR (R for Rukungiri)
- National WDN chatgroup; WDN

Instructions on how to use the group chat facility (using Rukungiri as an example)

Task	Message Format(s)	Example
To join a group that has been created	JOIN [Groupname]	JOIN WDNR
To Post a message on a group	POST [Groupname] [Message]	POST WDNR Please be informed that information on NAADS applications is going to be out tomorrow at the council offices
To invite someone to the group	INVITE [Contact(s)] [GROUPNAME]	INVITE 0714256372,0712920498 WDNR

To retrieve all prior messages to the group	LIST MESSAGES [Groupname]	LIST MESSAGES WDNR
To read a particular message after retrieving messages	READ [MESSAGEID] [GROUPNAME]	READ 1 WDNR
To stop getting messages from a group	STOP [Groupname]	STOP WDNR
To count members in a group	COUNT [GROUPNAME]	COUNT WDNR
To be notified of activities occurring in the group you created. E.g. when someone joins the group.	NOTIFY [GROUPNAME]	NOTIFY WDNR
To stop receiving notifications about the group	OFF [GROUPNAME]	OFF WDNR