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## From the Editor

### Dear readers of intWOJDE



First of all, greetings from Turkey and me that "Welcome to the fourth issue of the GLOKALde-2017, as being as Volume: 3, Number: 4 October, in 2017 last issue which is on the net now. The intWOJDE reflects that the disciplines of Women position, benefits, advantages and disadvantages in Distance Education/Learning, Open

Learning areas are interdependent with one another, as education and technology increasingly affects our system, students, colleagues, distance educators, administrators, researchers and our own professional practice.

The first issue of the intWOJDE appeared at the begin of April, 2012 as Vol: 1 Number: 1. the intWOJDE will aim to establish new channels of communication the for the women in distance education world in general from all of the world.

In addition Wojde is aiming to establish new channels of communication the for the distance education world and women in general, from the all corner of the world specifically. I believe that we will be successful with all together for crowning Wojde too by presenting a good team work. We would declare that Wojde will keep its regular publishing with its highest academic quality authors, technical team well known editors in distance education field and experienced administration.



I believe that the time is the wonderful and best moment to receive this responsibility with a new younger generation. But. One of the authors' and either member of the Wojde an Assistant Professor Dr. Serpil DUNDAR passed away very early age (58 year old) in October, 2017 issued 2017 of whom one of the authors' and either member of the Assist. Prof. Dr. Serpil DUNDAR (1958-2016). Assist. Prof. Dr. Serpil DÜNDAR graduated from Ege University, Journalism and Public Relations High School, Radio-TV

Department. She received his master's degree from Marmara University Institute of Fine Arts and his doctorate degree from Istanbul University Social Sciences Institute. Until 2016, she served as a faculty member at An. Univ. Open Education Faculty.

As We sadly decided to publish, her end and latest (unfinished and unpublished) research findings in Wojde's sister journal in GLOKALde's October 2017 issue, which is titled project Anadolu University in very early age their last uncompleted the latest project' marginal outcomes info with this issue which is titled as "A Priory Result Out Comes Project of The Attitudes of Anadolu University Employees On Distance Education".

In addition we gave 2 article from Ghana and



**USA. The first article arrived from Ghana written on Female Distance Education Undergraduate Students' Perception of the Effects of Information Communication Technology (ICT) Usage on Their Academic Work" by Paul NYAGORME and Simon-Peter Kafui AHETO from College of Distance Education, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, GHANA. This descriptive study was conducted to examine the extent to which female Distance Education undergraduate students use computers and the Internet and how these facilities affect their academic work. An attempt was made to identify the reasons for the apparent lack of interest by the female students in the use of ICT. The study was carried out in four public universities in Ghana.**

**A simple random sampling technique was used to select four hundred subjects for the study. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using one-way ANOVA and post-hoc test. The study showed that there is a statistically significant difference among Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduates in the usage, barriers, skills and competences in ICT. The study also established that there is a statistically significant difference in the effects of ICT use on academic work among Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduate students. It is recommended that female Distance Education undergraduate students be encouraged to use computers in ways that will contribute to their learning. The second article is from USA written by Helen CROMPTON on "How Mobile Learning Initiatives Can Empower Women", from of Instructional Technology Department of Teaching & Learning, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University Virginia, USA.**

**The Sustainable Development Goal 5 provides a call to action to promote gender equality and to empower women. This article responds to that call by providing insight into how mobile learning initiatives have been used to support that aim. A critical analysis is conducted of studies in the past decade to review what strategies have been effective in empowering women. The analysis revealed that initiatives were targeted towards three areas: Education, health, and financial empowerment.**

**Findings show that in certain topics women should play an active role to further the empowerment process.**

**This article also aligns with Objective 4 of the ITU-D Global Development Objectives (2015-2018) to build human capacity as this analysis will give leaders, policy makers, and researchers' insight into what should be the focus for future endeavors to enable women to be active and equally important members of the community.**

**Cordially,  
Happy readings  
... and hope to meet 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018  
Prof. Dr. Emine Demiray**

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## **FEMALE DISTANCE EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTS OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) USAGE ON THEIR ACADEMIC WORK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This descriptive study was conducted to examine the extent to which female Distance Education undergraduate students use computers and the Internet and how these facilities affect their academic work. An attempt was made to identify the reasons for the apparent lack of interest by the female students in the use of ICT. The study was carried out in four public universities in Ghana.

A simple random sampling technique was used to select four hundred subjects for the study. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using one-way ANOVA and post-hoc test. The study showed that there is a statistically significant difference among Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduates in the usage, barriers, skills and competences in ICT. The study also established that there is a statistically significant difference in the effects of ICT use on academic work among Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduate students. It is recommended that female Distance Education undergraduate students be encouraged to use computers in ways that will contribute to their learning.

**Keywords:** Academic work, Gender, Female Distance Education student and ICT.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Undoubtedly, Information Communication Technology (ICT) has become an emerging vehicle for creating enabling learning experiences. By extension, educational opportunities for formal, informal and non-formal groups that are traditionally excluded from education have also been enhanced. Such groups include women, girls, persons with disabilities and elderly persons (Göransson, 2017).

Other reasons of exclusion include cultural, cost implications and the limitations in accessing education via campus-based programmes.

Despite the fact that one cannot overemphasize the role and advantages of ICT in our societies, there are a number of potential issues endangering the utilization and effect of ICT in education as far as gender is concerned. It does appear that the numerous opportunities offered by ICT in education and its usage is becoming predominant skills meant for men only.

However, it also seems that much attention is not paid to the effects of these inequalities on female Distance Education students. Even though technology in education strategies like Distance Education is perceived to be bridging gaps and inequalities (Bates, 2005), little research on the area is done in the West African region.



### Statement of the Problem

Generally, it is perceived that fewer female undergraduates are using ICT for learning. Universities are experiencing a continued lack of interest especially by female students on Distance Education programmes using ICT for learning. This disconnect, account for why we have many barriers to use ICT for learning. It has been observed that there is lack of interest in the utilization of ICT in learning. Finally, there is no clarity to the extent to which ICT is perceived to affect the academic work of female undergraduates. This study, therefore, seeks to find answers to this phenomenon.

### HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses have been formulated and tested.

- ✓ Ho 1: There is no statistically significant difference in the factors that Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduate students perceive to be major barriers to their ability to use ICT.
- ✓ Ho 2: There is no statistically significant difference among Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduate students in the use of ICT.
- ✓ Ho 3: There is no statistically significant difference in the effects of ICT use on academic work among Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduate students.

### THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is directed and underpinned by the Feminist Theory. With this theory, Feminist actors use gender lenses and other research mechanisms to analyse the subjugation of females as described by Meena (1992). Inequalities, subordination and oppression are some of the terms used by Feminist actors to show social dichotomy that has been created but impacting on access to technology by both males and females.

In African societies, in general, boys and girls are treated differently by adults from the moment they are born. Adults encourage passive and social behaviour in girls and active and independent behavior in boys. Berg (2002) in her research on gender and ICT in Norway claimed that research carried out in the last three decades in Norway has proved that new technologies like computers have not translated into improved women situations.

Somewhat, ICTs have rather been used to perpetuate the existing practices that delineate the traditional social and cultural differences between men and women.

In relation to the aforementioned, a number of research activities point that technological language is dominated with violence. The violent technological language may be a potential source of worries and concern to females which may not be readily visible to males. For instance, terminologies like *"hard disc, hard drive, reboot, cold boot, hits are permanent fatal error, and so forth. Recreational or even educational software for children often includes title words such as 'attack' or 'war'"* (Saunders, 2005, p.6).



## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The research design is basically a descriptive study. The descriptive study was chosen, first, to find out the characteristics of the variables of interest in a situation and then describe those characteristics.

### Population

The target population of this study was the entire female Distance Education undergraduate students in Ghana. However, the accessible population consists of female Distance Education undergraduate students of the public universities in Ghana.

In effect, four universities were purposively selected because they all run Distance Education in the country. The total accessible population of the female students in these institutions stood at 22,063.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

In each of the institutions, 25 female Distance Education undergraduate students were randomly selected to reflect each of the 4 levels of academic work. In all, 400 female undergraduate students constitute the sample size.

### Instrumentation

Structured questionnaire which was designed by the researchers was used to gather data from the respondents. The questionnaire used contained 17 close-ended items. The first three items sought to illicit demographic data from the respondents. The rest of the items dealt with the perception of ICT usage and its effect on academic work.

### Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was made available to colleagues to comment on the appropriateness and clarity of the items. The reliability co-efficient which was computed using Cronbach's alpha internal reliability correlation co-efficient was found to be  $r = 0.80$ .

### Data Analysis

Data collected was represented in inferential manner using SPSS version 19. The statistical tool used to analyze the data was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

## RESULT OF THE STUDY

**Hypothesis 1:** It was therefore hypothesized that: There is no statistically significant difference in the factors that Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduate students perceive to be major barriers to their ability to use ICT.

The assumption underlying this hypothesis was that female Distance Education undergraduate students usually considered certain factors inhibiting their quest to use ICT for learning.

The major barriers mentioned were: Inadequate female ICT lecturers; fewer opportunities to learn ICT skills; female students are not given special attention; and lack of ICT role-models.

One way ANOVA was used to determine whether there are institutional differences in the perceived barriers to their usage of ICT. This is captured in Table 1:

**Table 1:**  
**Institutional differences of perceived barriers to ICT usage**

	UCC n=100		UEW n=100		UG, Legon n=100		KNUST Kumasi n=100			
Barriers to ICT usage	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	P. Value
Perception of major barriers to using ICTs	3.2	2.0	2.7	1.3	4.2	1.9	2.8	1.0	26.2	.000*

P<0.05 alpha level

Table 1 shows statistically significant difference in the perceptions of the female Distance Education undergraduate students across the entire four public Universities of Ghana in respect to the barriers to their usage of ICTs,  $F(2, 495) = 26.237$   $P < .000$ . Post hoc test was run to determine the direction of the differences. The result of the post hoc test is shown in Table 2:

**Table 2:**  
**Post Hoc Test on Multiple Comparisons: Perceptions of Major barriers to women inability to use ICT. Tukey HSD**

(I) Institution	(J) Institution	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
UCC, Cape Coast	UEW, Winneba	.500	.243	.241	-.17	1.17
	UG, Legon	-1.000(*)	.243	.000	-1.67	-.33
	KNUST, Kumasi	.450	.243	.346	-.22	1.12
UEW, Winneba	UCC, Cape Coast	-.500	.243	.241	-1.17	.17
	UG, Legon	-1.500(*)	.243	.000	-2.17	-.83
	KNUST, Kumasi	-.050	.243	1.000	-.72	.62
UG, Legon	UCC, Cape Coast	1.000(*)	.243	.000	.33	1.67
	UEW, Winneba	1.500(*)	.243	.000	.83	2.17
	KNUST, Kumasi	1.450(*)	.243	.000	.78	2.12
KNUST, Kumasi	UCC, Cape Coast	-.450	.243	.346	-1.12	.22
	UEW, Winneba	.050	.243	1.000	-.62	.72
	UG, Legon	-1.450(*)	.243	.000	-2.12	-.78

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The direction of statistical difference, with regards to the major barriers to women's inability to use ICT, lies between UCC, Cape Coast and UG, Legon.

In the same vein, difference are located between and UEW, Winneba. Furthermore, the direction of difference was also observed between UG, Legon and KNUST, Kumasi.

The result of the analysis rejects the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference in the factors that Ghanaian female Distance Education undergraduate students perceive to be major barriers to their ability to use ICT.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no statistically significant difference in female Distance Education undergraduate students' skills and competences in the use of ICTs.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test self-perceived level of competence in the use of ICT.

The major skills and competences identified include: booting and shutting down of computers, saving a document, printing of document, and opening a file. The outcome of the ANOVA analysis is shown in Table 3:

**Table 3:**

	UCC n=100		UEW n=100		UG, n=100		KNUST n=100			
Levels of ICT skills	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	P. Value
Self-rating of expertise in ICT usage.	2.8	1.1	2.7	1.2	3.1	1.2	2.4	1.1	8.5	.000*

Self-perception rating of ICT level of skills and competence  
P<0.05 alpha level

Statistically significant difference was found in the self-perception rating of ICT skills and competence among the female Distance Education undergraduate students in the four public universities,  $F(2, 495) = 8.467, p < .000$ .

To locate where the differences lie, a further analysis was done to evaluate a pair-wise differences among the means of the self-perception rating of ICT skills and competence. The result of the Tukey HSD Post Hoc test is shown in Table 4:

**Table 4:**  
**Post Hoc Test on Multiple Comparisons Self-perception rating of ICT level of skills and competence, Tukey HSD**

(I) Institution	(J) Institution	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
UCC, Cape Coast	UEW, Winneba	.150	.158	.877	-.28	.58
	UG, Legon	-.350	.158	.176	-.78	.08
	KNUST, Kumasi	.450(*)	.158	.037	.02	.88
UEW, Winneba	UCC, Cape Coast	-.150	.158	.877	-.58	.28
	UG, Legon	-.500(*)	.158	.014	-.93	-.07
	KNUST, Kumasi	.300	.158	.320	-.13	.73
UG, Legon	UCC, Cape Coast	.350	.158	.176	-.08	.78
	UEW, Winneba	.500(*)	.158	.014	.07	.93
	KNUST, Kumasi	.800(*)	.158	.000	.37	1.23
KNUST, Kumasi	UCC, Cape Coast	-.450(*)	.158	.037	-.88	-.02
	UEW, Winneba	-.300	.158	.320	-.73	.13
	UG, Legon	-.800(*)	.158	.000	-1.23	-.37

The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

On the whole the direction of difference in self-rating of ICT skills and competence lies between University of Cape Coast and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. The direction of difference was also noted between University of Ghana, Legon on one hand and University of Education, Winneba and Kwame Nkrumah

University of Science and Technology, Kumasi on the other hand. The analysis therefore shows that the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference in female Distance Education undergraduate students' skills and competences in the use of ICTs is rejected.

**Hypotheses 3:** There is no statistically significant difference in the effects of ICT use on academic work among Ghanaian female graduates.

One way ANOVA was employed to test hypothesis 3. This is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:**  
Institutional differences of the effects of  
ICT use on academic work Tukey HSD

	UCC n=100		UEW n=100		UG, Legon n=100		KNUST Kumasi n=100			
Perception of effect of:	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	P. Value
ICT use on academic work.	1.4	0.8	1.9	1.0	1.2	0.6	2.0	0.8	7.4	.000*

The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The data in Table 5 revealed statistically significant difference among the female Distance Education undergraduate students with regards to their view on the effects of ICT usage on academic work.  $F(2,495) = 22.290, P < .000$ .

To determine the direction of the differences, on the issues of female students' perception of the effects ICT usage on academic work, a Tukey HSD post hoc on pair-wise comparison was conducted. The result was captured in Table 5.

**Table 5: Post Hoc Test on Multiple Comparisons: Institutional Perceptual Differences of the Effects of ICT use on Academic Work.**

The analysis in Table 5 revealed that the direction of difference lies between University of Education, Winneba and the other three public Universities, viz, University of Cape Coast, and University of Ghana, Legon. Similarly, direction of difference was also established between Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi and the other three public Universities, namely; University of Cape Coast and University of Ghana, Legon.

The implication of this analysis is that the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference in the effects of ICT use on academic work among Ghanaian female graduates was rejected.

### Summary of Findings and Discussions

On the bases of the findings of this study, it was abundantly clear that female Distance Education undergraduate students have barriers to ICT usage. However, there are differences in the sort of barriers from university to university. Similarly, differences exist in the ICT skills and competences of female undergraduates in the public universities in Ghana. Finally, the respondents perceive that the rate at which ICT usage affect academic work also varies in all the public universities in Ghana.

### Discussion of Results

The research revealed that female Distance Education undergraduate students perceive certain factors to be major barriers restraining them from utilising ICTs in their learning. The major factors they enumerated were: Lack of ICT role-models, Inadequate female ICT lectures, less opportunities to learn ICT skills, female students are not given special attention. These factors were well supported by the available literature.

For example; female Computer Science students at *"Purdue reported in a survey that professors did not treat male and female students equally"* (Wasburn & Miller, 2005. p.164). A reasonable number of authors have proved that there are undertones of gender related issues from biases, perceptions and actions that become disincentives to females' involvement in ICT (Aggeli, & Vassala, 2016; Gatta, 2001).

The study was concluded on the basis that despite respondents having fairly good skills in basic or routine tasks such as handling of Internet and other high level skills like as attaching documents and files to mails, designing a web site creating a multimedia presentation and writing a computer programming, majority of the respondents had very low skills.

According to Spencer, Steele and Quinn (1999), female students' high performance in handling computers is linked to chance or fortune while failure is attributed to lack of ability. This finding was consistent with Heafner. Heafner's (2004) research revealed that though all students in a university owned and used their own laptops, the females preferred lower computer skills ratings compared to their male counterparts. The relevance of this findings shows that the technological or computer skills and competence of female Distance Education students have positive influence on the perception and utilization of ICT especially, in education.

The findings of the study revealed that the perception of the majority (respondents) was that using ICT has a positive effect on academic work. The findings are coherent with Khoshshima, Hosseini and Toroujeni (2017) found that computer usage by females help them perform better than their male counterparts in learning. In a similar direction, Chavez (1997) also found that computers have assisted students to become independent learners and critical thinkers which impacts positively in their learning. The above findings are key to female distance learners use of technology for their learning because technology use is dependent on perceived usefulness of technology to enhance teaching and learning. The findings also demystify the perceptions that cloud peoples' thinking on the negative effect of exposure of technology to females especially when they are studying by distance learning (Ramayah & Jantan, 2004).

Females and girls who lack role models are not likely to take up technology related programmes because in their minds, they can only see a male domineering field not privileged to females (Jepson & Perl, 2002). A number of parents have related the use of computers to males making it a disincentive to females who would have dared to venture the technological field (Shashaani, 1994). According to Kalka (2010), technology education was originally designed as a manual training with males in mind. The manual training ideology has over the years influenced the perceptions of both males and females therefore impacting on the computer use and application to learning.

Many female students considered ICT related programmes as difficult to learn. Some females underestimate their capabilities in the use of computers and technologies in general as a resulting in less confidence in taking up computer programmes (Fisher & Margolis, 2002; Volman & van Eck, 2001). Newman, Cooper and Ruble (1995) posited

that many female students are likely to be skewed in their thinking that dealing with computers and technology is the preserve of males. Johnson (2003) found out that computing continues to suffer gender stereotyping due to social misconceptions and that females themselves perceive and classify computing as a world for males.

## CONCLUSION

Generally, female Distance Education undergraduate students expressed positive attitude towards the use of ICT. However, based on the result of Self-Assessment of expertise in using computers and web, it was revealed that majority of them lack the necessary skills and confidence to use the ICT tools. The reason given was that many of them, apart from the school computers, do not have the opportunity to practice the ICT skills at home.

Even though they were aware of the positive effect ICT usage could have on academic work, they could not use it so much due to lack of the needed skills.

## Implications of the findings

It is a common knowledge that the 21st century belongs to the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). These findings are important because, educators and policy makers can relate to the current state of the usage of information and communication technology tools by the female Distance Education undergraduate students in an academic environment. It is also important that especially for female Distance Education undergraduate students, utilization of ICT facilities in their daily learning activities as well as in their workplaces in future is encouraged; hence prior preparation is a necessity.

## Recommendations

In view of the findings made and conclusion drawn after analyzing the data, the following recommendations deserve consideration:

University administrators and Distance Education providers should maintain high levels of ICT usage among students especially for female Distance Education students through continuous education and the promotion innovative use of ICT resources. The later, can be done through the use of seminars, conferences and training programmes as well as inviting female Information Technology (IT) personnel who would serve as role-models to the female Distance Education undergraduate students. This approach would help demystify some of the stereotypic views female students hold about the use of ICTs. Furthermore, female students should also be encouraged to use computers in ways that will contribute to their learning.

It is important to support female Distance Education undergraduate students to develop ICT skills throughout the Distance Education undergraduate programme. The training programmes should be designed on the basis of women centered demand-driven rather than a focus on technical solutions and viewpoints.

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## HOW MOBILE LEARNING INITIATIVES CAN EMPOWER WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT

The Sustainable Development Goal 5 provides a call to action to promote gender equality and to empower women. This article responds to that call by providing insight into how mobile learning initiatives have been used to support that aim. A critical analysis is conducted of studies in the past decade to review what strategies have been effective in empowering women. The analysis revealed that initiatives were targeted towards three areas: Education, health, and financial empowerment.

Findings show that in certain topics women should play an active role to further the empowerment process. This article also aligns with Objective 4 of the ITU-D Global Development Objectives (2015-2018) to build human capacity as this analysis will give leaders, policy makers, and researchers' insight into what should be the focus for future endeavors to enable women to be active and equally important members of the community.

**Keywords:** Technology, learning, mobile, mobile learning.

### INTRODUCTION

Gender disparity in many developing countries has resulted in women having a lack of access to many human rights that males take for granted. This disparity has stemmed from cultural norms involving religion, traditions, and customs that limit or exclude many educational, workforce and social opportunities. This has greatly restricted the human capacity in those countries as only the males are empowered with skills, knowledge and access to build that country.

Reducing the gender gap is one of the topics at the forefront of the UNs efforts. The fifth goal in the set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, 2015) was to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This target included gender parity in education and the labour market. The ITU-D also seeks to build human capacity through strategies for both men and women, such as information and resource sharing, and the delivery of ICT learning, training and development. In response to calls such as these, many researchers have sought to reduce or remove the gender gap by developing initiatives that use mobile devices to provide these opportunities to women. Mobile devices can be used to provide access to this knowledge and training.

### PURPOSE OF THIS PUBLICATION

This paper highlights some of the strategies used in mobile learning initiatives in the past decade and their efficacy in accomplishing this task. This critical analysis of studies will give leaders, policy makers, and researchers' insight into what should be the focus for future endeavors to enable women to be active and equally important members of the community.

## ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: DEFINING THE KEY CONCEPTS

### Mobile Learning

Mobile learning is using mobile devices, such as mobile phones (basic/smart) and tablets, to gain access to knowledge and skills.

### Gender Gap

The gender gap describes the discrepancy in opportunities, status, and values between men and women. For some values the gender gap can also be quantitatively calculated. For example, to quantify the gender gap in mobile phone ownership in developing countries this would be calculated by subtracting the number of male mobile phone owners from women mobile phone owners and dividing by the male mobile phone owners. A diagrammatic visualization of this equation is included in Figure 1.

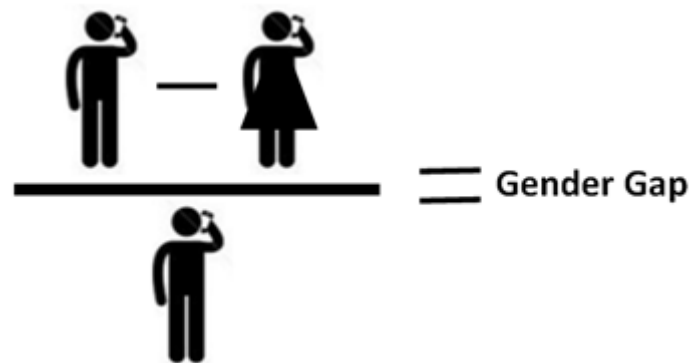


Figure 1.  
Calculating the gender gap in mobile phone ownership.

### Work to Support Empowerment

There have been various mobile device initiatives intended to empower women. In 2010 the GSMA conducted a report on some of these initiatives and stated that future research should be conducted to identify how mobile devices can be used to empower women. A GSMA report in 2015 repeated that call asking for research to be conducted to find the most effective methodologies and content. It is important to learn from those who have conducted studies in the past to learn from their successes and mistakes. Recent research reports that the dramatic spread of mobile phones is not enough to achieve empowerment of women (WWW Foundation, 2015).

By conducting this critical analysis of studies and reporting what is effective will greatly assist in the development of successful initiatives going forward.

### Challenges to Empowerment

Mobile devices can be used to provide access to knowledge and training. However, recent reports show that over 1.7 billion females don't own mobile phones in low and middle income countries, placing females 14% less likely to have a mobile phone than males (GSMA, 2015).

The cost of the device may appear an obvious challenge in these countries, but is not necessarily the largest or the most difficult challenge to overcome. From a review of the literature, the gender challenges reported can be separated into two overarching categories: innate traits and sociocultural influence.

Gender challenges due to innate traits are those perceived nuances of women that would hinder them from using mobile devices.

In 1994, researchers in North America observed that women were not as quick as men in using ICT (e.g. Dholakia, Dohlakia, & Pedersen, 1994).

In recent years, it is argued that women generally have a negative attitude towards technology (Verank, 2007). In the final declaration of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2005) a declaration was made that states there is a need for “enhancing communication and media literacy for women with a view to building the capacity of girls and women to understand and to develop ICT content.”

This appears to be saying that women are less capable at understanding and developing ICT content. A change in how women are perceived is necessary and statements could instead point out that the cause of the discrepancy is due to the inequalities in the treatment of women.

Sociocultural barriers to empowerment are those connected with religion, traditions, and customs that make a difference to employment, education, and income. For example, if the customs and traditions define the females’ role in caring for the family and the role of the male is to gain employment to provide income for the family, the female is not provided the opportunity to be financially independent.

Hilbert (2011) conducted a study that controlled for employment, education, and income to find out if women would use ICTs if they were not culturally inhibited from doing so. The findings showed that women are more active users of ICT than men when given the opportunity. This shows that ICTs can provide a tangible opportunity to overcome the gender gap by providing access to employment, income, and education.

### Topics supported

From the analysis of studies conducted in the past decade, education, health and finance were three overarching topics commonly were used to empower women. These are explained further in Table 1:

Table 1:  
Focus of Initiatives to Empower Women

Topic Area	Description
Education	These initiatives focused on primary education covering content such as literacy. It also covers topics in getting access to continued primary education.
Health	These initiatives focused on information and advice about health issues. It also includes access to general communication as part of psychological health and well-being.
Finance	These initiatives focused on the promotion of finances. This includes access to commodity information and opportunities for entrepreneurialism.

These topics are not surprising as they connect with many UN goals. As well as empowering women and girls SDG 5, they also overlap with SDG 4 in ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning and the health related goal of SDG 3. Looking broadly at these three topics, they are all different ways to increase knowledge which leads to empowerment. To provide examples of the knowledge

provided, for education, the Mobilink (UNESCO, 2012) initiative boosts women's literacy knowledge in Pakistan.

For health, MAMA South Africa (2013) is an initiative organized by the Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action that provides information to pregnant women during the course of pregnancy, childbirth and until the child's first birthday.

To boost knowledge in finance, the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India sends SMS messages to agricultural workers on up-to-date commodity prices so these women can make good crop planning and harvesting decisions (Nanavaty, 2011).

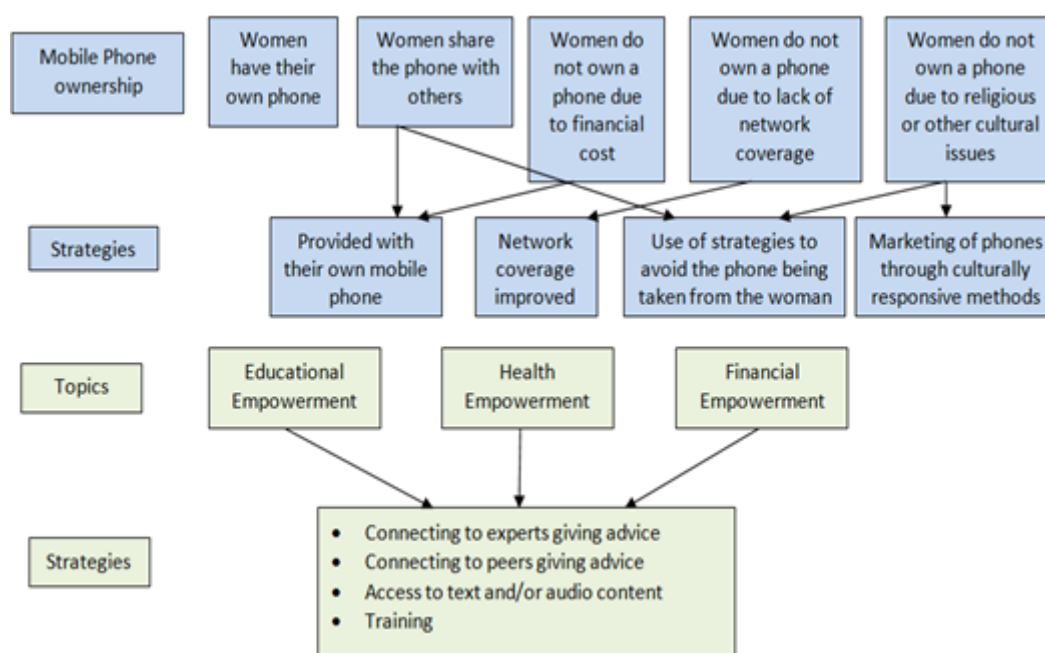
Of the three main topics (education, health, and finance), information is often in text and women need to have basic literacy skills to gain access to that knowledge. There are a number of mobile learning literacy initiatives for men and women, but there are a small number that specifically focus on improve literacy skills for women.

This number needs to be extended to provide more women literacy skills that will enable them to take advantage of the other opportunities. Few mobile initiatives focus on numeracy skills and again these skills are necessary for women to take best advantage of financial initiatives and opportunities.

For example, for the SEWA initiative, there is information provided on commodity prices, but if the numerical knowledge is lacking, these women may not be able to make best use of this information.

### Strategies to Empowerment

To empower women, there have been various strategies implemented. These strategies depend on what access to mobile devices and network coverage the women have and topics they are intended to support. Overarching themes were compiled into Figure 2 to show the strategies the majority of researchers took to empowerment women. The first focus is determining accessibility to resources, next the topic and strategy are listed.



**Figure 2:**  
Strategies for education, health and financial empowerment.

### **Ownership of a Mobile Device**

If the women do not own a mobile device due to financial cost or network coverage, various strategies are implemented to improve that access. For women who do not own a phone due to religious or other cultural traditions the strategies are more creative to enable women to gain access. In many rural areas of Cambodia, women often share phones with other family members. However, domestic violence towards women is commonplace in these areas and males typically have charge of the mobile phones. Oxfam implemented an initiative called the Pink Phone Project (Microfinance & Development, 2014) which provided women with mobile phones painted pink. This color discouraged men from using the project phones and empowered women with ownership.

For places where women are culturally discouraged from using mobile phones the Banglalink: Ladies First initiative (GSMA, 2010) advertises to women showing themselves in aspirational, positive and empowered images, rather than the typical stereotypical roles. However, interestingly the informational services that come with phone connectivity seem to be focusing back to the stereotypical role with cooking tips and first aid.

### **Key Strategies**

The analysis of studies revealed four main strategies for empowering women with knowledge in education, health and finances (see Figure 2). These strategies are all focused on different ways of having the learner gain that knowledge. The majority of the strategies were focused on delivering the content to the learner where the women are passively receiving content. An example of an initiative that fit within the delivery of text and/or audio content would be the SEWA initiative that sent SMS messages on commodity prices. The communication is one way. The GSMA (2010) described this initiative as positive as "opening the door to increased income will open the door to increased mobile phone adoption and usage" (p. 39). This could be a way to empower women as they get access to knowledge that can increase income. Nonetheless, these women are given this knowledge as passive recipients.

Perhaps another way to improve on this is to have these women supporting each other in a continued conversation about the commodity prices. Perhaps these women can give further information or perhaps future predications of those prices based on information they have that they can share with others. The primary purpose of mobile phones are to communicate with a two way conversation and it would also be beneficial to that empowerment if these women had an active role in the learning and empowerment process.

The designers of the Jokko Initiative in Senegal understood the need for women to be active participants in the learning process. Jokko is a fitting name as it means communication in the local language. In this initiative, the women in the community are connected by a SMS network. Messages sent to this SMS group are received by all the women in the community. To improve literacy skills and empower women, they are encouraged to send out messages on a range of topics which include birth/deaths, events, and commodity advertising. Other initiatives focus on empowering women/improving literacy by sending out SMS messages and having the women respond back to the instructor (e.g. the Mobilink initiative: UNESCO, 2012).

But research on learning shows that learning is going to be more effective when these women are actively involved and the topics are relevant to their everyday lives (Wright, 2015). Communication was specifically described in two of the four strategies: Connecting to experts giving advice, and connecting to peers giving advice. As discussed, peers actively having the opportunity to give advice are a positive way to self-empower

women. An example of how women have been financially empowered through active participation can be found with the UN Women's mobile learning platform iLearn (United Nations in South Africa, 2015). This platform is free to women in South Africa and provides a place where women entrepreneurs can share their stories behind their business plan, their successes and challenges and the skills they acquired during the process.

The effective empowerment of women may depend on the topic to be learned and perhaps in some situations expert advice is needed rather than peer dialogue. In a recent initiative, IMImobile, BBC Media Action and The Gates Foundation are providing free mobile health education services to people in India. This includes the Kilhari service that delivers audio messages to women who have subscribed to the service. These messages provide health information for mother and child up to one year old. This follows a similar initiative in Timor Leste which also sent out messages to pregnant women and up to the child's first birthday. Before these initiatives began, many women were taking advice from friends and family members and high mortality rates resulted. These are examples where expert medical information are important in empowering the women and when advice from local family and friends may not be as beneficial.

The majority of the initiatives in the past decade have used SMS to empower women. This is important in many low income developing countries where the cost of phones are barriers to access. These locations often have the largest gender gap in terms of access to information and connectivity. Nonetheless, there are women facing the gender gap in middle income countries who do have phones and would also benefit from empowerment that could involve basic or smart phones. In the critical analysis of empowerment studies, the lack of female mobile phone ownership was due to various factors and not just financial cost and a lack of network coverage. A woman may not have a mobile device because of religious or other cultural traditions. It would be beneficial to see more initiatives to empower these women.

## CONCLUSION

A critical review was conducted of mobile learning initiatives in the past decade that have the goal of empowering women. Three overarching topics emerged from the analysis, these were: Education, health, and finance. These matched the many SDGs outlined by the UN. These topics all provided knowledge relevant to the women targeted that would lead to empowerment. In the critical analysis of the strategies, four main topics emerged.

A number of representative initiatives were provided to show specifically the types of strategies used. From this analysis, it appears that some strategies may be more beneficial. For example, when women are provided an active role in the knowledge exchange this can lead to greater empowerment rather than passive consumers of knowledge to empower.

What is also clear is the method by which the women are best empowered is dependent on the topic, with expert opinions more beneficial in health related issues than opinions of family and friends. This paper provides leaders, policy makers, and researchers' insight into strategies for future endeavors to empower women to be active and equally important members of the community.



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Dr. Crompton holds various awards in the U.S. and England, her home country, for her service to the field of educational technology and the innovative ways she has extended the boundaries of traditional pedagogies with the effective integration of technology. These awards include two awards from the British Educational Communications Agency (BECTA), the NAACE MARK and the National ICT Mark as well as the 2012, 2013, and 2014 Presidents Volunteer Service award for her work in mobile learning.

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## SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN AND THE SOULCRAFT ECONOMY

*How ubuntu, the elusive Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) of the Soul of Nelson Mandela, and an African Women's family-focused agenda can embed planetary resilience and sustainability and show the way towards a sustainable economy that works for all...*

Marthe H. MULLER



Photo credit: <http://natoassociation.ca/25140>

The major spiritual component of the Continent of Africa - given a thousand different words in a thousand different languages - is the deep primal human concept of ubuntu. It rejects the individualistic priorities of western civilisation as anti-human destructive assertions born of a juvenile period of development, and asserts that we are part of one another and can only prosper on that basis."

### A PROGRESSIVE GROWTH OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Evolutionary biologist Jared Diamond, in his award-winning 1997 book, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, made the insightful observation that it literally took human beings hundreds of thousands of years to regularly meet new people without killing them.

As the history of cannibalism, slavery, colonialism, apartheid, ethnic genocide and continuing wars all over the world teaches us, the growth of the consciousness of the intrinsic value of every other human being is a progressive attainment. In millenias past, when humans weren't eating their perceived enemies, they were going to war against them, or enslaving them, or cheating them at business. Only slowly are we as a collective humanity evolving from apartheid to ubuntu, able to honour and protect the lives and human rights of others as we honour and protect our own lives and human rights. It comes as no surprise that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was only proclaimed and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly as recently as 1948, after the devastation of a Second World War in less than 30 years killed more than 60 million people, about 3% of the 1940 world population of an estimated 2.3 billion people. It is

the greatest tragedy that 1948 was also, ironically, the year in which the ideology of apartheid became official government policy in South Africa.

Recent research further illustrates that domestic violence kills nine times more people, and costs the world nine times more, than all current wars combined. In seeking strategies of peace, human security and future sustainability and resilience, it is important that we move our focus away from our emphasis on "statecraft", or what governments must do, to an emphasis on soulcraft, or what citizens can do, to improve the quality of their own lives, and the quality of life of their families and communities.

### **COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND INDIVIDUAL SOULS**

Nelson Mandela emphasized the need for an RDP of the Soul to complement the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that had been devised prior to 1994 to move South Africa from the vestiges of apartheid-era planning to a more inclusive, just and fair democratic dispensation.

The six basic principles of the RDP were identified as an "integrated and sustainable programme; a people-driven process; peace and security for all; nation-building; linking reconstruction and development; and the democratisation of South Africa."

While advocating for his still elusive dream of an RDP of the Soul in South Africa, Mandela famously kept his own Methodist Christian beliefs discreet "in favour of his great life work of reconciliation," fearing that speaking publicly about his own faith would cause division or be construed as proof that he was "using religion as a political tool, as the apartheid regime did."

Despite the fact that almost all wisdom traditions hold some doctrine of an "enduring entity" that survives death, the notion that we are the possessors of an undying and eternal human soul is not one that has universal currency. Buddhism, the one world religion without a God or a doctrine of the soul, is paradoxically the religion that comes closest to advocating a God-like path by teaching that the solutions to our problems are within ourselves, and that simplicity of needs and compassion will lead to wisdom and enlightenment.

Although Nelson Mandela is credited with first using the term RDP of the Soul, to which he also made reference in the Fifth Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture at the University of Cape Town on 10 September 2004, to describe the work necessary in South Africa to heal and restore a nation after the extended denigration of people's humanity that took place during apartheid, it would be his successor, Thabo Mbeki, who would wax lyrical about the RDP of the Soul at a 2006 Nelson Mandela Lecture, stating that "because of the infancy of our brand new society, we have the possibility to act in ways that would, for the foreseeable future, infuse the values of ubuntu into our very being as a people."

He also cautioned that, "because the white minority was the dominant social force in our country, it entrenched in our society as a whole, including among the oppressed, the deep-seated understanding that personal wealth constituted the only true measure of individual and social success."

He urged South Africans to help define "a world of hope, radically different from the universe of despair" in order that "together, as Africans, we must build a society based on the noble precept that - *Motho ke motho ka motho yo mongoe: Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu!*"

## QUALITY OF LIFE, GROWTH AND EQUALITY

The minimum values of social sustainability for families, societies and civilizations have been defined as life, quality of life, growth and equality, supported by the emotional values of love, empathy and compassion. In the book, *Social Sustainability for Community Builders*, it is suggested that these values are required as a basis for all our decision-making, from pre-conception to death, in order to encourage and nurture sustainable growth in the physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural, and spiritual spheres of human development.

These are also at the same time the simple values of ubuntu or human kindness that describes how many indigenous communities operate intuitively, and they indicate a way towards reforming our political, economic and societal structures.

The book on social sustainability further suggests that any lasting changes that improve the quality of life of ordinary citizens always need to begin at the local level, and specifically, at family level.

## THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN THE RDP OF THE SOUL

"The family is a building block for community, nation, continent, and even planetary civilisation. Governments are notoriously bad at reaching the level of the household or family. Without intentional, continual attention to the health and well-being of every member of every family, ensuring that quality of life, growth and equality are built into the fabric of every family, humanity will not survive the challenges that await us."eaching Mission Archives, 2013.

The collective wisdom of South Africa's people, as summarised in the Preamble to the Constitution of South Africa, clearly indicated the content of Mandela's suggested RDP of the Soul: A programme aimed at healing divisions, creating social justice, aligning governance structures to the will of the people, improving the quality of life of all citizens, and freeing the potential of each person.

Given the enormous levels of household poverty, racism, inter-generational trauma, family breakdown and father absence that were the legacies of apartheid design and practice, South African Women in Dialogue, a non-partisan civil society organisation with the mission of establishing a common agenda for the development of women, and to ensure that women's views are taken into consideration whenever decisions are taken on all issues that impact on their lives, has emphasized the need for a national peace, healing, reconciliation and social cohesion programme since its establishment in 2003, as well as towards a psycho-social, family-based strategy to reduce poverty and inequality.

The post 2015 sustainable development agenda, including all the local, national, regional, continental, and global development goals, can be summarised in only 5 major categories:

- ✓ poverty eradication and economic empowerment
- ✓ cradle to grave education, training and skills development
- ✓ Health and human security, including reduction of war, crime, domestic violence and violence against women and children
- ✓ Partnerships and coordination, leaving no one behind (disability, sexual orientation, sex workers, migrants, rural and grassroots women, youth and children, etc.)
- ✓ Environmental sustainability and climate change
- ✓ It has been pointed out that the term "sustainable growth" is a contradiction in terms. There is an end to growth. Economists, historians, scientists, mystics and celestial

guides alike have cautioned that our existing patterns of behaviour, consumption and political and economic governance are impossible to maintain.

Jorgen Randers, a Professor at the Norwegian School of Management in Oslo, Norway, in an article entitled What was the message of the Limits to Growth? paraphrased the basic message of the Club of Rome's 1972 book, Limits to Growth, in these words:

"Global society is likely to overshoot – and then be forced to decline or collapse - because of significant reaction delays in the global economy. These are the unavoidable lags in the perception and localization of global limits, the significant institutional delays involved in (democratic) decision making, and the biophysical lags between implementation of remedial action and the improvement of the ecosystem."

Just like the unjust, unequal, and ultimately, profoundly unsustainable system of "apartheid" had to give way to a more democratic and inclusive system, human civilization is noticing that our current strategies of growth do not deliver either lasting peace or meaningful human development at the level of the family or the individual.

If Africa is to become "the pupil of the eye of humanity", as the Founder of the Bahai Faith Bahá'u'lláh predicted; the darkest place where the most light will enter, it will require that the women of Africa seize the incredible opportunity afforded them by the remaining three years of the African Decade of Women and Mandela's still elusive RDP of the Soul to demand that budgets be made available to develop human sustainability at the level of the individual and the family.

#### **SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN AS "CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE"**

In 2011 and 2012 South African women articulated their priorities for the National Development Plan in the SA Women as Champions of Change provincial and national dialogues co-hosted by SA Women in Dialogue (SAWID) and the International Women's Forum of SA (IWFSa), with the support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy.

The priorities of SA women were defined as;

- ✓ A psycho-social, family based poverty eradication approach, combined with a productive self-reliance and economic empowerment strategy
- ✓ Accessible, quality and affordable early childhood education
- ✓ A strategy to reduce violence against women and children
- ✓ Civil society coordination
- ✓ Income generation in all these areas

An evidenced-based research study was commissioned to explore national and global best practices in solving these seemingly intractable human development challenges.

If it is indeed true, as has been pointed out earlier, that domestic violence kills more people than wars, with estimates of about nine people killed in domestic disputes for every one person who dies in a civil war, we should be greatly concerned about the future sustainability of humanity, as the family acts as the first peace-building unit of society, and the place where men and women first learn to "adjust their antagonisms." Social cohesion and human security cannot take place in the absence of family cohesion and family security.



## **TOOLS FOR EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY AT FAMILY LEVEL**

South African women have clearly indicated the following strategies to achieve their goals of inter-generational healing, poverty eradication and productive self-reliance:

- ✓ A focus on the family as unit of analysis, and the training and employment of family development workers, while exploring the use of the Poverty Stoplight tool of family self-diagnosis to measure and ensure equal growth from cradle to grave, and to equally coordinate and distribute available resources that serve the restoration of the family.
- ✓ Small healing dialogue circles and co-creative design teams at ward level for personal and societal healing, to articulate local priorities, and to ensure inclusive local solution-formation.
- ✓ A tool to link local decisions and solutions that emerge from communities to municipal budgeting processes, and outcomes of the Poverty Stoplight tool per geographic area to SALGA Municipal Barometer and Stats SA census data, as well as to available assets, budgets, and resources in civil society, the private sector and all levels of government, to ensure equal growth. (This amounts to a geo-mapping of community needs and assets, linked to a geo-mapping of available resources and expertise in the community, civil society, government, donor organizations and the private sector.)

## **USING THE RDP OF THE SOUL AND AN AFRICAN WOMEN'S AGENDA TO BEND SOCIETIES TOWARDS POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

It is difficult for most people to see how the future of our planet will be affected by a profoundly unsustainable and unequal global macro-economic framework, where the 8 wealthiest individuals now own as much wealth as the 3.5 billion poorest of earth's inhabitants and by unsustainable political systems based on self-interested party-political considerations rather than the well-being of individuals and families.

South African women are highlighting that attaining social and economic sustainability and Mandela's elusive RDP of the Soul will require an enormous shift towards a focus on the family as unit of analysis, and towards the kind of remunerated work that will ensure the well-being of every member of every family (family here defined as "two people who share a budget"). In terms of future planetary sustainability, it is becoming clear that all our considerable resources should be applied towards creating resilience and sustainability at the level of families, through the use of trained and remunerated family development workers, and the geo-mapping of indicators of family well-being at ward level.

It has additionally been suggested that the well-being of every member of every family, in effect the attainment of Nelson Mandela's elusive dream of an RDP of the Soul, can best be done through family clinics, a new social institution that will be needed to enculturate each new generation with the best practices of conscious and sustainable child rearing and parenting.

The professionalization of this soulcraft economy in Africa will encourage both men and women to be trained in and paid for providing those services of poverty-eradication, care-giving, family development, inter-generational healing, counselling and early childhood development that most serve the family unit. By prioritising productive self-reliance and income generation in areas of human need and soul development, including holistic health and inter-generational healing, food security and family development, African women can embed resilience and sustainability at local levels, ensuring the human and societal well-being that will become so critical in the years to come.