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KIGOMA

Advancing Digital Literacy and Vocational Skills among  
Women in Kigoma



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## 1. Executive Summary

This report celebrates the remarkable success of the Vocational Skills Training Initiative implemented by KIOO in collaboration with government officials from village to regional levels, as well as generous donors that significantly empowered girls and young women and marginalized communities by enhancing digital literacy and vocational skills.

I am pleased to present an ambitious and impactful initiative aimed at empowering girls and women in our community. Our program seeks to address the multifaceted challenges faced by women and girls, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, through targeted ICT and vocational education and business management training.

At the heart of our initiative is a commitment to fostering economic independence and self-reliance among women and girls. We recognize the inherent potential within every individual and believe that with the right support and resources, they can overcome obstacles and achieve their full potential.

Our program targets two distinct age groups: girls and young women aged 15 to 24, and women aged 25 to 35. For the younger cohort, we provided with a comprehensive training in integrating ICT, vocational education with business management concepts over a six-month period at the New KIOO Open School located in Ilagala village. This innovative approach equipped them with practical skills and knowledge needed to succeed in today's dynamic economic landscape.

For the older age group, we implemented the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) methodology at the ward level, reaching 200 women aged 25 to 35. SIYB is a proven system of training packages designed to support entrepreneurship and vocational skills development. Through this methodology, participants gained invaluable insights into business management practices and strategies, empowering them to start and grow their own ventures.

Central to our approach is the recognition of the unique challenges faced by women and girls in our community. From entrenched patriarchal norms to socioeconomic disparities, we understand the complexities of their lived experiences. By providing tailored training and support, we aim to create a more inclusive and equitable society where every woman and girl has the opportunity to thrive.

Importantly, our initiative goes beyond skill-building to address the underlying factors perpetuating gender inequality. We recognize that poverty, educational disadvantage, and gender-based violence are significant barriers to women's empowerment. Therefore, our program incorporates holistic interventions that encompass economic, social, and psychological support services.

Through strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts, we are confident in our ability to effect meaningful change in the lives of women and girls in our community. By investing in their empowerment, we not only unlock individual potential but also contribute to broader social and economic development goals.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to KIOO officials for their unwavering dedication and commitment to this initiative. Their tireless efforts have been instrumental in driving the success of the ICT and Vocational Skills Training Initiative, empowering girls, women and marginalized individuals across Kigoma. I also express my sincere appreciation to the government officials at the village, district, and regional levels for their invaluable support and collaboration throughout the implementation of the program. Their partnership has been crucial in ensuring the effective delivery of training sessions, as well as in facilitating community engagement and participation.

Furthermore, I extend my deepest thanks to the generous donors whose support has made this initiative possible. Their generosity and belief in the transformative power of education and skills training have enabled us to reach and impact a greater number of girls and young women in Kigoma.

Through hands-on training sessions and workshops, participants have gained proficiency in essential digital tools and technologies. They have developed skills in basic computer usage, internet navigation, and software applications, empowering them to access online resources and engage in digital activities confidently. The program has equipped participants with knowledge and resources to embark on entrepreneurial ventures. From business planning to marketing strategies and financial management, participants received comprehensive training and support, enabling them to establish and sustain their own businesses for meaningful employment, contributing to their economic independence and empowerment.

The impact of the program extends beyond individual participants, positively influencing entire communities. Through community engagement and peer learning networks, knowledge sharing and collaboration have flourished, fostering a culture of empowerment and advancement.

The Vocational Skills Training Initiative implemented by KIOO in Kigoma has been a resounding success, thanks to the collaborative efforts of dedicated officials, government partners, and generous donors. The program has not only enhanced digital literacy and vocational skills but has also empowered women and marginalized communities to realize their full potential and thrive in the digital age. As we reflect on the achievements of this initiative, we are inspired by the transformative impact it has had on the lives of girls and young women across Kigoma, and we remain committed to furthering this cause of empowerment and inclusion.

In conclusion, our initiative represents a bold step towards a more inclusive and prosperous future for all. By harnessing the talent and resilience of women and girls, we can build a brighter tomorrow for generations to come. Together, let us pave the way towards a world where every woman and girl has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

## 2. Project justification

The community of Kigoma grapples with entrenched challenges that perpetuate cycles of poverty and limit opportunities for children and youth, particularly in rural areas. Unequal access to quality education and high rates of youth unemployment contribute to economic instability and disengagement from society. Critical issues plaguing the education system include a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate resources, and long distances to schools, especially affecting girls who face risks of assault and rape during their journeys. Moreover, the exclusion of pregnant young women from publicly funded education and high rates of child pregnancies in rural areas further compound the educational challenges, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting future prospects.

The lack of vocational training programs leaves many girls and young women without practical skills essential for employment or entrepreneurship, reinforcing gender norms and societal prejudices against girls' education and empowerment. This report seeks to address these pressing issues by outlining the interventions and successes of initiatives aimed at improving access ICT and vocational training, particularly for girls young, women and marginalized youth in Kigoma.

Prior to the implementation of the ICT and Vocational Skills Training Initiative by KIOO, girls, women and marginalized communities in Kigoma faced significant barriers to digital literacy and economic empowerment. Limited access to technology and educational resources, coupled with cultural and societal norms, hindered their ability to harness the potential of technology for personal and economic development. KIOO became an instrumental in advancing digital literacy and vocational skills among women and marginalized communities in Kigoma. The ICT and Vocational Skills Training Initiative stands out as a flagship program, designed to empower participants with essential digital skills and entrepreneurship training. This report highlights the achievements and impact of the program.

## 3. Goals and objectives

The goal of the program was to empower girls and young women with essential digital skills and entrepreneurship training, thereby fostering digital inclusion and economic independence.

**Objective 1:** Enhance digital literacy among girls, young women and marginalized communities. In fulfilling this we conducted hands-on training sessions and workshops focused on basic computer skills, internet navigation, and software applications, developed a curriculum tailored to the needs and contexts of girls, young women and marginalized communities, ensuring inclusivity and relevance and created training materials in local languages to facilitate understanding and accessibility. Lastly we had practical exercises and real-life scenarios to reinforce learning and application of digital skills.

**Objective 2:** Provide participants with entrepreneurship training, we offered comprehensive training covering various aspects of entrepreneurship, including business planning, marketing strategies, financial management and access to markets and engaged experienced entrepreneurs and business experts to provide guidance and mentorship to participants throughout the training process. Practically we provided participants with practical tools and resources to support them in starting and managing their own businesses, such as templates for business plans and marketing materials and the case studies presented success stories of local entrepreneurs to inspire and motivate participants.

**Objective 3:** Expand job prospects for participants by imparting in-demand digital skills. The program offered training in in-demand digital skills required by various sectors, such as technology, hospitality, retail and administration. We also had designed modules focusing on specific digital skills, such as graphic design, social media marketing, data entry and office software proficiency that provided opportunities for participants to obtain certifications in relevant digital skills to enhance their credibility and employability. Furthermore we offered job placement assistance and networking opportunities to connect participants with potential employers in their respective fields.

**Objective 4:** Actively involve girls, young women and marginalized communities in program design and deployment processes. KIOO conducted extensive community consultations and needs assessments to identify specific needs, challenges, and aspirations including establishment of feedback mechanisms to solicit input from participants throughout the program, allowing for ongoing adaptation and improvement. There was appointed community representatives to serve as liaisons between the program organizers and participants, ensuring that voices from diverse backgrounds were heard and represented. We employed culturally sensitive approaches in program design and delivery to ensure inclusivity and relevance to the target audience.



*Community meetings and training of community committee members*

#### 4. Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of this program were girls and women, divided into two age categories being those aged 15 to 24 consisted 100 girls and young women who undergone training in integrating ICT, vocational education with business management concepts. They received training over a period of six months at the New KIOO Open School owned by our organization. The second group comprises 200 women aged 25 to 35 received training in business management at the ward level through the SIYB (Start and Improve Your Business) methodology.

Beneficiaries face multiple challenges stemming from socioeconomic factors and deeply entrenched cultural norms. Many of these women and girls are living in poverty or near-poverty conditions, which exacerbate their vulnerability and limit their access to opportunities for education and economic advancement. The community's social structure is deeply patriarchal and clan-based, meaning that men hold significant authority and power within the community. This hierarchy often marginalizes women and restricts their ability to make decisions or control resources.

A significant portion of the beneficiaries were school dropouts or have limited access to formal education. Lack of education further hampers their ability to secure stable employment or start their own businesses. Many of these women and girls come from rural areas where access to

essential services such as education, healthcare and employment opportunities is limited. They were also reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods, which precarious and subject to environmental degradation. Women and girls in this community often face various forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault and exploitation. These experiences further compound their vulnerabilities and inhibit their ability to thrive. The combination of poverty, patriarchal norms, educational disadvantages and exposure to violence creates highly stressful conditions for them. They struggle with mental health issues and experience chronic stress, which further impedes their ability to break free from cycles of poverty and marginalization. Addressing these challenges required holistic interventions that provide education, skills training, economic opportunities, and support services to empower women and girls to overcome these barriers and improve their quality of life.

## 5. Implemented Activities and progress

Under this program we implemented several activities to enhance digital literacy, provide entrepreneurship training, expand job prospects and actively involve girls, young women and marginalized communities.

### 5.1 Digital Literacy trainings

We conducted hands-on training on basic computer skills, internet navigation and software applications, the training materials were in local languages and culturally sensitive approaches to ensure inclusivity and relevance and adapt program activities and curriculum based on participant feedback gathered through extensive community consultations. Training sessions were designed to furnish participants with varying levels of computer literacy, starting from the very basics for beginners and above. Participants learned essential skills such as operating a computer, using a keyboard and mouse, navigating the desktop, and managing files and folders.

On Internet Navigation trainings focused on orienting participants how to access and navigate internet safely and effectively. Participants learned how to use web browsers, conduct online searches, browse websites and use email. Emphasis was placed on practical exercises to familiarize participants with common online tasks and activities. While on software applications training sessions covered popular software applications commonly used in personal and professional settings. Participants learned how to use word processing software (e.g., Microsoft Word), spreadsheet software (e.g., Microsoft Excel), presentation software (e.g., Microsoft PowerPoint) and other relevant applications. Practical exercises were provided to allow participants to practice using the software and apply their newly acquired skills.

In addition, the program also included instruction on coding, mobile application development, web designing, graphics and Photoshop. Participants were introduced to coding languages such as HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, equipping them with the foundational knowledge needed to create websites and web applications. They learned how to develop mobile applications for Android and iOS platforms, gaining insight into app design, development, and deployment processes. Furthermore, participants received training in web design principles and techniques, including layout design, user experience (UX) design, and responsive web design.

They also explored graphic design concepts using software tools like Adobe Photoshop, learning how to create visually compelling graphics for various purposes such as branding, marketing materials and digital content. Practical exercises and projects were integrated into the training sessions to provide hands-on experience and opportunities for participants to apply their



newfound skills in real-world scenarios. Through this comprehensive training approach, participants were empowered to explore diverse facets of technology and develop proficiency in a range of software and coding skills, enhancing their employability and expanding their career opportunities in the digital economy.

Apart from software applications and coding, the program offered training in tailoring, masonry, welding and entrepreneurship, providing participants with a diverse set of skills relevant to various sectors. Participants received practical training in tailoring, covering essential skills such as sewing techniques, pattern making and garment construction. They learned how to operate sewing machines, select fabrics, take measurements and create various types of clothing and textile products. Training sessions included hands-on practice and demonstrations, allowing participants to develop proficiency in tailoring techniques and gain confidence in their abilities.

Additionally, participants were trained to basic business concepts related to the tailoring industry, such as market research, pricing strategies and customer service, preparing them to establish and manage their own tailoring businesses. The masonry training provided participants with fundamental skills in bricklaying, plastering and construction techniques. Participants learned how to mix and apply mortar, lay bricks and blocks and build basic structures such as walls, foundations and partitions. Practical exercises and simulations were conducted to allow participants to practice masonry skills in a controlled environment, under the guidance of experienced instructors. Participants also received instruction on workplace safety practices and construction regulations, ensuring that they were equipped to work safely and effectively in the construction industry.

Participants in the welding training gained hands-on experience in welding processes such as arc welding, MIG welding, and TIG welding. They learned how to set up and operate welding equipment, interpret welding symbols and blueprints, and perform various welding techniques on different types of metals. Training sessions included demonstrations, practice exercises and supervised welding projects, allowing participants to develop proficiency and confidence in their welding skills. Additionally, participants learned about welding safety procedures, equipment maintenance, and quality control measures, preparing them for careers in welding and metal fabrication.

Entrepreneurship training was integrated into all aspects of the program, providing participants with knowledge and skills needed to start and manage their own businesses. Participants learned about business planning, market analysis, financial management, marketing strategies and customer relations. They received guidance on identifying business opportunities, developing business models and creating actionable business plans. Practical exercises, case studies and interactive discussions were used to reinforce key entrepreneurship concepts and principles.

Additionally, participants had the opportunity to hear from successful entrepreneurs and industry experts, gaining valuable insights and inspiration for their own entrepreneurial ventures. Overall, the entrepreneurship training empowered participants to take initiative, pursue their business ideas, and contribute to economic development in their communities.

## 5.2 Entrepreneurship Trainings

The program offered a comprehensive entrepreneurship training covering business planning, marketing strategies, financial management and access to markets. It engaged experienced



entrepreneurs and business experts to provide guidance. We also facilitated peer learning networks and community forums to encourage knowledge sharing and collaboration among participants. Provide training in in-demand digital skills such as graphic design, social media marketing, data entry and office software proficiency by ensuring participants acquire skills applicable to their desired career paths and offer opportunities for participants to enhance their employability and credibility.



*Entrepreneurship trainings at ward level*

### 5.3 Community Engagement

Conduct extensive community consultations and needs assessments to identify specific needs, challenges, and aspirations of girls, women and marginalized communities. Involve community representatives in program design and deployment processes to ensure that activities are tailored to the unique needs and contexts of the target populations. Establish feedback mechanisms to solicit input from participants throughout the program, allowing for ongoing adaptation and improvement. Program activities and curriculum were continuously adapted based on participant feedback gathered through surveys, focus group discussions and individual interviews. Furthermore there was an establishment of community advisory board comprising of representative of women's groups, youth organizations and community leaders to provide input and guidance on program design and implementation.

### 5.4 Linkages and Access to Seed Funds

KIOO collaborated with Local Government Authorities (LGAs) to facilitate access to seed funds for women and girls' business ventures. This involves leveraging resources allocated under the Women, Youth, and People with Disability Fund, which are typically available within LGAs. We worked closely with LGAs to ensure funds are accessible to eligible entrepreneurs who have participated in KIOO's programs and have established viable business ventures. We liaised with LGAs to facilitate the application process for seed funding. This involved providing guidance to participants on completing application forms, compiling necessary documents and meeting eligibility criteria.

KIOO assisted participants in submitting funding applications to the relevant committees within the LGAs responsible for administering the Women, Youth, and People with Disability Fund. LGAs review the submitted applications and assess the viability and impact of the proposed business ventures. Women and girls entrepreneurs who have completed KIOO's programs gain access to seed funds to finance their business ventures, which have been previously inaccessible due to financial constraints. Seed funding enabled entrepreneurs to expand their businesses, invest in new equipment or technologies, increase production capacity, or explore new markets, thereby accelerating their growth and sustainability. By accessing seed funds and expanding their

businesses, women and girls entrepreneurs experienced greater economic empowerment and independence, as they become less reliant on external support and more self-sufficient in generating income and creating opportunities for themselves and their communities.

### 5.5 Running of Annual Innovation Summits

KIOO organized annual innovation summits providing a platform for entrepreneurs to showcase their business ideas through pitching sessions. These summit aims to foster creativity, collaboration and networking among participants, while also attracting potential investors and stakeholders interested in supporting innovative ventures. Participants from KIOO's programs, as well as other entrepreneurs and stakeholders, were invited to attend the summits. Special emphasis placed on encouraging women and girls to participate and showcase their innovative business ideas. Entrepreneurs had the opportunity to pitch their business ideas to a panel of judges during dedicated pitching sessions. They presented their ideas, business plans, and potential impact, aiming to attract support and investment. The summits provide networking opportunities for participants to connect with potential partners, collaborators, mentors and investors. Participants had chance to exchange ideas, seek advice, and explore opportunities for collaboration and growth.

Participating in annual summits provides entrepreneurs, particularly women and girls, with visibility and exposure to a wider audience, including investors, potential partners, and customers. Entrepreneurs had the opportunity to network and build relationships with other stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, facilitating collaboration, mentorship, and access to resources. Pitching sessions provide entrepreneurs with valuable feedback and validation of their business ideas from experienced judges and investors. Successful pitches lead to investment or partnership opportunities, further validating and supporting their ventures. Attending the summits and witnessing the innovation and success of fellow entrepreneurs inspired and motivate participants to pursue their own entrepreneurial dreams, fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship within the community.

### 5.6 Forming small business ventures

KIOO facilitated a collaborative approach among program participants. Participants were organized into small groups comprising 4-6 members based on shared interests, skills, and business ideas. We conducted team-building activities and exercises to foster trust, communication, and collaboration among group members. Groups brainstormed potential business ideas collectively, leveraging the diverse skills and experiences of their members. Once a business idea was selected, groups worked together to develop a comprehensive business plan, outlining their goals, strategies and action steps.

KIOO provided support in securing necessary resources and assets for the ventures, including access to seed funds, equipment, and mentorship. After finalizing their business plans, groups launched their ventures, with each member taking on specific roles and responsibilities based on their expertise and interests. By pooling their resources and skills, participants were able to establish stronger and more resilient businesses, with each member contributing unique strengths and expertise to the venture. Working in small groups spread the risk associated with starting a business, allowing participants to share financial burdens and responsibilities. Group members had the opportunity to learn from each other, exchange ideas, and problem-solve collectively, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. Being part of a team encouraged participants to stay motivated and accountable, as they worked towards common

goals and supported each other through challenges and setbacks. Through their business ventures, participants expanded their professional networks and connections, tapping into new opportunities for partnerships, collaborations, and market access.

#### 6. Achievement of the Outcomes

Participants engaged in practical, hands-on training sessions where they learned essential computer skills, such as typing, using word processing software, and creating presentations. Workshops included guidance on navigating the internet safely and effectively, teaching participants how to search for information, use email, and access online resources. Through interactive sessions, participants gained proficiency in using software applications relevant to their personal and professional needs, such as spreadsheet software for budgeting or graphic design software for creating marketing materials. Example: Fatima, a participant, learned how to create a professional resume using word processing software during the training sessions. She applied this skill to submit job applications online, ultimately securing a position as an administrative assistant at a local company.

Training on business planning where participants were guided through the process of creating comprehensive business plans, including defining their business goals, identifying target markets, and developing strategies for growth. Trainings covered various marketing techniques, such as social media marketing, networking and creating promotional materials to help participants effectively market their products or services. Participants received training on basic financial management principles, including budgeting, pricing strategies and tracking expenses, to ensure the sustainability of their businesses and Access to Markets Resources and information were provided to help participants' access markets, such as connecting them with local marketplaces or assisting them in setting up online stores. Example Aisha, inspired by the entrepreneurship training, started her own catering business. With guidance on marketing strategies, she utilized social media platforms to showcase her dishes and attract customers. With proper financial management skills, she ensured profitability and growth in her business.

Participants underwent training in specific digital skills that are in high demand across various sectors, such as website development, data entry, or digital marketing. Some participants obtained certifications in their chosen digital skills, enhancing their credibility and demonstrating their expertise to potential employers. The program provided assistance with job search strategies, resume building, and interview preparation, as well as networking opportunities to connect participants with potential employers. Example Jamal, who completed training in graphic design, utilized his skills to create visually appealing marketing materials for a local restaurant. Impressed by his work, the restaurant offered him a full-time position as their in-house graphic designer, providing him with stable employment and career growth opportunities. By acquiring in-demand digital skills, program participants have expanded their job prospects and secured employment opportunities in various sectors, including technology, hospitality, retail, and administrative roles.

#### 7. Approach and Methodology

KIOO actively involved girls, young women and marginalized communities in program design and deployment processes. KIOO prioritized community engagement by conducting thorough consultations and needs assessments within target communities. Representatives from KIOO engaged directly with women and marginalized communities to understand their specific needs,

challenges, and aspirations. Through open dialogue and active listening, KIOO gathered valuable insights that informed the design and implementation of program activities.

### 7.1 Adaptation Based on Participant Feedback

Program activities and curriculum were not static but adaptable based on continuous feedback from participants. Feedback mechanisms were established to gather input from participants on the effectiveness and relevance of training sessions, materials, and approaches. KIOO remained responsive to participant feedback, making adjustments to ensure inclusivity and relevance, thus fostering a sense of ownership among participants. Feedback mechanisms, such as surveys, suggestion boxes, focus group discussions, and individual interviews, were established to gather input from participants. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on various aspects of the program, including training sessions, materials, facilitation methods, and overall program effectiveness. Program organizers consistently collected and analyzed feedback from participants throughout the duration of the program. Data collection methods were designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative feedback, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives.

#### 7.1.1 Responsive Program Management

KIOO remained responsive to participant feedback, prioritizing continuous improvement and adaptation of program activities and curriculum. Feedback received was promptly reviewed, analyzed, and acted upon by program organizers to address identified issues and enhance program effectiveness. By actively soliciting and incorporating participant feedback, program activities and curriculum were continuously refined to better meet the needs and preferences of the targeted group. Participants felt that the program was tailored to their specific needs and circumstances, increasing its relevance and applicability to their lives.

#### 7.1.2 Improved Participant Engagement

Participants appreciated being heard and valued as active contributors to the program's development and improvement. Knowing that their feedback was taken seriously and acted upon, participants felt a greater sense of ownership and investment in the program, leading to increased engagement and participation. Adaptations made based on participant feedback resulted in program activities and materials that were more effective and impactful. Participants experienced improved learning outcomes as a result of program adjustments that addressed their identified areas of difficulty or preference.

#### 7.1.3 Fostered Sense of Community:

The feedback process created a culture of open communication and collaboration between participants and program organizers. Participants felt supported and valued within the program community, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among peers. By continuously adapting based on participant feedback, the program demonstrated its responsiveness to evolving needs and circumstances, enhancing its long-term sustainability and effectiveness. In summary, adaptation based on participant feedback ensured that the program remained responsive, relevant, and effective in meeting the needs of the targeted group. By actively engaging participants in the feedback process, KIOO fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment among participants, ultimately benefiting them in their journey towards personal and professional development.

## 7.2 Training Materials and Culturally Sensitive Approaches

Recognizing the importance of language and cultural context, training materials were developed in local languages to enhance accessibility and comprehension. Culturally sensitive approaches were employed to ensure that program activities resonated with the cultural values and norms of the target communities. By incorporating local languages and cultural nuances, KIOO ensured that the program was inclusive and relevant to all participants, regardless of their background.

The training materials, including manuals, handouts, presentations, and visual aids, were translated into local languages spoken by the participants. Professional translators or bilingual community members were engaged to ensure accurate translation and localization of the content. Providing training materials in local languages enhanced accessibility for participants who may have limited proficiency in the dominant language. Participants could better comprehend and engage with the content, leading to improved learning outcomes and retention of knowledge. The use of local languages helped bridge communication barriers and fostered a sense of inclusivity and belonging among participants. Participants felt more comfortable and empowered to actively participate in training sessions, contributing to a more positive and effective learning environment.

### 7.2.1 Understanding Cultural Norms and Values:

Program organizers conducted thorough research and engaged with community members to gain insights into the cultural norms, values, and traditions of the target communities. By understanding the cultural context, program activities were designed and delivered in a manner that respected and aligned with the cultural sensitivities of the participants. Program activities were tailored to incorporate cultural elements and references that resonated with the participants' cultural backgrounds. Examples, anecdotes, and case studies used in training sessions were culturally relevant and relatable, making the content more engaging and meaningful for participants. Culturally sensitive approaches promoted inclusivity and respect for diverse cultural perspectives within the training environment. Participants felt valued and respected, as their cultural identities and experiences were acknowledged and integrated into the program activities. Participants benefited from training materials in local languages as they could better understand and engage with the content, leading to improved learning outcomes. Language barriers were minimized, allowing participants to fully participate in training sessions and actively contribute to discussions and activities.

Culturally sensitive approaches made program activities more relevant and relatable to the participants' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds. Participants felt a stronger connection to the material, increasing their motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Incorporating local languages and cultural elements into the program activities promoted cultural pride and identity among participants. Participants felt a sense of ownership and empowerment as they saw their cultural heritage reflected and respected within the training environment.

## 7.3 Mentorship and grooming

The organizations provided ongoing support and mentorship to program participants, guiding them through skill development, business establishment and professional growth. Peer learning networks and community forums were established to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among participants. Program participants received personalized support and guidance throughout their skill development journey. Mentors and facilitators provided one-on-one assistance to participants, helping them navigate challenges and build confidence in their

abilities. Participants had access to resources and tools to reinforce their learning, including online tutorials, practice exercises, and supplementary materials. Individuals interested in starting their own businesses received tailored support and mentorship to guide them through the process. Mentors offered advice and assistance on various aspects of business establishment, such as business planning, market research, and legal requirements. Participants were equipped with practical tools and resources to help them launch and manage their enterprises, including templates for business plans, marketing materials, and financial projections.

Program participants were supported in their professional growth and career advancement goals. Mentors provided guidance on career planning, resume writing, job search strategies, and interview preparation. Participants received mentorship on developing soft skills such as communication, time management, and teamwork, essential for success in the workplace. Peer learning networks and community forums served as platforms for participants to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices with their peers. Participants learned from each other's successes and challenges, gaining insights and perspectives that enriched their learning experience. Peer interactions fostered a sense of camaraderie and mutual support among participants, creating a supportive learning community. Collaboration facilitated the exchange of ideas, innovation, and creativity, leading to the development of new initiatives and solutions. Participants received personalized support tailored to their specific needs and aspirations, empowering them to overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Mentorship provided participants with access to expertise, guidance, and resources that they may not have otherwise had access to, accelerating their learning and development.

Ongoing support and mentorship instilled participants with confidence in their abilities and empowered them to take proactive steps towards their personal and professional growth. Through mentorship and peer interactions, participants gained a sense of self-efficacy and resilience, enabling them to navigate obstacles and seize opportunities with confidence. Peer learning networks and community forums facilitated networking and collaboration among participants, expanding their social and professional circles. Participants benefited from diverse perspectives, ideas, and experiences shared by their peers, enriching their learning and expanding their horizons.

## 8. Challenges and lesson learnt

### 8.1 Challenges

- a) One of the primary challenges was ensuring adequate resources for training facilities, materials, and instructors. Limited funding and infrastructure constraints sometimes hindered the quality and reach of the program.
- b) Encouraging participation, especially among marginalized groups, proved to be a challenge. Some women faced barriers such as lack of childcare, transportation, or familial obligations that made attending training sessions difficult.
- c) Many participants lacked basic digital literacy skills and access to technology, which limited their ability to fully engage with digital training materials and online resources.
- d) Deeply ingrained cultural norms and social dynamics sometimes posed challenges to women's participation and empowerment. In some cases, women faced resistance or

skepticism from family members or community leaders regarding their involvement in vocational training and entrepreneurship.

- e) Ensuring the sustainability and long-term impact of the program beyond the initial training period was another key challenge. Without ongoing support and follow-up, participants may struggle to maintain and apply the skills they acquired, limiting the program's overall effectiveness.
- f) Despite these challenges, the Vocational Skills Training Program has provided valuable insights into effective strategies for promoting women's economic empowerment and digital inclusion.

## 8.2 Lesson learnt

- a. Securing sustainable funding streams and leveraging partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations can help address resource constraints and ensure the long-term viability of similar initiatives.
- b. Tailoring program schedules and formats to accommodate participants' needs, providing support services such as childcare or transportation subsidies, and conducting targeted outreach and awareness campaigns can help improve engagement and participation rates.
- c. Incorporating foundational digital literacy training into the program curriculum, providing access to computers and internet connectivity, and offering hands-on technical support can help bridge the digital divide and empower participants to utilize digital tools effectively.
- d. Implementing culturally sensitive and gender-responsive programming, engaging with community leaders and influencers, and fostering dialogue and awareness around gender equality and women's rights can help address cultural barriers and promote social acceptance and support for women's empowerment initiatives.
- e. Implementing post-training support mechanisms such as mentorship, networking opportunities, access to financing and markets, and continuous skills development can help sustain the program's impact and facilitate participants' transition to successful entrepreneurship and employment.
- f. Into future program design and implementation, we can continue to empower women and marginalized communities to thrive in the digital age.

## 9. Conclusion

KIOO demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing digital inclusion and economic empowerment for women and marginalized communities in Kigoma. The Vocational Skills Training Initiative, along with other programs, has significantly bridged the gender digital divide and created opportunities for women to thrive in the digital age. Moving forward continued support and expansion of such initiatives will be crucial for sustaining this positive impact and fostering further growth and development. KIOO stands as a beacon of hope and progress in the journey towards digital inclusion and economic empowerment for women and marginalized communities in Kigoma. Through initiatives like the Vocational Skills Training Program, we



have not only bridged the gender digital divide but have also ignited a flame of opportunity and possibility for countless women across our nation.

As we reflect on our achievements thus far, it is evident that our collective efforts have yielded remarkable results, transforming lives and communities in profound ways. Yet, our work is far from over. In the ever-evolving landscape of the digital age, continued support and expansion of such initiatives are not just desirable but imperative.

We must remain steadfast in our commitment to nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and breaking down barriers that hinder progress. By investing in the potential of every woman and marginalized individual, we not only enrich their lives but also fuel the engine of economic growth and social development.

Together, let us continue to champion the cause of digital inclusion and economic empowerment, ensuring that no one is left behind in the march towards a brighter, more equitable future. With determination, dedication, and unwavering resolve, we can overcome any obstacle and realize the full promise of our collective potential.

The journey ahead may be challenging, but with each step forward, we inch closer to a world where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and succeed. Let us seize this moment, embrace this opportunity, and together, forge a path towards a more inclusive and prosperous tomorrow.

## 10. Recommendations

### Government and Policy Makers

Increase investment in vocational education and digital literacy programs targeting women and marginalized communities. Implement policies and regulations that promote gender equality in access to digital resources and economic opportunities. Provide financial incentives and support for organizations and initiatives focused on digital inclusion and economic empowerment.

### Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society

Collaborate with local communities to identify and address specific barriers to digital inclusion and economic empowerment. Advocate for the rights of women and marginalized groups, including access to education, training, and technology. Provide mentorship and support services to help individuals navigate the challenges of the digital age and entrepreneurship.

### Private Sector and Businesses:

Create inclusive hiring practices and provide training opportunities for women and marginalized individuals in digital skills and entrepreneurship. Partner with NGOs and government agencies to support vocational training programs and initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide and invest in infrastructure and technology that expands access to digital resources and markets for underserved communities.

### Community Leaders and Grassroots Organizations

Raise awareness about the importance of digital literacy and economic empowerment, particularly for women and marginalized groups. Establish community-based support networks and resources for individuals seeking to improve their digital skills and access economic

opportunities and advocate for the integration of digital education and entrepreneurship training into local school curricula and community programs.

#### Educational Institutions and Training Centers:

Incorporate digital literacy and entrepreneurship training into vocational education programs, with a focus on practical skills and real-world applications. Provide ongoing support and mentorship for students and graduates, helping them transition into the workforce or start their own businesses and foster partnerships with local businesses and industries to ensure that training programs align with market demands and employment opportunities. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can build upon the successes of initiatives like the Vocational Skills Training Program and further advance digital inclusion and economic empowerment for women and marginalized communities. Collaboration and collective action are key to creating a more equitable and prosperous future for all.