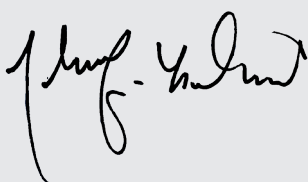## Editorial

Digitalization is a game changer for many aspects of our lives. Naturally, this also applies to development cooperation as such and the implementation of projects in particular. GFA is aware that the challenges that accompany these developments must be carefully addressed in order to establish sustainable and useful project components that help achieve overall development goals. Potential threats such as the so-called digital divide, i.e. the exclusion of specific social groups due to gender, demographics, social and financial status, geographic areas, education, etc., are amplified within the context of development cooperation. Social gaps and distortions can potentially increase if the project design is not planned carefully. Evidently, we need to avoid such negative collateral damage.

Therefore, the digitalization strategy of GFA is based on the principle of ownership. Beneficiaries should not only use, but also understand, develop and own the technological solutions at hand. The participatory and extensive planning and developing phases we use in our projects may be longer and may need more input of ever scarce resources. But these extra efforts will lead to more sustainable outcomes and help bridge the digital divide. This is why we at GFA embrace information and communication technologies in our work wherever these assist us in accomplishing the development objectives of the projects we manage. Ultimately, what we never lose sight of is improving the quality of life of the beneficiaries we care about.

Christoph Schaefer-Kehnert
Managing Director
GFA Consulting Group

# ICT4D – Digitalization opportunities

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) play a crucial role in the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Digital technologies connect people and organizations around the world in an instant. They enhance access to information, participation and dialogue, reduce transaction costs and can be a driver for innovation by providing new business opportunities. Therefore, GFA actively embraces digitalization opportunities for improving the quality of life of beneficiaries.

As a dynamic company with experience around the globe, GFA balances innovation, flexibility and reliability to meet local needs. ICTs for development (ICT4D) are used in all the company's business areas in order to further enhance service quality. GFA applies technological solutions to local needs in e-learning, optimization of information flows, citizen participation, market places, tracking and recognition, monitoring and evaluation, and other fields. Mobile devices, sensors, drones and satellites help GFA monitor projects worldwide, making results visible and connecting projects with beneficiaries in near-time. Large amounts of geo-referenced data that are integrated from various sources allow for more precise analyses. This allows GFA teams to provide individualized information to remote areas. GFA also supports governments in modernizing administrative processes facilitated by ICTs which promote accountability through efficient and transparent communication and advance citizen participation. The company's trainings help bridge the digital divide by fostering e-skills and promoting digital entrepreneurs. GFA experts use ICT-supported management systems to improve efficiency internally and in our projects. At the same time, GFA believes in open data sharing as well as data privacy and security as integral elements of digital development.

GFA continuously expands its knowledge and network in digital development solutions by testing and adapting existing tools in its projects and by co-developing new solutions together with clients, beneficiaries and partners.

### GFA and the Strategic Partnership for Digital Africa

As part of these efforts, GFA is highly engaged in the Strategic Partnership for a Digital Africa and teams up with technical partners in the education

Interviewing smallholders in Malawi

and health sector to push innovative solutions facilitated by the use of new technologies. The Strategic Partnership is an initiative of the new Africa policy of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The initiative aims at facilitating fresh economic prospects for Africa with a particular focus on training opportunities, decent employment and income, and a strong local private sector.

The German government's digital agenda suggests digitalization as a key component of development cooperation. Sustainable development goals can be achieved faster, more comprehensively and more effectively through ICTs. The Strategic Partnership aims at effectively supporting and underpinning private investment and responsible business in the ICT sector

through development cooperation measures, with a special focus on German core competences in the ICT sector. It focuses on selected partner countries that show a high potential for implementation, and supports the application of ICT solutions in economically important sectors that affect development. Currently, these sectors encompass education, health, energy, logistics, good governance and agriculture.

In the context of the Strategic Partnership for a Digital Africa, GFA is strongly dedicated to the expert group for education. The company provides the group's spokesperson and involves its Education, Skills and Employment (ESE) Department, its C³ Unit*, and its cross-cutting internal working group on ICT4D to boost innovative ideas and pool its in-house expertise. Moreover,

GFA recently joined the Partnership's health expert group to intensify and broaden ICT activities and to enlarge the network of technical partners in specific areas of expertise.

## GFA at Hyderabad ICT4D Conference

At the ICT4D conference in Hyderabad, India on 15-18 May 2017, GFA Consulting Group and GFA B.I.S.* presented its experience from an international project comprising 12 countries in which we developed a digital data platform for mobile data monitoring and analysis. The ICT4D conference series is the largest and most established one in this field. The GFA presentation was well received as it demonstrated a flexible modular solution which overcomes the limitations of integrated, fully automated solutions. The latter are often not applicable because of specific requirements by clients or the nature of data concerned, e.g. extensive data cleaning requirements or privacy rules.

With over 1,000 visitors, the Hyderabad ICT4D conference was a great opportunity for GFA to meet partners and likeminded experts from around the world and share new technological developments. GFA specialists expanded their network of partner companies and ICT experts as well as their in-house know-how. Hotly debated topics included the coordination between different actors, cloud-based artificial intelligence services to aid decision making and efficiency improvements as well as new collective efforts towards open data and data sharing.

*www.c3-training.de | www.gfa-bis.de


Field study in India

**GFA**
*Consulting Group*

# Information and communication technologies for development at work



Participating in a SMS survey in Sokodé

## Improving maternal and neonatal health and HIV prevention

On behalf of the National Health Insurance Fund, GFA Medica has been implementing the second phase of the Social Security for the Poor to Improve Maternal and Neonatal Health and HIV Prevention project in Tanzania since August 2016. The project funded by KfW provides poor pregnant women with health insurance cover to increase access to good quality healthcare. On behalf of project beneficiaries, health facilities hand in insurance claims and are reimbursed through the disposition fund.

A total of 27 million euros is available for this purpose until July 2018. In this context, ICTs are key success factors for GFA: Mobile phone registration allows for real-time monitoring and evaluation of around 14,000 new beneficiaries per month who enroll in the program in five project regions. At the same time, beneficiaries receive phone-based information on customer rights which strengthens accountability. All registered pregnant women get health-related information when their next visit for antenatal care is due. Reminders are timed in line with the expected date of delivery. The ICT infrastructure

also allows GFA to monitor the performance of all health facilities that participate in the project and to communicate directly with facility staff through calls or bulk SMS. The project regularly assesses the insurance claims for project beneficiaries and has access to data on total claims per beneficiary, demand in terms of care, patient flows, outliers to detect potential fraud, etc.

## ICT for monitoring and evaluation of water supply and sanitation facilities

GFA provided support in the application of ICT tools for monitoring and evaluation of water supply and sanitation facilities in the Development of the Urban Water and Sanitation Sector project of GIZ in South Sudan and the GIZ study Evaluation of Water Kiosks and Water Quality in Kenya. A survey was conducted on the use of water kiosks and water quality in Kenya. Data collected through tablet computers allowed for immediate geo-referencing of data and easy transfer of information into a database for subsequent analysis. GFA applied Survey Solutions, a free tool provided by the World Bank.

In South Sudan, GFA assisted GIZ in monitoring household sanitation facilities. The development of an online monitoring platform allows for direct entry of geo-referenced data through mobile phones. In this project, GFA opted for www.kobotoolbox.org, a free web-based data collection tool for surveys, data management and analysis. Data entry points appear on a map and show all entered information.

## MajiData – ICT for water sector management

As part of the GIZ program Development of the Water and Sanitation Sector Kenya, GFA supported the Water Sector Trust Fund (WSTF) in establishing a national online water and sanitation database on urban low-income areas. The latter is publicly accessible, the data is geo-referenced and linked to satellite imagery. The tool is meant to assist the Water Service Providers (WSPs) in preparing water supply and sanitation proposals for urban low-income areas. In urban areas that MajiData* indicates as low-income, WSPs can apply for WSTF investments funds. In addition, MajiData provides sector organizations with information required to assess impact

and progress. Moreover, residents can use the tool to compare their area with other ones in order to motivate their WSPs towards service improvements or the preparation of proposals.
*http://majidata.go.ke

## Information system for protected areas in the Caucasus, Georgia

As part of a KfW project in Georgia, GFA and GFA B.I.S. have been implementing and building a pilot management information system for protected areas. In close collaboration with project partners, key components of protected area management have been identified. These help manage patrols and identify law violations and law enforcement. Natural resources management, including the monitoring of flora and fauna, conservation efforts, and the licensed use of natural resources can be facilitated. This is also the case with other operations such as the management of cultural resources, visitors, eco-education efforts, and public relations. Although the system is capable of web-based access, not all parks covered by the project have stable internet connections so that they need local installations. Yet, the national agency needs access to data from all parks for central reporting. Therefore, the data structure allows for easy transfer and integration. The system is based on GFA's own Triple I platform which facilitates a combination of technical, financial, and visual
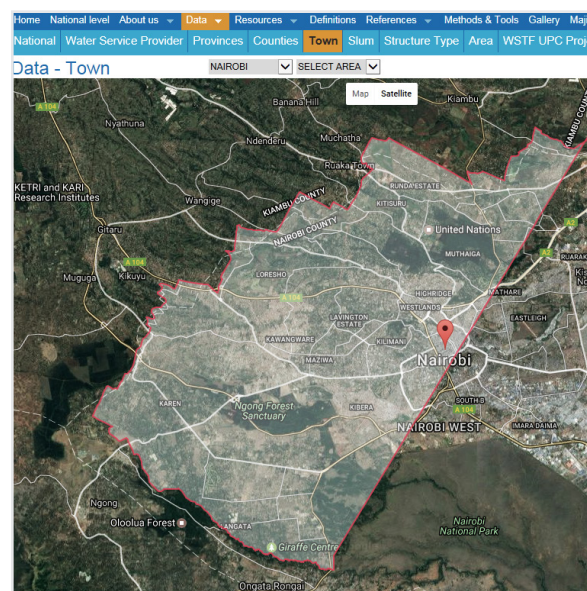


Detailed data information at http://majidata.go.ke/

data. Together with a GIS module contributed by Geo Consult International, geographical data offers a presentation of key information on a map. The system's design takes potential extensions with offline capabilities for use on tablets into account from the start.

## ICT for decentralization processes in Togo

Since November 2014, GFA on behalf of KfW has been supporting the development and piloting of an ICT-based tool for crowdsourcing citizen feedback in Togo. Today, three Togolese municipalities use SMS surveys to receive citizens' feedback on municipal policy making. The concept of SYSEC (**SY**stème de **S**uivi **E**valuation Par les **C**itoyens) is unique worldwide as the SMS data are published and analyzed so

that recommendations and municipal decrees can be formulated. This innovative tool is embedded in existing municipal structures and is characterized by a vast range of features. The most important success factors are the system's free short-codes, open and closed questions, anonymous publication, interactive mobilization, accessibility and user-friendliness. SYSEC strengthens accountability and fosters the focus on deliberative processes and dialogue between city administration and citizens. A functioning multi-stakeholder design connects citizens, a municipal coordination committee, the mayor, volunteers, civil society, the media, etc. In the past, surveys covered topics such as waste management, free-running cattle or the planning of municipal infrastructure. More than 2,000 participants took part in a recent survey

in Sokodé city. Many of them were women and young people whose level of direct interaction with municipal authorities is otherwise quite limited. The freeware-based platform is designed to be modular, scalable and adaptable in order to be ready for future applications. SYSEC is planned to be extended to other cities and to be improved further. For example, an interactive voice response system based on Freeswitch* is planned to make this tool more accessible to illiterate users.

*https://freeswitch.org

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Key elements: training and data collection

GFA Consulting Group is a growing consulting organization active in international economic development. The main sectors of the company comprise agriculture & rural development, natural resources management, climate change, energy, good governance, public finance management, private sector development, education, skills & employment, financial systems development, health and water & sanitation. GFA Consulting Group presently works in more than 90 countries and is implementing about 330 projects and studies.

GFA vision – to be the partner of choice for clients in our core service areas.

GFA mission – to improve the livelihood of beneficiaries through our professional services.

GFA core values – to offer high performance in service delivery, technical excellence in our main sectors, innovative approaches and products, and credibility with our clients when putting projects into practice.

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