

# **GRACE introduced at the first ever Communications Authority of Zambia (CAZ) ICT research symposium**

GRACE Zambia researcher, Kiss Brian Abraham, introduced the GRACE project at the first ever CAZ ICT research symposium in Zambia on 22 October 2008. The two-day event held at Southern Sun Hotel in Lusaka was organized in pursuance of the Zambia telecommunications act under section 5(2) (d), chapter 469 of the laws of Zambia. The objectives of the symposium included catalyzing development of related research capacity within the Authority, higher learning institutions and generally in Zambia with the view to aiding sustainable development of the ICT sector; aiding the Authority to improve on key deliverables in the sector; assisting the Authority to identify areas for potential research in the ICT sector aimed at accelerating development of telecommunications and ICTs in Zambia, and; identifying and creating relationships and synergies with Zambian researchers in the area of telecommunications and ICTs.

In her opening speech at the symposium, the Minister of Communications and Transport, honorable Dora Siliya, lamented at the absence of ICT research material specific to Zambia. She said in cases where there was research material on Zambia it was either grouped with that of other countries or not all encompassing enough; she expressed hope that the symposium would be a starting point for progress in the sector. The event, which was open to the public, attracted around fifty participants. The participants were either presenting their papers on completed or ongoing research in Zambia, or presenting proposals to the CAZ on areas of potential research.

Kiss Brian Abraham presented a paper titled 'Introducing GRACE Zambia.' In his presentation, he shared that GRACE was committed to women's progress, that the first GRACE project in Zambia yielded a chapter included in *African Women and ICTs: Investigating Technology, Gender and Empowerment* edited by Ineke Buskens and Anne Webb (Zed Books, March 2009); and that GRACE in Zambia was in the process of developing a new research design exploring how women use the internet as a means of self expression. Kiss said that there were many benefits gained through participation in the GRACE network, which is a network of researchers across twelve countries in Africa, and that these benefits can be replicated nationally when Zambian ICT researchers form cohesive networks. He went on to share that it was wonderful that CAZ took the initiative of bringing a broad spectrum of researchers in the country together and that this was a first step in forming links among Zambians and Zambian organizations that would work to formulate collective knowledge to meet Zambia's needs for progressive development. There was a lively debate on the presentation. Participants exhibited an interest in the methodology, in particular in the use of outcome mapping and appreciative inquiry in research projects, and how these approaches can be engaged in transformative research. Other debates revolved around the GRACE Zambia research process in carrying out gender and ICT for empowerment focused research, which was uncommon in the Zambian context.

The event was officially closed by Mr. Richard Mwanza, Acting CEO of CAZ. Mr. Mwanza said that the event was an eye opening experience for his institution and that more events would be organized around ICT in Zambia in the future. He encouraged the participating researchers to continue with their work. The event was chaired by Dr. L. Nyirenda, Chief Technical advisor- UNIDO – Renewable energy ICT Project Zambia, Dr. Mupanga Mwanakatwe, Dr. SOC Mwaba, UNZA Lecturer and Dr. Mubanga Lombe, UNZA Lecturer.