

The Challenges and Success Factors of Internet Connectivity Initiatives Around the World and Policy Implications



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INTRODUCTION

The past thirty years have seen tremendous growth in the capabilities and reach of **Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)**. The Internet, especially, has become a critical enabler of social and economic change, transforming how government, business and citizens interact and enabling new ways of addressing **economic opportunity and social development challenges**; governments, business, civil society and individuals have adopted ICTs extensively.

The **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are 17 targets for global development set to be achieved by 2030. These goals address specific challenges such as extreme poverty, child mortality rates, and disease epidemics and aim at building a global partnership for development. **ICTs and the Internet** enable more effective collaboration between development stakeholders and new ways to manage programmes and can help accelerate progress towards achieving these SDGs.

< 10% of people in **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** access the Internet, compared with more than **80% in developed countries** (particularly in rural areas). This reduces the extent to which people can use the Internet to achieve the SDGs.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



OBJECTIVE

- > To **ESTABLISH STANDARDS** of these stakeholders (policy makers and practitioners in area of technology and development) to collect accurate data.
- > To **RAISE CAPACITY** in the sectors of digital literacy, gender equality, health, agriculture, mobile money, and e-government by investigating the empirical impact of internet connectivity on key development outcomes with controlled trials.
- > To **IDENTIFY** new pathways for sustainable internet connectivity initiatives and analyze these trends in all public sectors.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

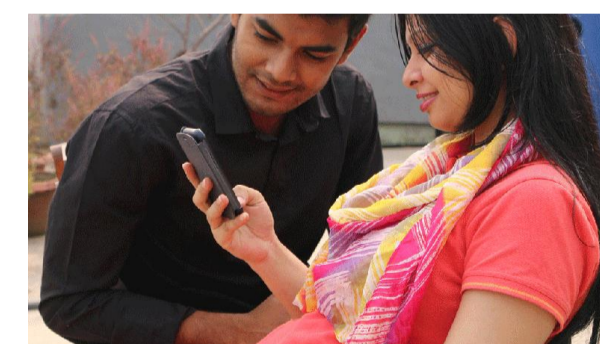
- 1) What are the **supply side efforts** to extend internet coverage vs **demand side**?
- 2) How should **collaboration** among a broad set of **actors** occur across all stages of the data?
- 3) What **incentives** can promote the use of data governance as it pertains to ICT-based initiatives at the **local** and **national** levels?
- 4) What should be the **roles** and **responsibilities** for individuals in producing quality and timely data?

SDG CASE STUDY: ICTs and Gender

- Regularly-collected, high quality data on women and girls can inform decisions for policies and programs.
- It is important to gather **intersectional data** that captures differences based on **income, age, race, ethnicity, location (urban/ rural), indigenous status, migration status, disability**, and other characteristics.
- Despite an increase in the number of initiatives, gender data gaps persist, due to **low prioritization, low resources** or **capacity** driving a low country coverage in gender data collection efforts, and poorly developed or **non-existent international standards**.
- Just **13%** of countries have a budget for collecting gender statistics and only **22%** of the **54 gender-specific indicators** in the SDGs are produced with regularity worldwide

APONJON (BANGLADESH)

- > Aponjon is an example of an initiative with accurate and comprehensive **data collection** as well as meaningful **impact**.
- > Aponjon is a global, public-private mobile health **information service** established under USAID's Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action (MAMA)
- > It serves to supply expectant and new mothers and their families mobile phone messages in order to stimulate behavior changes for **improved maternal, newborn, and child health outcomes**.
- > It has **EXPLICIT IMPACT INDICATORS** THAT MEASURE:
 - Number of pregnant women subscribed
 - Number of new mothers subscribed
 - Number of community agents trained and active
 - Reports of an increase in prenatal and antenatal health visits



Proper collection of data helps with access to critical public and social services as well as the protection of human rights. Without the recognition of ICTs and the Internet, crucial opportunities to achieve developmental goals may be missed

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Multi-stakeholder engagement is essential for overcoming barriers to ICT adoption

- Actors include governments; organizations from the private sector, academia, civil society, the UN, Academic institutions and think tanks, National statistics offices, multilaterals, and development partners

These actors have a wide set of **roles** and **responsibilities** that must be **operationalized to reach these objectives**:

- To ensure an enabling legal and regulatory environment for Internet access and applications, and facilitate cybersecurity
- Stimulate the development of content, services and applications that are accessible to **all social groups**, including women and girls, rural and urban dwellers, low-income users and those who speak minority languages
- Build a more substantial evidence base concerning the relationship between the Internet and sustainable development
- Develop policies, services, tools and applications that will bring the benefits of Internet access and use to everyone

Social constraints are a huge determinant of the efficacy of local initiatives

- The existing evidence suggest that rural, low-income populations live within complex systems of disadvantages and, as a result, ICT-based initiatives are likely to grapple with not just with financial barriers to access but also **social and cultural ones**.

More reliable data is essential for evidence-based policymaking across all SDG

- Too many people are **invisible** in data and therefore invisible in **decision-making**; setting policies without core information or timely analysis means resources are wasted and their impact is limited.
- In sectors such as gender equality, **data disaggregation** remains a key challenge across sectors as most data are collected at the **household** rather than **individual** level.

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