

How can ICT be used effectively across a variety of sectors to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals? What can we learn from ICT pilot projects in developing countries about proper design, sustainability and impact of such interventions? infoDev commissioned Gamos to conduct a detailed analysis of seventeen ICT-for-development projects it had funded in the past several years to capture lessons about how, and why, such projects succeed or fail.

The widespread hope within the international development community that ICTs could be a powerful tool of development and poverty reduction, and of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, led to a proliferation of donor-funded ICT-for-development pilot projects in several sectors in a wide range of countries in the past decade. Yet, by the time the international community was preparing to convene in Geneva in November 2003 for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), there was a growing uneasiness about the lack of detailed information on the implementation of these projects, and rigorous evaluation of their impact.

To contribute to a sober assessment of this experience, and to promote a dialogue about how to conduct such assessments, infoDev commissioned in 2003 a detailed review of a cross-section of 17 of the more than 100 ICT pilot projects it had funded in the past several years. The main criterion for selecting projects for this analysis was to be as representative as possible of the various environments (political, economic, social and geographic) in which infoDev had been funding projects since its inception. An effort was also made to provide a balanced sample of more and less "successful" projects. Rather than selecting the "best projects", priority was given to those initiatives likely to offer the richest lessons and knowledge about how, and under what conditions, such initiatives succeed or fail to have a sustainable impact on the lives of their intended beneficiaries. The analysis focuses in particular on the ways in which, and the extent to which, these projects contributed to the Millennium Development Goals.

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