



ICT and health: 12 key lessons

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These lessons are from a framework paper that emerged from the Infodev research project on the type of information and communication technology (ICT) interventions used in the health sector.

1. Technology is not an end in itself, but is a tool to enhance existing work, strengthen existing systems, achieve broader health and development goals and meet locally determined needs.
2. Successful inclusion of ICTs in ongoing health programming depends on the active involvement of beneficiaries and end users from the beginning in determining information needs, type of content and the most appropriate technology to use.
3. Local conditions determine success. Therefore, the choice of ICT tools in the health sector should depend on local availability and access, whether it is the Internet, radio, portable computers, video, television broadcasts, newspapers or anything else that is being used. Locally available technical solutions should be prioritised.
4. The simplest possible technology solution is likely to be the most appropriate, user friendly and sustainable. The use of any technology should build on and complement information and communication technologies already being used.
5. No single technology will be suitable for all situations. Innovative and creative combinations of old and new ICTs will provide added value and new possibilities.
6. Capacity development and training components need to be included in all ICT initiatives. They should build on existing knowledge and help to strengthen the local ICT skills market.
7. Developing local and international multi-stakeholder partnerships supports communities to become more self-sufficient through capacity enhancement, and by building on existing formal and non-formal communication networks.
8. The enabling environment is crucial to providing information and communication services, innovation and entrepreneurship and free flow of information. The infrastructure required by the technology being used needs to be in place, or in the process of being put in place.
9. Regular monitoring and evaluation of impact generates successful use of ICTs. Incorporating plans for monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment into interventions ensures critical evaluation of efforts and adaptation as interventions develop. This makes use of the important communication principle of feedback and provides opportunities to involve the beneficiaries and end users in continuous dialogue about how the programme is progressing.
10. Sharing learning and disseminating experience by linking up with others doing similar work helps to design ICT interventions so they reflect an understanding of the different ways people learn, communicate and use information.
11. Addressing the needs of the poor and most marginalised, particularly women and girls is vital. Gender considerations should constantly be applied when undertaking an ICT activity.
12. A clear and expressed plan for sustainability ensures that capital replacement and operating costs are identified up front as well as ICT infrastructure requirements and capacity to maintain the programme and its impact.

To access the framework paper, summary framework paper, literature review, online bibliography and online discussion summary see the ICTs and health window at

www.asksource.info/res_library/ict.htm

For more information contact **Andrew Chetley** chetley.a@healthlink.org.uk