

ICT in the Health Sector

Online Consultation: Key Findings

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- 'ICT & Health' needs to be viewed within the context of a complex landscape of development practice, development goals and targets, and within a wide range of sectors and ICT applications.
- The theme of interconnectedness was a major one in the consultation, with many participants pointing to the interconnectedness of MDG targets, development sectors and different applications of ICTs.
- ICT should not be viewed in isolation as a means in itself or as a development area – ICTs are a tool for development, and primarily for informatics and communication.
- There is a range of definitions of ICT within the health and development sectors, as well as a tendency for practitioners in the field to focus on the issue of definitions and barriers rather than on impact analysis.
- The consultation showed that there is insufficient 'impact' data about ICTs and health, and that this data is much desired by ICT in health advocates in order to 'prove' effectiveness.
- There is insufficient learning about macro level evaluation and impact analysis for ICT and health, and also for ICT in development more broadly. The consultation pointed to the problem of a 'pilot syndrome' in ICT and health – there are many case studies and pilots but not enough scaling-up of initiatives or shared learning for use on a national or regional level.
- It is a challenge to replicate best practice projects and innovations in other contexts in the absence of detailed impact analysis due to the vital role of context in all communication endeavours.
- ICTs need to be viewed as part of the process of communications, with all the multifaceted issues and conditionality that that implies; as tools they need to fit in with the context.
- ICTs are only as good as the communication they enable. There is an imperative for appropriate forms of communication that are delivered and accessible in such a way that they have an impact on behaviour and on access to information for health.
- There is enthusiasm about ICT in health at project and policy levels, and a wide range of case studies point to the effectiveness and impact of 'old', 'new' and 'convergent' technologies and innovations.
- HIV and AIDS is the dominant health issue when examining the communication aspect of ICTs in health. HIV and AIDS lead the field in the number of ICT and health projects, evaluations and reviews that are available.
- The consultation pointed to the potential of ICT for addressing other diseases – and increasingly emergent diseases – particularly via telemedicine and informatics interventions using ICTs.

See www.asksource.info for a full online bibliography, literature review and framework paper from the research on ICT and the health sector.