

The Bellagio Initiative

Global Dialogue Summary

November 2011

ICTs and Development

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As part of a series of global dialogues, in September 2011 IDS Knowledge Services brought together and facilitated an online community to discuss the relationship between living well and ICTs.

The online forum was held over three days from 27 to 29 September. It was hosted on the Eldis Communities platform and was facilitated by Abigail Murphy and Kelly Shephard. Technical support was provided by Adrian Bannister, Knowledge Services, IDS.

The objective of the forum was to bring together a wide range of voices that would help to shape the Bellagio Summit in November.

This document reflects on the approach taken and summarises the views expressed.

Why people and problems come before ICT

The facilitation team chose to frame the discussions around three broad thematic areas:

1. What is the value of focusing International Development on Human Wellbeing? What do we mean by ICTs in this context?
2. In what ways can ICTs help in improving the ways in which we live well together? What particular case studies are you aware of that help illustrate this?
3. What new technologies, communications and platforms do you see as beneficial for promoting and protecting wellbeing? What others don't achieve these objectives as well?

With attendees from all around the world, the Initiative wanted to ensure that there were a range of voices to provide a wide view on the subject. These ranged from academics working across the field, from University of Berkeley and IDS, to practitioners delivering ICTs to

communities around the world. Emerging over the two days were several strong themes worthy of sharing.

Wellbeing is defined differently for different people

'Poverty can hold different meanings for different people. It is not only about not having an income or not having a sufficient income, it can be about not having an enabling environment, not having access to opportunities, and in the words of one woman I remember from a story, not having the love of her husband (a case of domestic violence).' Angela Kuga Thas, APC.

Contextual analysis, particularly with regard to gender roles, is key

'... why infolady? Why not man? In Bangladesh a lady is accepted inside homestead without any restriction and majority of service recipients are women. Women feel comfortable to describe her problem with a woman and a major portion of women used her service to receive medical (gynaecological) advice.' Masum Billah, DNet.

ICTS are an enabler but not the cause of improving human wellbeing – the technology is not the only part of the solution

'First it starts with what people may value, not with what ICT producers think they may value. Second, it suggests that we pause and recall that ICTs embrace so many different possibilities, not of all of which may be valued by everyone.' Robin Mansell, LSE.

It's not just about 'new' technologies

'Not just about new technologies but technologies used in an innovative way.' Angela Kuga Than, APC.

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The excellent participants deserve almost all the credit for the quality of the discussion, but good facilitation also played an important role to ensure its smooth running. The facilitators felt, this online forum has reinforced a strong point: that technology is just a tool – how and who uses those tools determines their value.

As Ken Banks, kiwanja.net, so succinctly put it in the forum ... 'Let's start with the people, then the problem. And then the tech.'



The Future of
Philanthropy and
Development in the
Pursuit of Human
Wellbeing

Credits
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The Bellagio Initiative is a series of global consultations to produce a new framework for philanthropic and international development collaboration in pursuit of human wellbeing in the 21st century. The project is led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), the Resource Alliance and the Rockefeller Foundation.

