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Governance and ICT4D Initiative Success: A Longitudinal Field Study of Ten Villages in Rural India

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Abstract

Initiatives to leverage information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) have attracted huge investments, especially in less developed countries. However, the success rate of such initiatives has been low. Prior research on this topic has argued for various individual and network characteristics as predictors of information and communication technology (ICT) use and consequent benefits. We argue that, in order to garner potential benefits of the local information and knowledge resources embedded in citizens' advice networks, hybrid governance that combines leadership by the local government and the technology sponsor is required. We further theorize that leadership by the local government or the technology sponsor for different stages of the ICT4D initiative affects the salience of the pathways through which benefits of citizens' advice networks accrue. We found support, in a longitudinal field study in 10 villages in India (2,980 heads of households), for our theory that hybrid governance modes outperform those that are homogeneous. Leadership by the local government for the pre-launch stage and by the technology sponsor for the post-launch stage was the most effective in promoting the behavioral pathway for economic benefits—that is, leveraging advice networks for ICT use and consequently realizing gains in income. In contrast, leadership by the technology sponsor for the pre-launch stage and by the local government for the post-launch stage was the most effective in promoting the informational pathway—that is, leveraging information and knowledge from advice networks to directly generate gains in income. Adjacent villages that did not have a similar ICT4D initiative did not experience a comparable growth in farmer income.