



University

CRS Faculty Learning Commons

Spring 2015 Session 2 - [ICT4D: Better Business](#)

Discussion Guide

Readings/Video Resources:

Discussion Prompt #1: What exactly is ICT4D? And what do we mean by resilience?

- a) ["ICT4D: Building Resilience Through Innovation,"](#) (video, 5:23), by CRS
- b) [Mobile Phone Usage Explodes in Africa Spurring Innovation](#) (video, 9:00), by PBS Newshour.

Questions for discussion:

- 1) The use of mobile devices is talked about as a “fundamental transformation” in the field of international development. Is this transformation surprising to you? Why or why not? Substantiate your comments with at least one statistic or example from the resources.
- 2) One goal of using ICT4D is “sustainable development.” After viewing the PBS video on mobile phone usage in Kenya, select one of the ways that a particular group in Kenya is utilizing mobile devices (from Google professionals to rural farmers). Who is benefiting from this particular innovation? How (profit, health, etc.)? Is this “sustainable development” in your view? Why or why not?

Discussion Prompt #2 – Case study on using digital to support business in farming

We have learned about the presence and promise of information communication technologies in developing countries. What does ICT4D look like in action for CRS? How does a simple mobile device improve the quality of a field agent’s work in bringing farm products to market?

Readings:

- a) [Agriculture and Livelihoods: Using Digital to Support Business Applications](#) (video, 31:00), by Shaun Ferris. Ferris discusses how information technology is enhancing business services (e.g., linking farmers to markets) and transforming small-holder farming.

Questions for discussion:

- 1) Take note of the Recover, Build, Grow diagram. Why does CRS target its technology work at field agents (or extension agents)? What is a field agent and what skills does he/she need?
- 2) How is technology helping field agents be more effective at their work (give examples)?
- 3) What is the impact of shifting to a fee-based model for support in business planning and finance? (Think field agents as entrepreneurs.)
- 4) Ferris stated that “private capital ‘dwarfs’ development capital.” How will technology and the data it provides be part of an increased role for private capital in international development, in your view?
- 5) What did you find surprising about Mr. Ferris’s presentation? (For example, were you surprised by the initial amount of increase in profit for farmers working with CRS - \$30-50 gains - per year?)
- 6) Do you have a question you would ask Mr. Ferris and his colleagues if given the chance?

Discussion Prompt #3: ICT and Sustainable Development - The ethical implications

Finally, let’s focus on the principles and decision-making that drive the use of information and communication technology in international development. How does an organization like CRS integrate goals of efficiency and justice?

Readings:

- a) [Principles for Digital Development](#), by the Greentree Consensus
- b) “Information Technology and Development: Know Before you Go,” March 2015 blogpost by CRS featuring CRS ICT experts See: <http://university.crs.org/blog/information-technology-and-development-“know-you-go”>

Questions for discussion:

- 1) What, in your view, facilitates “adoption of ICT”? Make a link to the Greentree Principles and or CRS’ “Know Before you Go” blogpost if possible.
- 2) Steve Hellen, Director of Global Knowledge and Information Management at CRS, states that ICT in development is “disruptive.” Google “information technology, international development, and disruption” to learn more about “disruptive innovation.” (See [this article](#) for one position on technology as disruption. See also [this interview](#) with USAID Director Rajiv Shah from the Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 64, No. 1 Fall/Winter 2010.) What are some reasons that ICT can be “disruptive” in developing countries? Is disruption a good thing?

- 3) Do you think that information technology is “disruptive” in your own community? Briefly describe one way that information technology has a significant impact on your quality of life. For better or worse? (For example, is your phone a definitive part of the way you learn and socialize? Does it determine the way you and your peers spend your time and make choices that do or do not make the world a better place? Is your smartphone part of a business value chain? Who is profiting?)