



BRIEFING NOTE

HARNESSING ICT TO SCALE-UP AGRICULTURAL SOLUTIONS

A RESEARCH PROJECT BY FARM RADIO TRUST AND FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL

Scaling-up agricultural innovations that can contribute to food and nutrition security is one of the key challenges facing development organizations, research institutions, governments and the civil society. This research initiative will examine the role and contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in enabling the scaling-up of agricultural solutions. The project aims at developing, testing and sharing a conceptual framework for implementing and assessing gender-responsive ICT-for-scale (ICT4scale) initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa.



RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite the development and testing of agricultural innovations that have demonstrated potential to enhance household food and nutrition security and contribute to rural development, there remain important challenges to their uptake at scale by smallholder farmers and rural communities. In effect, many development initiatives still tend to be short-lived and isolated, thus failing to deliver sustainable impact at scale.

Although the issue of achieving impact at scale has always been a preoccupation of the international development community, recent years have seen an increased effort by development organizations, donors, research institutions and governments to more explicitly study and address the challenges of scaling-up innovations in complex social-ecological environments. As a result, many research and development initiatives are currently being implemented to identify, develop and test strategies to scale-up agricultural innovations – technological, social, institutional, policy.

Within that context, there is a recognition that information and communication technologies (ICTs) could play an important role in enhancing scaling-up processes by facilitating interactions, linkages and networking among key stakeholders and making information about innovations, markets, and weather available, accessible and affordable to farmers. There remain important gaps, however, in our understanding of the developmental impact of ICTs, their impact on gender dynamics, and their potential contribution to scaling agricultural innovations.

AT A GLANCE

IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONS

- > Farm Radio Trust (Malawi)
- > Farm Radio International (Canada)

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- > Global, with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa

PROJECT LEADERS

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RESEARCH TEAM

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PROJECT SCHEDULE

- > April 2017-October 2019



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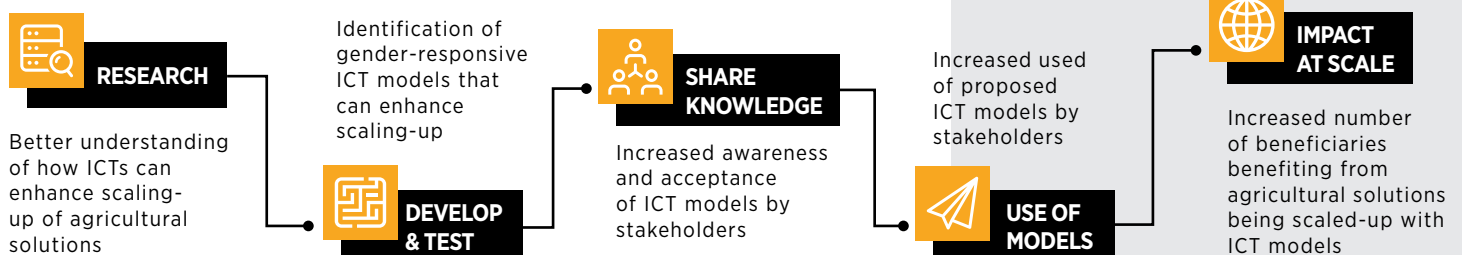
RESEARCH QUESTIONS



This project aims to contribute to the overall challenge of scaling agricultural solutions in rural developing regions, specifically in sub-Saharan Africa, through a study focused on the role and contributions of ICT. Questions to be addressed include:

1. What combinations of ICT, actors and institutional arrangements are most effective in scaling agricultural solutions?
2. What strategies for the use of ICT are successful in facilitating the scaling of solutions, e.g. interaction with audiences, type and quality assurance of information and content?
3. What are the gender equality considerations of ICT-enabled scaling of agricultural solutions?
4. How and by whom are ICT being designed, applied and tested as part of business models that lead to successful scaling of solutions and practices?
5. What barriers may limit the reach or effectiveness of ICTs in scaling initiatives?

IMPACT PATHWAY



Follow the progress of our research on social media by searching **#ICT4Scale**

INTERACTIVE
LEARNING
PLATFORM



INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED?

> The research team in this project is looking to form an interactive learning platform of interested organizations, projects and programs in the field of ICT for agriculture scale-up. If you are interested in joining this learning platform please email mleclair@farmradio.org with an explanation of your link to the topic. Members of this group may be engaged in case study and intervention research work throughout the project based on their relevance to the research topic and their geographic focus.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The main research outcome of this project will be a conceptual framework and tested working models for the implementation of gender-responsive ICT4Scale that could be shared with key stakeholders involved in scaling agricultural innovations. The project will use a variety of research methods:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic and grey literature on scaling concepts, business models and practices, gender dynamics, and recent advances on scaling solutions using ICT, will be reviewed and synthesized.

META-RESEARCH

Impact assessments and findings from a set of existing ICT-enhanced scaling-up initiatives implemented worldwide will be synthesized using content analysis of documents, surveys, and interviews.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies will be conducted in sub-Saharan Africa to examine in more detail the functioning and impact of concrete scaling-up initiatives.

INTERVENTION RESEARCH

This component will involve the implementation and testing of elements of our ICT4Scale models within existing initiatives, and the assessment of their impact on beneficiaries.



LEARNING PLATFORM

To broaden the use of ICT4Scale, the project will initiate the establishment of a collaborative learning platform to share the project's lessons and research findings across a diverse set of stakeholders - donors, NGOs, policy makers, researchers, and private businesses both in Canada and internationally, but also to facilitate knowledge sharing among them.

RESEARCH TEAM

FARM RADIO TRUST

Farm Radio Trust (FRT) is a leading organization in the field of information, communication, extension and advisory services in Malawi with a growing reputation and involvement in program and policy development across sub-Saharan Africa. FRT is an indigenous non-governmental organization (NGO) whose main goal is to promote ICT-based extension and advisory services in Malawi.

FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL

Farm Radio International (FRI) is a Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to serving African farming families and rural communities through the innovative use of radio and mobile phones. FRI's network of radio broadcasters includes more than 650 radio partners across 40 sub-Saharan African countries. Building the capacity of these stations and their local stakeholders is central to FRI's approach to building viable communication platforms for long-term sustainable development.