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Our themes

DEMOCRACY ICT enhances communication and the right to freedom of expression, as well as the right to seek, receive and impart information. ICT has the potential to increase citizen's participation in decision making processes, thus strengthening democratization.

EDUCATION Education is one of the most critical building blocks for social change. ICT for education (ICT4E) can support a number of vital functions including: educational administration and management; student access to quality education; professional development of teachers; and, development of locally relevant content.

HEALTH Improved health and poverty reduction go hand in hand, not least since good health is a prerequisite for better living conditions. Smart combinations of ICT can be used to improve planning and delivery of health services, as well as awareness raising and preventive measures, not least through edutainment efforts that combine different media and communication technologies in innovative ways.

This is Spider

At Spider we believe in an interconnected world built in the spirit of digital solidarity for future generations.

The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (Spider) is a resource center for ICT for Development (ICT4D). Spider was established in 2004 and is based at the Department of Computer and Systems Sciences (DSV) at Stockholm University.

We function like a node in a network of actors from academia, public sector, private sector, and civil society. Networking and brokering of knowledge and expertise is combined with support to innovative ICT4D projects in partner countries.

Our mission is to support the innovative use of ICT for development and poverty reduction in partner countries through synergistic partnerships, while strengthening the global ICT4D knowledge base through collaborative networking, strategic brokering, and open sharing of information.

We serve as an independent source of knowledge and expertise. Our network ranges from a core of 230 experts in 40 countries to 800 stakeholders around the world, along with a network of 17 partner universities in Sweden. We play the role of ICT4D broker, connecting partners in developing countries with local or international expertise, while facilitating the generation and dissemination of ICT4D knowledge.

We offer catalytic seed funding to innovative ICT4D projects in partner countries. Initiatives must be demand-driven, while corresponding to our thematic and geographic focus.

We encourage a multi-stakeholder, participatory project approach, aligned with development and poverty reduction priorities. We can only offer partial funding, but can help partners attract complementary support from other sources.

We focus primarily on the twelve priority countries for Swedish development cooperation: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. The geographical scope is narrower for our ICT4D projects in partner countries and broader for the Spider network.

Our activities align with a number of themes and issues that we believe are particularly relevant to work with. Technological issues of interest to us are low cost and high quality technology, free and open source software (FOSS) and mobile technology for development (M4D). Youth empowerment, cultural creativity and capacity development are crosscutting development priorities.

Most importantly we work within the three thematic areas Democracy, Education and Health. These sectors of society are key for sustainable development and poverty alleviation, and where we believe ICT can make a difference.

About ICT4D

ICT4D (Information and Communication Technology for Development) is not just about technology. It is about helping poor and marginalized communities across the world to benefit from technology to improve the quality of their lives.

ICT offers a powerful tool, but opportunities must be carefully weighed against risks. If the education sector invests in computers instead of teachers, students are not likely to benefit from e-learning; if patients are unable to receive health care in time, it does not really matter how sophisticated information systems doctors have access to; and unless they can achieve greater political influence, efforts to organize and mobilize citizens by mobiles or social media will not improve the structures of public participation. When measured in terms of real impact, it is clear that ICT is but one of many components of social development, yet a particularly complex and dynamic one.

ICT4D is by nature multi-disciplinary, and interventions require a multi-stakeholder approach, not least to keep abreast with and take full advantage of rapid technological developments. Transparent communication between actors is not just an aspiration but a necessity in ICT4D, which is why knowledge brokering is one of the main functions of Spider.

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Read more at www.spidercenter.org



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