Agricultural research organizations, governments and civil society are increasingly looking at how to successfully scale-up agriculture and food security innovations to bring more benefits to more people and have lasting impact. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) can play an important role in greater uptake of innovations. Communication tools, methods and approaches can help create interaction between partners, share information about the innovation to potential beneficiaries and distribute materials, services and products related to the innovation. 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.
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.

- Many development initiatives still tend to be short-lived and isolated, thus failing to deliver sustainable impact at scale.
- The exact mechanisms for scale-up remain elusive, especially in agriculture.
- A lack of full integration of ICTs into projects limits their ability to truly scale.
- The gender dynamics at play in scaling agricultural solutions are not generally well understood or capitalized on.

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 donors, implementers and other key actors and by making information about innovations, markets, and weather available, accessible and affordable to farmers.

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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?

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.

IMPACT PATHWAY

Better understanding of how ICTs can enhance scaling-up of agricultural solutions

Identification of gender-responsive ICT models that can enhance scaling-up

Increased awareness and acceptance of ICT models by stakeholders

Increased use of proposed ICT models by stakeholders

Increased number of beneficiaries benefiting from agricultural solutions being scaled-up with ICT models

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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 including implementers, donors, farmers and media partners. 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-REVIEW**
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.

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