**PAPER NUMBER #394**

**What ICT4D interventions work to improve economic growth in low- and middle income countries? A rapid review**

**Presenting Author**

Annette N. Brown

**Affiliation**

FHI 360

**Country of residence**

United States of America

**Objectives/aims**

The United Nations characterizes the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) as a way to “fast forward” progress toward the sustainable development goals. Many policymakers look to ICT for low-cost methods to address market failures, which are barriers to economic growth. ICT can reduce asymmetric information and transaction costs and can also increase productivity and market access and entry. In this rapid evidence review, we assess which ICT interventions work to improve economic growth outcomes in low- and middle-income countries.

**Methods**

To conduct a rapid review of the impact evaluation evidence, we begin with an existing evidence map of 254 impact evaluations of ICT interventions covering 11 intervention categories across nine sectors in low- and middle-income countries. We include in the review all studies coded in the economic growth, trade and finance sector on the map. We identify and describe the relevant theories of change for these evaluated interventions. We conduct critical appraisal using a tool developed for practitioners. Focusing on effects measured with few or some limitations, we group the evidence by intervention type and by theory of change and synthesize the evidence. We include 27 impact evaluations, which cover interventions in seven of the nine ICT categories.

**Main findings**

Following critical appraisal, we find that the majority of the studies have some or many limitations, with only a small number having few limitations. While there are four, five, and eleven studies each for e-governance, digital information services, and digital finance, respectively, the interventions are highly heterogeneous. Synthesis for most categories reveals null to small positive effects, which may suggest that situations suffer from more market failures than addressed by ICT. Two thirds of the interventions evaluated are programs rather than research pilots, however, only one-fifth of the studies provide any information about cost.