

ICTs as an agent of change

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“ICTs are particularly important in the sectors of the economy that rely on the provision and transmission of information, as well as transactions based on that information.”

Forum speaker

While there is much that the ICT industry can itself do to advertise the productivity benefits of new infrastructure and services, efforts to integrate technology and communications deeper within industry verticals will require the various stakeholders involved to define new, collaborative roles.

Healthcare is one area where ICT can transform services, reducing costs and increasing efficiency as issues like remote patient monitoring and improved clinical interaction come to the fore. This is more than a question of technological sophistication – those most in need of healthcare services are often those who are digitally excluded.

To begin with, the role of ICT in healthcare needs to be consistently understood by all parties, whether user or supplier. While disease surveillance is the scene of ICT-based innovation in the United States, for example, progress may be hampered by the fragmentation of current initiatives. As such, national frameworks are needed, under which government is a sophisticated and model user of ICT. In this light, there is much that can be learned from suppliers and indeed from wider consumer behaviors – Web 2.0 can enhance information and feedback services, for example.

Even once central policies are in place, challenges await, with the demand to embed ICT in existing national infrastructure potentially competing with frameworks that empower local communities to improve patient outreach in remote areas. For the time being, top-down and bottom-up approaches will co-exist, particularly in developing markets, which represents an ongoing challenge to policy-makers.

