



## From the Guest Editor

### *Selected Papers from ICTD2010*

The International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICTD) continues its momentum as the premier interdisciplinary scholarly conference on information communication technologies and development. This past March, the fifth ICTD conference was held in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Attendees at ICTD2012 cheered the announcement that the sixth conference would be held in Cape Town, South Africa, in late 2013.

This special issue of *Information Technologies & International Development (ITID)* presents selected articles originating from the fourth ICTD, held in London, UK. ICTD2010 built on previous conferences held in Doha, Qatar (2009), Bangalore, India (2007), and Berkeley, California, USA (2006). Under the leadership of General Chair Tim Unwin and General Programme Chair Dorothea Kleine, ICTD2010 expanded to a four-day event that explicitly reached out to nonresearchers and sought open discussion. The two days of paper presentations, which have formed the research program of ICTD from the beginning, were complemented by two days of participatory activities involving panels, workshops, and other interactive sessions. The conference registered nearly 600 participants.

The paper program attracted 140 submissions, 30 of which were returned to authors without review because they were not full-length research papers. The remaining 110 papers went through a double-blind review process involving three reviewers—two reviewers selected to match a paper's domain and methodology and one reviewer chosen from outside the paper's field to provide the fresh perspective critical to interdisciplinarity. For 2010, a Senior Programme Committee was formed to guide the review process and to provide an additional level of reading for controversial papers. Ultimately, 19 submissions were accepted for oral presentation, and an additional 36 studies were chosen for poster presentation.

For this special issue, the 19 oral submissions were reviewed by a subgroup of the Senior Programme Committee, and the eight studies perceived to be the strongest were chosen for submission to *ITID*. After an additional round of reviews by *ITID*, seven manuscripts were selected for publication. As a result of the additional review cycle, the studies have evolved beyond their initial ICTD submissions, increasing the quality of articles that were already very strong.

The articles in this ICTD2010 Special Issue are:

- “Divided We Call: Disparities in Access and Use of Mobile Phones in Rwanda” by Joshua Blumenstock and Nathan Eagle
- “Understanding the Links Between ICT Skills Training and Employability: An Analytical Framework” by Maria Garrido, Joe Sullivan, and Andrew Gordon

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- “Digital and Other Poverties: Exploring the Connection in Four East African Countries” by Julian May
- “Correlation Between Limited Education and Transfer of Learning” by Indrani Medhi, Raghu S. Menon, Edward Cutrell, and Kentaro Toyama
- “Managing Microfinance with Paper, Pen, and Digital Slate” by Aishwarya Lakshmi Ratan, Sunandan Chakraborty, Pushkar V. Chitnis, and Kentaro Toyama
- “Impact of Low-Cost, On-Demand Information Access in a Remote Ghanaian Village” by Cliff Schmidt, Trina Gorman, Michael Gary, and Andrew Bayor
- “Looking Beyond ‘Information Provision’: The Importance of Being a Kiosk Operator in the Sustainable Access in Rural India (SARI) Project, Tamil Nadu, India” by Janaki Srinivasan

These articles reflect the proportional representation of material from ICTD2010 based on interventionist work, qualitative research, and quantitative research. Interventionist studies tend to form close to half of the program at each ICTD conference, and this issue showcases three such articles (Medhi et al.; Ratan et al.; Schmidt et al.). Two articles (Blumenstock & Eagle; May) apply an economic methodology to understanding trends in information communication technologies and development. Two additional articles (Garrido et al.; Srinivasan) consider trends and projects through qualitative methods or critical theory.

Having been with ICTD since its start in 2006 (and even before that in a preconference workshop in 2005), I am gratified to witness the various strengths of each discipline slowly but steadily diffusing across ICTD participants and *ITID* readers: The optimistic, problem-solving orientation of engineers and policy makers is influencing more analysts and observers. The care and scale of quantitative methodology is increasingly sought by interventionists. The qualitative emphasis of work in situ with a sensitivity to culture and power dynamics is all but taken for granted. Increasingly, ICTD papers incorporate hybrid methodologies that combine the best aspects of the various disciplines, making it somewhat harder to put submissions into neat categories.

Meanwhile, the tensions among our respective epistemologies, methodologies, and ideologies continue, keeping the field fertile and exciting. I have had several recent conversations with people who agree that ICTD is our favorite conference for exactly that reason. I believe the articles in this special issue provide a glimpse of what makes ICTD *ICTD*.

### **Kentaro Toyama**

*Chair, Programme Committee, ICTD2010*