**Does Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Improve Public Goods Provision?**

*Princeton’s “Improving Government Accountability and Leading Reform” Conference*

*Friday, September 21st, 2012*

*Problem*

Can information and communication technology help poor communities more effectively generate public goods? While the development community is increasingly enthusiastic about the use of ICT, there is little empirical evidence of the ultimate welfare effects of these tools.  Further, the scant available evidence does not help adjudicate between competing explanatory mechanisms.  For example, does technology decrease bureaucratic failure by giving decision makers better situational awareness? Alternatively, does technology enable citizens to exert pressure, thus altering the incentives of political elites?

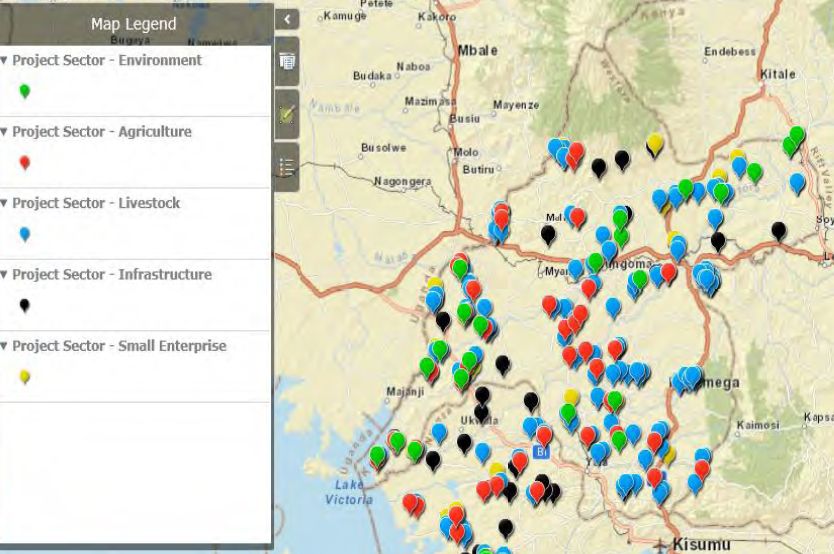
This unique field experiment seeks to explore this question in Kenya, where the government is leading the Western Kenya Community Driven Development (CDD) Project, a $100M project designed to empower local communities to engage in sustainable and wealth creating livelihood activities. The project supports over 300 community-prioritized investment projects, ranging from water points to access roads, to improve livelihoods and build demand and capacity for local level development at community and district level.

*Intervention*

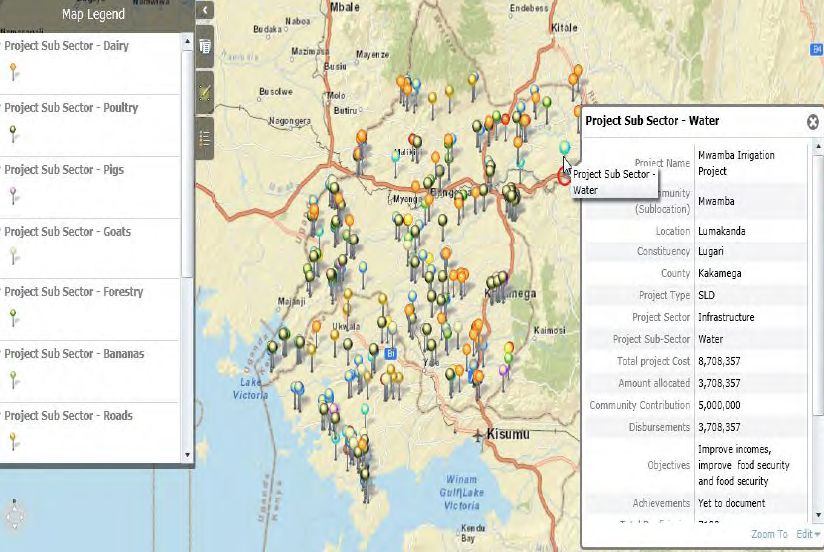
The project design seeks to test both *what* and *how*. To test the effect of ICT on project success rate, the intervention will randomize the reporting on project progress via a mobile application installed on a mobile phone running the Android operation system. The reporting will be pushed in real time to ArcGis Explorer, an online mapping platform pre-populated with the project locations. In a random sub-sample of projects, the results of mobile reporting are only available to project oversight teams. In a second random sub-sample, results will be available to project oversight teams and published in community gathering locations, on line, and via community radio stations. The third random sub-sample will be a control group.

*Mechanism and Outcomes*

This intervention seeks to disaggregate the effects of competing causal stories. The first sub-sample explores whether ICT increases situational awareness of project leaders, allowing them to do their job more effectively. The second sub-sample explores whether ICT enables public pressure, allowing citizens to publicly track the performance of projects in their community. In short, does efficiency or transparency explain how technology effects public goods allocation in developing countries?



*The ArcGis Explorer Platform with CDD projects color coded by type*



*The ArcGis Explorer Platform with project performance widget*