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PII: S2211-8837(16)30050-8  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.hlpt.2016.07.003>  
Reference: HLPT192

To appear in: *Health Policy and Technology*

Received date: 27 June 2016  
Accepted date: 11 July 2016

Cite this article as: GianLuca Quaglio, Claudio Dario, Theodoros Karapiperis, Laura Delponte, Sarah McCormack, Göran Tomson, Giorgio Micheletti, Lauren Bonnardot, Giovanni Putoto and Paolo Zanaboni, Information and communications technologies in low and middle-income countries: survey result on economic development and health (Part I), *Health Policy and Technology*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.hlpt.2016.07.003>

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**Title**

Information and communications technologies in low and middle-income countries: survey results on economic development and health (Part I)

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Despite the wide gap between the developed and developing world in terms of ICT access, ICT investment in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) has increased due to the rapid development of mobile services. However, the effects of ICTs in LMICs still remain debatable.

**Methods:** An online survey was conducted to collect feedback from experts. The questionnaire explored the role of ICTs in the economic development of LMICs, investigated the benefits and limits of e-health, and collected evaluations of past EU initiatives and opinions on future development policies. Structured interviews were also carried out with ten of the respondents.

**Results:** One hundred and forty-five experts responded to the survey. Health and education were considered to be the two main areas where ICTs can support economic development. Poor infrastructure, lack of political support and human capital, and poor affordability were main obstacles. The shortcomings of donors in fostering the role of ICTs in LMICs development were sustainability of interventions and lack of a coherent approach. The main benefits of e-health technologies in LMICs were their ability to facilitate health information and increase access to health care. Remote data collection, training for healthcare workers and education were the most effective m-health applications. Poor infrastructure and lack of equipment were considered the main barriers to the use of e-health in LMICs. Limited financial resources and lack of policy and regulatory frameworks might prevent the scaling up of e-health.

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