Empowering Women Through ICT-Based Business Initiatives: An Overview of Best Practices in E-Commerce/E-Retailing Projects

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Abstract

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been increasingly promoted as a key solution for comprehensive development, poverty eradication and the empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups, such as women and minorities in the Global South. ICT-based business initiatives, and e-commerce projects in particular, have been hailed as “potential goldmines” for women’s empowerment. However, research and experience show that to be successful, projects must balance the need to overcome structural barriers to women’s advancement with sensitivity to the limited space within which many women in the Global South navigate. In this paper, we review literature on ICT and empowerment of women, drawing upon several e-commerce/e-retailing projects as case studies to identify a set of best practices that underlie a successful project: 1) government and institutional support, 2) societal involvement, 3) training and empowerment, 4) expansion of market access, and 5) managerial best practices. We anticipate that the insights generated by this study will be useful both for purposes of effective program development and policy design.

Keywords

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); Development; Women Empowerment; Global South; e-Commerce; e-retailing; policy

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