



Executive Summary Project Report

“A Comprehensive Approach for Assessing Risks and Opportunities of the ICT sector and ICT applications“

The Project Report addresses the assessment of sustainability risks and opportunities of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector and ICT applications. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and accompanying targets were selected as a framework for analysis. The project outcomes have the purpose to guide the ICT sector in improving relevance and transparency when reporting on its positive and negative impacts, specifically those arising from applications of ICT.

ICT, as a crosscutting technology can in fact contribute to achieve the realisation of the MDGs. This opinion is not only expressed by business, but also in Target 18 of the MDGs and by a whole range of stakeholders like NGOs, intergovernmental organisations and financial institutions. But ICT implications are not purely beneficial, and a range of stakeholders raises critical topics in this context. Business actors thus need solid and balanced sustainability information to accurately get the implications of ICT and to promote and assess their voluntary activities.

However, quantified information on ICT contribution to the MDGs which is available today does not meet the expectations of stakeholders. Important sources of quantified information are not linked in a systematic way. Consequently, a lack of relevance persists as sustainability aspects are not covered and prioritised systematically and in accordance with stakeholder expectations. Causal chains are neglected and the connection between micro and macro level remains obscure. Furthermore, transparency is not assured, as measurement procedures are deficient or non-existing for important types of information.

A range of approaches is proposed in this report to solve these challenges. A common framework of goals and targets should be applied, which could be subject to regional differentiation. A systematic typology for indicators spanning the causal chain is developed to support companies in putting their activities in a societal context in a systematic way. As an example, a set of ICT core sustainability indicators is sketched, allowing for flexible adaptation to different needs and framework conditions. To remedy the lack of transparency, streamlined measurement procedures are needed for the various existing quantification approaches.

Next steps include to set up a sector level reporting system for harmonisation and integration of the existing data. Work is needed to improve the understanding of the implications of regional aspects for quantification efforts. When aiming at responsible sector governance, quantification and reporting efforts on company level need to be coordinated and linked with information compiled on the sector level. Finally, understanding the business case of quantifying ICT contributions to the MDGs is an important step to further integrate responsible business practices into all organisational sections of the companies involved.

Further information:

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