The Evolution of an ICT Platform-Enabled Ecosystem for Poverty Alleviation: The Case of eKutir

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the pioneering work of eKutir, a social business in India that leverages an information and communication technology (ICT) platform to progressively build a self-sustaining ecosystem to address multiple facets of smallholder farmer poverty. The study reveals that eKutir’s ecosystem has evolved through five distinct phases, each expanding the number and type of actors engaged and the breadth of ICT-supported services provided. The evolution displays a distinct pattern where the five elements of the ecosystem progressively evolve and reinforce one another to create a system that is economically sustainable, scalable, and can accelerate transformative change. The study has important implications for the design of emergent ICT platforms, which can enable an ecosystem-based approach to address complex problems.

Keywords: Poverty alleviation, evolution, collaboration, loosely coupled integration, ICT-enabled ecosystem, scalability, ICT platform, Development 2.0, societal transformation, convergent innovation, ICT for sustainability