SIGCHI Development Consortium 2016
HCI Across Borders Proposal

Monali Agarwal

Carnegie Mellon University

Pittsburgh, PA 15213, USA

monalia@andrew.cmu.edu

Abstract
I am an Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) practitioner. I am interested in participating in the 2016 Development Consortium to share lessons learned from my field experience and to better understand the most current HCI4D research findings. I hope to apply what I learn toward improving the design and development of future HCI4D products.

Author Keywords
ICT4D; HCI4D; ICTD; HCID; international development; social impact; social innovation.

ACM Classification Keywords
Software: Design Tools and Techniques

About Me
I am an ICT4D practitioner with a focus on User Experience (UX) research and Product Management (PM).

As a researcher, I identify the unmet needs of people who live in constrained environments and devise technology solutions accordingly.

As a product manager, I lead the execution of ICT4D technology solutions.

I am currently a Master's student at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), where I am learning the additional skills (visual design, front-end development, iterative user testing) that will enable me to effectively build ICT4D solutions from the ground up.

While my current focus is in the product space, I previously worked as a development economist, running randomized controlled trials with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), sister association of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (JPAL), to quantify the efficacy of different ICT4D interventions.

Area of Work
I have worked on ICT4D products in different geographic regions (Latin America, Africa, and Asia) as well as in different industries (farming, solar power, mobile money, and telecommunications).

Research Questions of Interest

The communities I work with are culturally distinct but often face similar constraints: cost; limited education; lack of consistent power; lack of consistent cellular network access; and obstacles that stem from gender norms, class, and other socio-economic factors.

I am curious to know what approaches have been successful (either one-off or across the board) at overcoming some of these constraints. I am particularly interested in product or process-oriented approaches.

Product-oriented approaches refer to technical solutions. A simple example would be the introduction of mobile phones with very long battery life to circumvent power constraints. I would like to know what other technologies are commonly used to overcome constraints and how they are being built (platforms, languages, etc.).

Process-oriented approaches refer to guidelines for successfully integrating technology solutions. Process-oriented approaches can explain how to build trust with local communities; how to accurately assess local needs; how to get buy-in for tech solutions; and how to overcome (or at least chip away at) deeply ingrained, societal power differentials.

I look forward to expanding my knowledge base of both product and process-oriented approaches by:
- Listening to academics in the HCI4D space share their research findings
- Conversing face-to-face with industry practitioners about their experiences

What I Will Contribute

I can advise on ICT4D product development related to the following industries in East and West Africa:
- Solar Power
- Mobile Money
- Social Media

I can also advise on the following research methods:
- Survey Design (especially for non-English speakers/people who are not literate)
- Contextual Inquiry/Ethnography
- Randomized Controlled Trial design
- Statistical analysis of research data

I would additionally like to use the Consortium time to aggregate information from different participants on what approaches are working in the ICT4D/HCI4D space and why. I hope to write out the findings in a practical set of ICT4D-specific guidelines that can later be used by industry practitioners like myself to improve product design and development.

Participatory Role

I am happy to work with other Consortium participant(s) on a product or process-oriented research project.

Because my research questions of interest tend to be broad/high-level, I am also happy to participate in the Consortium as an observer. In this role, I would devote time to speaking with other participants and documenting the information they share into a clear summary of practitioner takeaways. The takeaways would be made available to all Consortium participants.