

DIGITAL GREEN

Area of Focus: Agricultural Extension

How it works:

Launched in 2006, Digital Green disseminates targeted agricultural information via digital media to small-scale and marginal farmers in India. The Digital Green system includes (1) a participatory process for local video production, (2) a human-mediated instruction model for video dissemination and training, (3) a hardware and software technology platform to exchange data in areas with limited Internet and electrical grid connectivity, and (4) an iterative model to progressively better address the needs and interests of the community with web-based analytical tools and interactive voice response (IVR) phone-based feedback channels. In each district, Digital Green's partners produce 6-8 videos each month by modularizing agricultural and related practices into short, 8-10 minute segments. The videos feature local farmers on a variety of topics including testimonials and demonstrations of improved production techniques, market linkages, and government schemes.

Technology used: Pocket video cameras, pico projectors, phone-based interactive voice response (IVR) system, online/offline web-based data management and analytical tools

Implementer/Funder: Digital Green was developed by Microsoft Research India's Technology for Emerging Markets team. Since 2008, it has been functioning as an independent nonprofit and in 2009 it received a three year grant for \$2.8 million from the Gates Foundation. Digital Green currently works with seven NGOs, an agribusiness, and the Ministry of Rural Development.

Fees: INR 2-4 per farmer per screening. Farmers subscribe to the service as a part of their membership fees to farmer organizations, such as producer companies, cooperatives, and self-help group federations, where they exist, and partners share upfront and recurring costs.

Primary Markets: India (Karnataka, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa). Currently, Digital Green reaches over 600 villages and 42,000 farmers and plans to extend its work in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2011.

Users: Small-scale and marginal farmers via partner extension systems and community intermediaries.

Business Model: Currently Digital Green depends on outside grants to replicate its model with NGO partners and negotiates cost-sharing agreements with these partner and the communities that they work with. Digital Green charges fees for technology development and training support services to commercial partners.

Impact: A recent article in *Technology Review* claimed that Digital Green is "10 times as effective, per dollar spent, in converting farmers to better farming practices than classical approaches to agriculture extension workers."¹ This is based on an 13 month study conducted by Microsoft Research India, which looked at the cost per adoption in villages using their method versus traditional methods.² This study, involving over 1,500 households, found an increased adoption of certain agricultural practices over traditional agricultural extension by a factor of seven times.³ A large-scale randomized control trial is in progress and up-to-date impact data is available on Digital Green's website.

For more information visit: <http://www.digitalgreen.org>

Sources: ¹ <http://www.technologyreview.in/TR35/Profile.aspx?TRID=852>
³ <http://itidjournal.org/itid/article/view/322>

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