

BENJAMIN KWASI ADDOM, PhD

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Research Associate, USAID's Global Broadband and Innovation (GBI) Program

Key Qualifications

Benjamin K Addom specializes in the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) including mobile technologies for agricultural development. Prior to his graduate studies, he spent over four years as agricultural extension service supervisor in facilitating knowledge exchange and training among stakeholders along the value chain in Ghana. Since 2009, Ben has been consulting with international organizations like FAO, USAID, NEPAD/CTA in exploring mobile technologies and social media in agricultural knowledge management. He recently led a project that identified over 150 mobile applications for agriculture, mapped along the value chain to support the activities of USAID's project/program implementers. He is also engaged in research activities to increase rural mobile connectivity in developing nations through efficient and effective collection and disbursement of universal service and access funds (USAFs), as well as design and development of national broadband strategies. He has a unique blend of education – doctorate in information science and technology with concentration in community information system, innovation systems, and knowledge management; masters in international agriculture and rural development with focus on extension and training; and bachelors in general agriculture.

Professional Experience

Research Associate, INTEGRA Government Services International LLC., Washington DC, USA (September 2011 – Present).

I work on the USAID's Global Broadband and Innovation (GBI) Program, which is designed to focus the Agency's attention and resources on adopting ICTs across its development portfolio. I have been involved in conducting research on cutting edge ICT4D issues through desk research, interviews and participating in events locally. Specific activities include:

- Identifying and analyzing the development and implementation of Universal Service and Access Funds (USAF) in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean for increased access to ICTs in these countries.
- Researching and analyzing national broadband policies and strategies of developing nations in preparation for technical assistance from USAID.
- Researching and writing ICT Sector Reviews for countries in Latin America to inform USAID's technical assistance in the ICT sector.
- Development of a comprehensive database of ICT solutions (mobile and projects) for agriculture, mapped onto an agricultural value chain framework for USAID.
- Analyzing ICT and agricultural challenges in a number of Sub-Saharan African countries for intervention.
- Creating high-quality and effective print, web, and video communication materials, especially blog entries for the GBI program website/Integra website. Among the top portals/websites that have reposted some of my blogs are FAO's e-Agriculture, USAID's Agrilinks, USAID's Microlinks, and Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services.

- Helping to develop a publicly accessible reference database of ICT4D applications and programs including those in support of health, education, democracy and governance, economic growth, and environment and natural resources management.
- Assisting in the development of research papers, presentations, and training materials.
- Helping to organize and support the project team's presentations, workshops, conferences, trainings, and other activities.
- Assisting with project administration tasks as required – including contract preparation to meet USAID reporting requirements.

Regional Consultant, The New Partnership for Africa's Development Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), (May 2012 – Present).

A part of 6-member team currently conducting a Scoping Study for an African Community Informatics Network (ACIN) to determine the operational context of an Africa-wide, multi-stakeholder, Community Informatics framework. The study focuses on identifying the most appropriate strategy for implementation of a community informatics framework, taking into account the current state of play and the needs and issues presented by various stakeholders and actors in the Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) and Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) sectors. Specifically, I am jointly working with a Lead Consultant and three other Regional Consultants representing the Southern, Northern and Eastern parts of the continent to:

- Establish the current state of play with respect to ICT4D and ARD networks and determine a role for Community Informatics.
- Determine the appropriate scope, extent and priority areas for implementation of national, regional and continental mechanisms or frameworks.
- Determine appropriate governance structures and strategies required to operationalize the identified mechanisms
- Identify the priority areas for research, content development and interaction in relation to ICT4D as it pertains to ARD
- Determine suitable platforms for knowledge and information exchange to support the identified mechanisms (needs analysis and functional requirements)
- Establish a funding model for the network that would assure sustainability.

Analyst, Social Media for Environmental Advocacy in Africa, International Resources Group (IRG), Washington DC, USA (April – September 2011).

I was part of 4-member team from International Resource Group (IRG) that worked on a USAID Africa Bureau's Biodiversity Analysis and Technical Support (BATS) program. The team was tasked to understand how three environmental organizations - Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), Sustainable and Thriving Environments for West African Regional Development (STEWARD), and Conservation International's Securing Water and Food in Miombo-Mopane Woodland initiative in the Zambezi Basin of Southern Africa currently share information within their areas of operation and how might those methods be improved upon. I specifically led the design and development of a web survey for these international networks of conservation specialists on the effectiveness of their communications, including the "pipes, policy, and people" needs that could facilitate uptake of emerging ICTs by conservation organizations.

International Consultant, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (May – Dec. 2009)

In the context of improving the global food security situation through effective management of crop pollinators, biodiversity conservation, and climate change, I provided consultancy services to FAO on how ICTs could contribute to documenting and disseminating farmers' local knowledge as the basis of best practices, facilitating the incorporation of scientific knowledge into revising and improving local best practices, and contributing to their effective dissemination. I designed focus group discussion and interview protocols in collaboration with FAO officials in Rome and host country partners in Ghana, and conducted over 100 interviews and 21 focus group discussions with local farmers, agricultural extension agents, agricultural researchers and representatives of international organizations working in the agricultural sector. I assessed the existing communication channels for sharing knowledge between and amongst the partners, and how the new media could most effectively be used to document best practices. I developed a comprehensive list of best practices based on farmers' local knowledge and practices, and scientific research outputs from the agricultural scientists in the area of management of insect pollinators, biodiversity conservation and climate change. A 54-page feasibility study report was submitted to FAO with key policy recommendations for inclusion of ICTs in pollination services management for biodiversity and climate change adaptation.

Information Policy Instructor/Adjunct Professor, Syracuse University, USA (fall & spring 2008)

I designed and taught an advanced undergraduate seminar on "Information Policies and Decision-Making" in fall 2008. The course gave a comprehensive introduction to students in information policies. It used the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which took place in 2003/2005 as a case to explore the impact of globalization and information communication technologies on the information society and the knowledge economy, and issues of Internet Governance. Key policy issues such as root zone administration, interconnection costs, stability, spam, meaningful participation and capacity building, domain name allocation, freedom of expression, data protection and privacy, and multilingualism were addressed. I also designed and taught an advanced undergraduate seminar on "Telecommunications Regulations" in the spring 2008. This course covered issues of history of telecom reforms and regulations across the world, the factors that have contributed to the various reforms, different models used by these countries, and types and nature of the regulatory agencies.

Research Fellow & Center Manager, Center for Research on Collaboratories and Technology Enhanced Learning Communities (Cotelco), Syracuse University, USA (fall 2005 – spring 2008)

I led a research team in Cotelco to explore the socio-technical infrastructure required to support geographically distributed collaboration and knowledge work, particularly between developed and developing countries. For these years, the center worked on a number of research and teaching projects including designing and deployment of online survey; building of cyberinfrastructure to facilitate people to people, people to information, and people to facility collaborations; face-to-face and online interviews; analysis of these data (qualitative, quantitative and network); and reporting of results. I also led a team of students to collaborate with partners at the Burton Blatt Institute to introduce Cyberinfrastructure into two geographically distributed network of organizations ("Southeast Disability and Business Assistance Center" and "Demand Side Employment Placement Models") both of which were funded by the National Institute on

Disability and Rehabilitation Research in US. A number of ICT tools were introduced into these networks by the Cotelco team; monitored and redesign several times to meet the needs of our clients. I supervised an average of 8 students (graduates and undergraduates) per semester to successfully execute these tasks.

Digital Preservation Assistant, Cornell University, USA (November 2004 - June 2005)

I was involved in the reviewing of scanned documents on Home Economics Archives: Research, Tradition, and History (HEARTH) - electronic collection of books and journals in Home Economics and related disciplines; and Core Historical Literature of Agriculture (CHLA) - electronic collection of agricultural texts published between the early nineteenth century and the middle to late twentieth century; and assisted in similar work with The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) and Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA).

Field Officer (Agricultural Extension Officer), Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana (December 1998 – June 2003)

I was responsible for communicating new technologies from research to farmers through awareness creation and dissemination of information on the innovation/technology; training and capacity building for field staffs on the delivery of the technology to the users; training and educating the users after adoption; monitoring, evaluation and gathering feedback on the use of the technology/innovation for improvement; and analyzing the results for future use. I managed, administered, and operated agriculture and food security projects at the national level in Ghana. I monitored agricultural production including crops and animals. I provided information about internal and external market systems - market information system (MIS) to farmers. I analyzed complex food security policy issues (value chain systems) with analytical reports and technical documents. I was involved with field operations - planning and implementation of annual field operations with management; training and capacity building of field staff; delivery of extension messages to farmers through farm visits; and monitoring and evaluation of results. I was jointly responsible for organizing rural women groups and general farmers' groups for meetings, delivering extension messages to farmers, and collaboratively worked with community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations to advise farmers on crop and animal production as well as marketing. I represented my organizational unit at various national and international workshops, trainings, and seminars and supervised an averaged of 30-35 field staffs annually for the 5-year period.

Education

- Doctorate in Information Science and Technology, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, NY, USA – December 2010.
- Master of Professional Studies (MPS), International Agriculture & Rural Development, Cornell University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Ithaca, NY - May 2004.
- Bachelor in General Agriculture (B.Sc. Agric.), University of Cape Coast, School of Agriculture, Ghana, West Africa - September 1998.
- Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed.), University of Cape Coast, Faculty of Education, Ghana, West Africa - September 1998.
- Certificate in Networking in Support of Development, Organized by FAO, CTA and Balancing Act, Online - May 2008.

- Food Security Information for Decision Making, Online Learning Center Modules by the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2010.

Publications

- Kim, Y., Addom, B. K. and Stanton, J. M. (2011). Education for eScience Professionals: Integrating Data Curation and Cyberinfrastructure. *The International Journal of Digital Curation*, 1(6): 125-138.
- Addom, B. K. (2010). Knowledge Brokering in the Digital Age: The Case of an Agricultural Innovation System, Doctoral Dissertation presented to Syracuse University, NY USA.
- Addom, B. K. (2009). Using ICTs and Local Knowledge in the Context of Management of Pollination Services in Ghana. A 54-page Consultancy Report submitted to the Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO) of the United Nations, Rome Italy.
- P. Blanck, W. Myhill, D. Cogburn, D. Samanti, B. Addom (2008). Developing Accessible Cyberinfrastructure-Enabled Knowledge Communities in the National Disability Community: Theory, Practice, and Policy. *Assistive Technology Journal - RESNA*, 2008 Fall; 20(3): 157-174.
- Addom, B. K. (2004). E-readiness assessment of seven higher education institutions in Ghana, A masters' thesis presented to Cornell University Library, Ithaca New York.
- Davis, K. and Addom, B. K. (2010). Sub Saharan Africa. In: Saravanan, R., (Ed). *ICTs for Agricultural Extension: Global Experiments, Innovations and Experiences*. A book chapter. New India Publishing Agency, New Delhi.
- Addom, B. K. (2006). Universities as Alternate Incubators of Information Communication Centers for Ghana's Development. A book chapter in *Meeting the Information Challenge: The Experience of Africa*. Cambridge Scholars Press, Newcastle, UK.

Languages

English - Proficiency

French - Beginner

Ewe (Ghanaian) - Native

Akan (Ghanaian) – Native

References

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