

# California calls Ken from Africa

By Jonny Pearce

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A JERSEYMAN who has dedicated his life to taking technology into Third World countries has been awarded a fellowship at a Californian University.

Ken Banks (39) was chosen from hundreds of candidates and invited to attend Stanford University where he will spend the next ten months with like-minded people from 13 countries. The fellowship is for elite academics and allows qualified people to use an institution's facilities and do research.

In 1993, the former St Helier Boys' School and Hautlieu student was engaged and ready to settle down to life in Jersey. But then he went on an Overseas Aid trip to Zambia.

## ● Technology

'It didn't seem right to carry on as normal after seeing people suffering and struggling for food and water,' he said. 'There is so much waste in our society and it made me sick. I couldn't ignore it.'

His then fiancée told him before he went on the trip that it would change his life and she was proved right.

Ken, who is an IT consultant and now runs a non-profit driven business that is geared towards modernising developing countries, went on further trips to Africa throughout the 1990s and his relationship came to an end.

He has worked with corporate businesses, including Vodafone, and the governments of African countries in an attempt to introduce mobile phones, computers and other gadgets to countries.

'Obviously capitalist businesses are profit motivated. But most of them have foundations that are set up and people like me can tap into them and get funding to try to help developing countries.'

### Luxury perk

Ken says that something as simple as texting is a luxury perk to Western cultures, but such technology could be the difference between life and death for people in Africa and other places.

He said: 'A herd of elephants can charge through a village and destroy a whole year's crop. If people had mobiles they could text those in other areas and let them know the elephants were coming, for example.'

'It's not easy to stop a herd of elephants, but at least if the people know they are coming they can prepare.'

'Also people can be reminded to take medicine at certain times by doctors. And if somebody wants to organise a big event they would not have to travel over vast distances and tell people in person. And if there is a change of plan organisers can let people know instantly.'

'The technology we take for granted would save lives and develop economies in Third World countries.'

The fellowship course is partly subsidised, but such is Ken's dedication he is paying more than £10,000 to attend.

'I am excited about meeting people who think like me and exploring new ways of bringing technology into developing countries,' he said.

Anyone interested in sponsoring Ken should e-mail [ken.banks@kiwanja.net](mailto:ken.banks@kiwanja.net)

**Ken Banks wants to bring more technology to the developing nations of Africa**

Picture: PETER MOURANT (00361461)

