

M4G in Kenya - Overview



The pilot project in Kenya has proved to be a great success since it began in September 2003. Originally funded by Vodafone Group Foundation, the project has successfully evolved into a self-sustainable Kenyan owned and managed venture. The project, initially known as OKN Mobile and part of the local content initiative Open Knowledge Network, is now the first franchise under Mobile for Good.

The original project was set up in Kibera, East Africa's largest informal settlement, situated on the outskirts of Nairobi. Previous studies in Kibera showed that, although ownership of mobile handsets was not extensive, as much as 80 to 85 per cent of the community had access to a mobile through sharing with friends and family. It was this research which suggested that mobile technology would be the most viable and effective channel of communication for dissemination of news to marginalised communities.

The project has now expanded country-wide and seeks to empower marginalised individuals by offering a unique SMS-based information service to disadvantaged communities. The services that have been developed to meet the information needs in Kenya include: Kazi560, a job information service for the casual jobs sector, Health Tips, which provides daily tips to subscribers about Breast Cancer and HIV/Aids, MyQuestion, a quick response Question & Answer service providing information on HIV/Aids, Breast Cancer and Diabetes, and a Community News service which provides free, locally sourced news to those living in informal settlements in Kenya via SMS.

Other services being piloted include a government Question and Answer service from citizens to the Kenyan government, and simple business advice to SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises). [Click here](#) for more about Mobile for Good services.

The success of M4G-Kenya has been staggering. The business has already broken even and has had over 70,000 people use its services. Over 60,000 have found employment through the jobs service, Kazi560. In addition, some employers have said that this is the only form of recruitment they are now using.

The comments received in response show that the service is working and having effects. One local resident who got a text about a local eye clinic's opening times said: "I showed my neighbour and they found treatment for a previously undiagnosed problem".

"Life-changing information when you want it, where you want it".

Mobile for Good's progress has been closely watched internationally through 2004/2005. Visit the Media Centre to read press coverage of M4G, including articles by the BBC, New York Times and Washington Post.

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