

Ugandan joint venture wins U.S. \$1m

A Uganda-Dutch company that uses mobile technology, to rapidly exchange information with specific target audiences, has received an impact investment one million euro (\$1.1 million) from the Netherlands - ABN AMRO Social Impact Fund.

TTC Mobile, (formerly Text to Change), management said the money will be used to expand the company's activities, hire more local and international staff and spread its projects all over the world, effectively turning the company into a leading global social enterprise.



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Eunice Namirembe, the TTC Mobile Uganda Country Director, has said this investment will help more social projects and possible expansion of some of the existing ones.

This funding comes at a time when according to research statistics, Africa is experiencing the highest growth rates in mobile phones uptake and according to TTC Mobile founder Bas Hoefman it is expected that by 2017, some 40% of people in Africa will be carrying a smart phone.

TTC Mobile currently reaches millions of people across Africa, Asia and Latin America through several projects in the areas of healthcare, agriculture and education.

The company is now active in 23 countries of which 18 are African, partnering with organizations such as UNICEF, The World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) in addition to governments, NGOs and businesses.

TTC Mobile was registered in 2007 in Uganda and in the Netherlands originally as Text to Change (TTC) and according to Hoefman, it all began in Uganda when TTC launched an interactive Short Messaging (SMS) large-scale mHealth campaign that reached 15,000 people aimed at creating awareness around HIV/AIDS and to stimulate people to get tested for the deadly disease.

The ABN AMRO Social Impact Fund invests via direct participation in social enterprises that aim to achieve both social/sustainable and financial results. The fund is particularly interested in enterprises whose innovative business model can help revolutionise the market. Development of the fund fits in with the bank's aim to strengthen its position as a leading socially responsible company.

With the success of its original mHealth campaign in Uganda, TTC Mobile has now expanded its projects to include a global mobile messaging platform with a private sector focus in emerging markets, market research and social marketing.

According to Eric Buckens, the Manager of ABN AMRO Social Impact Fund, "TTC mobile reaches diverse groups of people at a large scale in developing countries. The goal is to support them in their daily lives and truly bring about improvements in matters that directly concern them, such as healthcare. The enterprise fits the aims of the ABN AMRO Social Impact Fund completely."

Among the most successful projects currently being run by the company is one in Tanzania where TTC Mobile's unique partnerships have enabled them to use their mobile services to reach and aid over 500,000 pregnant women and mothers with valuable tips on healthy pregnancy and safe motherhood, in addition to reminders to regularly seek care at a clinic.

Hoefman says that currently, TTC is also actively involved in the fight against Ebola in western Africa. "We have managed to reach people in hard-to-reach places," he notes.

TTC Mobile's social marketing business is conducted through the use of text messaging (sms), interactive voice response

(IVR), a Call centre, face-to-face surveys using tablets and smartphones and online surveys.

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