

# Summit to unlocking the potential of mobile technology for social impact

SANGONeT and MobileActive.org will be hosting the MobileActive08 Summit, 13 -15 October 2008 in Johannesburg, the theme of which is “Unlocking the Potential of Mobile Technology for Social Impact”. The summit will convene more than 300 international civil society, development and technology experts interested in the use and application of mobile technology in support of social impact.

It is claimed that there are close to 3.5 billion mobile phones in circulation around the world. In many countries, especially in the developing world, mobile phones are the easiest and least expensive medium to communicate, and are far more pervasive than the Internet. Mobile phones are also bridging the digital divide in developing countries at a rate much faster than most other technologies to date.

The UNCTAD “Information Economy Report 2007-2008” states that there were 50 million new mobile subscribers in 2006 in Africa, and in 2007 the total number of mobile subscriptions reached an estimated 200 million. As a result, there are more than 20 active mobile phones per 100 people in Africa, with mobile telephony practically replacing fixed lines in many countries.

## How best to adapt

However, even with ubiquity of access, the challenge to civil society stakeholders and technology experts is how best to adapt and translate growth and innovation in mobile technology in support of specific development challenges. As a result, there is an urgent need to share lessons learned to date and explore the most effective use of this technology.

Participants at [www.mobileactive08.org](http://www.mobileactive08.org) will include non-profit practitioners using mobile phones in innovative and creative ways, mobile technologists, researchers studying the use of mobile phones, government officials, and representatives from the international donor community and telecommunications industry.

According to Katrin Verclas, co-founder and editor of MobileActive.org, “At MobileActive08 participants will explore how mobile phones are used to advance civil society and development work, assess the current state of knowledge in the use and effectiveness of mobile technology to advance social action, and investigate trends, needs and investment opportunities.”

## Submit proposals

SANGONeT and MobileActive.org are therefore inviting practitioners, researchers and technologists to submit proposals for

workshops and short talks on the topic of mobile technology for social impact, as well as to showcase products and services in the interactive SIMplace and SIMlabs - interactive marketplaces for applications and products.

The deadline for submissions is the end of June 2008. Go to Call for Expertise ([www.mobileactive08.org/call-for-expertise](http://www.mobileactive08.org/call-for-expertise)) for information on how to submit applications for sessions and exhibitions.

According to David Barnard, Executive Director of SANGONeT, "MobileActive08 will not be a typical conference. While it will feature workshops and panel discussions, the event is organised to maximise interaction amongst participants and accelerate and document learnings."

The event is intentionally designed to be cross-disciplinary as learnings and experiences span various disciplines in this emerging field. However, specific attention will be given to the role of mobile technology in health, human rights, economic development, advocacy, education, citizen journalism and democratic participation.

This will be the largest international civil society event to date focusing on this topic.

General registration for the event will open in June 2008.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>