



Press Release

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Microsoft and UNIDO Partner with CTPH to Bring ICT to Rural Businesses in Uganda

Innovative IT access project gets underway, following Memorandum of Understanding between UNIDO and Microsoft.

Queen Elizabeth National Park, UGANDA — 23 Nov 2007 — The United Nations

Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and Microsoft's joint project to bring the benefits of ICT to rural communities was marked today by HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, sending the first official e-mail from a new telecentre in Uganda, managed by Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH).

The telecentre partnership between the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and CTPH, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Queen Elizabeth National Park (a UNESCO biosphere reserve), will be the home for Project Silverback — an innovative trial that will provide access to e-mail and other digital services to rural small businesses and communities. Access to such services is far more difficult and expensive to establish in rural areas, hindering growth and development, and preventing people from realising the benefits offered by locally relevant ICT solutions.

Project Silverback will see trained CTPH staff and community volunteers visiting local villages with refurbished laptop PCs. Local business people and communities can then read and write e-mails, prepare documents and enjoy other ICT benefits. At the end of each day, the laptops are returned to the telecentre where e-mails are sent, new e-mails received and batteries recharged. There is a small fee, similar to the fee charged to use an internet café.

CTPH founder and CEO, an Ashoka Fellow, Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, said, "We wanted to extend our services beyond the walls of the physical building, out into the local communities

surrounding protected areas who cannot always get to the telecentre near the equator, but still need to benefit from this facility.”

Project Silverback marks another example of the dynamic UNIDO-Microsoft partnership, following the signing of an extension to their memorandum of understanding in June 2007, in Burkina Faso. It builds on work that has so far focused on reducing the cost of access to technology through the use of refurbished PCs and providing digital services in Uganda through District Business Information Centres.

Sean Nicholson, the manager of Emerging Solutions and Refurbishment at Microsoft, said, “This work is part of Microsoft’s commitment to reach 1 billion people who do not yet enjoy technology’s benefits through Unlimited Potential by the year 2015. Success for Project Silverback will be local people using telecentres as the hub for accessibility, Microsoft providing refurbished PCs for affordability, and the telecentres offering relevant services — all leading to sustainable growth in rural businesses and jobs.”

Barbara Kreissler, industrial development officer at UNIDO, said "Our District Business Information Centres, which are operational in eight districts throughout Uganda, have been successful in helping small businesses in semi-urban areas to use ICT for the development of entrepreneurial skills, access to relevant business information and linkages to markets. We are looking forward to extending this success to rural locations."

The UNIDO-Microsoft partnership provides refurbished laptops, software and help to develop business models, with CTPH contributing local staff and access to the telecentre. Funded by the British High Commission in Uganda, Barclays Bank plc, the UWA and the United States Agency for International Development, the telecentre uses solar power and VSAT internet to offer digital services that include web browsing, e-mail and office productivity tools. For ecotourists, the telecentre also serves Uganda’s artisan coffees and sells crafts made by local groups.

Project Silverback will initially run for six months and then be reviewed with the aim of expanding it to another CTPH telecentre in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, home of the endangered mountain gorillas. The project is unlike any other and presents its own unique challenges, as Lawrence Zikusoka, founder and director of ICT for CTPH said, “One of the issues for CTPH is the risk from the lions in the park that may view a person with a laptop on a bicycle as something more than digital access!”

About the Conservation through Public Health (CTPH)

Conservation Through Public Health's (www.ctph.org) mission is to promote conservation and public health by improving primary health care to people and animals in and around protected areas in Africa. Our vision is to prevent and control disease transmission where wildlife, people and their animals meet, while cultivating a winning attitude to conservation and public health in local communities. CTPH has three integrated programs that focus on Wildlife Health Monitoring, Human Public Health, and Information Education and Communication of which community telecentres are a component.

About the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)

UNIDO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that works towards improving the quality of life of the world's poor by helping countries achieve sustainable industrial development. UNIDO views industrial development as a means of creating employment and income in order to overcome poverty. It helps developing countries produce goods they can trade on the global market, and helps provide the tools - training, technology, and investment - to make them competitive. At the same time, it encourages production processes that will neither harm the environment nor place too heavy a burden on a country's limited energy resources. UNIDO has 172 Member States and has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria (please visit www.unido.org).

About Microsoft Unlimited Potential

Microsoft, through its Unlimited Potential vision, is committed to making technology more affordable, relevant and accessible for the 5 billion people around the world who do not yet enjoy its benefits. The company aims to do so by helping to transform education and foster a culture of innovation, and through these means enable better jobs and opportunities. By working with governments, intergovernmental organisations, nongovernmental organisations and industry partners, Microsoft hopes to reach its first major milestone — to reach the next 1 billion people who are not yet realising the benefits of technology — by 2015.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realise their full potential.

Note to Editors

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