

Mobile extends healthcare reach in emerging markets

CAMBRIDGE: Mobile technology's low cost and ease of use make it ideal for improving the delivery of healthcare, education, and other social services in emerging markets, opening up opportunities for mobile operators and vendors, according to a new report by Pyramid Research, the telecom research arm of Light Reading Communications Network.

Healthcare programs in emerging markets: Opportunities for mobile operators looks at the role of mobile network operators and vendors in social programs, in particular healthcare, referencing many examples throughout, mostly from Africa and India. Going into more detail, case studies examine four of the most prominent and successful programs — in Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, and India, all focusing on the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The 12-page report highlights the benefits to operators and vendors of becoming involved in such projects. These include the overall industry growth resulting from governments and NGOs investing in various initiatives as well as the opportunity to advance new services as users grow increasingly aware of applications beyond voice.

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“Mobile technology is ideal for raising awareness for a variety of social programs in emerging markets, notably health and education, whereas PCs and other alternatives in comparison appear limited, costly, and complicated,” says Jan ten Sythoff, research manager and author of the report.

Africa and India are particularly prominent in the use of mobile technology for such causes, and there are encouraging results that suggest that these programs are having a substantial impact. “One example is Project Masiluleke in South Africa, which is raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and reminds sufferers of treatment sessions via SMS alerts. This program is to be introduced in other countries, and will also be replicated for other diseases, such as tuberculosis,” Sythoff says.

The supporting roles of mobile operators and vendors enabling various applications are also creating new opportunities. “We've identified a variety of social programs that leverage mobile technologies, including a number in Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, and India,” Sythoff comments. “Mobile operators and vendors can participate in these programs and promote new applications to enter the healthcare and education markets,” he adds. “Also, with the population perceiving the impact of mobile technologies across more aspects of their daily lives, there is greater incentive for governments to promote the development of the overall telecom industry.”

Healthcare programs in emerging markets: Opportunities for mobile operators is part of Pyramid Research's Africa and the Middle East Telecom Insider report series. This report is priced at US\$595.

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