

# MobileActive08 Summit around the corner

With more than 350 confirmed participants from over 40 countries, next week's MobileActive08 Summit will allegedly be the largest international event to date focusing on this topic and one of the most important ICT4D events to be hosted in Africa in 2008. The Southern African NGO Network (SANGONeT) and MobileActive.org is hosting the event at the Wanderers Club in Illovo, Johannesburg, 13 - 15 October 2008.

Speaking at the end of September 2008 at the United Nations in New York during a high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Hamadoun Touré, announced that worldwide mobile cellular subscribers are likely to reach the 4 billion mark before the end of this year. "The fact that 4 billion subscribers have been registered worldwide indicates that it is technically feasible to connect the world to the benefits of ICT and that it is a viable business opportunity", he stated. "Clearly, ICTs have the potential to act as catalysts to achieve the 2015 targets of the MDGs."

## Urgent need to share lessons

However, even with ubiquity of access, the challenge to development practitioners 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.

At MobileActive08, the theme of which is "Unlocking the Potential of Mobile Technology for Social Impact", participants will explore how mobile phones are used to advance development work in different parts of the world, 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. Specific attention will be given to the role of mobile technology in health, human rights, economic development, research, advocacy, citizen journalism and democratic participation.

According to David Barnard, executive director of SANGONeT, "During the first day and a half of the event more than 60 speakers will share their experiences through a variety of workshops and skill-share sessions, rotating mini-talks, SIMlabs and SIMplaces. The second part of MobileActive08 will be conducted in an 'open space' format where participants will delve more deeply into the topics discussed during the first part of the event."

## Key mobile experts

Some of the key mobile experts that will make presentations at the event include Brian Richardson of Wizzit, Jonathan Donner of Microsoft, Peter Benjamin of Cell-Life, Russell Southwood of Balancing Act and Erik Hersman of Ushahidi.

Delegates will include NGO and development practitioners, mobile technologists, researchers studying the use of mobile

phones, government officials, and representatives from the international donor community and telecommunications industry.

The MobileActive08 Summit is supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Microsoft, Department of Communications, Vodacom, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, United Nations Foundation and Vodafone Foundation Technology Partnership, HIVOS, Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), Ford Foundation and Torque IT.

SANGONeT's new corporate identity and the new SANGONeT NGO Portal, NGO Pulse, will also be launched during the event.

More information about the event is available at [www.mobileactive08.org](http://www.mobileactive08.org). For more detailed information about the programme and speakers, go to <http://mobileactive08.confabb.com/conferences/MobileActive08/sessions>.

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