Text to Change

Uganda
Netherlands
Famke Kamphorst

Organization type:
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector
Project Stage:
Scaling
Budget:
$1 million - $5 million
Website:
http://www.texttochange.com

- Health care
- Health education
- Economic development
- Maternal health
- Information & communication technology
- Rural

Project Summary

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

What can mobile technology do for health, education and economic development? Connect, start a dialogue and create endless opportunities. Text to Change knows how to reach people in Africa.

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Text to Change is driven by the belief that the mobile phone has become more and more affordable and accessible, also at the poorest level of the population in rural areas. By themselves, mobile phones will neither pull people out of poverty, nor propel democratic governance. Instead they are catalytic tools for enhancing and broadening development programming if deployed strategically. Access to information in the developing world is a well-known challenge. Text to Change plays a vital role in improving lives – even in the most isolated areas – by connecting people via their mobile phones. We also collect participants’ data for analysis, which then helps us to plan our campaigns more effectively. In this way, we are reaching out to hundreds of thousands of people.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Currently 80% of the population in developing countries have access to a mobile phone. Text messages are an easy, scalable, and anonymous way to gain access to people. This is the reason why Text to Change so strongly believes in the power of using SMS to provide and collect important information – especially in the developing world. It’s an effective and efficient way of reaching people. SMS can be used as a very effective campaigning tool because of the 100% opening rate. Also 95% of messages is read within 4 minutes in Africa. TTC was the first of its
kind in Africa, mobile phones had never been used before on such a large scale for health educational purposes. The success of Text to Change's initial programmes in Uganda — covering HIV prevention and the uptake of HIV Voluntary Counseling & Testing (HCT), malaria, family planning, reproductive health and child abuse — paved the way for Text to Change’s emerging presence across Africa and other developing regions.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

Text to Change conceptualizes, manages and analyses mobile phone-based programs. Our flexible and easily scalable mobile platform sends out and receives text messages, mms, voice and data. We focus on improving healthcare and education, stimulating economic development and creating awareness on environmental issues. Examples of what we do: Interactive and incentive-based quizzes to educate people, personalized medicine reminder programs, data collection surveys via apps and SMS and price information systems for farmers. Our model encourages continued participation in our programmes and sparks a dialogue on topics such as HIV/AIDS, which are often considered taboo. An example of one of our projects that enabled the empowerment of women is The Unicef Mother Reminder System. This project aims at improving the lives of children and mothers in nine districts of Uganda by using available technology to educate and mobilize mothers and families to demand for ANC and PMTCT services. The combination of field research, experience with past SMS programs and lessons learned from similar programs ensure that the implementation design is realistic; both technically and practically.

Sustainability

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Most of the competitors of Text to change are focused locally or by sector. TTC has experience in several countries and in several sectors without underestimating the quality of each project. -Praekelt Foundation -Cell-Life -Voxiva -Dimagi -D-Tree -Grameen Foundation

Team

Founding Story

Text to Change was launched in 2007, after Bas Hoefman was inspired by a documentary on the growth of mobile telephony in Africa. Bas Hoefman was a Marketing Manager, his sister was a Tropical Doctor and Hajo van Beijma was an IT-specialist. Bas and Hajo are friends since kindergarden. Mobile phones are now readily available at relatively low cost throughout the poorest countries. Networks cover the majority of the world’s population. Bas Hoefman, Hajo van Beijma and Marieke Hoefman combined their expertise and developed this brilliant idea of using short message service (SMS) communication in order to reach wide audiences on health related issues.
Innovation

How long have you been in operation?

Operating for 1-5 years

Which of the following best describes the barrier(s) your innovation addresses? Choose up to two

Cost.

Social Impact

What solution(s) does your initiative address to better the lives of girls and women by leveraging technology? (select all applicable)

Access to health care.

What has been the impact of your solution to date?

Text to Change and Health Child introduced a mobile phone SMS campaign to increase access to health information and services among the rural communities in Jinja (Uganda). Through interactive and incentive-based SMS quizzes on health information and promotion. Already 60% of the respondents reported that they had come to seek for HIV Counselling and Testing services.

Health Child, a local organization in the districts of Jinja and Wakiso is supported by Dutch NGO Cordaid, and is currently working with plans to extend its services to other parts of the country as funding allows.

What is your projected impact over the next 1-3 years?

The project is expected to have the following outcomes: (i) the percentage of pregnant women who complete the recommended four visits will increase from 47% to 75%; (ii) women who deliver their babies under skilled care will increase from 39% to 70%; (iii) women who attend post-natal care services will increase from 36% to 80%; and (iv) the number of fully immunized children will increase from 41.9% to 75%.

What barriers might hinder the success of your project? How do you plan to overcome them?

In multiple parts of Africa the mobile phone conception is very bad, this has an effect on the overall service of the mobile networks. We'll improve our mobile technologies. We already combine them with radio. Now we work on campaigns with games, images and mobile internet. Soon our newly developed open-source interactive SMS platform, called vusion, will be launched. Which also improves our data collection, but in order to collect good data, we need to train our peer educators better. The failures that occured from our prototype, and after the implementation, need to be carefully taken into account and be solved.

Winning entries present a strong plan for how they will achieve and track growth. Identify your six-month milestone for growing your impact

We'll focus on better partnerships and positioning TTC more. Partnerships with the private and public sector with a global view.

Task 1

In the coming 6 months we will work in 17 countries in Africa and South America and we'll work on our global footprint.

Task 2

We want to focus more on the private sector besides our normal public sector contracts.

Task 3

Improve our mobile technologies, our open-source platform Vusion will be launched. That includes integration with social media.

Now think bigger! Identify your 12-month impact milestone

In 12 months we'll work in 3 continents for 5 governments, 10 companies, 8 UN-organizations and 20 NGO's.
Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your 12-month milestone

**Task 1**
TTC's systems will be available in all (local) languages, next to English and Spanish.

**Task 2**
We'll be executing active sales activities in big countries like Brazil, China, India and Russia.

**Task 3**
We'll expand from 2 to 4 offices; we'll hire more local people and focus on training our local staff.

---

**Sustainability**

Tell us about your partnerships

With a four year successful track record, TTC has experience in working with both the public and the private sector. Among Text to Change's partners and clients are the UN (Unicef, ECOSOC and GIVAS), governments (USAID, German, Dutch and English Ministries), NGO's (Family Health International, Cordaid, Warchild, HIVOS, Twaweza), universities (Johns Hopkins (USA), Makerere (Uganda), University Utrecht (The Netherlands)), companies (Kakira Sugar, IBM, Microsoft, PWC, Clifford & Chance, Merck) and major mobile providers (Orange, Airtel, MTN, Vodacom).

Please elaborate on any needs or offers you have mentioned above and/or suggest categories of support that aren't specified within the list

---

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/girtech/entries/text-change