kiwanja.net launches its next-generation text messaging platform for the grassroots non-profit (NGO) community

FrontlineSMS continues to unlock the potential of mobile technology for non-profits working for positive social and environmental change throughout the developing world

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Cambridge, UK – Wednesday 25th June, 2008: NGO-focused mobile technology organisation kiwanja.net today releases the latest version of its popular text messaging platform – **FrontlineSMS** – which opens up the potential of two-way group text messaging to the global grassroots non-profit community.

The explosive entry of mobile technology in the developing world has created a raft of opportunities for the non-profit sector. Text messaging has proved itself to be particularly versatile in helping remind patients to take their medicine, providing market prices to farmers and fishermen, distributing health information, permitting the reporting of human rights abuses and promoting increased citizen participation in government.

While the list may be long, not everyone has been able to reap the benefits.

While group messaging applications do exist, the majority remain web-based and are either too costly or too technical or rely on internet connectivity to work, something which continues to be a challenge for many grassroots non-profits working in remote areas in the developing world. FrontlineSMS gets around this by using the mobile phone network to send and receive messages through a fully-featured easy-to-use computer-based application and an attached mobile phone or modem. The software works in any country which uses the GSM standard, and is provided free to NGOs who can easily attach their own phone and insert a local SIM card to get their messaging hub up and running.

According to Eric Cantor, Grameen Foundation AppLab Manager in Uganda, "FrontlineSMS has reduced the hassles and complexity of using text messaging to share data with, and collect data from, our collaborators and partners in the field. It brings down our costs by enabling us to use existing technology, while expanding our ability to listen to the words of

our constituents, and then document and share them with ease. With lots of clutter in the free software market, this is really a tool that makes our job easier and takes the complexity out of managing direct text message communications with our partners. FrontlineSMS has proved itself to be an essential tool in helping us carry out our work here in Uganda".

Since its initial release in 2005, FrontlineSMS has been adopted by NGOs in over forty countries for a wide range of activities including blood donor recruitment, assisting human rights workers, promoting government accountability, keeping medical students informed about education options, providing security alerts to field workers, election monitoring, the capture and exchange of vegetable (and coffee) price information, the distribution of weather forecasts, the co-ordination of healthcare workers, the organising of political demonstrations, the carrying out of surveys and the reporting and monitoring of disease outbreaks. Its use has been reported on the BBC and in The Economist, as well as a wide range of web-based news sites and Blogs. Since news of the latest version was announced at a keynote address at Global Messaging Congress 2008 in Cannes in May, an additional two hundred NGOs from around the world have signed up to use the software.

The latest release of FrontlineSMS, which has been funded through a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, builds on the success of the earlier version by supporting Windows, Mac and Linux platforms; by providing remote data collection functionality for organisations needing to electronically capture information in the field; by offering language support for Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Swahili; by working on an increasing range of handsets and modems; and through its provision of built-in support for online messaging services, designed for NGOs who do have access to the internet. The new FrontlineSMS website also contains a community section allowing NGOs from around the world to connect and share experiences, ideas and suggestions for future releases.

According to Ken Banks, Founder of kiwanja.net and the originator of the FrontlineSMS concept, "This new release has been a year in the making, and is the result of over two years worth of feedback from the NGO community. Not only is this a very exciting day for us, but also for the countless grassroots NGOs out there who desperately need this kind of technology to help them make that first step onto the mobile technology ladder".

Further details on FrontlineSMS, along with details of how NGOs can download the software, can be found on the project website at **www.frontlinesms.com**

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Enquiries: Ken Banks, Founder, kiwanja.net   **Email**: frontlinesmspress@kiwanja.net

About kiwanja.net

kiwanja.net
where technology meets anthropology, conservation and development

Since 2003, kiwanja.net has been helping local, national and international non-profit Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) make better use of information and communications technology in their work. Specialising in the application of mobile technology, it provides a wide range of ICT-related services drawing on over 22 year's experience of its Founder, Ken Banks

kiwanja.net believes that all non-profits, whatever their size and wherever they operate, should be given the opportunity to implement the latest mobile technologies in their work, and actively seeks to provide the tools and environment to enable them to do so

www.kiwanja.net

About FrontlineSMS

FrontlineSMS is the first text messaging system to be conceived, designed and written firmly with the needs of the non-profit sector in mind. Until its launch in late 2005, the majority of systems did not take into account the nature of non-profit work, and the specific conditions – financial and physical – which many work under. FrontlineSMS is provided free to all charities and other non-profit organisations working for positive social and environmental change throughout the developing world, and to date has users in over forty countries. This latest release of the software was kindly funded by a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

www.frontlinesms.com

A high-resolution version of the logo is available from www.kiwanja.net/launch/frontlinesmslogo.jpg
An image of FrontlineSMS can be downloaded from www.kiwanja.net/launch/frontlinesms.jpg