Computers, mobiles and the Internet: can they make a difference to the lives of poor people?

Tim Unwin

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Science Festival

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

uniTwin
UNESCO Chair in ICT for Development
Royal Holloway, University of London

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the humanitarian centre

How de we understand poverty?

Both in our own countries and elsewhere…

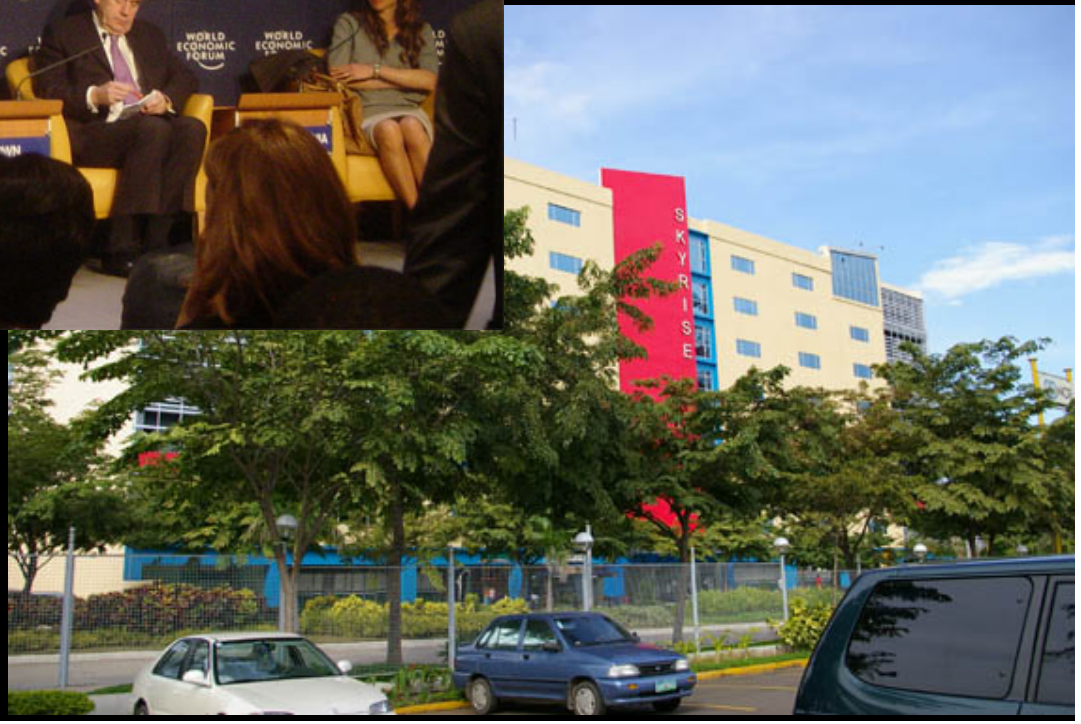
And what do we do about it?

‘Development’: economic growth will eliminate poverty…

- Dominance of the twin rhetorics of liberal democracy and the free market
  - Particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union around 1990
- Prominence of UN Millennium Development Goals (2000)
  - Espoused the belief that poverty can be eliminated
- Builds on the so-called Washington Consensus (Williamson, 1990)
  - Macro-economic discipline, free market and openness to the world

ERICSSON
CLASS A

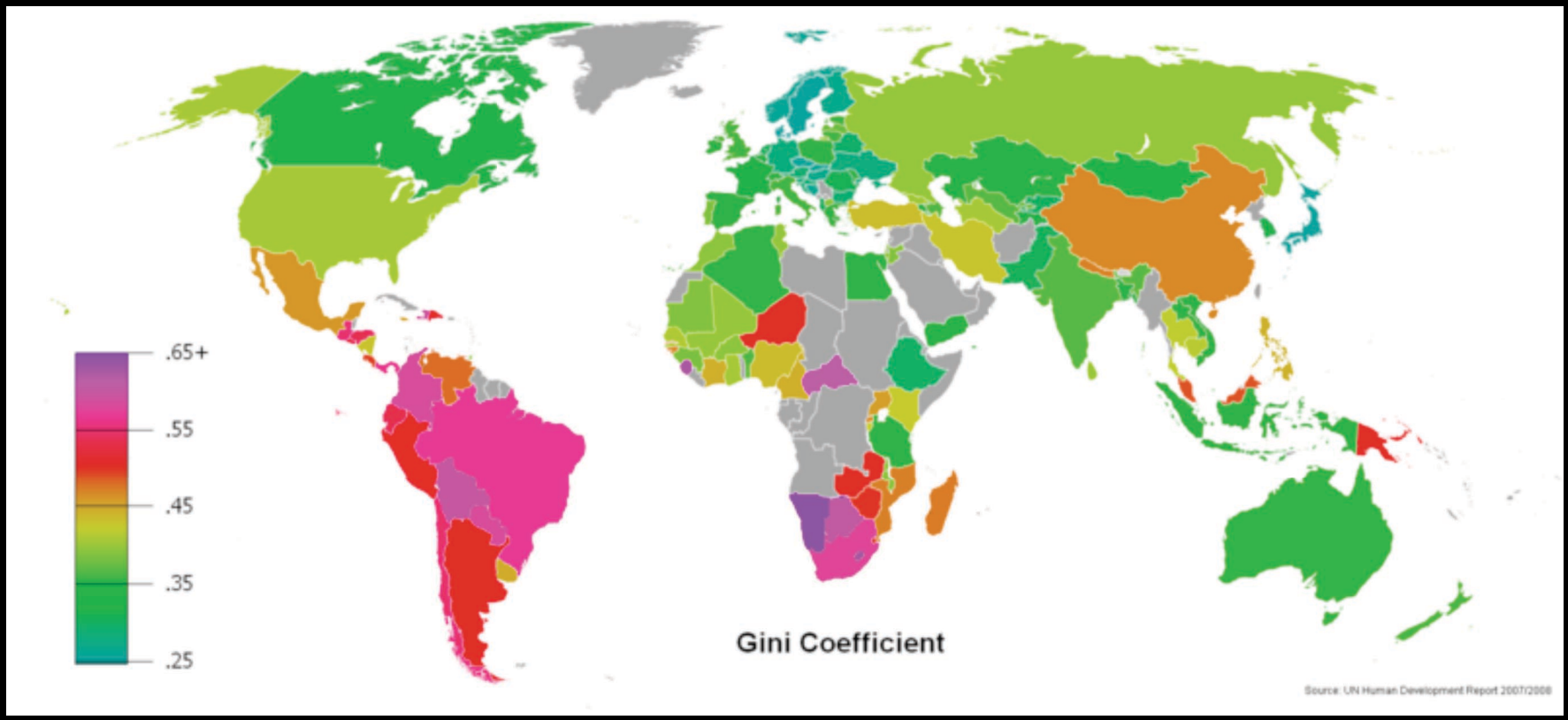
WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM


SKYRISE

A belief that poverty really can be eliminated.

- Economic growth will lift people above the $1 a day threshold
- Need for good governance (i.e. democracy)
  - So that growth can occur
- Based on absolute notions of poverty

But…



Gini Coefficient from World Human Development Report 2007-8

There are other ways of understanding poverty

- Relative poverty
  - Will not necessarily be changed by economic growth
- Alternative notions of development as:
  - Social equity
  - Freedoms (Sen)
  - Political Justice

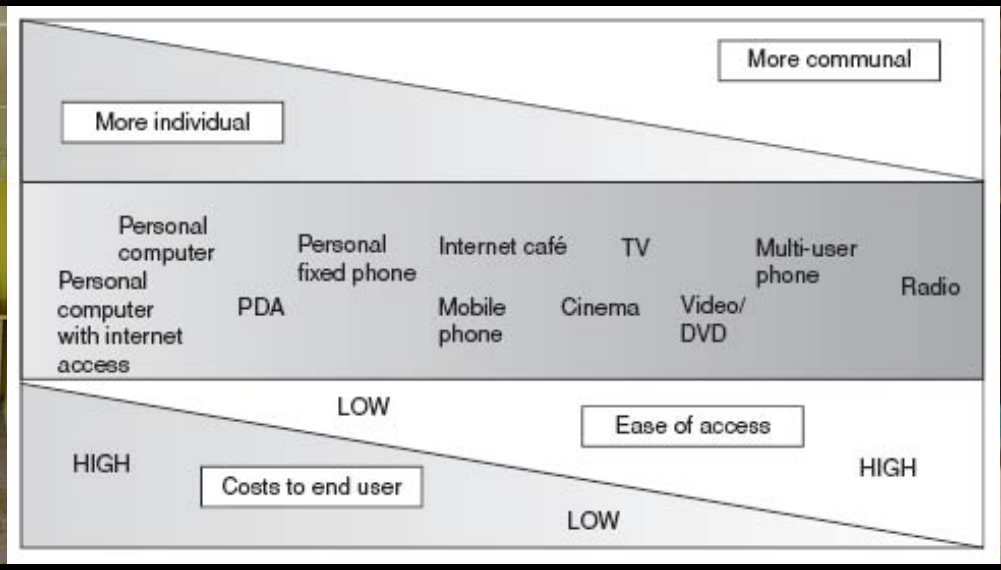
This lecture is about how ICTs can transform the lives of poor people

And why they are not yet really doing so…

My own particular interests

Young people at risk of living and working on the streets, and people with disabilities

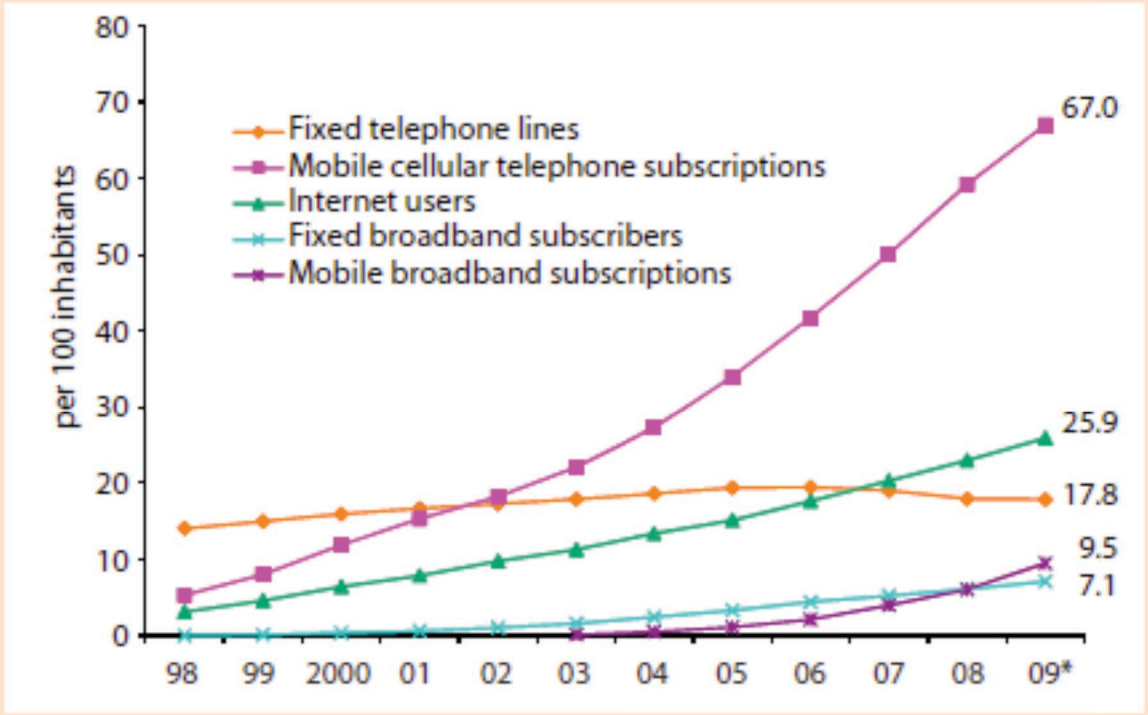
What do we mean by ICTs



Examples…

Global ICT trends

Chart 1.1: Global ICT developments, 1998-2009



Note: * Estimates.

Source: ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database.

How can these be used by poor people: an outline

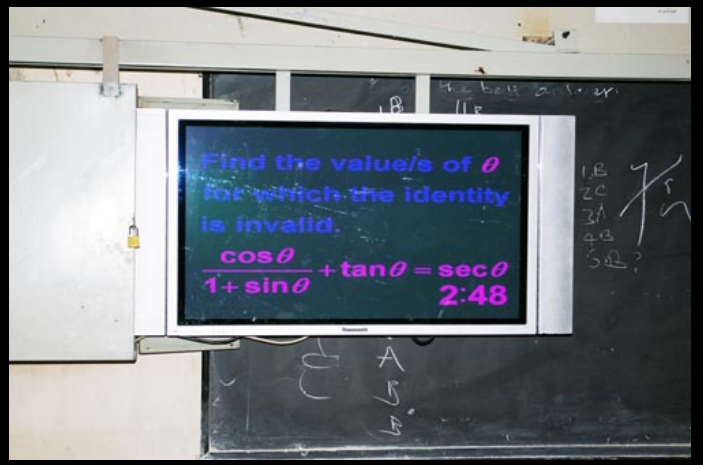
- Challenges with the use of ICTs
- Examples of work in which I have been involved
- Mobiles: success and challenges?
- Looking to the future

OLPC

- Often held up as a great example of success
- But
  - Rolled out separately from other initiatives
  - ‘Educational model’ based on avoiding teachers
  - Has little ‘educational’ content or structure
  - Negligible monitoring and evaluation
  - Huge cost
  - How to decide who gets one
- ‘Top down’ and ‘externally driven’

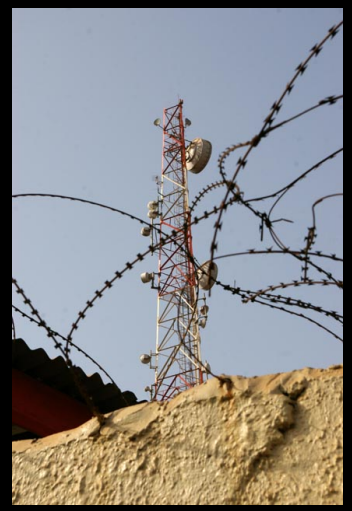
Ethiopian plasma screens

- Problem of poor quality teachers
- Replaced by plasma screens and satellite links
- Streaming of imported content
  - Initially no recording
- Alienation of teachers



There are many problems with ICT4D

- Often led by ‘outsiders’; D4ICT !
- Technologies in search of a purpose
- Do not consider user contexts and needs
- Not integrated into national policies
- Forget energy demands
- Partnerships disfunctional
- Pilot project based
  - Scale
  - Sustainability



Not this…

But…

Contrasting approaches to ICT4D

- Top-down
  - Innovative ideas development in Europe and north America
  - Technologically led
  - ‘Applied’ to development contexts
- Bottom-up
  - Needs based
  - Led by poor people themselves
  - With ‘our’ support

Examples of some of the work in which we have been involved….

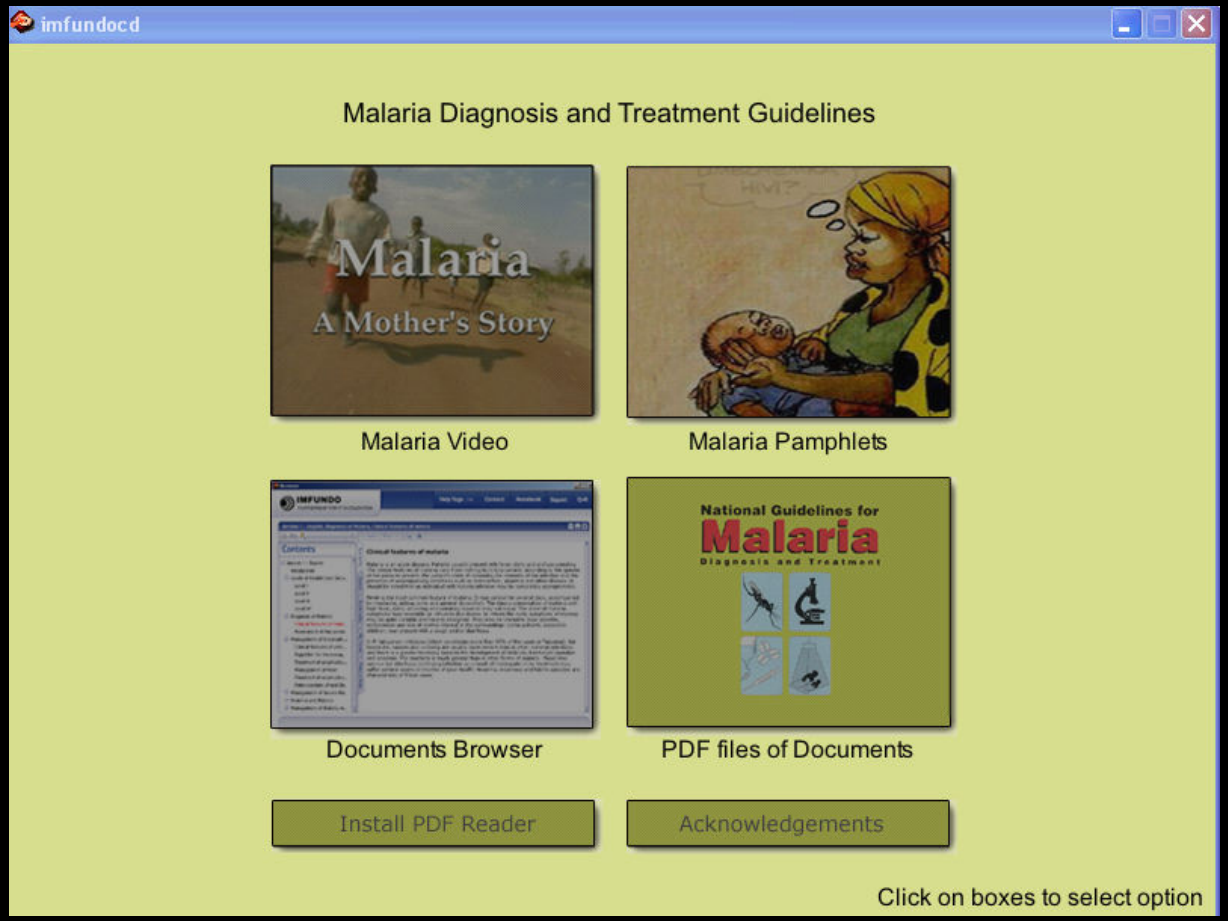
Education and ICTs: Ethiopia (2002-2005)

- Imfundo working with Forum on Street Children in Ethiopia
- Multi-stranded
  - E-learning centre
  - Girls club
  - Drop in centre
- But lack of continued donor partnership

Education and ICTs: Philippines (2004-present)

- eSkwela: development of non-formal digital curriculum
  - For out of school youth
- Importance of certification
- Programming by deaf programmers
- UNESCO award

Health: Malaria information in Tanzania



imfundocd

A mothers story

1 - Early and effective case management

2 - Access to quality medicines and knowledge of suppliers

3 - Insecticide Treated mosquito Nets (ITNs)

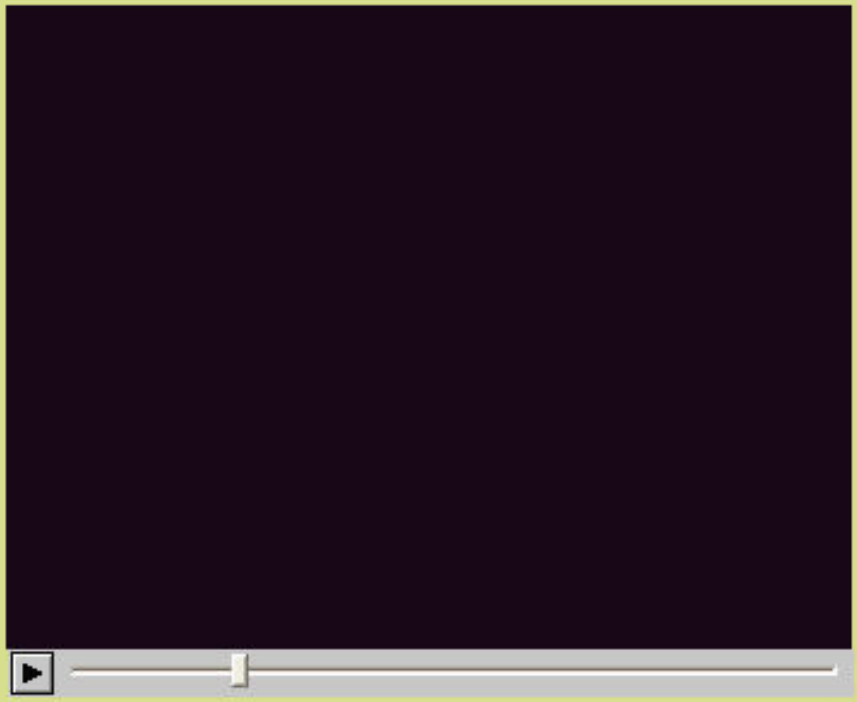
4 - Referral of malaria cases

5 - Intermittent Preventive Treatment

6 - Training and supervision

7 - Play all videos

<< Back



FILM : A MOTHER'S STORY

http://www.gg.rhul.ac.uk/ict4d/Video%20clips/m03.mpg

The film included on this CD was made in Kenya in 2000 for the National Malaria Control Programme so that it could be shown at the annual Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Global Partners Meeting, held that year in Geneva. The aim was to provide a reality check for the delegates so that they could better understand the enormity of the task set for RBM.

Tanzania and Kenya have both moved forward since the film was made. In Tanzania SP is now widely available in Government clinics and the 'Duka la dawa' of urban and rural communities; Chloroquine has been largely withdrawn from retail outlets; enough SP is supplied to districts for all pregnant women to have access to free IPT; and Insecticide Treated mosquito Net (ITN) and 'Ngao' sales, and use, are increasing dramatically. However, many of the underlying systematic problems, that are responsible for the tragic outcome illustrated in the film, still need to be addressed.

We have included 'A Mother's Story' on the malaria guidelines CD for Tanzania as a reminder of the reasons for the change in anti-malaria drug policy and to illustrate why the recommendations in the guidelines are so important. It should serve to focus the efforts of all those who have an interest in reducing the burden of malaria disease and improving the well-being of Tanzanian children and their mothers. The story highlights the need for action, at all levels, to:

*Improve early case recognition

OER and LMS

ICT4D Consortium
Tim Unwin
Colleagues
Twitter
ICTD
LONDON 2010
13th-16th December 2010
International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development
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BBC NEWS

Mobiles: successes and challenges

Solutions for all business types

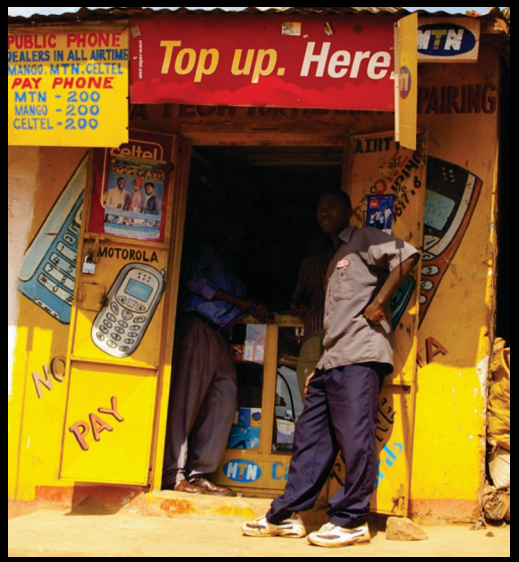
Enterprise

Improve productivity and customer satisfaction with solutions that offer advanced functionality and IT control.

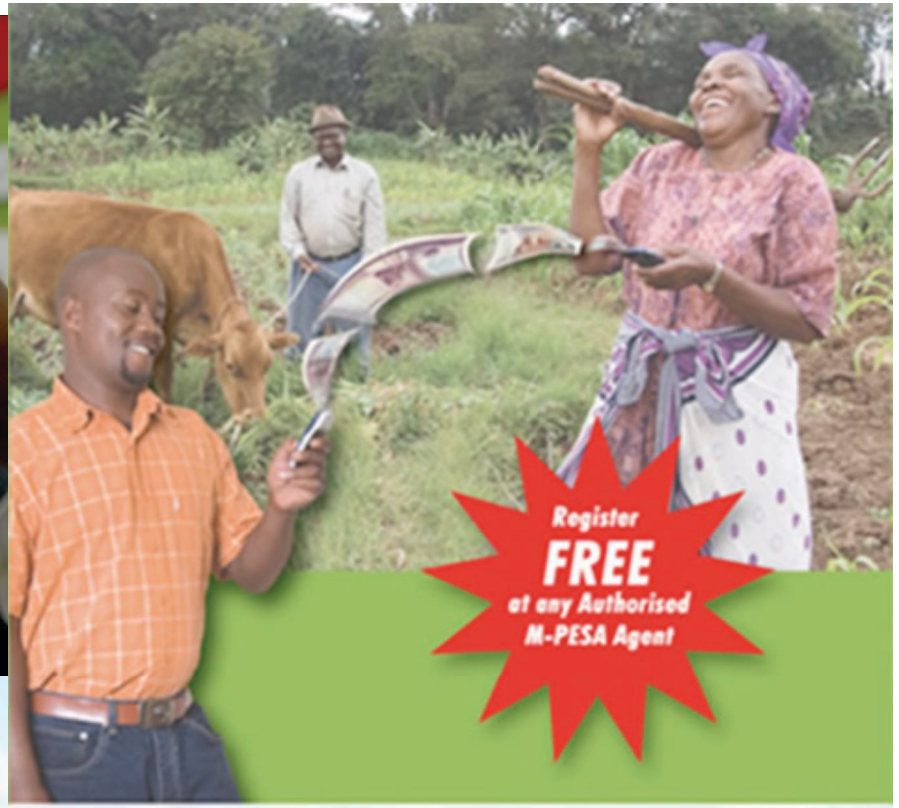
› Find out about BlackBerry solutions for the enterprise

How can mobile phones benefit poor people?

- What do you use your phones for?
- Mainly used for social purposes
  - And people willing to pay much for this
- Recent developments
  - Mobile banking
  - SMS messaging
    - FrontLine SMS
  - Crowd sourcing
    - Ushahidi



Tuma
PESA
kwa simu
NOKIA
Give Ksh2,000
cash to
Options


Register
FREE
at any Authorised
M-PESA Agent

Top up
here
AVAILABLE HERE
mPESA

WHAT IS THIS VISA CREDIT
CARD YOU SPEAK OF? WE
USE M-PESA HERE IN AFRICA!

Mobile successes: Kiwanja and Frontline SMS

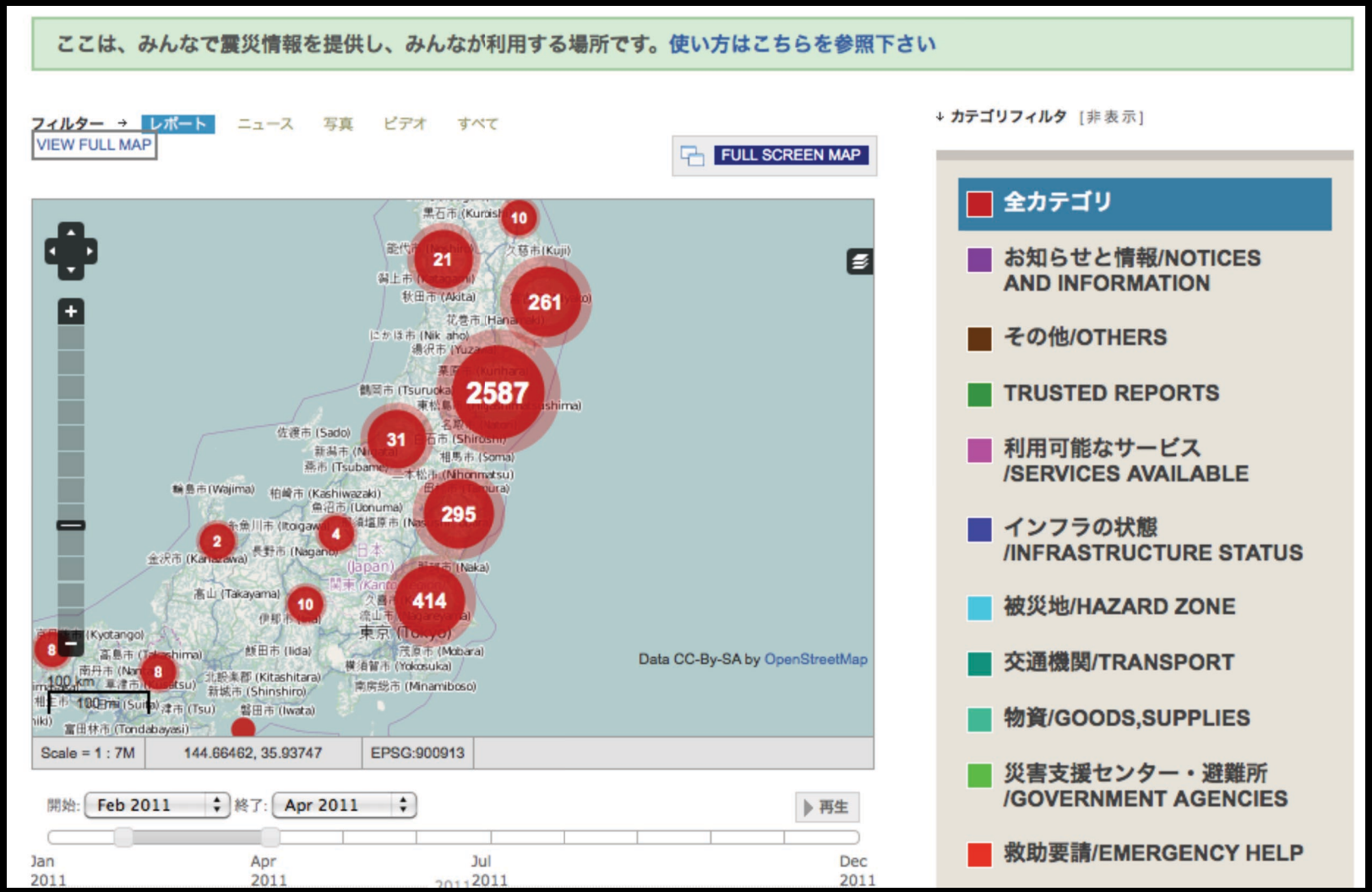
FRONTLINESMS ALLOWS YOU TO TEXT MESSAGE WITH LARGE GROUPS OF PEOPLE ANYWHERE THERE IS A MOBILE SIGNAL.

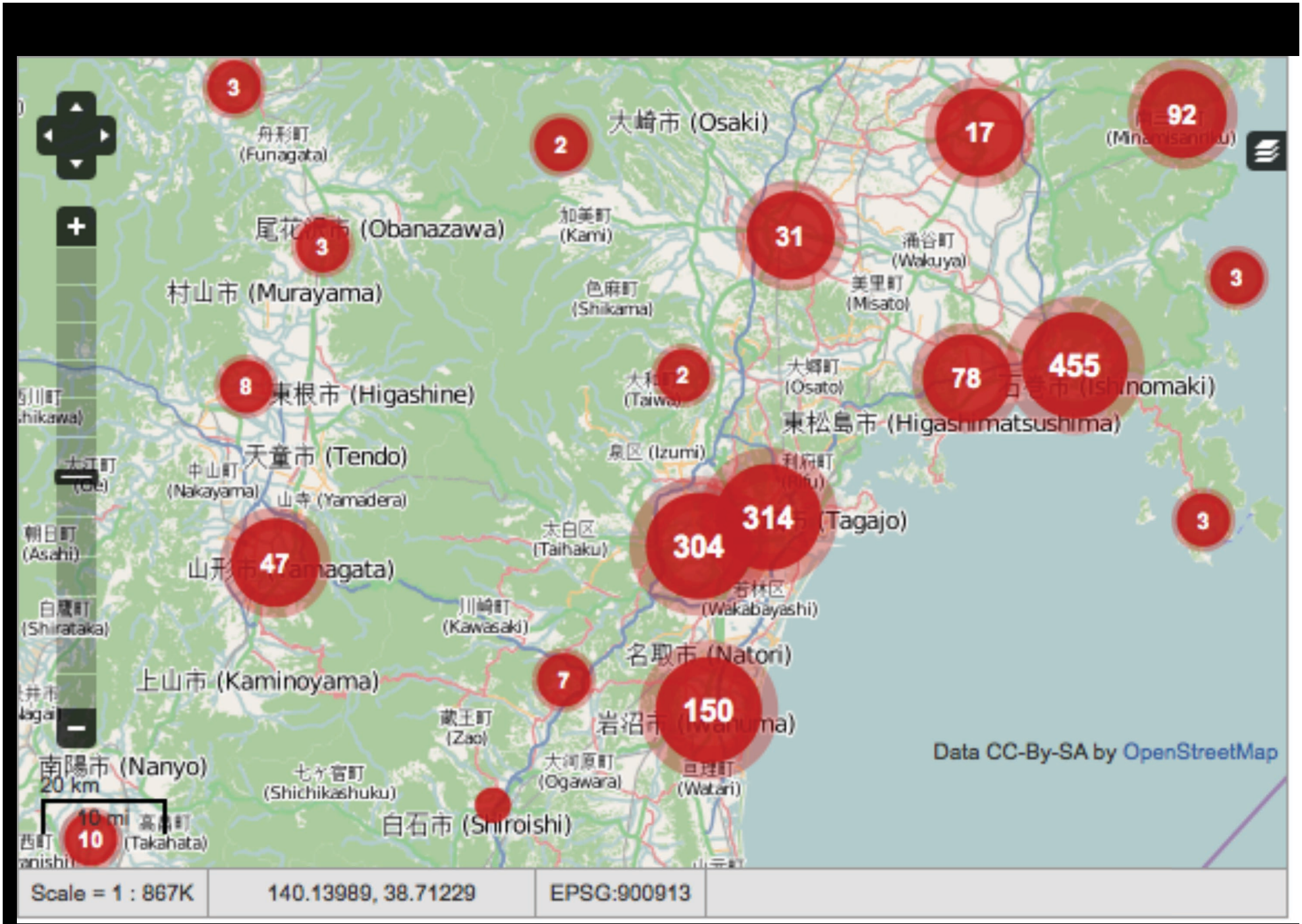
A lack of communication can be a major barrier for grassroots non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in developing countries. FrontlineSMS is the first text messaging system created exclusively with this problem in mind.

By leveraging basic tools already available to most NGOs — computers and mobile phones — FrontlineSMS enables instantaneous two-way communication on a large scale. It's easy to implement, simple to operate, and best of all, the software is free. You just pay for the messages you send in the normal way.

Mobile successes: Ushahidi and crowd sourcing

Ushahidi in Japan today





http://www.sinsai.info/ushahidi/

But, how can we use mobiles for

- Education?
  - Supporting girls' education?
- Health?
  - Providing preventive advice
- Rural Development?
  - Reaching the most marginalised areas

Can technology really serve the needs of the poorest?

Or will it continue primarily to serve the interests of the powerful?

Fixed line Broadband as proportion of monthly income

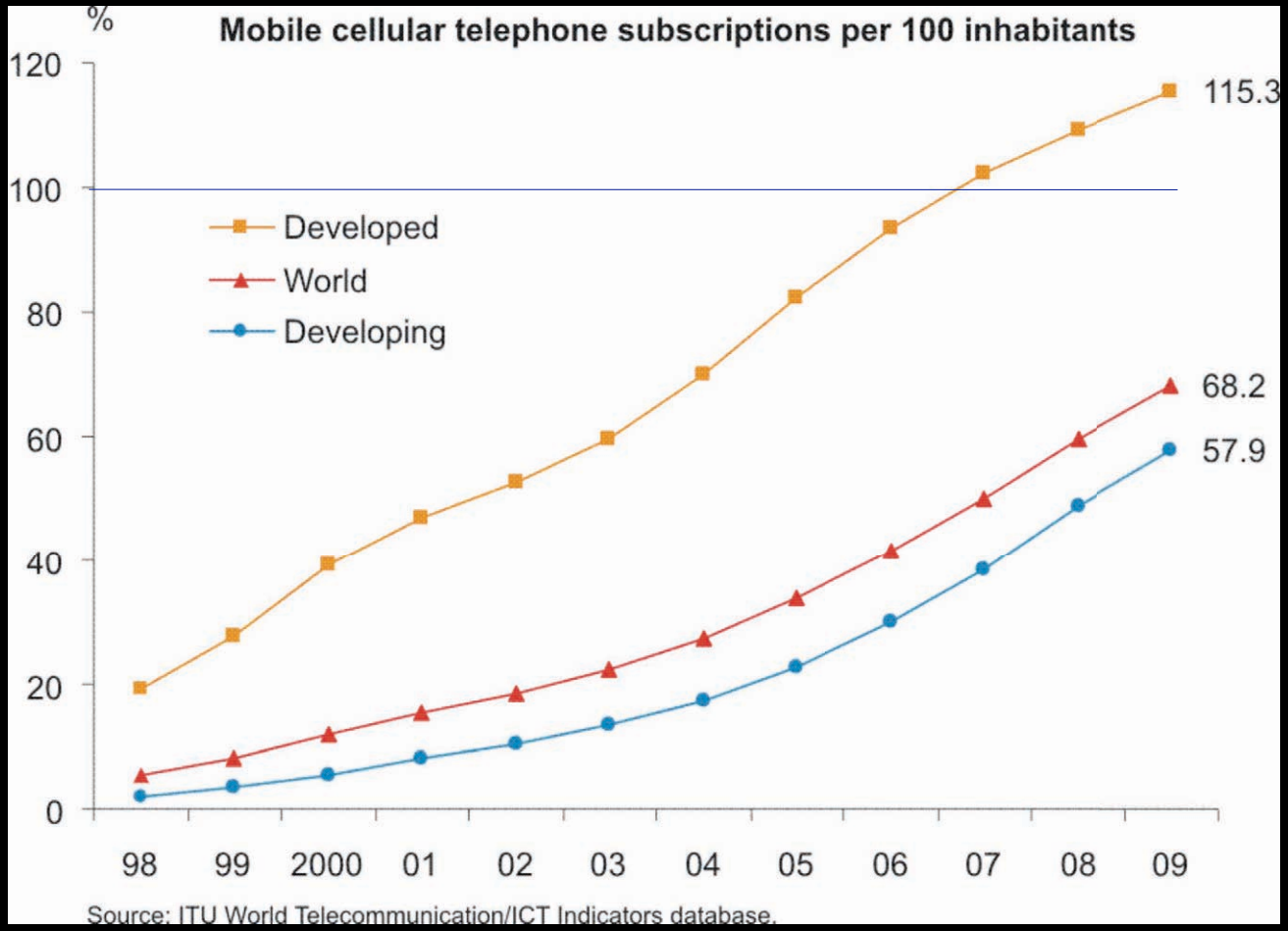
Least expensive

- Macau, China (0.30% of monthly income)
- Israel (0.33% of monthly income)
- Hong Kong (0.49% of monthly income)
- United States (0.5% of monthly income)
- Singapore (0.58% of monthly income)

Most expensive

- Central African Republic (3,891% of monthly income)
- Ethiopia (2,085% of monthly income)
- Malawi (2,038% of monthly income)
- Guinea (1,546% of monthly income)
- Niger (967% of monthly income)

Mobile subscriptions per 100 people



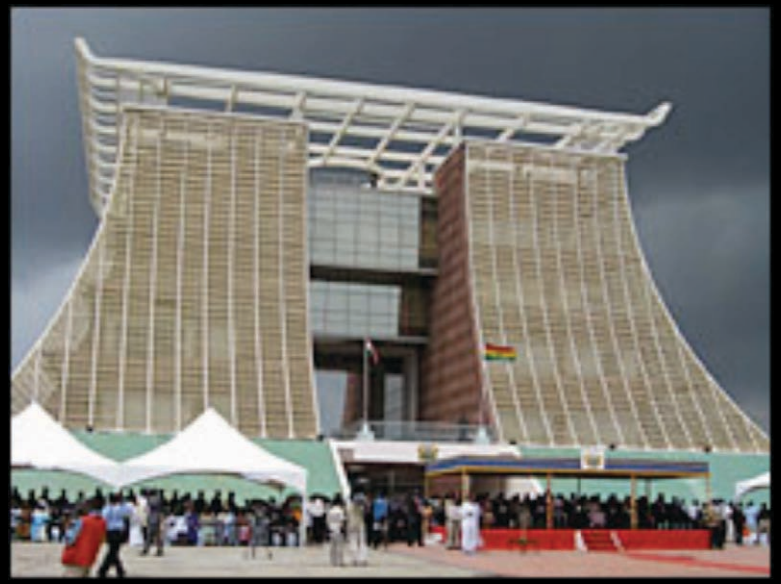
Source: ITU 2010

Child labour 'is helping to power our mobile phones'

Article | Graphic: The supply chain

Markets and governments

- Neoliberal market driven agendas
  - For economic growth
- But the market will not serve the poorest and most marginalised
- So states *must*
  - Ensure regulatory environment is fair
  - Provide infrastructure for delivery to poorest



ICT*4*D – necessary conditions

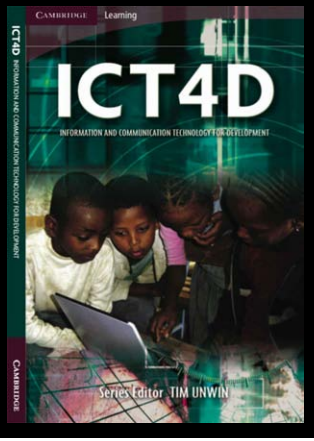
- Appropriate regulatory environment
- Focus on the needs of the most marginalised
- Supporting bottom-up innovation
- Explicitly addressing social and political agendas
- Crafting appropriate partnerships

The importance of effective partnerships

- ICT4D is inherently multi-disciplinary
  - Need different skills and expertise
- Need to bring together different sectors to implement
  - Governments
  - Private sector
  - Civil society
- But difficult to do!

…and political agendas?

http://totallycoolpix.com/2011/02/the-egypt-protests-part-04/

What I hope you will take away

- Understanding ‘development’ in a different way
- Reflecting on how ICTs can help poor and marginalised people
- Some case study examples
- What needs to be in place for success
- … to explore ideas further