



PRESS RELEASE

Health Child and Text to Change introduce SMS services for health campaign in Jinja.

Health Child and Text to Change have introduced a mobile phone text messaging for a Health Campaign in Jinja District, Eastern Uganda. The project will officially be launched on 3rd December in collaboration with the Department of Health Services Jinja District. The project is supported by the International Institute of Communication and Development (IICD) Netherlands. .

The purpose of the SMS for health project is to increase access to health information and health services among rural communities. It not only aims to bridge the ICT gaps by introducing a novel approach in the promotion of family planning, HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention, treatment and maternal health; but will also move one step further in providing complementary support for data collection, analysis and SMS-based query consultation for the recently instituted National Health Information Management System at the Ministry of Health. The infrastructure for these applications is already in place through standard telecommunications networks (MTN, Zain, UTL and Warid). The program will engage Ugandans in an interactive SMS quiz on health prevention and promotion; phone users will be able to "opt in" the campaign and send their replies at no cost. Moreover, participants in the quiz are eligible to win prizes such as airtime, mosquito nets, mobile phones and football jerseys.

The specific objectives of the program are:

- Gauging and increasing knowledge of participants on HIV/AIDS
- Encouraging uptake of Family Planning practices
- Informing participants about maternal health including ANC, and other reproductive health services
- Scaling up Voluntary and Couple Counselling and Testing for pregnant mothers and their partners
- Prevention of mother to Child infection with HIV
- Child health and nutrition
- Data collection.

The majority of people that will benefit from the new health information services provided by Health Child and Text to Change live in poor fishing communities and other underserved areas in semi-urban and rural areas in selected areas in Jinja and neighbouring districts. Health child works with communities, local leadership, and public and private health facility workers, to implement a range of activities both preventive and curative that augment the health of children. The new health information service **TTC** was designed with a flexible platform that will redesign information materials and messages into an acceptable SMS format with the option to present the messages in Luganda and English. This will complement the government's interventions in this area and will contribute towards achievement of *Health Child's* objectives of creating a safe, secure and healthy environment for young mothers, children, and young female care givers. Health Child through its community workers is gathering phone numbers of target participants for database feeding as well as serving as a conduit of information that participants can get further guidance on sourcing health services including access to more information on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and skilled advisory services to the expectant mothers using the on-hand qualified midwives.



The services provided by Text to Change in partnership with Health Child are a perfect example of how the use of new information technologies can help to innovate and enhance development approaches. Text to Change has recently become preferred partner of Connect4Change, a new consortium of Dutch development and specialised ICT organisations in the Netherlands of which IICD and Cordaid also form part, as well as Edukans, ICCO and AKVO. The organisations have decided to join forces and seek complementarities; synergy and benefit from advantages of scale to use innovative solutions based on internet and mobile phones to better address development programmes.

Note to the Editors:

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. The mission of the organization is to create a safe and secure healthy environment for young children and young care givers at the household and community level so that children—both girls and boys can experience a safe and fruitful childhood; and that they will grow to become responsible and productive adult persons in their communities. The organization focuses on preventing the occurrence of common illnesses among children. It also works to promote the good management of child illnesses by targeting the mothers of children on issues of childcare, antenatal and maternal care as well as social protection for children. Website: www.healthchild.info

Text to Change (TTC) is a young dynamic organization working in the least developed nations. It uses state of the art mobile phone technology to collect and disseminate information on health issues. With our partners we develop innovative advocacy campaigns that use the latest insights in marketing adapted to the developing country context. TTC has been one of the pioneers in using mobile phones for Health monitoring and advocacy in Africa and is specialized in interactive and incentive based text message programs addressing a wide range of health issues. TTC currently works in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Namibia. Website: www.texttochange.com

IICD: The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) is an international non-profit organisation based in the Netherlands, specialized in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for development. IICD creates practical and sustainable solutions using both modern media (such as computers, Internet, email and multimedia) and traditional media (such as radio and television) to connect people and enable them to benefit from ICT, thereby contributing to the Millennium Development Goals. Together with partners from the public, private and non-profit sector, IICD puts knowledge, innovation and finance to work. Currently, IICD is active in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia in the field of education, environment, governance, health and livelihoods (agriculture).

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