



Press Release

The United Nations to launch “Texting4Health” in Uganda

The UN is launching, on 1 July 2009, a ten-day initiative intended to reach out to 10,000 people in Uganda through mobile phones to demonstrate the reach and potential use of mobile phones in health information and promotion. The initiative, "Texting4Health" will invite residents of Uganda's second largest commercial city of Jinja to participate in a short health quiz using text messages. These messages are free to the consumer and are designed to serve a public health information campaign.

Texting4Health will use the same approach as two previous programs for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns in Uganda. The results of the Texting4Health demonstration will be shared with Ministers of UN Member States at the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in Geneva in July 2009.

The initiative is sponsored by UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and the Uganda Ministry of Health. Text to Change (TTC), a Dutch non-profit organization, will provide its mobile telephony platform. They will send out SMS (short message service) questions on health prevention and promotion provided by the World Health Organization to 10,000 mobile subscribers. Prior to that, TTC will inform the public with announcements via SMS and other media.

Mobile health, or mHealth, takes advantage of the broad adoption of mobile telephones in countries to reach the public with health messages for promotion and prevention.

The objective of this short campaign is to draw attention to the potential of mHealth. It aims to create awareness and interest by demonstrating the possibilities to collect information in real time and showing the ease of outreach to citizens with mobile phones.

The campaign will engage Ugandans in a SMS quiz on health prevention and promotion; phone users will be able to "opt in" the campaign at no cost. Participating individuals will then receive confirmation of their responses.

For more information, contact:

- Olivia Nyakarungi, UN Communication Group, +256 41 236272, onyakarungi@ohchr.org
- Bas Hoefman, Text to Change-Uganda, +256 754157659, bhoefman@texttochange.com
- Joan Dzenowagis, World Health Organization, +41(22)791-2504, dzenowagisj@who.int
- Newton Kanhema, UN Department of Public Information, +1 212 963 5602, kanhema@un.org
- Paul Simon, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, +1 917 367 5027, simonp@un.org
- Monica Nogara, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, +1 212-963-4901, nogara@un.org

###

About the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

ECOSOC is the principal United Nations body for coordinating and reviewing economic and social policies, providing advice and fostering dialogue on development issues. The Annual Ministerial Review, which was mandated at the 2005 World Summit, assesses the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other goals and targets agreed at the major UN conferences and summits over the past 15 years, which constitute the United Nations Development Agenda (UNDA). Each year, the AMR focuses on a specific aspect of the UNDA. For more information, visit www.un.org/ecosoc; www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amr.shtml; or www.un.org/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/ECOSOC_BROCHURE_en.pdf;

About the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

DESA promotes and supports international cooperation to achieve development for all, and assists governments in agenda-setting and decision-making on development issues at the global level. DESA provides a broad range of analytical products and policy advice that serve as valuable sources of reference and decision-making tools for developed and developing countries, particularly in translating global commitments into national policies and action and in monitoring progress towards the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. For more information, visit www.un.org/esa/desa/

About the World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. For more information, visit www.who.int/en/

About Text to Change (TTC)

Text to Change is a Dutch non-profit organization which is dedicated to support health education via mobile telephones in Africa. Text to Change works on developing mobile telephony based solutions in developing countries and is specialized in incentive based text message programs addressing HIV/AIDS and other health issues. TTC aims at creating awareness, collecting data and creating an uptake in health services by using mobile telephones. For more information, visit www.texttochange.com