

MICROFINANCING AND MENTORING VIA MOBILE PHONES

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

We've already written about a few microfinancing platforms focused on the developing world, including [Kiva](#) and [C4-World](#). Next up is [Mobile Movement](#), a Canadian initiative we just learned about that works via mobile phone. Few young social entrepreneurs in the developing world have computers, so Mobile Movement provides mobile phones and training to foster both micro-funding and professional advice via SMS, MMS and email. Through a collaboration with UN-HABITAT, Microsoft Research India and the Vancouver-based Environmental Youth Alliance—with funding from the MacArthur Foundation—Mobile Movement's first prototype project is currently under way in Kenya, where it is working with 15 youth groups from the slums and low-income neighbourhoods of Nairobi that are part of UN-HABITAT's Urban Entrepreneurship Program. One such group aims to open a tailoring school for at-risk youth, for example; another hopes to build an urban agriculture project. Last fall the groups were given mobile phones and trained in their use, allowing them to begin taking photos and sending emails and texts soon afterwards. Thanks to Mobile Movement's storytelling website and videos, several groups began to secure funding for their projects earlier this year, and a creative business partnership was formed between a bone-craft collective in the Kibera slum and a New York City jewelry designer. Potential donors of funds or advice begin by reviewing the groups' project descriptions online. When they find one that interests them, they can write a comment on the group's page, and it will be sent directly to the youth group's phone. The group will respond via text message or email, and Mobile Movement will notify the donor that the youth group has responded. From there donors can offer creative business ideas or mentoring as well as microfinancing loans and community grants, sent via PayPal or CanadaGives. The Environmental Youth Alliance and UN-HABITAT manage and administer funds raised; 90 percent of proceeds go directly to the youth, while 10 percent is reserved to administer the fund and maintain the website. Ultimately, Mobile Movement hopes to get companies to use its platform as a way to personalize their employee charitable donations programs. For the next phases of its test project, it seeks technological, management and marketing experts to help improve its current system. Later this year it hopes to expand to additional East African cities, followed by a broad public launch in early 2010. More information can be found on [NetSquared](#); one to join up with, participate in, or be inspired by! Spotted by: Darren Roberts

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