GINKS NORTHERN ICT4D FORUM

Theme: "FRONTLINE SMS"

30TH SEPTEMBER 2010

The meeting started with a word of welcome from the Northern Projects Node Coordinator, Mr. Agbenyo John Stephen. He welcomed all who were participating in the knowledge sharing platform for the very first time. He explained that the event was organized by GINKS and it comes off on the last Thursday of every month.

He explained that a lack of communication has been a major barrier for grassroots non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in developing countries. By leveraging basic tools already available to most NGOs — computers and mobile phones — FrontlineSMS enables instantaneous two-way communication on a large scale. He stated that It is against this background that the Northern ICT4D Forum has decided to focus and share knowledge on Frontline SMS, a bulk messaging platform.

Mr. William Nsiah Asare, a member of the Northern node of GINKS was the resource person. Doing his presentation, he mentioned that Frontline SMS was invented by Ken Banks of Kiwanja and that it is a software that turns a laptop or desktop computer and a mobile phone or modem into a two-way group messaging hub. He mentioned that it works anywhere there is a mobile signal.

Mr. Nsiah stated that once one had the software running on one's computer, one can send messages to wide groups of people, and collect responses to any questions or surveys one might want to run, all via text message.

On the technological requirements, Mr. Nsiah mentioned that Frontline SMS requires a GSM modem or a mobile phone to be connected to a computer via Serial, USB or Bluetooth. He listed a computer, a modem or mobile phone and text message-based software (Frontline SMS).

On the features of the software, Mr. Nsiah mentioned that the software could be used to

- Create and manage all of your SMS-related contact groups
- Send and receive messages via special on-screen consoles
- Provides incoming and outgoing message history for each contact
- Engage with your contact groups – run surveys, competitions etc. via the **Survey Manager**
- Run your own text-based information service via the automated **Reply Manager**
- Export data to Excel and other programs
- No need to be on-line – works on any GSM network via your own PC or laptop

Participants were thrilled with a demonstration of installing the software, managing and importing contacts, sending SMSs, setting auto reply, and configuring the platform in general.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Agbenyo Stephen thanked all the participants for being present despite the fact that the weather that day was not friendly and that despite the rain, the program went on successfully. He urged all who were interested in the software to pass by the Savana Signatures office to pick up copies of the software.