**Uplifting text messages**

Kenya’s Centre for Training and Integrated Research for Development (CETRAD) and NETWAS Uganda are among the four winners in the inaugural nGomobile competition. The winning projects were selected from a pool of more than 70 entries that came from Kenya, Uganda, Mexico and Azerbaijan.

A statement issued by Kenya’s Tell-Em Public Relations said the nGomobile competition was aimed at encouraging grassroots non-profit organisations in the developing world to think about how they could benefit from text messaging in their business.

The statement said that the entry of mobile technology into the developing world had opened up a number of opportunities for the non-profit sector. “Text messaging has proved itself to be remarkably versatile, helping to remind patients to take their medicine, providing market prices to farmers and fishermen.” Other benefits include distribution of health information, allowing the reporting of human rights abuses and promoting increased citizen participation in government.

Micheline Ntiru, head of CSI for Nokia in the Middle East and Africa and one of the panel judges, comments: “It is good to see some East African organisations benefit from this competition. In emerging markets, we are discovering so many new ways to use mobile phones to enrich and uplift people’s lives, both socially and economically.”

Other winners of the competition include NETWAS from Uganda, who will launch an SMS-based service for rural communities allowing them to ask a range of water-based questions on topics such as sanitation, hygiene, water harvesting and water technologies.

David Mwunagga, for Highway Africa News Agency.

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- from A-Z in sub-Saharan Africa