

Posted by Administrator

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Some 3/4 of the world's human inhabitants now have access to a mobile phone, as the evolution of the wireless market is no longer "so much about the phone, but how it is used," according to a World Bank-infoDev report released July 17. There were fewer than 1 billion global mobile phone subscriptions, pre- or post-paid, in 2000. That's grown to more than 6 billion, nearly 5 billion of which are in developing countries. With multiple subscription ownership on the rise, active mobile subscriptions are likely to soon total more than the global human population, according to the World Bank and infoDev, its technology entrepreneurship and innovation program. The shift towards how owners are using their phones is evident in the rapid growth of Internet-enabled smartphone ownership, as well as the fast growing number of mobile application downloads. More than 30 billion mobile apps were downloaded in 2011, according to the World Bank report.

"In developing countries, citizens are increasingly using mobile phones to create new livelihoods and enhance their lifestyles, while governments are using them to improve service delivery and citizen feedback mechanisms," according to the "Information and Communications for Development 2012: Maximizing Mobile" report.

"Mobile communications offer major opportunities to advance human and economic development – from providing basic access to health information to making cash payments, spurring job creation, and stimulating citizen involvement in democratic processes," commented World Bank vice president for Sustainable Development Rachel Kyte.

The third in the World Bank's series on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for Development, this latest report on mobile phones and technologies analyzes the growth and evolution of mobile telephony and the rise of data-based services, including apps, to handheld devices. The consequences for development of the emerging "app economy" are investigated, particularly as they pertain to agriculture, health, financial services and government, as is how it's changing approaches to entrepreneurship and employment, the authors explain.

"The mobile revolution is right at the start of its growth curve: mobile devices are becoming cheaper and more powerful while networks are doubling in bandwidth roughly every 18 months and expanding into rural areas," noted Tim Kelly, lead ICT policy specialist at the World Bank and one of the report's authors.

Examples cited in the World Bank-infoDev press release include:

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In India, the state of Kerala's mGovernment program has deployed over 20 applications and facilitated more than 3 million interactions between the government and citizens since its launch in December 2010.

Kenya has emerged as a leading player in mobile for development, largely due to the success of the M-PESA mobile payment ecosystem. Nairobi-based AkiraChix, for example, provides networking and training for women technologists. In Palestine, Souktel's JobMatch service is helping young people find jobs. College graduates using the service reported a reduction in the time spent looking for employment from an average of twelve weeks to one week or less, and an increase in wages of up to 50 percent.