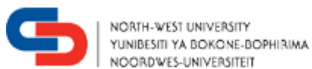




VOIce-based Community-cEntric mobile Services for social development

Consortium partners



ICT services have the potential to play a major role in social development in developing economies. Recently, mobile telephony has made its entrance in the developing world, and this is opening great opportunities. Despite many efforts, the World Wide Web is still inaccessible for many people in developing countries.

We take as an example remote rural communities in the Sahel region in West-Africa. Communication here is voice-based - many people don't read or write - in local African languages. While there is clearly a need for indigenous knowledge sharing in remote rural areas in the Sahel, the actual information on the World Wide Web contains little relevant or interesting information for people here. Unless people are able to create their own content and publish and access it, the Web does not have an added value for them.

The VOICES project is aimed at supporting remote communities creating "spoken Web content". A toolbox to enable African web-developers to create voice-websites is one of the deliverables of the VOICES-project. This will encourage the creation of voice web-content, including community radio content and spoken messages from users.

The final objective of VOICES is to remove a range of access barriers to the Web, related to access channels, literacy, and languages. This may represent a major step forward in realizing the potential of mobile ICT services, particularly in the African context. VOICES will demonstrate that its results are adapted to the African context by extensive local pilots and associated community building, namely through the focus on health services in Senegal, and agricultural knowledge exchange in the Sahel countries, e.g in Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

The objectives of the project

Open and wider access: VOICES will improve voice based access to content and mobile ICT services by building a toolbox for the development of innovative voice services.

VOICES will work towards integration of local community radio and ICTs.

VOICES will deliver speech technologies: tool support and methodology for under-researched and under-resourced African languages.

Long-term sustainability: A sustainable architecture and business models will ensure local adoption and exploitation of the tools and methods beyond the end of the project.

VOICES will enhance uptake by delivering a mobile training lab that offers capacity building for local partners.



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