

Ericsson, MTN start first Millennium Village project (Rwanda)

October 31st, 2007 3:07 pm

Ericsson and mobile operator MTN have unveiled the first services in their Millennium Village project, in Mayange, Rwanda. Part of a partnership with Columbia University's Earth Institute, the Millennium Village project aims to improve mobile and internet connectivity in rural areas in Africa, supporting social services and economic development. In Rwanda, MTN is upgrading its GSM network to EDGE to increase broadband connectivity and equip community health workers with communication tools. One initiative to improve health services is a new toll-free phone service that can be used in medical emergencies to connect patients with on-duty medical personnel. Other initiatives include a mobile learning tool to train community health workers and applications to collect and share basic household health information. Sony Ericsson has also provided mobile phones to the Millennium Village health clinics and community health workers. Together with Ericsson, it has developed and will provide a new Solar Village Charger capable of recharging at least 30 mobile-phone batteries per day and eight phones simultaneously for each village cluster. Small-business entrepreneurs will also have the opportunity to sell shared voice and data services to villagers, thanks to a partnership with the GSM Association's Development Fund.