

Republic of the Congo's access to internet messaging services nearly doubles

Warid Congo brings two-way email and online chat to entire subscriber base with ForgetMeNot Africa

A new service is bringing email and online chat to people in even the most rural parts of the Central African state of Republic of the Congo via SMS-enabled mobile phones – nearly doubling the population's access to internet messaging.

Congo's highly literate population – UNICEF figures show that adult literacy was at 87 per cent in 2008 – struggles to access vital information such as healthcare, travel and educational resources. One reason is that only 6.6 per cent of its 3.68 million population use the Internet, according to the latest figures from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 2009.

Internet connectivity in Congo is still extremely low, even in comparison to the rest of Africa. However, mobile phone subscriptions in the country are booming. ITU figures show 2.17 million Congolese people had a mobile phone subscription in 2009, compared to just 383,700 in 2004. The country now has 89 mobile phone subscriptions to every single fixed telephone line.

Now Warid Congo is transforming its 450,000+ mobile phone subscribers' handsets into virtual smartphones with its new Warid messenger service.

Warid Congo customers can now send and receive mobile email and online chat messages on any SMS-enabled handset, bypassing the need for internet access, subscriptions, smartphones, Java downloads or data connections. Expanding the country's access to internet messaging via entry level, ultra low-end mobile phones will naturally improve access to information, communications with friends and family, and trade.

Warid messenger, provided by ForgetMeNot Africa, a specialist in unified messaging systems for telecommunications operators, is particularly attractive to young "early adopters" because it gives them a considerably cheaper and more convenient way of accessing email and chat compared to a standard internet connection. The service also incorporates popular chat services such as MSN Messenger, Yahoo!, Windows Live and Gtalk so that users can send and receive messages and continue to chat online without being connected to the internet. Warid Congo's subscribers can now keep in touch with friends and family in Congo and all over the world whenever and wherever they like.

Jeremy George, Chief Operating Officer for ForgetMeNot Africa, said: "Warid Congo is building a bridge over the digital divide for people in Republic of the Congo. The availability of smartphones, laptops and even fixed line internet connections is very low for this highly literate country. Now by providing affordable access to chat and email services on standard mobile phones, without the need for data plans or expensive handsets, Warid Congo is providing more convenient messaging possibilities to its entire subscriber base.

"Our development work means that ForgetMeNot Africa technology can now serve the 115 million Francophones on the continent. The launch of Warid messenger also expands our footprint across Africa, with our first venture into central Africa following previous launches in east, west and southern Africa. Our cloud computing approach is turning even more basic handsets into virtual messaging smartphones. We are giving millions of Africans access to internet messaging which otherwise, for both

economic and technical reasons, would be unavailable to them due to a severe lack of internet connectivity and language support. For the large majority of African people basic first generation mobile phones may be the only way they will ever access the internet."

Michel Elame, CEO of Warid Congo, said: "Deploying ForgetMeNot Africa software is a clear sign that Warid Congo intends to be the most innovative mobile phone network in Congo. Warid messenger opens up a world of internet messaging to the highly literate Congolese people. They can now send and receive emails and have chat conversations with friends and family from all over the world anytime they like, be it from their armchair, while in the park with their friends or even while doing their shopping. This is a unique innovative offering for Congolese consumers."

-ends-

Notes To Editors

Figures were sourced from the International Telecommunication Union (www.itu.int) and UNICEF

For further editorial information, images or to arrange interviews please contact fmn@pwkpr.com or call +44 20 7609 1900

About Warid Congo

WARID Congo S.A is a mobile phone network in the Republic of the Congo. It launched in Congo in early 2008, becoming the country's third telecommunications operator. Warid Congo is an affiliate of Dhaba group that has diversified its business interests with a focus on emerging market opportunities in financial services, real estate and telecommunications. Warid Congo now has more than 450,000 active subscribers. The company offers a range of innovative products, including Warid Musik (Caller Ring Back Tone), MMS messaging

About ForgetMeNot Africa

ForgetMeNot Africa Ltd. is a "software as a service" (SaaS) company specialising in unified messaging that supports seamless interoperability between SMS, email and Instant Messaging clients for telecommunications operators. The core product is Message Optimiser which allows telecom operators to immediately provide cost-effective comprehensive unified messaging services to all of their customers without any upgrades to the device or any need for downloading new applications onto the device. This opens up a range of previously inaccessible services to many of their customers including 2-way email and 2-way instant messaging communication capability. For more information call +44 207 408 4730 or visit www.fmnafrica.com