



Applying ICT to Support Refugees

In more than five decades, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has helped an estimated 50 million people restart their lives. UNHCR was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 and 1981. The agency today has a staff of around 6,540 people in 116 countries acting to help refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide.

“Refugees have been forced from their homes against their will but they have not lost their strength or courage. They inspire the UN Refugee Agency to excel everyday in our duty to protect them, and their plight encourages us to seek new partners who share this commitment to refugees and who can bring special skills and resources to help them rebuild their lives with dignity. We can only encourage others to follow the inspiring example set by Microsoft.”

Wendy Chamberlin, Deputy High Commissioner, January 2005

In 1999, as the Kosovo refugee crisis unfolded, a group of Microsoft employees joined together and contacted the UNHCR to volunteer their time and technical knowledge. Together UNHCR, Microsoft employees and other partners developed a mobile registration system to provide more than half a million refugees with new identification documents. This system evolved into the Refugee Field Kit 2000 which was used in over a dozen countries worldwide.

Since 1999, the relationship between UNHCR and Microsoft has broadened to provide refugees with technology that can help them improve their standard of living, education and job prospects, by embracing refugees as part of the worldwide community technology movement.

Project Profile

Microsoft has also been working with the UN refugee agency on the global roll-out of Project Profile which follows on from the Refugee Field Kit 2000, providing a standardized system for refugee registration, replacing dozens of old, incompatible databases. The system was designed and implemented by UNHCR, with support from Microsoft.

Outlining the benefits of the system, Deputy High Commissioner Wendy Chamberlin said, “You have no protection if you are invisible. To get this kind of documentation is a basic form of protection, and services flow from that.”





Seventy Microsoft employees have helped implement the system handling key demographic information, including number of men, women, and children, age, mortality rates, medical status, and food and nutritional information. Microsoft is currently working with UNHCR to develop the third version of Project Profile. The system is now referred to as ProGres and is operating in 58 countries throughout 308 refugee camps, the majority of which are in Africa. ProGres currently stores the information for 4-5 million refugees.

Council of Business Leaders

Microsoft is among the founding members of the UNHCR Council of Business Leaders (CBL) launched by Wendy Chamberlin at the World Economic Forum, Davos in January 2005 – along with Nike, Manpower, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, WPP and Merck. The aim of the Council is to catalyze innovative public-private partnerships, better coordinate corporate investments and help UNHCR find new sources of private sector funding and public-private partnerships.

In March 2006, the Council of Business Leaders, including Microsoft and Nike visited UNHCR camps in East Africa to gain insight on the capacity-building efforts to date, and to see what areas have the potential for partnership in the future.

Ninemillion.org – Let Them Play

Together with UNHCR, Right to Play, and CBL partner Nike, Microsoft launched the ninemillion.org campaign on 20 June 2006, World Refugee Day. The campaign is aimed at raising awareness of the plight of refugee

children, developing greater understanding of their long-term needs, and to raise funds for educational and sporting opportunities in the camps.

Microsoft supported the Ninemillion campaign through MSN, Microsoft's online media network, to provide advertising media, editorial and promotional support for the campaign. MSN also featured the campaign on local portal and Hotmail sites in 10 markets across Europe, as well as on MSN's popular 'Road to the World Cup' channel.

In January 2007, Microsoft, in support of Ninemillion.org, launched the Click for the Cause initiative where Internet searches performed at <http://click4thecause.live.com> using Microsoft's search service, Live Search, resulted in a financial donation to ninemillion.org. This initiative, which ran until March 2007, was implemented in 26 countries and in 11 languages. The initiative resulted in 2 million visits in 2 months.

Windows Live Messenger is also cooperating with Ninemillion.org in the I'M Making a Difference campaign, where individuals can post videos and messages about their experience taking part in the programme. When MSN Messenger users start a conversation through the I'M website, a portion of the advertising revenue is donated to Ninemillion.org.

Underlining the commitment to Ninemillion.org, in May 2007, the Council of Business Leaders visited two refugee camps in Thailand to see the impact of the partnership. The visiting executives, including Jonathan Murray, Worldwide Technology Officer for Public Sector, Microsoft Corp, viewed the new Community Technology Centre at Tham Hin camp, which will provide access to technology, including internet access, and skills training to over 2,000 refugees during its first year.

Community Technology Access Programme

UNHCR hired BP energy expert to ensure access to technology, energy to power, as well as content and curriculum in refugee camps. Microsoft recently began working on this global project to provide a replicable solution for enabling access to information technology skills and support in camps around the world. The aim is to empower 20.8 million refugees, improving their quality of life and economic opportunities. The focus will be on persons of concern (refugees/IDPs) in rural, camp based settings and hosting communities.

