

Rural Areas of Kenya Get Connected to the Web



This is the VOA Special English Development Report.

Some _____ engineers from the United States have brought the Internet to several areas of rural Kenya.

Their idea was to connect the communities to the Web by satellite. But there was a problem. The areas are not even connected to Kenya's electric power supply. The answer: solar _____. Energy from the sun powers the satellite dishes and computers that link the areas with the world outside.

Kelly Moran, Joan Ervin and Trisha Donajkowski spent ten days in Kenya in November. The women recently earned master's degrees in space systems engineering from the University of Michigan.

Another engineer, Drew Heckathorn, did not go to Africa but worked on parts of the _____.

Kelly Moran says there was excitement when the team would arrive to connect communities to the Internet. People would sometimes run alongside the car carrying the engineers to _____ them. And local residents would offer to help the team build the Internet stations.

People now have access to educational, medical and all kinds of other information. Farmers, for example, can easily find weather, crop and _____ information online.

The project began back at the college of engineering in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in two thousand seven. That was when twenty-five students in a _____ taught by Thomas Zurbuchen first talked about the idea.

The goal was to test whether Internet stations could be set up, how much they would cost, and how long they could operate. But the engineers also had to consider others things -- like social _____. Students from the public health and business schools offered advice.

The young engineers also had to design the equipment to survive the heat in Africa. Professor Zurbuchen praises his former students for "making something work in a different climate far away from home."

Google paid for the final design of the equipment. The company is also supporting the costs of the satellite bandwidth needed for the _____. Google has invested in a new company that wants to put up a system of satellites over Africa. The availability of more satellites would reduce the costs.

Just five percent of Africans have Internet connections. The International Telecommunication Union says one-third of Kenyans have mobile _____. But mobile phones may or may not work well with the Internet.

And that's the VOA Special English Development Report, written by Jerilyn Watson. Transcripts and MP3s of our reports are at voaspecialenglish.com. I'm Steve Ember.

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