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## Coming Soon to Africa: XLBrowser, a Mobile Browser Powered by SMS

By SARAH PEREZ ReadWriteWeb  
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For most of us in the developed world, browsing the mobile web means whipping out our new favorite smartphone and launching a web browser that nearly mimics the one we have on our home computer. Unfortunately, other parts of the world aren't so lucky. In emerging markets, you're more likely to see SMS used for information retrieval - not mobile browsers - for reasons that include everything from lack of infrastructure to the high costs of mobile internet data plans.

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In parts of Africa, there simply is no mobile internet access available...but there is the ability to send SMS. Enter [Mobile-XL](#). With their browser's graphical, easy-to-use interface, people with limited or no internet access finally have an entry point to vast resources of the web. The application, which works on Java-based phones with either GPRS or Bluetooth functionality, provides access to news, weather, flight status, package tracking, dictionary, thesaurus, translations, local 411, games, music, access to email, and [more](#).

The XLBrowser doesn't have to be pre-installed on handsets in order for people to use it. If customers have a GPRS-enabled phone, they can text "XLB" to 3663 (for Kenya) or 7197 (for Uganda) or 3112 (for Tanzania). However, they will need a Bluetooth-activated PC or laptop to store the file that's downloaded from the link. The file then needs to be transferred to the handset using Bluetooth. For obvious reasons, having phones which are already equipped with the browser will give more people access to the mobile web, especially in places where PCs and laptops are hard to come by.

Says Guy Kamgaing-Kouam, CEO of Mobile-XL, "we're taking a gigantic step toward realizing our mission of bridging the digital divide." His company has been working since 2005 to develop a simple and affordable technology that could bring internet services to the underserved markets of the world.

The new partnership agreement between Nokia and Mobile-XL will deliver the XLBrowser in phones initially shipped to Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania as early as March 2009.

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