

# Wikipedia Zero on mobile in Kenya

In partnership with Airtel, Wikipedia and Praekelt Foundation will make Wikipedia Zero available on mobile in Kenya.

Wikipedia will be using Praekelt's mobile messaging platform, Vumi, to expand its free service further to even more mobile subscribers - making it available to anyone with a basic mobile phone in Africa and other developing countries around the world.



## Accessible for free

Sue Gardner, executive director of the Wikimedia Foundation, the non-profit organisation that runs Wikipedia, said, "Wikipedia is an important service, a public good and so we want people to be able to access it free, regardless of what device they're using."

Taking advantage of universally accessible unstructured supplementary service data (USSD) technology, the Vumi platform allows mobile phone subscribers to dial a short code to access a multiple-choice menu that they can use to search through the encyclopaedia across any topic, as they would online.

Vumi, an open source product developed by Praekelt Foundation, is a USSD and SMS mobile messaging platform offering connectivity in Africa and serves NGOs, corporations and entrepreneurs. It has been used in partnership with Sisi Ni Amani to promote peace during the recent Kenyan elections. It is also the engine behind MAMA, which brings vital health information to pregnant women in South Africa.

## Available content

"It will automatically adapt Wikipedia entries for the text-based interface, making sure the information is as accessible on any handsets, regardless whether it has data capability. It will provide millions of people with access to a basic, text-based version of the Wikipedia service, with further information delivered through subsequent SMS messages," said Gustav Praekelt, founder of Praekelt Foundation. "People who ordinarily do not have access to vital information across a diverse range of topics will now have access to the rich content via their mobile phone. This, we believe, has the potential to greatly improve people's lives."

The foundation is in discussions with local network operators to make the platform available free in South Africa.

For more information, go to [www.praekeltfoundation.org](http://www.praekeltfoundation.org).