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## **Millions of poor people will have mobile phone numbers under UN-backed scheme**



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Three million poor people in Africa and South Asia, the majority of them women, will gain access to low-cost mobile phone numbers as part of technology firm Movirtu's partnership with the United Nations-backed initiative that enlists the private sector in efforts to fight poverty.

Instead of sharing a phone number with family members or neighbours, those provided with a Movirtu cloud phone number will be able to use any mobile phone to log in with their own unique number to make and receive individual calls and access critical information and services such as banking or agriculture support.

The new effort is part of the Business Call to Action (BCtA), a global initiative supported by the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), the corporate responsibility scheme known as the UN Global Compact and several other organizations and governments.

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“Evidence shows that access to mobile communications is a way of improving lives and expanding the earning potential of one billion people living on \$1-2 a day,” said Amanda Gardiner, BCtA Acting Programme Manager.

“By providing low-income communities with access to secure mobile accounts and identities, Movirtu is helping to bridge the divide between those that have easy access to mobile phones and those that rely on community phones or paying a borrower’s premium to friends to meet their communication needs,” she added.

The United Kingdom-based company plans to bring the phone technology to at least 12 markets in Africa and South Asia by early 2013, giving at least 50 million people in both continents access to the technology, with a target of 3 million using it on a regular basis.

A unique personal mobile identity will allow users to access network applications that provide information about employment opportunities, promote access to mobile payment systems or banking services, and help keep users up-to-date on a variety of health and market topics.

The main beneficiaries of Movirtu’s investment will be women in rural communities in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, according to a news release issued by the company and BCtA.

“It is a basic fact not everyone in the world can afford their own mobile phone,” said Ramona Liberoff, Executive Vice President of Marketing, Strategy and Planning at Movirtu. “Our goal is to increase the earning potential of those on \$1-2 a day by saving money and allowing them to access the economic benefits of a full mobile identity today.”

Movirtu has been piloting the phones in Africa, with Madagascar the first market entry point. Additional country launches will be announced later this year.

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