Digital technology means development is now happening outside the system

The spread of the internet and rise of mobile phone ownership means more social entrepreneurs are succeeding outside the traditional development system

Ken Banks
Friday 7 March 2014 10.01 GMT

I recently spent an evening at the University of Sussex talking to students interested in a career in the international development and non-profit sectors. That might not sound particularly interesting at first, except that I’ve never had a job in either.

There's a general assumption - and not an unreasonable one - that if you want a career helping solve some of the bigger challenges facing people and the planet that you reach out and volunteer, intern and work at some of the largest institutions taking on those problems.

But there is another way.

A few decades ago, if you wanted a career in development you’d have to be a teacher, doctor or build dams. The spread of the internet and the march of the mobile phone have changed all that. Now, anyone with a computer and internet connection can build an app in their bedroom that helps to improve the lives of millions of people around the world, or develop an idea which goes viral. And I speak from experience, developing text messaging platform
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Ken Banks (@kiwanja) is the founder of kiwanja.net, FrontlineSMS and Means of Exchange. His new book, The Rise of the Reluctant Innovator, builds on his ideas of development outside the system.

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