

Covering Africa's elections and promoting press freedom by phone

Mobile phones have revolutionised communication in Africa - even during elections.

Nairobi - They provide tools for small-scale business, connect families separated by long distances and can even be used to send and receive money. This year's Kenyan elections should also be a milestone in the role of mobiles in politics and the media.

Kenya is one of four countries involved in a pilot programme, Voices of Africa, which aims to use new mobile technology to better equip struggling young journalists.

"Africa is experiencing a new revolution in journalism but African governments do not know it is happening," said Evans Wafula, Kenyan coordinator of Voices of Africa.

In the coming months, reporters will receive mobile phones with relatively high-speed data connections, using General Packet Radio System (GPRS), a service running on an increasing number of African networks, which allows users to send and receive large amounts of data, such as audio and images.

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