

inveneo®

Partner Profile



ICIP member, James Wire of LinuxSolutions, configures and deploys new Inveneo systems in a school in Uganda.

Bringing Economic Development to Rural Uganda

LinuxSolutions helps farmers and villagers improve their lives and livelihoods

Since James Wire founded LinuxSolutions in 2000, he has seen first-hand how information and communications technologies (ICTs) have benefited his Kampala-based clients. In the process, he has also benefited. Known throughout the region as a Linux/Open Source expert, James has grown LinuxSolutions from a one-man shop into a nine-employee IT firm providing everything from network design and implementation, to software development and IT procurement consulting services.

Despite this rapid growth, James has seen that even the most basic benefits of ICT are not reaching the vast majority of Uganda's rural communities. With a degree in agricultural economics, he

notes that middlemen can buy produce "for peanuts" in the countryside and make "a killing" selling these goods in the city, mostly because farmers don't know the market prices for their goods. James speaks fluently about how ICTs can improve efficiency, lower the cost of contracting and benefit small businesses, education, microfinance, and the list goes on and on.

But for James, ICTs are at least as much about human rights as they are a tool to promote economic development. "Many rural people have no idea where their rights start and where they end. Many young girls are married as minors by their parents—which is illegal—but have no way to protest. What if there was a free public phone that these girls could access?" Moreover, for many of these communities, a 911 call means a half-day's walk.

For every opportunity he sees, James is also well aware of the obstacles.

LinuxSolutions



Founder: James Wire
(center in yellow)

Location: Kampala, Uganda

Founded: 2000

Services Offered: IT Services, ISP

Number of Employees: 9

ICIP Certified: 2006

Lack of reliable (or any) electricity; dusty, wet conditions; limited or no experience with ICTs; these factors have turned thousands of PCs strewn across rural Africa into giant paper weights. "What we need today in rural Africa are not fancy PCs," says James, "what we need are computers that meet basic needs and that can be sustained."

James first encountered Inveneo—and its solutions—in 2005 at a regional Open Source event called AfricaSource II. In 2006, he teamed with Inveneo to deploy a Ugandan school project backed by AMD's 50x15 initiative as part of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). LinuxSolutions brought solid technical skills, a staff of nine and James' desire to serve rural areas. Inveneo offered the affordable and sustainable solution and the training required to deploy it. James was impressed with the ultra-low power requirements and, in particular, its solid-state ruggedness. In many rural areas, says James, "dust is number one on the list of worries. With no moving parts, Inveneo solutions are

exceptionally durable." Through working with James, Inveneo's Certified ICT Partnership (ICIP) program was born.

In 2006, James became Inveneo's first Certified ICT Partner in East Africa. Since then, James has worked closely with Inveneo on several projects. Most recently, he installed and networked an Inveneo system supporting two rural schools for Cornerstone, an NGO that runs "leadership academies" that prepares hundreds of Uganda's most talented rural students to compete for a coveted higher education. You can read about the Cornerstone project on the Inveneo website (www.inveneo.org).

Despite the success of this and other projects, James laments that progress remains "very, very slow." But he's still optimistic, "At least we now have the tools to make a difference."

About Inveneo

Inveneo is a non-profit social enterprise whose mission is to get the tools of information and communications

technology into the hands of organizations and people who need them most—those in remote and rural communities in the developing world. For more than two billion people living in these communities, gaining access to ICT—either directly or via service organizations—can transform their lives in simple yet profound ways. Access to ICT can help save lives (through rural health care), provide better economic opportunities (for farmers and entrepreneurs) and provide a better future for children (through better education).

To date, Inveneo has projects completed or underway in Uganda, Rwanda, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, and Mali. These projects serve schools (50 percent), economic development groups, telecenters, and relief camps in 66 communities. They will reach hundreds of thousands of people, directly or indirectly, with life-changing ICTs. Our goal is to serve thousands of communities in the next three years.



The LinuxSolutions team configures and deploys new Inveneo systems in a school in Uganda.



Inveneo

760 Market Street, Suite 859
San Francisco, CA 94102 USA

Phone:

Main: +1.415.901.1969x1250
Fax: +1.415.449.6073

Email:

Information: info@inveneo.org
Sales: sales@inveneo.org
Press: press@inveneo.org
ICT Partners itpartners@inveneo.org