

News story: British space tech transforms education for 34,000 students in Africa

Due to poor internet coverage, teachers in remote schools previously had to travel long distances to access educational material. Some schools have already reported improved confidence in their teachers and better exam results from their students.

Launched in 2015 the iKnowledge project, led by British satellite operator Avanti Communications and supported by the UK Space Agency aimed to equip rural areas with satellite internet to improve education in Tanzania and develop innovation and technology in the UK.

The project has now completed its first phase of funding and the next step is to leverage the robust iKnowledge infrastructure for new educational projects to scale up.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive at the UK Space Agency said,

By providing teachers with the skills and capability to adopt new technology, we are making a practical and significant difference to the lives of children in rural Tanzania whilst encouraging innovation and growth back in the UK.

Avanti and UK Space Agency have been awarded a Certificate of Education Appreciation from the Tanzanian Education Authority (TEA) for the iKnowledge Project.

Graham Peters, Managing Director of Government Solutions at Avanti said,

Technology and internet access can transform teaching and learning in schools by providing teachers and students with access to a huge range of educational resources that are normally unavailable to rural African schools.

High speed internet by satellite can make every school a digital school and enable school children to become digital citizens no matter where they live.

This capability was delivered by Avanti's HYLAS 2 Ka-band communications satellite. The satellite is specifically designed to provide high-speed broadband internet in areas lacking poor terrestrial or mobile coverage.

A few selected iKnowledge schools have been installed with Wi-Fi Hotspots to give schools the flexibility to buy internet only when they need and without the monthly internet subscription commitment. When not in use by schools, the system can be used by the local community.

iKnowledge was one of the first projects to be awarded through the UK Space Agency's International Partnership Programme (IPP) in 2015. IPP is a five-year, £152 million programme designed to partner UK space expertise with overseas governments and organisations.

It is funded through UK aid from the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's Global Challenges Research Fund. GCRF is a £1.5 billion fund which forms part of the UK Government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment.

Through partnership projects like these, UK aid is tackling some of the biggest global challenges of our time to help make communities across the world safer better, safer and more prosperous.

There are currently 33 projects funded through IPP, ranging from tackling deforestation in Latin America to increasing disaster resilience in South East Asia.