

The Naledi3d Factory, with World Links Zimbabwe, achieves recognition from the World Summit Award



The Naledi3d Factory, a resident at The Innovation Hub in Pretoria, has reached another historic milestone. In May 2009, its work with World Links Zimbabwe was selected by the World Summit Award (WSA) Grand Jury 2009 *“as one of the most outstanding examples of creative and innovative e-Content”*.



During a seven-day evaluation process in New Delhi, the **“Rural Life Skills Development Project (Farming)”** was chosen to be among the Special Mentions of this year’s contest out of a pool of 545 national best products from 157 countries.

Thirty-four leading e-Content experts from Africa, Asia, Australia and Oceania, North America, Latin America and Europe met for the WSA Grand Jury in New Delhi, India, to consider 545 national finalists from United Nations member states. These finalists were selected from around 20 000 products and projects from the 157 countries that participated in the 4th edition of the World Summit Award, via national contests and a global jury process. The Winners’ Events and Gala will be held in Monterrey, Mexico, from 2-4 September 2009.

Of the forty Awards, two were from sub-Saharan Africa, and of the twenty-two Special Mentions, five were from Africa, including this project.

The biennial World Summit Award started in 2003 as part of the UN’s World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and is a global initiative to select and promote the world’s best e-Content and innovative ICT applications.

WSA demonstrates the local diversity and rich creativity of ICT use and values the crucial importance of *local* content to make today’s information society more inclusive. It is the world’s premier contest for excellence in e-Content and creativity.



Field surveying for water conservation – practice follows theory

WSA honours producers of interactive multimedia and innovative ICT applications and identifies high-quality e-Content products in collaboration with the UN Secretary-General’s Global Alliance for ICT and Development, UNESCO and UNIDO.

“Success with a World Summit Award helps creative individuals and innovative companies no matter where they are. WSA addresses the global issues of the Digital Divide and the Content Gap and thus contributes in an intelligent way to the achievements of the UN Millennium Development Goals,” says Prof. Peter A. Bruck, WSA Chairman.

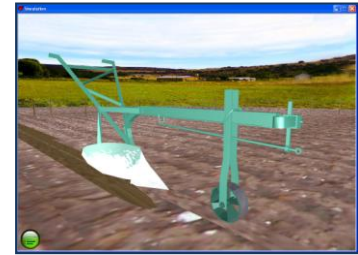


While the Naledi3d Factory started to explore the use of virtual reality in community development in 2000, this three-year project (supported by the WK Kellogg Foundation) was the first time that *interactive3d learning objects (i3dlo’s)* had been extensively used in a true implementation project – in this case, developing farming skills in Zimbabwe through workshops in four rural communities.

Against a backdrop of economic downturn and poor rainfall in most parts of Zimbabwe, and at a time when land was being transferred to people new to farming practice, this project presented itself as a timely and appropriate intervention.

The project had four broad aims:

- To demonstrate the use of VR-based learning content and specifically, the use of *i3dlo's* as a new, innovative visually interactive communication / learning medium
- To build agricultural capacity through focused training of local farmers and other community members through the World Links community centres
- To help rural communities to better understand and be better empowered to address local issues that impact on rural and specifically, agricultural development
- To develop skills in World Links on the "localisation" (translation) of *i3dlo's* before being taken *into the field* through the World Links centres.



The plough – a common farm implement.
From theory to practice



Sixteen *i3dlo's* were developed by the Naledi3d Factory as inputs to the workshops (and made publically available via the Naledi3d Factory's *i3dlo* web portal). One major reason for the success of the workshops in Zimbabwe was that many of the *i3dlo's* used were translated into Shona by World Links before being used in the workshops.

The extent to which local people and their leadership took up and understood the power of VR and in particular, the use of *i3dlo's* as a learning medium / approach has been amazing. A strong linkage was also established with local extension officers, in particular AGRITEX, who took the lead in explaining the agricultural principles behind the *i3dlo's* presented.



All together now - Rusike

Of particular interest is the way in which the *i3dlo's* are now leading communities to establish income-generating projects themselves, such as bee-keeping (all four centres set up through this project established at least two hives in the latter half of 2008) as a new income-generating activity for the centre as well as the community.

Says Eli Gudza, Executive Director, World Links Zimbabwe: *"The use of interactive3d learning objects in the training of rural farmers produced results far beyond what we could think or imagine. During the training workshops, it became clear that this cutting-edge approach was capable of bringing out concepts and assisting in the development of skills, deepening understanding as well as changing attitudes in a way not previously possible using traditional media, text or video. i3dlo's have the potential to revolutionise training across many sectors of development, not just on the African continent, but globally. They appeal to the way that people learn, whoever they are, wherever they are and in whatever language - through the localisation process that has developed through this project"*.

"...Our view is that it is now time to bring this powerful learning tool and methodology not just to the people of Zimbabwe, but to the many people of Africa who need it and whose livelihoods can be transformed". Recognition through WSA will go a long way towards helping to make that happen.