

Social Innovation Summit 2012 Comes to an End

From VOA Learning English, this is the Technology Report in Special English.

More than 700 business leaders, government officials, investors and other people gathered last week in Mountain View, California. They went there to attend the Social Innovation Summit. Landmark Ventures, a financial advisory company, organized the event. It is an invitation-only conference aimed at finding new ways to deal with old problems.

Problems like traffic jams. That is an issue that student entrepreneur Christian Bruggemann hopes to solve.

“Traffic is actually really bad in most countries and we thought there must be some way of doing something about it.”

Last week, his Team Graphmasters received a Microsoft Imagine Cup Grant of \$100,000. The German team won the prize for its “nunav” traffic management system. Here is how it works.

“Everyone that’s using our system sends his current position as well as the destination to our servers every 30 seconds. And with that information our central system can reroute all of the cars in a way that everyone gets his individual best possible route.”

Christian Bruggemann says early research with the system has been promising.

“We found out through our simulations that it could be possible to save up to 20 percent of the fuel consumption. What’s even more interesting is that it can save up to 50 percent of the time you spend in traffic so you could get to your destination twice as fast.”

A team from Uganda also was invited to the Social Innovation Summit. Team Cypher256 has developed a mobile app aimed at improving health care for pregnant women in Africa. Aaron Tushabe is a member of the team.

“Maternal and infant mortality rates are extremely high in the community. On average, in sub Saharan Africa, we have mothers dying almost every minute from pregnancy related complications.”

The app is called WinSenga. It measures fetal heart sounds to help establish the heart rate, age and position of the fetus in the mother. That information is recorded and stored for future use. Aaron Tushabe says the device is similar in operation to an ultrasound test, but is far less costly.

“With an ultrasound scan, mothers have to pay about five dollars each to access antenatal care, which is very expensive in a community where people still live on less than a \$1 a day.”

And he says not having to depend on ultrasound equipment adds an even greater benefit.

“Even better we see the medical personnel being able to move into the communities then offer the antenatal diagnosis right there.”

Team Cypher256 received a Microsoft Imagine Cup Grant for \$75,000 to help continue the project.

This is the third year for the Social Innovation Summit. The event is held two times a year, once in New York and once in California. The first one in 2012 was held in May. The United Nations’ Office for Partnerships helped to organize the event.