Challenge Overview Sheet

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN AFRICA

The **development gap** remains one of the greatest 21st century challenges. Although hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in recent decades, the same percentage of people still live below the poverty line in central Africa as in the 1980s. The latest **Millennium Development Goals** (MDG) data show that eradicating poverty in Africa remains a major challenge. Plenty more progress needs to be made.

Can digital technology can help address this challenge? Would overcoming Africa's **digital divide** help tackle the more fundamental development gap? Certainly, there are many ways in which technology can help build people's capacities in ways that mean greater progress towards MDG targets could be met. This scheme of work encourages students to think critically about how attempts to bridge the digital divide could help us tackle the far broader development gap. Helping people get connected using mobiles and the internet can, in particular, help with:

- poverty alleviation - there are a range of ways in which being connected helps raise incomes.
- education - ICT is a powerful tool to spread knowledge and aid learning.

Many geographers are enthused by the way that digital technology - as opposed to older, analogue forms of communications - speeds up these processes. The roll-out of digital communications to areas where analogue (landline) communications have never been developed is called technological **leap-frogging**. In this scheme of work a range of case studies of leap-frogging are examined, including Uganda, Ghana and Kenya.

In a long-term development context, many development experts hope that this technological leap-frogging can play a part in finally steering African development trajectories away from **over**-**dependency** on **natural resource** exploitation and instead towards greater utilisation of their **human resources**. Kenya is one nation where this process is just beginning and where plenty of progress could perhaps soon be made.

This scheme of work has relevance for the study of all major A-level geography Specifications as well as the International Baccalaureate diploma programme in geography, especially these topics:

- the development gap and ways of bridging it
- the uneven development of globalisation and global ICT networks