

Microsoft, Huawei eye smartphone push into Africa

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An Egyptian talks on his phone in Cairo on February 16, 2011. Microsoft announced it had teamed up with Chinese manufacturer Huawei to launch an affordable smartphone across Africa.

Microsoft announced on Tuesday it had teamed up with Chinese manufacturer Huawei to launch an affordable smartphone across Africa.

"Microsoft and Huawei today introduced the Huawei 4Afrika phone, a full-functionality [Windows Phone](#) 8 preloaded with select applications

designed for Africa, by Africans," said Microsoft's [top executive](#) for the Middle East and Africa, Ali Faramawy, on a corporate blog.

While Africans have been enthusiastic adopters of mobile phones, the high cost of smartphones, which can run over \$700, has kept penetration of the devices low.

Microsoft estimates that smartphone penetration in Africa is about 10 percent, while sales of the devices accounted for 45.5 percent of total [mobile phone sales](#) globally last year according to the IDC research firm.

Faramawy said the phones, which the New York Times reported would be sold for around \$150, would ensure Africans "affordable access to best-in-class technology, so they can access the information and tools they need to be active global citizens.

Huawei is known for building innovative and affordable phones, and the first in the series of 4Afrika phones will initially be available in Angola, Egypt, [Ivory Coast](#), Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa.

A separate blog posted on Microsoft's website showed a picture of the device that resembles many current models with forward and rear-facing cameras.

The [internal memory](#) and screen resolution are below high end models but the phone sports a fast processor and dual cameras.

Microsoft's Faramawy said the 4Afrika Initiative initiative aimed to tens of millions of smartphones into the hands of Africans and bring a million small and medium-sized businesses online by 2016.

The initiative could also prove a boost to WindowsPhone8 as the mobile operating system has had difficulty gaining traction in the market.

Strategy Analytics said last month that 70 percent of smartphones shipped in the final quarter of 2012 used [Google's Android](#) operating system, while 22 percent was accounted for by Apple iPhones running its iOS.

Microsoft added it was partnering with Kenya's communications ministry and Internet service provider Indigo Telecom to deliver low-cost, high-speed wireless broadband access across Kenya using solar-powered base stations.

The New York Times cited another Microsoft executive, Fernando de Sousa, as saying its partner Nokia also plans to launch phones designed for the African market under the 4Afrika Initiative as well.

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