

Western Union expands Kenyan mobile money transfer service

JOHANNESBURG: Western Union late last week announced that consumers can now send money directly to Safaricom M-PESA subscribers in Kenya from 45 countries and territories. The expansion of the service to more than 80,000 Western Union agent locations worldwide follows the debut of the offering from Western Union agent locations and the Westernunion.com website in the UK.



Apart from the UK, the service is now available from the US, Canada, as well as select countries and territories in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia Pacific.

Riding on Western Union's worldwide network

The service rides on Western Union's worldwide network and global "hub" for processing cross-border remittances. It also builds on the success of M-PESA, a domestic mobile money transfer service in Kenya offered by Safaricom that has attracted more than 13.5 million customers since its launch in 2007.

"We are pleased to extend our service with Safaricom, and we look forward to adding additional functionality for M-PESA users in the near future," said Jean Claude Farah, senior VP, Middle East and Africa, Western Union.

According to the Central Bank of Kenya, Kenyans living outside their home country sent US\$642 million home in 2010 - up from the US\$609 million sent home in 2009.

Western Union offers the Mobile Money Transfer Service in the Philippines with Smart Communications and Globe Telecom; in Malaysia with Maxis; and in Canada with EnStream. Western Union also has agreements with other mobile operators and banks to introduce the service in the future.