



## How can the internet and mobile phones be used in issue identification?

One main way that technology can be used to identify and prioritise advocacy issues is through surveys. A survey is a way of gathering important information about a population. It assesses a sample of a population and then suggests trends about the whole population using the information that has been gathered.

### Using mobile phones

**Individual surveys** are possible with mobile phones. Text messages can be used to ask people for their opinions on a particular issue and/or to collate data about their needs and concerns.

### Using mobile phones, a computer and a reliable internet connection

**Household surveys** are possible with mobile phones and a suitable device, such as the free service Magpi (<http://home.magpi.com/>). This technology enables mobile phones to collect data, then feedback and analyse the results.

**Community surveys** are possible with a laptop computer, a mobile phone and free software such as that provided by Frontline SMS (<http://www.frontlinesms.com/>). The software can be downloaded using a reliable internet connection. The combined technology creates a two-way message hub, which allows large numbers of text messages to be sent and received from the laptop computer.

### Using a reliable internet connection

**Online surveys** are possible where people have a reliable internet connection and access to a free online survey service, such as Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>).

### Should you use text messages?

Advantages of using text messages:

- people can send text messages in private, so they do not have to share their views with others
- most text messages are read within 15 minutes of being received, so it is a perfect tool if a message needs to be disseminated fast
- it works everywhere that has reasonable network coverage

Disadvantages of using text messages:

- the format requires short answers, so the quality and quantity of information collected may be insufficient
- it relies on people being literate and a sufficient cross-section of the applicable population responding

It is also possible to publicise surveys and encourage participation in them through radio programmes, advertising billboards, and other communication channels.

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To read other documents regarding ideas for using the internet and mobile phones in specific parts of the Advocacy Cycle, visit this page on the TILZ website - <http://tilz.tearfund.org/advocacycomms>