

Activities

Here are some ways of taking your thoughts further

- 1 Prepare an assembly on mobile phones in order to raise money for Oxfam and to get your fellow pupils thinking about the way we communicate.
- 2 Is it important for everyone to have access to technology? What disadvantages do people suffer if they don't have access to the internet, e-mail, or mobile phones, or if they haven't learned how to use the technology? Should governments give computers to poorer people? Should we in the industrialised world provide technology for people in the developing world? Write a piece about your thoughts on these issues.
- 3 Try and find out about the way people communicate in other countries, and the way people communicated in the past. Talk to your teacher about how to make contact with people abroad. It is often better to communicate with people in developing countries by letter or fax (e-mails can be difficult for them to receive, because they take a long time to download). You could also think of the books you've read that are set in the past.
- 4 Rewrite a well-known story, showing how events would have turned out if mobile phones had been available. (For example, Cinderella texts her fairy godmother when her sisters have gone to the ball...use your imagination.)
- 5 Make a leaflet giving advice to young people about making the best use of their mobile phones. You could include tips on not spending too much money on calls, taking health precautions, communicating in other ways (face to face, letters, etc), staying safe from bullies and muggers, as well as some of the plus points of the phones (staying in contact with your friends, easy access to information, etc).
- 6 Draw up a cost-benefit sheet for a mobile phone. Make a list of all the costs involved on one side, and all the benefits that people get from the phone on the other. Are there any 'social costs' (eg health risks)? Is it worth the money? What might people have to do without in order to afford a phone?

Useful resources

How your phone works

Encarta Encyclopedia:
<http://encarta.msn.co.uk>
(Search under 'Cellular Radio Telephone')

How Stuff Works:
www.howstuffworks.com/cell-phone.htm

Inventors:
<http://inventors.about.com/library/weekly/aa070899.htm>

Issues about phones, and phones around the world

<http://news.bbc.co.uk> (search for 'mobile phone') or search for 'mobile phone' on the site of any reputable newspaper or periodical.

Texting

www.text.it

For extra materials and worksheets connected with Oxfam's **Bring Bring** scheme, visit www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet. Cool Planet also features information and activities for young people and resources and ideas for teachers.

For further information about resources for schools which bring a global dimension to life in the classroom, send for a copy of Oxfam's catalogue *Oxfam Education Resources for Schools*.

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Photo: Brian Moody

Why recycle mobile phones?

Apart from the fact that old handsets can be used to raise funds for Oxfam's humanitarian work around the world, donating old mobile phones to Oxfam is good because they can be recycled. Mobiles should not be disposed of thoughtlessly, because the batteries contain dangerous chemicals and because many of the materials in the phone can be reused. The most harmful chemicals in the batteries are heavy metals, such as nickel and lithium, which are toxic and not biodegradable. Buried deep in the earth, these metals could, in the future, seep into underground rivers and other water sources. Surprisingly though, the law still allows for them to be disposed of in landfill sites. Phones donated to Oxfam are refurbished and sold, raising money for our work overseas. Many of them will eventually be exported to regions with expanding mobile phone networks. These second-hand phones are usually more affordable for people there than new ones would be. The few batteries and phones which cannot be reused are sent for reprocessing, so that toxins are extracted and any materials left are reused.

Oxfam's **Bring Bring** appeal will help protect the environment, as well as benefiting people in developing countries.

did you know...?

...The batteries in your phone contain toxic heavy metals such as nickel and lithium

The mobile phone revolution

The first mobile phones were produced in the USA in the late 1970s, but they were heavy and unreliable. Mobile phones as we know them now appeared in the mid-1990s, and since then, they have grown enormously in popularity and have changed the way we communicate. It is now possible to speak to people in remote corners of the world where normal telephone technology is relatively undeveloped – or perhaps non-existent. A new form of communication has come into existence:

bring bring

your old mobile to Oxfam

the txt msg. This is particularly popular in some European countries, including the UK and Finland. Almost one billion text messages are sent each month in the UK.

did you know...?

...The peak hours for text messaging are between 10.30pm and 11.00pm Mobile Data Association website

What is a mobile phone made of?

A mobile phone is a technological miracle. Thirty years ago, you would have needed a whole room for this equipment. Today, it fits inside the handset. A mobile phone consists of seven main parts:

- circuit board containing several computer chips
- antenna
- liquid crystal display
- microphone
- keyboard
- speaker
- battery



In effect, a mobile phone is a type of two-way radio.

bring yr old mbl 2 Oxfam -
U know it mks sence



Photo: Brian Moody

Mobile phones around the world

Life before mobiles

Less than two decades ago, people in many developing countries often had to spend more than a day making a short phone call. Most people did not (and still do not) have a phone at home. Public phones would be available in post offices and telephone exchanges in the capital city and a few other large towns. People who lived in the country would have to spend hours travelling – perhaps by bush taxi, or by hitching lifts on trucks – to the city. They would then have to book a call with the person behind the counter, and would have to wait, perhaps for several hours, before the operator had arranged their call. They could then get a brief connection to the number they wanted, and have a short chat on a bad line, before making the long journey home. An aid worker based in Sierra Leone in the 1980s says, 'I had to take two days off in order to make a phone call home.'

However, it is often not possible to make calls in the countryside, as the network still may only cover towns and cities. This means that people might have to rely on satellite phones (which are more expensive) and two-way radios. Furthermore, mobile phones are often too expensive for ordinary people to use.

The question of how mobile phones affect the developing world is a complex one. They have brought some clear benefits, but not to everyone.

did you know...?

...On Valentine's Day 2001, the British sent more than 800 million text messages Mobile Data Association website

did you know...?

...People in South Africa are buying less beer because they're using their money to pay for mobile phone calls Mail and Guardian, South Africa, 30 March 2001

Mobiles in the developing world

Mobile phones have changed the way many international and local organisations in developing countries work, making communications much easier and far less time-consuming. Some local people have also benefited from mobile phones. In general, it is cheaper and easier to get a mobile than a landline. This is because telephone companies often do not have enough landlines available, and there are long waiting lists. It can take a year or so to get a line installed, and it is very expensive. The advent of the mobile phone means that some organisations and people which couldn't have afforded landlines can communicate using mobiles.



Howard Davies

Young Kosovans in a refugee camp in Macedonia using a borrowed mobile to let their relatives know that they are safe

Disaster relief

Oxfam workers based in some parts of the world have found that mobile phones have made it much easier for them to reach people in need, when they have to respond to a disaster or an emergency. During the severe flooding in Mozambique in 2000, mobiles were used to help organise rescue, food, and shelter for people stranded by the floods. They also eased communication during the earthquakes in El Salvador and Gujarat, India.

Mobiles have also been used to help refugees contact relatives to reassure them that they are safe.

did you know...?

...The first ever text message was sent in 1995 Mobile Data Association website

21st-century global citizen

have your say!

Hangin' on the telephone

Mobile phones have changed the way we communicate, and are continuing to do so. Is this a good or a bad thing? What do you think?

Q What are the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones?

What are the differences between the way we communicate today and the way people communicated a couple of generations ago?



Courtesy of BT archives

▲ A Victorian woman using the telephone. This picture was taken around 1900

The technological revolution

The internet, mobile phones, laptops, palmtops, interactive pagers, WAP, SMS, PDA, MP3, 3G... Where will it all end?

Q How do you think we will communicate with each other in the future?

Will we talk to each other? Will we forget how to write? Does it matter?

If you could design your ideal mobile phone, what features would it include?



Penny Tweedie

▲ A social worker uses a mobile phone in Accra, Ghana

Cellphones in the South

How do mobile phones affect people in developing countries and our relationship with them?

Q Does mobile phone technology mean more people can have access to a phone?

Does the fact that we can now communicate more easily with people mean that the world will be a safer and more peaceful place?

What rules and regulations, if any, do we need to introduce as technology spreads across the globe?



Crispin Hughes

▲ An accountant answers her mobile phone during a meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso