Using the internet and mobile phones to identify advocacy issues

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

Types of survey

Individual surveys

If you have a basic mobile phone, SMS text messages can be used to ask individuals for their opinions on a particular issue or to collate data about their needs and concerns.

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 information needs to be gathered quickly.
- They work anywhere 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.
- They rely on people being literate and a sufficient cross-section of the target population responding.

If you have a smartphone, messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Viber and Signal can also be used to do the same thing. Always use messaging apps responsibly and in line with good practice.

Where people have a reliable internet connection, you could use a free online survey service, such as Survey Monkey or Typeform.

If sending out a survey via SMS or a messaging app you must ensure you have consent to send the message first.

Household surveys

There is a range of easy and affordable apps that enable data collection, collaboration and communication while on location at a project, as well as feedback and analysis. Costs vary, but examples include Open Data Kit, Magpi , Enketo, Teamscope, SurveyCTO, etc.

Community surveys

Community surveys are more easily analysed on a laptop computer, but the data can be collected using free software such as [Frontline SMS](#). 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. Alternatively any of the data collection apps listed above could be used.

A comprehensive catalogue of tools for gathering data is available from impacttrackertech.kopernik.info

Publicising surveys

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

Also in this series

This guide is part of a series of resources on **Advocacy in the digital age**.
Other titles include:

- Using the internet for research and analysis in advocacy
- Ideas for managing stakeholders' contact details in advocacy campaigns
- Using the internet and mobile phones to mobilise people for advocacy
- Using the internet and mobile phones to advocate in difficult political contexts

Download the series for free from Tearfund Learn:
learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/series/advocacy-in-the-digital-age

The Advocacy toolkit

The **Advocacy in the digital age** series is designed to complement the Advocacy toolkit.

This comprehensive guide to the theory and practice of advocacy contains teaching notes, tools and exercises that will enable any individual or organisation to integrate advocacy into their programmes, in order to bring sustainable, positive change.

Explore the Advocacy toolkit on Tearfund Learn:
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