**GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER** RESEARCH

# A Survey of NGO Use of Mobile Technology for Social Change

**B**etween December 10, 2007 and January 13, 2008, 560 non-governmental organization (NGO) workers participated in a survey designed to demonstrate how NGOs are using wireless technology to help reach various social, civil, economic, and political goals.

The survey was developed by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, and distributed via the email networks of eight partner groups reaching a geographically and thematically diverse group of NGOs: Idealist.org, InterAction, International Youth Foundation, MobileActive.org, New Tactics in Human Rights, OneWorld, SANGONeT, and ShareIdeas. The survey was also shared with the contacts of the two sponsoring organizations: The Vodafone Group Foundation and the United Nations Foundation. Responses were collected from NGO representatives in all parts of the world.

## NGOs' Use of Mobile Technology Very Widespread and Indispensable

Eight-six percent of NGO employees are using mobile technology in their work. NGO representatives working on projects in Africa or Asia are more likely to be mobile technology users than their colleagues in areas with more 'wired' infrastructures. Ninety-nine percent of technology users characterize the impact of mobile technology as positive. Moreover, nearly a quarter describe this technology as "revolutionary" and another 31 percent say it would be difficult to do their jobs without it.

|  | Total (%) |
|---|---|
| It has completely revolutionized the way my organization or project does its work | 25 |
| It would have been very difficult to do the work without it | 31 |
| It is/was very helpful for my organization or project | 36 |
| It is/was only somewhat helpful | 8 |
| Ultimately, it is/was more of a burden than a help | 0 |
| It was a waste of time and money | 0 |

## Applications of NGO Mobile Use Are Diverse

While voice and text messaging are still the most common applications of mobile technology among NGO workers, respondents report using wireless technology in a number of other ways, including photo and video (39 percent); data collection or transfer (28 percent); and multi-media messaging (27 percent). The survey also finds some NGO workers using mobile technology for more sophisticated purposes such as data analysis (8 percent), inventory management (8 percent), and mapping (10 percent). Importantly, the amount of money invested in mobile technology correlates to a higher diversity of application; those NGOs that spend more use this technology for higher-end functions. Users of mobile technology on projects with a health focus are also more likely to use mobile technology for data purposes.

## Perceived Benefits of NGO Mobile Use are Enormous

The survey reveals that the key benefits of mobile technology for all NGOs include time savings (95 percent); the ability to quickly mobilize or organize individuals (91 percent); reaching audiences that were previously difficult or impossible to reach (74 percent); the ability to transmit data more quickly and accurately (67 percent); and the ability to gather data more quickly and accurately (59 percent).

Not surprisingly, then, 76 percent of NGO users said they would likely increase their use of mobile technology in the future. Many of these survey results are reflected in the case studies featured in this report.