

Connecting to Earth

Three billion people now have a mobile phone and this global connectivity brings huge opportunities for environmental empowerment. Vice President and Head of Environmental Affairs at Nokia, Kirsi Sormunen explains.



Not long ago, the thought of mobile phones being owned by hundreds of millions of people seemed like a utopia. Yet the milestone of one billion mobile phone subscribers was reached in the mid-1990s, half a billion in 2000, one billion in 2003, and we're now heading towards two billion. Mobile technology has had a fundamental impact on the lives of many people, especially in developing countries. The network infrastructure is easier and less costly to build than traditional fixed telephony and has helped bridge the digital divide by providing a communications tool to people living in rural areas. According to a study by the London Business School in 2005, an increase of one mobile phone per person in emerging markets translates to an impressive 1.5% growth in GDP.

There is also some good evidence that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and mobile technology in particular can help to combat climate change. New working methods such as video conferencing and working from home decrease the need for commuting which helps lower CO₂ emissions. Mobile phones are no longer just a phone, but multi-purpose devices that can include features such as an alarm clock, radio, video, camera, MP3 player and navigation system. Combining several products into one and replacing physical products with bytes, for example, being able to download music or other services is both material- as well as energy efficient. Furthermore, the technology enables greater energy efficiency by making homes, offices and transportation more energy efficient. There are a number of