

1 **After the storm**

2 *(original at <http://www.economist.com/debate/days/view/329>)*

3 ***Mobile phones have transformed lives in the poor world. Mobile money could*** 4 ***have just as big an impact.***

5 ONCE the toys of rich yuppies, mobile phones have evolved in a few short years to
6 become tools of economic progress for the world's poorest people. These phones
7 compensate for inadequate infrastructure, such as bad roads and slow postal services,
8 allowing information to move more freely and making markets more efficient. All this has
9 a direct impact on economic growth: an extra ten phones per 100 people in a typical
10 developing country boosts GDP growth by 0.8 percentage points, according to the World
11 Bank. More than 4 billion mobile phones are now in use worldwide, three-quarters of
12 them in the developing world. Even in Africa, four in ten people now have a mobile
13 phone.

14 With such phones now so commonplace, there is a new opportunity: mobile money,
15 which allows cash to travel as quickly as a text message. Across the developing world,
16 corner shops are where people buy vouchers to top up their calling credit. Mobile-money
17 services allow these small retailers to act rather like bank branches. They can take your
18 cash, and (by sending a special kind of text message) credit it to your mobile-money
19 account. You can then transfer money (again, via text message) to other registered
20 users, who can withdraw it by visiting their own local corner shops. You can even send
21 money to people who are not registered users; they receive a text message with a code
22 with which they can get cash.

23 This type of service is now used to pay for everything from school fees (no need to queue
24 up at the bank every month to hand over a bunch of bills) to taxis (drivers like it because
25 they are carrying around less cash). Similar schemes are popular in the Philippines and
26 South Africa.

27 Extending mobile money to other poor countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, would
28 have a huge impact. It is a faster, cheaper and safer way to transfer money than the
29 alternatives, such as slow, costly transfers via banks and post offices, or handing an
30 envelope of cash to a bus driver. Rather than spend a day travelling by bus to the
31 nearest bank, recipients in rural areas can spend their time doing more productive
32 things. The incomes of Kenyan households using M-PESA, a mobile services operator,
33 have increased by 5-30% since they started mobile banking, according to a recent study.

Questions

- 1) What benefits do mobile phones bring in developing countries? Can these benefits be calculated?
- 2) Explain the concept of 'mobile-money' (line 16–17)
- 3) **'Mobile money could have just as big an impact' (3–4)** – What ways of paraphrasing this sentence without the verb **'could'** can you find?
- 4) How can small corner shop fulfil the role of banks?
- 5) What is the 'GDP'? (10) What happens when it grows?
- 6) 'With such phones now so commonplace' (14) – Can you think of ways of paraphrasing this sentence without using the word 'commonplace'?
- 7) Who are 'retailers'? (17)
- 8) What are the advantages of mobile-money?
- 9) What are 'school fees' (line 23)?
- 10) Who are 'yuppies' (5)? Can you paraphrase this phrase: 'ONCE the toys of rich yuppies, ...'?
- 11) Do you think, based on the extract you have just read, that the whole article is in favour of spreading mobile phones in developing countries? Why/Why not? Can you think of any possible downsides of the increased popularity of mobile phones in developing countries?

Vocabulary

Impact (9) – have an impact on

Credit (16, 18) – to credit sb./to credit an account/ give sb. credit etc.

Transfer (19)

Withdraw (20)

Four in ten (12)

Scheme (25)

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček: