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CONCEPT NOTE

MOBILE LEARNING WEEK 2015



Monday, 23 February	Tuesday & Wednesday, 24–25 February	Thursday, 26 February	Friday, 27 February
Workshops	Symposium	POLICY FORUM	Research Seminar

Policy Forum: Thursday, 26 February

Powerful technology and instant access to information are opening educational opportunities for women and girls, including those disadvantaged by poverty, inequitable social practices and geography.¹

As the world becomes increasingly saturated with mobile devices, policy-makers are rightly asking themselves how these technologies can advance gender equality in education and contribute to a broad range of post-2015 priorities. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action,² the 2000 Millennium Development Goals³ and the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action⁴ all underscored the importance of expanding women and girls' education, highlighting the centrality of this goal to health, employment, poverty alleviation and political participation. As these agreements near expiration, it is important to consider the ways new technologies can accelerate progress towards shared development objectives.

In keeping with the gender theme of Mobile Learning Week 2015, UNESCO and UN Women will host a one-day Policy Forum to take stock of how mobile technologies can and do support the learning of women and girls. This invitation-only event will investigate how mobile learning policies can improve education and bridge persistent gender divides, both within the context of formal education and beyond it.

The Forum will be attended by ministers and senior officials from ministries of education, gender, and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as high-ranking representatives from international organizations, development banks, NGOs and private sector companies. The event will dovetail with a Friday, 27 February meeting of the Broadband Commission, and Commissioners will underscore how policy actions can improve universal access to connectivity.

The Policy Forum will investigate how mobile learning policies can improve education and bridge persistent gender divides, both within the context of formal education and beyond it.

More broadly, participants will share how widely used devices such as smartphones, tablet computers and laptops are changing – and should change – teaching and learning. They will further discuss how these mainstream technologies can be more effectively leveraged to erase inequalities across gender lines. Through a mix of panels and working sessions, policy-makers will reflect on lessons learned from previous initiatives and delineate principles to ensure ICT improves the educational outcomes of women and girls as well as men and boys.

Five overarching questions will guide the meeting:

1. What policies or initiatives have expanded access to mobile technology and broadband connectivity to successfully promote gender equality in education?
2. Gender equality and education cut across a range of post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs). How can mobile learning contribute to goals such as poverty reduction, health improvement and environmental protection?
3. How should mobile learning be financed? What legal and institutional constraints must be addressed?
4. What barriers prevent women and girls from participating in mobile learning and how can these barriers be eliminated or reduced? What are the specific needs of women and girls when it comes to mobile learning?
5. How are progress and impact in mobile learning best monitored? What strategies ensure sustainability and accountability?

The answers to these questions are central to the success of the post-2015 agenda.⁵ Also, by elaborating how their countries' contexts influence decisions related to mobile technology and gender, policy-makers will provide valuable lessons to their counterparts in other countries.

The overall objective of the Policy Forum is to give senior officials a space to share, listen and learn as they begin to decipher how a rapidly changing technological environment will redefine education – and, with sound decisions, improve educational quality and equity, particularly with regard to gender.

AIMS

- ◆ Share lessons learned from mobile learning initiatives to inform senior-level decision-making.
- ◆ Facilitate networking between policy-makers from different countries and, when relevant, promote dialogue between separate government departments, including those in charge of education, gender, finance and ICT.
- ◆ Clarify how mobile learning can be infused into conversations about the post-2015 education and development agendas.
- ◆ Provide input for the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held in New York in March 2015.



TARGET AUDIENCE

The invitation-only forum is aimed at senior policy-makers from ministries of education, gender, finance and ICT; private sector and civil society stakeholders; international organizations working on gender, education and/or development; and leaders of NGOs and teacher training institutions.

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