



# UNESCO Chair Report

Topic 1: Ensuring Equitable Access to Digital  
Education and Technology in Developing  
Countries



# Table of Contents

Personal Statements	3
Chair – Anna Glienke	3
Deputy Chair – Abhinav Barua	4
Committee Introduction	5
Introduction	5
Glossary	6
Issue Explanation	8
Perspectives of Parties Involved	9
Potential Solutions for the Issue	13
Media Contribution	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> 3
Bibliography	154



# Personal Statements

## Chair – Anna Glienke

Dear Delegates,

My name is Anna Glienke, and I am currently attending 9<sup>th</sup> grade at the International School of Stuttgart, Germany. I am thrilled to be one of your chairs at this year's annual MUNISS conference.

My MUN- Journey started in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, at one of ISS's annual MUN-Days. I was intrigued to further participate in more conferences because they were so interesting, and I learned a lot. If somebody would have told me that not even a year and a half later I would have been in the Netherlands for LMUNA and FAMUN, our school for MUNISS and even Morocco for TMUN I would not have believed it.

Even if this is your very first conference, I am sure you will do great! I hope that I can help make MUNISS 2025 one of the best conferences you will ever attend. I am looking forward to a long weekend full of quality debates and creating lots of memorable moments with you all.



## **Deputy Chair – Abhinav Barua**

Dear Delegates,

My name is Abi, a 9th-grade student at the International School of Stuttgart, Germany. I am honored to serve as your deputy chair at MUNISS 2025.

My MUN journey began in fourth grade in Singapore, sparking my passion for debate and global affairs. Since then, I have participated in multiple conferences, deepening my understanding of international relations and diplomacy.

MUN has provided invaluable insights into global issues and the power of collaboration, fostering my public speaking and problem-solving skills.

For first-time delegates, stepping into MUN can be both exciting and daunting.

Remember, every experienced delegate started where you are now. Approach the conference with an open mind, and know that the MUN community is here to support you.

I look forward to an inspiring weekend filled with engaging debates, innovative solutions, and new friendships. Let's make MUNISS 2025 a memorable and impactful experience together!

Warm regards,

Abi



# Committee Introduction

UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. The UNESCO committee was established on the 16th of November 1945 to promote international collaboration within the framework of education, science, and culture after WW2. One of UNESCO's greatest achievements is the World Heritage Sites Program 1972, in which they managed to create the World Heritage Convention that led to the preservation of over 1,000 cultural and natural sites worldwide. With this convention they managed to preserve well known sites such as the Great Wall of China and Machu Picchu. The committee has the power to influence policies and settle global norms, but they can't enforce laws meaning they are dependent on the collaboration of all member states.

## Introduction

Education is a crucial part of economic growth within a country. "About one-third of the global population, or 2.6 billion people, remained offline in 2023" (World Bank, 2024). It is therefore vital to support the less developed countries by providing them with modern technology with internet access. This will enable students all across the world to utilize online learning resources and reduce the digital divide amongst society. By prioritizing education, a country's entire economy could have the possibility of further developing their infrastructure and further establishing a quality education system in which everybody has access to learning resources.

More than half of the world's population is now covered by 5G networks, reflecting significant advancements in mobile broadband infrastructure (ITU, 2024). Unfortunately, around the entire world, there are lots of students who lack basic education because there is either no Wi-Fi available or they don't have the money to be able to afford a technical device with access to the internet. Therefore, many programs are trying to support these students by providing them with the essential technology for their education. It would take over 400 billion US dollars to be able to achieve the Giga initiative's goal by 2030 (World Bank, 2024).



This is a significant amount of money, which no NGO or country can spend alone. Therefore, governments must collaborate and be open to increasing global access to quality education and technology.

## Glossary

**Assistive Technology:** Productivity tools to enable people with disabilities to be able to understand text. E.g. Text-to-speech for a dyslexic student.

**Digital Infrastructure:** Software based infrastructure to deliver digital products and services. This is a broad term for anything such as Cybersecurity frameworks, online learning platforms, Cloud computing services or even Wi-Fi hotspots.

**ICT (Information and Communication Technology):** Broad term for digital tools like computers, the internet, and mobile networks that support communication and education. It provides digital lessons, assignments, and interactive learning. Google Classroom, Khan Academy, and Coursera are great examples of this.

**Digital Divide:** The digital gap within society of the individuals with and those without access to technology.

**GPE (Global Partnership for Education):** Coalition providing policy support and funding to strengthen worldwide education systems.

**Online Learning:** Learning process in which students can access digital materials and receive support from teachers from wherever they are.

**Debt Relief Programs:** Financial initiatives allowing developing countries to invest into education prior to repaying their debt.

**Digital Sovereignty:** The idea that countries should be in control over their own digital infrastructure and online education systems.



**USFs (Universal Service Funds):** Government programs that fund the expansion of digital infrastructure within underserved areas.

**MDGs (Millennium Development Goals):** 8 Goals created in 2000 that are highly suggested by the UN to be achieved by the year 2015. Primary focus was basic human development and reducing global inequalities.

**SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals):** 17 Goals created in 2015 that are highly suggested by the UN to be achieved by the year 2030. Primary focus is global sustainability, climate action, and economic growth.

**ICT (Information and Communication Technology):** Agency of the United Nations, which is responsible for global policies on telecommunications, access to the internet, and digital infrastructure.

**OLPC (One Laptop per Child):** A non-profit organization with the goal of providing laptops to students in less economically developed countries.

**Learning Poverty:** The number of 10-year-old children across the globe who can't read and understand a simple story by the end of primary school.

**Giga Initiative:** Global initiative launched by UNICEF with the goal of connecting all schools across the globe to the internet by 2030.

**Digital Literacy:** The ability to use, create, and understand digital technologies.

**Literacy Rates:** Defined by percentage of population given an age group that can read and write. Adult literacy would be defined by everybody within the age of 15 and above whilst youth literacy would be age 15 to 24.

**GDP (Gross Domestic Product):** Total value of goods and services produced in a country within one year. Main measure of output and economic activity.

**GDP per capita:** Total value of all goods and services produced in a country within one year and then divided by the number of people living within the country.



**Poverty Rate:** Ratio of the part of the population whose income falls below the poverty line.

## Issue Explanation

Education is one of the 30 Human Rights that the United Nations has established. Unfortunately the lack of digital access results in many students not having the opportunity to utilize education. Over the past decades in which technology has been further developing by the day, a huge digital divide amongst society has been taking place. This negatively affects those living in less developed countries since they don't have as highly developed digital infrastructure as some other highly developed countries do. While more than 90 percent of people in high-income countries used the internet in 2022, only one in four low-income-countries used the internet. (World Bank, 2024). Additionally, this limits the access to technology with which students could access educational resources online. Therefore, this results in entire communities or countries being trapped in an endless cycle of poverty and a lack of possibility for further developing the infrastructure of the country.

The less developed countries are struggling with low digital literacy and therefore have major struggles to compete within the global economy. Digital literacy and the educational possibility it could bring forward are the keys to workforce development and providing the general knowledge foundation required to be able to have a free choice of which job people would like to do. Currently, many businesses have limited access to workers that have had the luck of being able to partake in school, which causes the economic growth to be reduced. Additionally, developing countries fall behind in innovation, research and technological advancements due to the lack of educated people being able to carry out these jobs.

If this issue doesn't get addressed soon, there will be a major increase in poverty rates and unemployment. This would also lead to a major increase in political instability and greatly limit the possibility for a country to further develop their infrastructure. The digital divide would also continue to grow





to an extreme where decreasing it would cost a lot more and would be nearly impossible to achieve.

The main group affected by this issue are primarily the students within developing countries. The limited access for millions of children to modern education tools will limit their future opportunities and decrease their success within the business world. This happens specifically to the students living within rural areas of a less developed country, since they might not even have access to Wi-Fi to be able to connect technological devices in the first place. In Sub-Saharan Africa only 22% of schools have Wi-Fi (Reuters, 2024).

Facing this problem is incredibly difficult because of the many different aspects you must consider whilst approaching it. The main issues it encapsulates are:

- **Political instability** and conflicts within countries like Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan are currently facing ongoing wars which directly impact infrastructure whilst disrupting the education of many students. Additionally, poor governance and corruption can prevent successful investments in education and technology.
- **Economic barriers** due to the high costs of getting everybody connected with Wi-Fi and supplied with technological devices whilst simultaneously funding the further expansion of digital education. Many low income countries struggle to invest this money.
- **Lack of Infrastructure** causes the individuals living in rural and remote areas to lack the budget to provide stable internet, electricity, and education which the government can't support them with either since building things such as fiber optic cables, Wi-Fi hotspots, and mobile networks are expensive and time consuming.
- **Social Inequality** amongst groups which are often discriminated against such as: women, refugees, and low-income families are often excluded from opportunities to access digital education. "In a study across 32 countries and territories, for every 100 male youth with digital skills, only 65 female youth possess similar competencies." (Unicef, 2023)



- **Digital Literacy Gap** causes many students and teachers to lack the basic skills of utilizing technology and digital software programs which are vital to further increasing the global access to digital education.

Currently there is a third of the global population which remains cut off from most digital services (Reuters, 2024). This shows just how severe this issue is for all people looking for access to digital education. The digital divide disproportionately affects mostly the less developed countries. The countries most affected are Chad, South Sudan, Burundi, Afghanistan, and Haiti. Within South Sudan alone only 12% of the population has access to Wi-Fi (Internet Society Pulse, 2022).

## Perspectives of Parties Involved

### India:

India has managed to become one of the leaders in low-cost educational technology by developing platforms like Diksha. Additionally they are expanding mobile-based education programs within rural areas to ensure education within all of the country and not only the cities. As of right now the mobile-based education programs are still ongoing and many people within rural areas are left without technology thus meaning they have a lack of access to digital education.

### United States & European Union:

Within both the United States of America and the European Union there have been many educational aid programs and technology partnerships created. Additionally both advocate for neutrality within the internet, digital rights, and data privacy.

### Iran:

The government of Iran has blocked or heavily regulated foreign educational websites, which limits access to online learning resources.



Even though bigger cities like Tehran have many modern education tools available, most of the rural areas still lack internet access and technological resources to access digital education resources. This means that there is a major divide within the country of Iran itself.

### **Cuba:**

One of the lowest internet penetration rates in Latin America is in Cuba. The government has strict control over online access. Additionally, when internet access is available, access to computers, tablets, and e-learning platforms is scarce within public schools. The Cuban government has made some efforts to integrate digital learning into the school system, but due to the high costs and censorship, there is still a major struggle in making this accessible for all.

### **Jordan:**

Within Jordan, there are currently over 1 million Syrian refugees being hosted. This adds immense pressure on the education system of Jordan. There are many NGO efforts like Edraak (an Arabic e-learning platform) and UNICEF supporting online schools to help expand access across the country. Funding and infrastructure limitations still persist to this day.

### **Developing & Conflict-Affected Countries:**

The countries which are currently being affected by conflict or are still developing lack the digital infrastructure. Within many rural areas and conflict zones the access to internet, reliable electricity and technological devices is scarce meaning digital education is almost impossible. The economic inequalities create a greater digital divide amongst the citizens. In some cases the government censors and regulates the access to global platforms which greatly limits the access to learning opportunities. The people most affected by this are the students who lack education. This will cause a chain reaction of not enough people being able to support the economy by taking on demanding jobs which require basic education. This leads to a very slow economic growth and further increases the digital divide.

### **World Bank:**



The largest financier of education within the world is currently the World Bank. By working together with governments and organizations across the globe, they can support innovative projects in which they support learning and poverty reduction. They provide financial aid to lots of schools around the world to afford digital learning tools.

### **ITU (International Telecommunication Union):**

The main focus of the ITU is to expand global internet access for educational purposes. They have been working together with UNICEF within the Giga Initiative. Additionally they work together with governments to create policies regarding digital inclusion regarding education.

### **OLPC (One Laptop per Child):**

The non-profit organization started in the year 2005 to decrease the digital divide and provide education to students in less economically developed countries. The way the program works is by countries purchasing these “cheap” laptops, (XO Laptops) and then distributing these to schools. The laptops have pre-installed educational platforms. This led to millions of laptops being distributed within Latin America, Asia, and Africa. A huge struggle was that the laptops require internet access which was and still is quite an obstacle within rural areas of the world. Unfortunately many countries do not have enough money to participate in this project and the program has had to scale down a lot since 2010.

## **History of the Topic**

Around the 1990s the slow rise of the internet slowly started to create a digital divide amongst the wealthy and developing nations. This was due to the still developing nations struggling to ensure access for everybody to technological resources with which you can access the internet.

In the year 2000 the MDGs were introduced which partially focussed on accessible education for all. The second of the eight MDGs focuses on achieving universal primary education. There was no goal mentioning technology or digital access yet.



As of 2010 mobile phones and general technological items made online learning a more accessible resource within rural areas. Specifically Africa and South Asia benefited a lot from this technological advancement. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report was published in the year 2018. The report highlighted the digital divide as a major barrier to equality within the field of education. This was one of the first times the digital divide was highlighted as an impediment to accessibility to education.

When the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 started, it created a global shift to online learning and expanding educational resources available to students online. This also exposed the severe inequalities when it came to digital access in less developed countries. Since lots of students within the less developed countries couldn't access the internet, they missed out on multiple years of school education. This brought the global focus on bringing technology into less developed countries to support education in a digital way and ensure equal access to every student.

In the year 2021 the World Bank and UNESCO launched "EdTech" which supported developing countries in expanding the accessibility to online learning for students. "EdTech" Stands for "Education and Technology" and is ongoing within 80 countries.

## **Potential Solutions for the issue:**

To be able to effectively reduce the impact and size of the digital divide, collaboration amongst governments across the entire world is vital. One of the biggest problems within "Ensuring Equitable Access to Digital Education and Technology in Developing Countries" is that the digital infrastructure must be expanded.

During the year 2018, the United Nations General Assembly created a resolution on the Right to Education (A/RES/73/136). Its emphasis was on bridging the digital divide through investments in ICT infrastructure, teacher training, and affordable technology. This was partially successful since it laid the groundwork for future opportunities in decreasing the digital divide. It managed to strengthen cooperation between the UN



agencies and governments and supported digital infrastructure initiatives. The main limitations the resolution faced were the geopolitical barriers, unequal implementations and the persisting limited internet access.

One way of doing this would be to invest in more accessibility to satellite internet to ensure that individuals within rural areas of a country have the same quality of Wi-Fi as people within urban areas. This could involve supporting the Giga Initiative and UNICEF established in 2019 by an increase in funding to achieve the goal of giving every school access to the internet by 2030.

Providing schools with technological devices such as laptops and tablets will provide students with access to digital learning platforms and make teaching larger groups of people easier. This would require low-cost technological devices to be made available to less developed countries. Although Germany is a highly developed country, they provide a great example of an opportunity that other countries could also incorporate within their school systems. Germany offers the possibility for students to utilize iPads the school offers for a small monthly fee. By the end of the student's school education, they have completely paid off the price of the iPad and keep it as their personal property.

Additionally, teachers must be trained into being able to teach students how to use the provided digital teaching methods, so students will be able to utilize these by themselves.

But for the teaching resources to be available online, it requires a lot more input into the amount of accessible and low-cost resources. This means that there are still a lot more open possibilities to create digital libraries in which students from all across the world have access to the same information in the required languages, as well as worksheets and digital textbooks for all subjects and important topics.



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