



**2010 United Nations Private Sector Forum on the Millennium Development Goals  
Thematic Discussion Briefing Note: Access to Education through Innovative Information and  
Communication Technologies (ICT)**

**Introduction:**

Despite significant progress made since 2000, the international community is not on track to deliver on the promise of a quality basic education for all by 2015. In 2007, at least 72 million primary-aged children were not in school, of which 54 percent were girls. Protecting the gains made in primary education in many countries during the past decade and ensuring further progress, particularly towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, will require governments to identify and adopt different approaches to reaching the unreached. Innovative information and communication technologies (ICT) offer alternative and complementary approaches to reaching girls and boys who are excluded and/or subject to multiple deprivations. The private sector, with its wider range of ICT expertise, can make a critical contribution to enhancing the relevance, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning activities in and for a range of contexts. This requires changing how we conceptualize, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate teaching-learning and related activities to take full advantage of the inherent characteristics of ICT, including the rapid pace of its evolution and its widespread appeal.

**Key challenges:**

The potential of ICT for enhancing teaching-learning activities is clearly recognized. However, education policymakers, practitioners and ICT industry leaders have approached this challenge largely from the perspective of their traditional positions with varying results, including inefficient use of hardware, unsuitable software and a widening of the knowledge gap among various groups. Innovations are needed, for example, to support remote learning, teacher planning and evaluation, development of local content, mobile libraries, textbooks, online classroom learning, etc. The innovations need to be accessible, appropriate, affordable, durable, adapted to the social and cultural context, and able to be produced at scale.

**Solutions:**

ICT leaders can help education policymakers and practitioners develop more effective and efficient approaches to address a wide range of situations, including:

- Mapping technologies which provide real-time data and information to decision-makers at building, local and national levels.
- Accessible telephone and other mobile devices that can transmit large quantities of data at affordable cost to enhance teaching-learning activities, as well as increase the efficiency and effectiveness of planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluating student performance and institutional efficiency and effectiveness, particularly at the school level.
- Simple, durable, energy-efficient, no-maintenance, affordable computers that combine textbooks, notebooks and access to reference materials/tutorials.

**Discussion question:**

What kinds of game-changing private-sector innovations could help at risk education systems reach the education-related MDGs and Education-for-All (EFA) goals, particularly with a view towards increasing access for the most marginalized and enhancing learning outcomes across the board; and how can governments support the further development and spread of these innovations?

**UN–business partnerships and initiatives that advance these issues:**

1. **Schools for Africa:** The joint international fundraising initiative of UNICEF, the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Hamburg Society, aims to accelerate access to quality basic education for children, with a special focus on girls, orphans and vulnerable children. The initiative is also a way to mainstream Child Friendly School standards and to ensure a quality education for all children. ([www.unicef.org/education/southafrica\\_43976.html](http://www.unicef.org/education/southafrica_43976.html))
2. **UNESCO’s ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (ICT-CFT):** An ambitious initiative that began in 2008 to guide professional development programmes, teacher preparation curricula, policy frameworks, assessments, and other resources that integrate technology into education. The framework aims to help providers to develop or revise their offering. Current partners include Virginia Tech Polytechnic Institute and State University, Microsoft, Intel, Cisco, Electric Paper. ([http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=22997&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=22997&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html))

Further information on these and other UN–business partnerships that could benefit from additional corporate engagement and support can be found at [business.un.org](http://business.un.org).