



Closing Digital Literacy Gap Could Unlock Trillions of Dollars in Global GDP Growth

Descrizione

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New report, authored by GSMA Intelligence in partnership with Huawei, released at UNESCO's Digital Learning Week

PARIS, Sept. 10, 2026 /PRNewswire/ • More than one in three (38%) people remains offline despite being covered by mobile broadband • and a lack of digital literacy skills is often to blame, according to new research published yesterday.

The new report, •Bridging the Divide: Enhancing Digital Literacy in the AI Era,• authored by GSMA Intelligence and produced in collaboration with Huawei, identifies a digital divide impacting 3.1 billion people caused by a shortage of digital skills, user trust and AI literacy.

AI raises both access and risk

Existing industry projections suggest closing the capability gap could add around \$3.5 trillion to global GDP by 2030, with more than 90% of those gains flowing to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Physical mobile broadband coverage currently reaches 96% of people worldwide.

The report, unveiled at UNESCO's Digital Learning Week, suggests artificial intelligence could act as both a bridge and a barrier for underserved communities. AI-powered voice assistants and applications that work with images, audio and video can all help low-literacy users bypass the need to input text. At the same time, they raise the security and critical-thinking standards required to participate safely. However, the study warns that users must now be able to understand data privacy and identify risks such as fraud and deepfakes.

The research cites World Bank statistics that GenAI literacy represents the highest-value skill category, with wage premiums up to 36%, far exceeding returns for both digital and traditional AI skills.

Without targeted interventions in basic digital training, the authors warn, rapid AI adoption risks entrenching existing inequalities even in areas with full network coverage.

Mobile classrooms build skills in remote areas

Digital inclusion initiatives typically target those most at risk of digital exclusion, including rural and remote communities, children and teachers in rural schools, older people, and women and girls.

The report emphasizes the need for community-based delivery models, citing Huawei's Skills on Wheels initiative as a field-tested example – particularly its solar-powered DigiTruck mobile classrooms, which bring hardware, rural connectivity and hands-on training, including AI literacy, to off-grid regions.

Since 2019, training courses delivered by Skills on Wheels projects have reached more than 130,000 people across 21 countries, with more people benefiting indirectly. DigiTruck trainers encourage trainees to share their new skills, which is shown to occur in practice. A report on DigiTruck by Kenya's Ministry of Information, Communications and Digital Economy shows that 79% of DigiTruck trainees surveyed had passed on their newly acquired digital skills to family members and peers.

Policymakers urged to treat AI literacy as core infrastructure

To bridge the usage gap, the report urges policymakers, telecom operators and technology vendors to work together and focus on four priorities:

• Digital literacy can no longer be defined by static thresholds, said Tim Hatt, head of research and consultancy at GSMA Intelligence. • Connectivity alone is insufficient – capabilities, system design and trust must evolve together. To capture this multi-trillion-dollar opportunity, stakeholders must integrate layered AI literacy directly into daily livelihoods through trusted community channels. •

• Mobile classrooms have demonstrated immense value in helping underserved populations break through physical and psychological barriers to technology, said Gavin Allen, Executive Editor-in-Chief at Huawei. • We will continue working alongside local governments and industry partners to drive digital literacy, ensuring that no one is left behind as we transition into the AI economy. •

A new DigiTruck program will launch in France this autumn, covering several cities in the Île-de-France region and targeting low-income and underserved communities with digital skills training.

The full report is available on the GSMA Intelligence research portal:

<https://www.gsmainelligence.com/research/research-file-download?reportId=83651&assetId=83691>

View original content to download multimedia: <https://www.prnewswire.co.uk/news-releases/closing-digital-literacy-gap-could-unlock-trillions-of-dollars-in-global-gdp-growth-302875089.html>

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