

# New report: Connecting schools has the potential to boost GDP by up to 20 percent in the least connected nations

- Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) report - Connecting Learners: Narrowing the Educational Divide - highlights four key areas for multi-sector collaboration
- Ericsson is an early funder and Global UNICEF partner for school connectivity mapping in support of the Giga initiative
- Empowering children and communities through school connectivity and enabling access to quality digital learning will help to meet UN Sustainable Development Goals and is a catalyst for individual, regional and national economic success

**Cairo, Egypt, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021** – An Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) report sponsored by Ericsson (NASDAQ: ERIC) has found that nations with low broadband connectivity have the potential to realize an increase in GDP by up to 20 percent by connecting schools to the internet.

A well-educated workforce is more likely to be innovative and foster ground-breaking ideas, leading to economic development and job creation. EIU analysis shows that for every 10 percent increase in school connectivity in a country, GDP per capita could increase by 1.1 percent.

In the context of the West African country of Niger, the report finds that improvements in school connectivity to Finnish levels could increase GDP per capita by almost 20 percent - from USD 550 per person in the baseline, to USD 660 per person by 2025.

The report focuses on four key actions to make a change:

1. **Collaboration is key:** A holistic, public/private partnership strategy is needed to coordinate efforts with stakeholders to overcome barriers to school connectivity.
2. **Accessibility and affordability:** Building infrastructure to enable access to the internet is a starting point. Quality of connection and cost are important factors as well.
3. **Embedding internet and digital tools into education:** Once access to school connectivity is achieved, it must be embedded into the curriculum. Teachers must be trained to integrate technology into everyday learning.
4. **Protecting children online:** School connectivity provides opportunities for children. Additional steps must be taken to ensure healthy and protected online learning environments. Internet usage must be properly managed to ensure safe and secure use..

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The report also recommends that public, private and NGO sector leaders around the world can make a dramatic impact towards bridging the digital divide by joining forces to make internet connectivity a global reality for school children of all ages.

As a result, Ericsson today appeals to these players to get behind the efforts of [Giga](#) (a school connectivity initiative founded by UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union) through actions such as: funding, data sharing, technological expertise and reimagining sustainable business models for connectivity. Ericsson has committed its efforts through a three-year partnership with UNICEF to help map the current school connectivity gap across 35 countries.

The Ericsson-backed EIU report – Connecting Learners: Narrowing the Educational Divide – has reinforced the company’s belief that the ambitious goal of Giga, to connect all schools and their surrounding communities by 2030 is achievable.

Heather Johnson, Vice President of Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility, Ericsson, says: “When Giga was announced, we immediately understood the positive impact it could deliver - bridging the digital divide between and within countries, to give children the world over the opportunity of bright and rewarding futures.”

She adds: “The report makes it clear that partnership between business leaders, public sector leaders and NGOs can take effective action to address this issue and significantly impact lives. Every player in these sectors, no matter how big or small, can make a difference. We encourage stakeholders to read the report and more importantly join the Giga initiative to help realize this important goal.”

Charlotte Petri-Gornitzka, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, says: “Together, we’re mapping schools around the world to identify connectivity gaps in communities. It’s key that we collaborate across sectors to connect schools and provide quality digital learning, so every child and young person can leapfrog to a brighter future.”

### **The report**

The EIU report shows how school connectivity can lead to improved educational outcomes and enhanced career opportunities for children. resulting in higher economic activity and community growth. The report finds that these individual-level benefits for children have a snowball effect leading to higher incomes, better health, and improved overall wellbeing. The benefits can extend beyond children, supporting wider community development and economic growth.

Other potential school connectivity benefits highlighted by the report include:

- Increasing quality of education
- Creating a more productive workforce that fosters innovation and ground-breaking ideas
- Job creation
- Community development
- Driving economic growth and development

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To learn more about this initiative and how to get involved in the Giga initiative visit

[www.gigaconnect.org](http://www.gigaconnect.org)

### **Related links:**

[About the Giga Initiative](#)

[About Ericsson's partnership with UNICEF](#)

### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

#### **Report methodology:**

A detailed description of the report methodology is included in the [Connecting Learners: Narrowing the Educational Divide report, pages 80-95](#).

#### **About the Economist Intelligence Unit:**

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is the research arm of The Economist Group, publisher of The Economist. As the world's leading provider of country intelligence, it helps governments, institutions and businesses by providing timely, reliable and impartial analysis of economic and development strategies. Through a global network of more than 650 analysts and contributors, The EIU continuously assesses and forecasts political, economic and business conditions in more than 200 countries. For more information, visit [www.eiu.com](http://www.eiu.com).

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