

# Mobile solutions to empower, educate refugees and displaced persons take spotlight at UN forum

28 March 2017 – Several initiatives to improve learning through mobile technologies were presented during the Mobile Learning Week 2017, a recently-concluded five-day event held at the Paris headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

[Mobile Learning Week](#), which wrapped up last Friday, hands-on education specialists, private sector and policy makers, and focused on the theme ‘Education in Emergencies and Crises.’

While smartphone apps and interactive workshops demonstrated how mobile solutions could meet some of the challenges faced by displaced people, two tents set up by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) at the event facility gave participants an idea of the living and learning conditions faced by refugees, including the lack of Internet connection.

“While refugee learners face numerous obstacles, they also carry the potential to transform educational practices,” the Congolese university student and youth community activist Roland Kalamo [told](#) UNESCO. He lives and studies at Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, and was one of the presenters at the event.

Mr. Kalamo is also the founder of Movement of Youth for Peace and Change, an organization that teaches young people at Kakuma about human rights, peacebuilding and conflict resolution through arts like cinema and music, language, journalism and sports. Through his organization, he seeks to empower the youth to be part of the solutions to their own problems.

Although lack or unstable Internet connection can be one of the multiple obstacles to refugee learners, [mobile learning](#) – which enables, through mobile technology, learning anytime and anywhere – can be an opportunity for them to invest in their own lives and future.

“When a refugee is using mobile learning, they enjoy the same rights as a normal citizen and no matter the circumstances,” said Mr. Kalamo, adding that: “If they’re alive and have access to internet, nothing will stop them from learning.”

According a report from UNHCR – which co-organized the event together with UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](#)) – only [50 per cent of refugee children have access to primary education](#), while the global average is of more than 90 per cent.

*Source: UNESCO (2014) | UNHCR (2015)*

As these children grow older, there is an even larger gap: only 22 per cent

of refugee adolescents attend secondary school compared to a global average of 84 per cent. At the higher education level, just 1 per cent of refugees attend university, compared to a global average of 34 per cent.

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