

MOBILINK, UNESCO DRIVING FEMALE LITERACY THROUGH CONNECTIVITY Announces expansion of SMS-based literacy initiative

Islamabad: March 25, 2010 – Mobilink, Pakistan’s market leader in cellular services and part of Orascom Telecom Holding, has announced the expansion of the SMS-based literacy project in partnership with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Launched last year with a view to reshaping lives through connectivity, the SMS-based literacy program is a joint venture between Mobilink and UNESCO with a local NGO, Bunyad as the implementing partner.

In the pilot, the 250 learners received informative text messages daily in Urdu and were expected to respond. In the second part, the participants were evaluated on a periodic basis to assess gains in knowledge and learning. The program was conducted with the help of 10 teachers enlisted by Bunyad.

It was found that at the beginning of the program 57% of the girls were graded ‘C’ and only 28% of the girls managed to score an ‘A’. However, near the end of the project the situation reversed with percentage of girls receiving a ‘C’ dropped to only 11% whereas more than 60% of the girls were awarded an ‘A’.

The program teachers also report a stark improvement in the confidence of the young girls as owning a mobile phone made a difference to their sense of security.

Addressing the media, Rashid Khan, President and CEO, Mobilink, shared that the 5 month pilot project conducted with 250 adolescent girls in Punjab has shown a marked improvement in their reading and writing skills. Khan announced to expansion of the program to include another 1,000 girls to understand the impact of replicating the project on a larger scale. “The cell phone holds the key to social development by its very nature and we want to make sure that women are an integral part of this revolution,” Khan added.

Warren Mellor, Country Director UNESCO stated, that Pakistan is the signatory of Dakar Framework of Action for EFA, held in Dakar, Senegal in April, 2000 and Pakistan has committed to achieve 86% literacy rate by 2015. UNESCO Islamabad has successfully run a very innovative programme with BUNYAD Foundation, Lahore and Mobilink.

Mr. Mellor extended special thanks to the respected media fraternity for attending the forum and helping in promoting such a noble cause. Mr. Mellor said that a mass scale literacy drive is the need of the day, and using modern cellular technology can help us to achieve our goal very rapidly.