



32 INNOVATIONS TO IMPROVE CHILD LITERACY ANNOUNCED AT INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY EVENT

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its partners World Vision and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) announced 32 winning innovations for *All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development* grant competition during an International Literacy Day celebration at USAID headquarters in Washington, DC. The competition to create innovative solutions to improve early grade reading in the developing world elicited more than 450 proposals from more than 75 countries.

“Today, on International Literacy Day, we have the opportunity to celebrate an initiative designed to generate game-changing ideas to help children around the world improve their reading skills. The ability to read is central to all aspects of a child’s life and future. Yet, 61 million boys and girls are out of school. And just as troubling, schooling doesn’t always translate into learning,” said USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah.

All Children Reading, launched in November 2011, is a multi-year partnership to find and fund ground-breaking solutions for illiteracy and to inspire global action around this critical issue. The focus of the competition was to catalyze innovative practices to target applied research for improving teaching and learning materials, to enhance the quality and accessibility of education data to support decision-making. The 32 award nominees are proposing innovative ideas to promote literacy in more than 20 low-income countries. For example:

- In Haiti, the *Institute of Higher Education and Infotronics* is planning to introduce 250 interactive white boards into Haitian classrooms. Bringing the same cutting-edge technology that our kids are learning on here in America to more than 20 elementary schools in Port au Prince and reach 25,000 students.
- In the Philippines, the *Education Development Center* is harnessing the power of mobile technology to address an overwhelming lack of reliable education data. In the past, the Department of Education in the Philippines had to rely on a cumbersome, pencil-and-paper system that often took as long as 18 months to receive and process data. And led to more than 50 percent of public elementary schools failing to submit any required data at all. With the Center’s support, teachers will now be able to submit text messages with student reading performance data directly to a Department of Education database. In turn, teachers will receive access to the database and receive training in interpreting the results and designing new strategies and activities around them.
- And in India, a local organization called *PlanetRead* is aiming to improve the literacy skills of 28 million children adding subtitles to Hindi TV programs, music videos, and popular movie. Through a five-year pilot study in 5 Hindi states, the approach has already shown significant results. In their rural sample, 45 percent of girls could not read after 5 years of schooling. But that number dropped to 16 percent when the girls were exposed to same-language subtitling.

All winners showcased their innovations at a DevelopmentXChange session. “Since the ability to read is the most basic skill required to overcome poverty, one of humanity’s greatest challenges is to invent ways to ensure that all of our children are reading. If we fail, tragically their vast potential will be lost to all of us,” said Kofi Essien, project manager for Open Learning Exchange (OLE) Ghana. OLE Ghana proposes to develop and deploy a national network of low-cost digital libraries. Other innovators will address critical needs for teaching materials in a child’s mother tongue, teaching and learning tools for the blind, and more accurate and timely data to make the right decisions to improve learning.

“Our work in communities around the world over the past 60 years has taught us that education, particularly for young girls, is absolutely foundational to the future success of a country,” said Kent Hill, Senior Vice President of International Programs at World Vision. “By seeking innovative new ideas for reading and education, we are focusing our efforts on one of the areas of community development that brings the greatest dividends for the future.”

“Education is one of the best investments we can make to lift people out of poverty and that’s why it is the flagship of the Australian aid program,” AusAID Director General Peter Baxter said. “One-fifth of Australia’s overseas aid budget is targeted at literacy and other education programs. AusAID is proud to be working with USAID and World Vision to inspire innovations that will bring the joys and benefits of reading to children and their families.”

In addition to announcing the 32 All Children Reading innovators, the International Literacy Day event featured education leaders, senior Obama administration officials, and taped messages from former First Lady Laura Bush and others, discussing efforts to achieve quality education for all. The event was co-hosted with the Brookings Institution and the Global Partnership for Education.

For more information about the award nominees, visit www.AllChildrenReading.org

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