Worldreader

PROJECT LITERACY   Pearson   RESULTS FOR DEVELOPMENT   Press Release
                                           CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

Study Finds Mobile Technology Gets Parents Reading to Young Children and Improves Home Literacy Environment

Worldreader releases results from the Read to Kids pilot in India, showing the potential of mobile phones to get entire communities reading to children

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA -- April 17th, 2018 – Worldreader, the global nonprofit that believes everyone can be a reader, in partnership with Pearson, as part of the Project Literacy campaign, and Results for Development, today released the results of a two-year digital reading pilot which revealed **how parents' and caregivers' reading habits changed after receiving access to a free mobile library** of children's books alongside community-based education about the benefits of reading to children from a young age. The report contributes to growing evidence on how parents can support their children's early learning using technology.

The pilot took place in Delhi, India from 2015 to 2017 and reached over 200,000 families with digital books via the Worldreader Kids app (www.readtokids.com). The first digitally focused literacy intervention of this kind, Read to Kids leveraged a behavior change campaign and partnered with community-based organizations to raise awareness on the importance of reading to children from birth. While the majority of children that the pilot targeted lived in homes lacking age-appropriate children's storybooks, over 57,000 families browsed the Worldreader Kids library and read at least one book. Nearly **7,000 households demonstrated deeper change in their reading habits, becoming "frequent readers"** who read from the application at least four times a month.

Other findings include:

- **Digital reading is scalable and affordable.** App promotion and downloads cost Worldreader approximately $0.30 USD per user. This low cost of app promotion coupled with widespread availability of mobile phones in India supports affordable access to Worldreader's digital books. India's aggressive cell phone market translates to low data costs for the end user making online digital reading an affordable option, even for low-income parents. Reading a book a day for thirty days cost the equivalent of two cups of street chai, or about $0.16 USD per month.
- **Women became important and indirect beneficiaries of the pilot.** Many women in the intervention group report that access to storybooks and participation in the program has increased their access to a family mobile

phone, led to more investment in cellular data and improved their digital literacy.
- **Local language books are preferred.** Parents prefer books in mother tongue (Hindi) but English is also frequently read and reflects parental aspirations for early exposure to English.
- **In person, digital and media assets together best foster attitude and behavior change in parents.** A blend of digital and in-person strategies is most supportive in normalizing digital reading to children.

"Our goal was to take the ubiquitous mobile phone in India, transform it into a great mobile library, and discover how to get parents reading with their children," said Wendy Smith, Director of Pre-Reading Programs, Worldreader. "This report is additional proof to ways parents can support their children's early learning using technology, and showcases the power of mobile reading for improving early-childhood learning outcomes."

"Research shows that the more words children hear at home, the more prepared they'll be when they enter school. We are proud to take part in the rich experimentation that is happening in this space to ensure we are setting the next generation up for success," said Jennifer Young, Director of Social Impact Programs at Pearson. "Our hope is that others working to end illiteracy can pick up on what we're doing and start researching and experimenting on their own, leveraging the technology already available to many people around the world."

The Worldreader Kids app was designed, developed and launched containing an age appropriate digital collection of 550 children's storybooks in Hindi and English. The books were sourced from 34 different local and international publishers including Pearson, Katha, Tulika, Pratham Books and Eklavya.

Worldreader also partnered with organizations like CKS, HLFPPT, SARD, KATHA as well as Happy McGarry Bowen and ITTISA, to codesign the behavior-change campaign and support the digital and traditional mass media strategy. These partners have an established presence and positive influence in 177 low-income communities across Delhi and were selected based on their extensive networks, their ability to scale, and their knowledge of early childhood development, reading or early education. All partners promoted reading and aimed to improve the knowledge, attitudes and reading behaviors of parents and caregivers in the target group.

The pilot generated evidence through an adaptive learning approach, designed by Results for Development that combined real-time data with project implementation to yield results on what was working and what was not.

"It's critical to use an adaptive learning approach for a pilot program like Read to Kids where there are so many unknowns that need to be tested," said Molly Jamieson Eberhardt, a program director at Results for Development who led the design of the pilot research. "Our pre-pilot research helped Worldreader to better understand behavior change barriers and tailor activities to address those barriers. Once the pilot started, our quarterly Learning Checks enabled program managers to review current data, quickly identify challenges, test solutions and make intervention adjustments."

"Mobile phones are everywhere, and early childhood reading has the greatest impact in a person's life," said David Risher, co-founder and CEO, Worldreader. "Read to Kids lays the groundwork to unlock the potential of millions of children around the world."

To read the full Read to Kids report, visit: http://bit.ly/R2KFinalreport.

About Worldreader

Worldreader is a global nonprofit whose mission is to help the world read. The organization provides students and their families with a free digital library available on e-readers and mobile phones, complemented with a suite of reading support programs. Since 2010, over 6 million people across 50 countries have read from their digital library of over 40,000 local and international e-books. Worldreader works with device manufacturers, local and international publishers, government agencies, education officials, and local communities to help readers worldwide.

To read free books on your mobile phone, visit read.worldreader.org. For more information on Worldreader, please visit www.worldreader.org.

About Project Literacy

Project Literacy is global movement to make significant and sustainable advances in the fight against illiteracy so that all people – regardless of geography, language, race, ability, class or gender – have the opportunity to fulfill their potential through the power of words. Founded and convened by Pearson, the world's learning company, Project Literacy brings together a diverse and global cross-section of people and organizations to help unlock the potential of individuals, families and communities everywhere so that by 2030, no child will be born at risk of poor literacy. Learn more at www.projectliteracy.com

About Pearson

Pearson is the world's learning company, with expertise in educational courseware and assessment, and a range of teaching and learning services powered by technology. Pearson's mission is to help people make progress through access to better learning and believes that learning opens up opportunities, creating fulfilling careers and better lives. Pearson founded and convenes Project Literacy, a global coalition-based campaign to make significant and sustainable advances in the fight against illiteracy and to ensure by 2030 all people have the opportunity to fulfill their potential through the power of words. For more information, visit www.pearson.com.

About Results for Development

Results for Development (R4D) is a leading non-profit global development partner. We collaborate with change agents around the world — government officials, civil society leaders and social innovators — to create strong systems that support healthy, educated people. We help our partners move from knowing their goal to knowing how to reach it. We combine global expertise in health, education and nutrition with analytic rigor, practical support for decision-making and implementation and access to peer problem-solving networks. Together with our partners, we build self-sustaining systems that serve everyone and deliver lasting results. Then we share

what we learn so others can achieve results for development, too. For more information, visit our website at: www.r4d.org.

Contact:

Nadja Borovac
Worldreader
+34 618 399 102 | nadja@worldreader.org

Jennifer Young
Pearson, Project Literacy
+1 202 271 2788 | jennifer.young@pearson.com

Kelly Toves
Results for Development
+1 202 796 0142| ktoves@r4d.org

###