Wednesday, May 1, 2013
Lions Clubs International Headquarters – Oak Brook, IL

8:30 am – 8:45 am
Welcome
• Welcome
  Peter Lynch, LCI Executive Director
• Opening Remarks
  Wayne A. Madden, LCI International President
• Participant Introductions

8:45 am – 10:00 am
Accelerating Progress Toward Global Literacy
Key issues affecting the global literacy crisis: What has been achieved? What still needs to be done?
Presenter: Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope, Director, Division for Basic Learning and Skills Development, UNESCO
(role of civil society in improving education quality and increasing the capacity of the education sector)
Panelists:
• Dr. Changu Mannathoko, Senior Policy Advisor of the Education Section, UNICEF
  (equity and inclusive education in the development of more inclusive societies)
• Dr. Shirley Burchfield, Vice President, World Education
  (strengthening education systems and quality teacher training)
• Linda Hiebert, Senior Director, Education/Life Skills, World Vision International
  (strengthening community involvement – beyond what is being taught in the classroom)
• Dr. Lotte Renault, Regional Technical Advisor, CARE USA
  (breaking barriers to equitable and quality childhood education)
Group Discussion

10:15 am – 11:30 am
Advancing Literacy Through Early Reading and Book Distribution
What can be done at the community level to promote early reading? What are the most effective means to distribute low-cost, age and culturally appropriate books to children in need?
Presenter: Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, Medical Director, Reach Out and Read Wisconsin
(importance of early reading on childhood development)
Panelists:
• Christie Vilsack, Senior Advisor for International Education, USAID
  (considerations for improving early grade reading)
• Malcolm Kelly, Vice President, Development, RIF
  (providing quality, age-appropriate books to children in need & changing parent behaviors related to early reading)
• Carol Sakoian, VP International, Scholastic International
  (working with schools in underserved communities to promote early reading)
• Kathy Bartlett, Co-Director, Education, Aga Khan Foundation
  (unique approaches to producing and distributing books in local language/culture to marginalized populations)
Group Discussion

11:30 am – 12:30 pm
Lunch
(15 minute presentation – Mobillo – mobile desk demonstration)

12:30 pm – 2:00 pm
Expanding Inclusion: The Reading and Literacy Needs of People with Visual Impairments and Disabilities.
What are the needs? How can they best be met?
Presenter: Steven Rothstein, President, Perkins School for the Blind
(building capacity for inclusion within the education sector)
Panelists:
• Carl Augusto, President & CEO, American Foundation for the Blind
  (literacy needs and challenges for individuals with vision loss)
• David Evangelista, Vice President, Global Development, Special Olympics
  (promoting social inclusion)
Role of Vision Care
• Dr. Jill Keeffe, Professor/Technical Advisor, University of Melbourne/SightFirst
  (an overview of visual impairment worldwide – the growing challenge of URE, blindness and low vision)
• Dr. Noel Brennan, Clinical Research Fellow, JJVC, Inc.
  (improving quality of school vision screenings and providing affordable eyewear and eye care to children in need)
Group Discussion

2:15 pm – 3:15 pm
Transforming Literacy/Reading Through Technology: The Role/Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)
How can e-readers, mobile technologies, and other innovative tools help improve reading and literacy? How can digital technology be used to expand resources for people with vision loss and other disabilities?
Facilitator: Anthony Bloomer, Senior Education Technology Specialist, USAID

3:15 pm – 3:45 pm
Question & Answer Session with:
• Betsy Beaumon, Benetech
• Greg Butler, Microsoft
• Steven Duggan, Microsoft
• Kayla Mertes, The John Corcoran Foundation
• Kristina Pappas, Benetech
• Carol Sakoian, Scholastic International
• Janet Sawaya, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
• Others

3:15 pm – 3:45 pm
Closing Round Table Discussion – Where do we go from here?
Building upon solutions, scaling up what works and exploring partnerships

3:45 pm – 4:00 pm
Concluding Remarks
Wayne A. Madden, LCI International President
### Summit Attendees

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organization/Group</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)</td>
<td>Kathy Bartlett</td>
<td>Co-Director, Education</td>
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<td>American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)</td>
<td>George Abbott</td>
<td>Director, eLearning Center</td>
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<td>American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)</td>
<td>Carl Augusto</td>
<td>President/CEO</td>
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<td>Benetech</td>
<td>Betsy Beaufort</td>
<td>VP &amp; General Manager, Literacy Program</td>
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<td>Benetech</td>
<td>Kristina Pappas</td>
<td>International Program Manager, Literacy</td>
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<td>CARE USA</td>
<td>Dr. Lotte Renault</td>
<td>Regional Technical Advisor</td>
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<td>Essilor Vision Foundation</td>
<td>Stephen Shawer</td>
<td>President</td>
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<td>Global Partnerships for Education</td>
<td>Luis Crouch</td>
<td>Team Coordinator, Global Good Practices Team</td>
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<td>Johnson &amp; Johnson Vision Care, Inc.</td>
<td>Dr. Noel Brennan</td>
<td>Clinical Research Fellow</td>
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<td>Johnson &amp; Johnson Vision Care, Inc.</td>
<td>Sheila Koelsaire</td>
<td>Director, Global Communications and Public Relations</td>
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<td>LCI</td>
<td>Doug Lozier, (and Kathy Lozier)</td>
<td>Past International Director</td>
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<td>LCI</td>
<td>Wayne Madden</td>
<td>International President</td>
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<td>LCI</td>
<td>Joseph Marchegianni</td>
<td>Board Appointee, Past International Director</td>
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<td>LCI</td>
<td>Barry Palmer</td>
<td>First International Vice President</td>
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<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>Greg Butler</td>
<td>Senior Director, Education Strategic Partnerships</td>
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<td>Mobillo</td>
<td>Augusto Di Pietro</td>
<td>Inventor</td>
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<td>Perkins School for the Blind</td>
<td>Deborah Gleason</td>
<td>Regional Coordinator</td>
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<td>Perkins School for the Blind</td>
<td>Steven Rothstein</td>
<td>President</td>
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<td>Potomac Strategic Development</td>
<td>Karen Johnson</td>
<td>Senior Advisor</td>
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<td>Reach Out and Read</td>
<td>Anne-Marie Fitzgerald</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>Reading and Writing Foundation</td>
<td>Dr. Dipesh Navsaria</td>
<td>Medical Director, Reach Out and Read Wisconsin</td>
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<td>Reading is Fundamental (RIF)</td>
<td>Stefan Cornelis Leiliveld</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
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<td>Scholastic International</td>
<td>Malcolm Kelly</td>
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<td>Scholastic International</td>
<td>Jackie Harvey</td>
<td>Director of Community and District Wide Partnerships</td>
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<td>Special Olympics</td>
<td>Carol Sakoian</td>
<td>VP International</td>
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<td>Special Olympics- Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes</td>
<td>David Evangelista</td>
<td>Vice President, Global Development</td>
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<td>Spectrios Institute for Low Vision/SightFirst</td>
<td>Dr. Sandy Block</td>
<td>Global Clinical Advisor and Director of Research and Development</td>
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<td>The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation</td>
<td>Dr. Tracy Williams</td>
<td>Executive Director/Technical Advisor</td>
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<td>The Hadley School for the Blind</td>
<td>Janet Sawaya</td>
<td>Senior Impact, Advocacy and Policy Officer, Global Libraries</td>
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<td>The Hadley School for the Blind</td>
<td>Ruth Rozen</td>
<td>Senior Curriculum Designer</td>
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<td>The John Corcoran Foundation</td>
<td>Charles Young</td>
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<td>John Corcoran</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>Kayla Mertes</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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<td>University of Melbourne/SightFirst</td>
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<td>John Comings</td>
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<td>Leah Maxson</td>
<td>Disability Technical Advisor</td>
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<td>U.S. Department of Education</td>
<td>Shirley Jones</td>
<td>Family Engagement Liaison</td>
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<td>U.S. Fund for UNICEF</td>
<td>Ananda Grant</td>
<td>Deputy Director, Civil Society Partnerships</td>
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<td>World Education</td>
<td>Dr. Shirley Burchfield</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
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<td>World Vision</td>
<td>Rebecca Leege</td>
<td>All Children Reading, Grants Officer</td>
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<td>World Vision India</td>
<td>Jomon Baby</td>
<td>Education Advisor, Technical Solutions</td>
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On May 1, 2013, Lions Clubs International hosted the Reading and Literacy Summit where leading literacy experts, researchers, educators, vision health providers, entrepreneurs, and civil society partners from around the world came together to explore the state of global literacy and the challenges and opportunities it represents.

The goal of the summit was to discuss how we can collectively strengthen the capacity of the education sector and enhance community involvement to meet the needs of children, youth, and adults that face a variety of barriers to becoming literate.

The summit featured panels of experts representing a cross-section of intergovernmental organizations, development agencies, non-profit organizations, and for-profit companies who shared how they are each working toward improving global literacy. This included experts in the areas of education, community development, vision care, disability, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Each session was followed by a brief discussion that allowed participants to exchange ideas and best practices.

The event focused on how we can ensure inclusive education, both in terms of equitable access and quality. We explored different barriers to inclusive education such as gender, poverty, language, cultural norms, poor vision, and disability; and how the local governments, businesses, and civil society organizations can work together to bring about a positive change.

The discussions that took place during the summit helped us identify a few key opportunities for cross-sector collaboration. The global education priorities, their implications, and what it will take to achieve them are discussed in detail in the pages that follow.

Summit Objectives

- To inform, debate, and reflect on challenges and opportunities related to global literacy.
- To identify practical, low-cost strategies to promote early reading, improve access to education for marginalized populations, improve the quality of education, and build capacity for inclusion by creating learning environments that meet the needs of all children, including those with disabilities.
- To explore opportunities for collaboration and cross-sector partnerships.
Role of Civil Society

Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope, Director of the Division for Basic Learning and Skills Development at UNESCO, began the first session by talking about the global literacy crisis and actionable solutions that civil society members can take to advance education reform forward.

Civil society actors – including NGOs, labor organizations, and a range of other emerging actors – are more important than ever in advancing global education reform. The past decade has seen the rise of increasingly aware, connected, and educated global citizens demanding new ways of improving the access and quality of education.

Though the state has the ultimate responsibility and authority over education, civil society organizations are a formidable pressure group. NGOs have been increasingly participating and contributing to the delivery of educational services, influencing education policy, and advocating for the development of a reformed education system.

Civil society members are often service providers where state provisions are absent or insufficient. In many developing countries they take on responsibility for non-formal education programs and are particularly successful in reaching the marginalized and excluded populations through approaches adjusted to the needs and life conditions of the poor. They are particularly effective in areas such as community participation, empowerment, literacy, community schools, and early childhood education.

The primary challenge for civil society actors is to ensure that early childhood education is equitable. Governments need to strengthen the regulatory framework so that education is a constitutional right for all. The current quality of education systems is very poor and civil society members need to strengthen the capacity of education systems through advocacy. Illiteracy is too expensive to sustain, therefore civil society groups should actively pressure their decision makers to heighten their political commitments to inclusive growth and education.

Today, civil society’s new power and its growing and decisive influence have impact on political, governmental and intergovernmental action. The forging of solid partnerships with civil society, including NGOs, local authorities and the private sector, allows UNESCO to be more attuned to citizens’ concerns and better able to mobilize the active support of public opinion. Since its creation, UNESCO has worked with a number of these civil society actors, who have been called the new partners of the United Nations.

Equity and Inclusive Education

Dr. Changu Mannathoko, Senior Policy Advisor of the Education Section at UNICEF, started her presentation with a video on the inequity of education in Northern Ghana. The video featured the story a young girl named Elizabeth and her struggle to obtain an education in the face of disparity.
Inclusive education entails providing meaningful learning opportunities to all children including the most disadvantaged within the regular school system. Ideally, it allows children with and without disabilities to attend the same age-appropriate classes at the local school, with additional, individually tailored support as needed. Inclusive education is central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners and the development of more inclusive societies.

The Education for All Goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) cannot be achieved without including the most disadvantaged and marginalized children—including girls and those with disabilities. Education is not only a human right but also an enabler for the realization of other rights. All marginalized children have the right to education without discrimination.

Dr. Mannathoko noted that equity and inclusive education are imperative as we move toward a post-2015 agenda. The stakeholders in the global community should develop and encourage governments to adopt policies and programs that foster inclusive education. All disadvantaged children have a stake in education and should be provided with opportunities to participate in all aspects of learning including the development of safe and secure schools that foster equity and inclusivity free from discrimination.

As a girl living in Northern Ghana it is very difficult to obtain an education. Elizabeth was the first girl in her family to attend school. There are many cultural implications in regions that have a traditional bias against sending girls to school. Elizabeth’s labor— including carrying water for the family each day— was a necessity for survival.

Gender remains one of the most pervasive disparities that cuts across poverty, disability, and location. That is why girls’ education continues to be a primary focus of UNICEF’s work in developing regions. Lack of access to secondary school remains a challenge and shapes adolescent girls’ performance and learning outcomes throughout their life. UNICEF and the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) are willing to collaborate with NGO partners on strengthening girls’ education in countries where there are wide disparities due to gender. Cross-collaboration is essential in providing services in knowledge management, advocacy, and campaigns on critical issues such as: school related gender based violence, adolescent girls and learning outcomes at the secondary school level.

Elizabeth, 12, (pictured above) attends a UNICEF-supported child-friendly school in Northern Ghana.

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Strengthening Quality Teacher Training

Dr. Shirley Burchfield, Vice President of World Education, talked about the importance of strengthening quality teacher training. Teacher effectiveness is a key predictor of student learning and it has been found to correlate with increased student achievement.

World Education is providing teacher training programs in Mozambique through their “Learn to Read” program in collaboration with USAID. They also train teachers and directors in early grade reading instruction and assessment, providing high-quality school management materials and measurement tools to the schools through their “Early Grade Reading Project”.

World Education also trains teachers to use effective, child-centered teaching methods to help children learn important lessons through their national teacher-training program. In Mali they work with UNICEF to provide teaching materials and school supplies to schools and skills development for adolescents and out-of-school teens. They provide educational support for remedial training and monitoring of student attendance and support for improved educational environments.

Research shows that sustained, intensive, and quality teacher development is related to improved student learning outcomes and achievement. But for teacher training to produce strong effects on student learning, it must embody evidence-based best practices. Dr. Burchfield presented information on the World Bank’s Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). This framework is used to analyze teacher policies that govern public schools in education systems around the world, in both developing and developed countries.

The 8 Teacher Policy Goals (pictured above) are functions that all high-performing education systems need to fulfill in order to ensure that every classroom has a motivated, supported, and capable teacher who can advance the learning of each and every student. The main objective of this assessment is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher policies of different education systems and pinpoint possible areas for improvement.

The current system of teacher training in many developing regions is not meeting the challenges of producing the quantity and quality of teachers needed to deal with the changes expected in basic schooling in the 21st century. Education reform in developing regions must focus on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. Governments must invest in institutional environments that value teachers and in turn there must be a high level of public commitment to quality education.
Strengthening Community Involvement

Linda Hiebert, Senior Director for Education/Life Skills at World Vision International, talked about the importance of strengthening community involvement to achieve global literacy and education. Community involvement is essential in bringing education reform forward.

World Vision developed the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) program to help communities transform the quality of public services through civil mobilization. The program equips civil society members with the tools needed to monitor government services, like public sector education, to ensure standards are being met.

World Vision International works on many literacy and education related projects around the world. The Literacy Boost project is being implemented in a selection of World Vision area development programs (ADPs) in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, and Rwanda. It works with civil society members in the development of reading skills in young children. Through this initiative they mobilize parents and communities to support children as they learn to read through out-of-school literacy activities.

World Vision uses a life-cycle approach in the advocacy of their education programs. Communities are encouraged to advocate for the needs of children from all education levels, including early childhood, school age, and adolescence. This comprehensive approach to education aligns with the global commitment made under the “Education for All” goals.

The global community should work together to call all governments to provide children with measurable levels of reading, writing, and basic mathematic skills. Civil society should work together to enhance the quality of the education systems through the realm of advocacy.

Quality Education for Marginalized Children

Dr. Lotte Renault, Regional Technical Advisor at CARE USA, talked about breaking barriers to equitable and quality education for marginalized populations. The barriers to education range from social to economic disparities.

Poor learning outcomes are concentrated amongst children who have traditionally been marginalized by poverty, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, language and geographic location.

Dr. Renault notes that civil society needs to work together to dismantle the social, cultural, economic, political and physical barriers to education in developing regions. Poverty and socio-cultural barriers need serious attention if the plans for ensuring inclusive education for marginalized communities are to be realized.

Countries with marginalized populations need to embark upon serious and systemic efforts to gradually address the socio-cultural barriers that pose serious challenges to achieving targets for inclusive education in terms of educational access and equity. Such barriers take the form of deeply held values, such as the low value assigned to marginalized communities like indigenous, pastoralist, and/or refugees.
Gender issues are a common impediment to education in marginalized contexts. In fact, girls are regularly prevented from attending school. Families often prefer girls remain at home to perform domestic chores and care for children and siblings. When put together with other discrimination issues, this has serious social consequences for the marginalized communities and contributes to a generational cycle of poverty.

In order to address these barriers the “Education Plus” model provides a sustainable solution. The model consists of providing equitable and quality education with leadership opportunities in an educational environment.

There must be equitable treatment in both the classroom and the home. The social nuances related to education are shaped at the foundational level by the families in these communities. Leadership skills can be developed through reading clubs, extracurricular activities, and student-led advocacy. It is also very important to develop and incorporate multilingual and intercultural education in the development of culturally relevant curriculum.
Early Reading on Childhood Development
Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, Medical Director for Reach Out and Read Wisconsin, started the second session on “Advancing Literacy through Early Reading and Book Distribution” with a riveting presentation on the impact that early childhood reading has on cognitive development.

Literacy is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives for individuals, families, and societies alike. One of the main causes of the literacy crisis is the lack of books and learning resources in schools and communities in developing regions.

Dr. Navsaria presented a video on an interesting study called the “Still Face Paradigm” conducted by Researcher Edward Z. Tronick. During the experiment, an infant and a parent interact playfully before the parent suddenly stops responding and looks away. After a short period, the parent reengages with the infant. The infant’s reaction to the sudden unresponsive parent showcases the many aspects that stress has on early social and emotional development.

Toxic stress in early childhood is associated with persistent effects on the nervous system and stress hormone systems that can damage developing brain architecture and lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior and both physical and mental health.

(Below) Still Face Paradigm, Researcher Edward Z. Tronick
Children in a large (1,200) study whose mothers engaged in scaffolding — creating opportunities to accomplish small tasks, like stacking blocks — during play had lower stress levels and were more attentive. Those with mothers who were more authoritative had higher stress levels and were found to be less attentive. This was found at 7 months of age and again at 15 months. They also found that the more impoverished the family, the less likely it was to engage in scaffolding.

Children from low-income families hear as many as 20 million fewer words than their more affluent peers before the age of 4. Nationally, 48% of U.S. children under age 5 are read to daily. This number drops to 40% for U.S. children living under 200% of the federal poverty line.

Reach Out and Read prepares America’s youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with clinicians to prescribe books and encourage families to read together. In the exam room, health care providers trained in the developmental strategies of early literacy encourage parents to read aloud to their young children, and offer age-appropriate tips. The primary care provider gives every child between the ages of 6 months and five years a new, developmentally-appropriate children’s book to take home and keep.

Literacy-rich waiting rooms feature books, posters and reading nooks. Volunteers read aloud to children, showing parents and children the techniques and enjoyment of looking at books together. ROAR reaches 4.9 million children in all 50 US States (and some international reach) through 6.5 million books, 12 thousand medical providers and 5 thousand clinic sites.

Increasing Education Access for All

Christie Vilsack, Senior Advisor for International Education at USAID, presented information on ways that USAID is working to increase education access for all through their “All Children Reading” initiative.

USAID is working to bring clarity and attention to the global literacy crisis to fund the design and implementation of actionable solutions by leveraging research, innovation, and partnerships to achieve substantial global impacts on early grade reading.

The All Children Reading initiative is a multi-donor grant making mechanism to support innovative projects that improve early grade reading outcomes. This program aims to catalyze innovative practices and target applied research for teaching and learning materials and education data that have the potential to be implemented across multiple contexts.

USAID is making significant progress through the Mobiles for Reading working group intended to promote dialogue and knowledge sharing focused on the use of mobile technology and mobile applications for reading. This initiative plans to engage a variety of donors, international organizations, non-profit organizations and private sector partners.

The main focus is on primary education (basic reading) and creating access for children in crisis regions. The main goal is to mobilize grassroots community members to come together for the achievement of global literacy and education.
Providing Age and Culturally Appropriate Books

Malcolm Kelly, Vice President of Development at RIF, presented information on the importance of providing quality, age-appropriate books to children in need.

Currently, a huge disparity exists between children from low-income backgrounds. Research shows that children from low-income families enter kindergarten with a listening vocabulary of 3,000 words, while children from high-income families enter with a listening vocabulary of 20,000 words.

The graphs listed below showcase the poverty achievement gap between children who are eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), due to being low income, and the children who are not eligible. This disparity is known as an achievement gap and is seen by the differences between the average scores of two student subgroups on the standardized assessment. The reading gap between the two groups of children shows a clear association between poverty and achievement. This poverty-related gap is constant over the course of 4 years, the first cohort group was assessed when they were in 4th grade and the second assessment took place four years later when they were in 8th grade (as shown below).

Research shows that the summer reading loss for children in low-income households leads to a loss of 1-3 months of learning from the previous school year. The implication is that on the first day of school of the new year some children have lost 25%-50% of learning from last year.

Research shows that to prevent “decay” of children’s reading ability over summer, children need a voluntary summer reading intervention program with books based on Lexiles, specialized instruction by teachers, and scaffolding by parents. The Lexile Framework for Reading is an educational tool that uses a measure to match readers of all ages with books, articles and other leveled reading resources.

Through RIF’s holistic educational approach they work with parents, schools, and teachers collectively to get books in the hands of the children that need them most. They provide activities to teachers and parents through cross-content boundaries (tier 3 vocabulary) to promote active learning. Their segmented distribution channels provide children with a book-bag, motivational/educational materials, 5 books, and a diary with writing prompts. They also provide parents with scaffolding materials to ensure at-home reading.

RIF’s mission is to motivate young children to read by working with them, their parents, and community members to make reading a fun and beneficial part of everyday life. RIF’s highest priority is reaching underserved children from birth to age 8.

Figure 2. Poverty Related Gaps, Source: National Center for Educational Statistics
**Promoting Early Reading in Underserved Communities**

Carol Sakoian, VP International of Scholastic International, presented information on working with schools in underserved communities to promote early reading. For 93 years Scholastic has been providing books that encourage the love of reading and learning to children around the world.

Scholastic promotes early reading in underserved communities in the Middle East and North Africa through the integration of the ‘My Arabic Library’ educational initiative. The program was created to fill a well-documented need for high-quality Arabic-language classroom titles and promote literacy in underserved communities. Through this initiative they are able to provide culturally relevant books where there are no books for children in their local language and culture.

My Arabic Library also provides schools with a comprehensive teacher training program. This training program includes strategies and exercises drawn from the actual titles in the classroom libraries. The instructional materials provide teachers with suggestions on promoting early reading in the classrooms.

Currently, 17 million copies of the Arabic books are used in the Middle East and North African Refugee Camps. My Arabic Library is a unique educational project designed to encourage a love of reading and learning in Arabic speaking children and children learning Arabic as a second language.

The promotion of early reading in underserved communities is vital in closing the widening gap that continues to exclude the most marginalized children. Scholastic works to improve access to education by building local capacity for inclusion by creating learning environments that meet the needs of children through culturally relevant and age-appropriate books.

**Distributing Books in Local Languages**

Kathy Bartlett, Co-Director for Education at the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), talked about the importance of surrounding children with literacy rich environments in order to enhance reading opportunities in regions that suffer from book famines.

The Aga Khan Foundation strives to improve the quality of basic education by ensuring better learning environments for young children, increasing access to education, keeping children in school longer, and raising levels of academic achievement.
AKF supports a range of initiatives to encourage community-based efforts that stimulate very early language and literacy development. The AKF Reading for Children project builds children’s interest in reading by providing culturally relevant books to children in developing regions. More than 8,300 parents have been trained through this initiative and a network of mini-libraries has also been established to give parents and other caregivers’ access to books to highlight the importance of early reading.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs are an invaluable contribution to learning and school achievement, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A substantial number of studies from a range of low-income countries demonstrate significant advantages for children who have participated in ECD programs in terms of basic cognitive skills, social development, and retention in school rates in the early years.

AKF is working to revitalize local languages through book development in different regions of the world. Currently they have local language projects in Kyrgyzstan, Mali, India, Mozambique, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan. AKF is also working with Lions in East Africa and soon in Egypt to increase literacy opportunities for more families.

AKF works to ensure that families have access to books so that they can foster an environment that promotes reading for the children in their local languages. The ongoing refinement, adaptation and expansion of the Reading for Children initiative is currently underway. The next steps are to evaluate the primary transition and outcomes of the program, expand the reach to other remote areas, and partner with other organizations on book development, procurement, and distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AKF Expansion</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini-libraries/groups</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>3,081</td>
<td>55,118 (58% girls)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>2,576</td>
<td>28,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained facilitators</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. 2008 vs 2012 Expanding Our Reach, Source: AKF
Building Capacity for Inclusion

Steven Rothstein, President of Perkins School for the Blind, shared his insights on building capacity for inclusion within the education sector. Perkins provides education services for children and adults around the world who are blind, deafblind and visually impaired.

According to the World Health Organization there are more than one billion people in the world today who experience a disability. People with disabilities have generally poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities, and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities.

Perkins serves over 650,000 people world-wide through programs for infants, school-aged children, youth, and adults in 67 countries. Perkins builds local capacity by training teachers in braille instruction, which leads to a more inclusive and sustainable model of development. The education sector must expand teacher training to include braille literacy to adhere to students with a wide range of needs, challenges, and literacy rates.

Civil society members can build capacity for inclusion by working with their local governments to promote educational and social inclusion. Advocacy is a powerful way to influence public-policy and resource allocation within the political, economic, and social systems.

Literacy Needs for Individuals with Vision Loss

Carl Augusto, President and CEO of the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), talked about the literacy needs of individuals with vision loss. Augusto started his presentation by talking about one of the most remarkable women in the history of braille literacy—Helen Keller.

Helen Keller worked for AFB for more than 40 years. Few could have imagined the leading role she would go on to play in many of the significant political and social movements of the 20th century in shifting literacy forward for those with vision loss. Until her passing in 1968, she continuously worked to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Although a lot has been achieved, more needs to be done. Braille needs to be universally available for people in every country if we are going to achieve global literacy and inclusive education.
A “Treaty for the Blind” is being considered by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The purpose of this treaty is to ensure access to books for people with vision loss and help end the “book famine” we are currently facing.

There are about 256 million visually impaired people in the developing world, according to an estimate by the World Health Organization. In many developed regions, blind people have access to books that have been translated into braille and other accessible formats. However, under existing copyright law, poorer countries do not have access to those translations without getting the permission of the copyright holder. Very few governments in developing countries have managed to obtain copyright permissions and their blind and visually impaired populations are left with limited access to braille books.

Advocacy is a powerful tool that civil society partners can use to promote the sharing of intellectual property in developing regions. This will allow people in other countries with access to braille transcriptions and help move braille literacy forward.

Promoting Social Inclusion

David Evangelista, Vice President of Global Development for Special Olympics, provided insight on social inclusion for those with disabilities. Special Olympics works to promote social inclusion for children and adults with intellectual disabilities through sports training and athletic competition.

Special Olympics Project UNIFY uses innovative programing to promote the inclusion of children and youth with intellectual disabilities in school and in society. Project UNIFY uses a whole-school engagement strategy to offer classroom curriculums, inclusive sports participation, student-led advocacy campaigns, and interactive communications to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities to become fully active and contributing members of their school environments.

This initiative places particular emphasis on student-to-student relations and highlights the important roles that youth with and without intellectual disabilities have in creating stronger and more positive school climates.

Since 2008, Special Olympics Project UNIFY has engaged over 500,000 young people with and without intellectual disabilities across 2,100 schools in 42 states in the U.S. The program will reach international expansion in the 2013-2017 term.

Special Olympics promotes social inclusion and provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.
Visual Impairment Worldwide

Dr. Jill Keefe, Professor and Technical Advisor at the University of Melbourne/SightFirst, provided a global overview of visual impairments and their effect on literacy and education. There are many growing challenges of Uncorrected Refractive Errors (URE), blindness and low vision on childhood education in developing regions.

A refractive error is a very common eye disorder that occurs when the eye cannot clearly focus on the images from the outside world. The result of uncorrected refractive errors is blurred vision, which is sometimes so severe that it causes visual impairment. In middle to high income countries, low vision is often caused by hereditary or congenital conditions while, in poorer countries, it may be the result of vitamin A deficiency, measles, cataract and harmful traditional practices.

Figure 4 shows the refractive error and visual impairments in urban children in Southern China. This study found that the prevalence of reduced vision as a result of myopia is higher in school-age children living in metropolitan Guangzhou, representing an important public health problem. One third of these children do not have the necessary corrective spectacles because they are from low-income families.
Low vision in developing countries often goes untreated due to economic hardships. The combination of visual, functional, psychological, social and economic factors influence a child’s learning experience. The Feelix initiative provides equity for pre-school children who are blind or have low vision; it strives to allow children with low-vision access to braille and large print so that they are on equal footing with their sighted peers when they start school.

In each little Feelix suitcase there is a picture book provided in both print and braille versions, a CD for auditory learning, and some hands on educational materials. This initiative is designed to aid organizations in fostering inclusivity for children with vision loss.

Half of all cases of uncorrected refractive errors (nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism) in the world remain undetected and untreated. Assessment of the health of the eyes and associated structures is an integral component of early detection through a comprehensive examination of a child with a visual impairment. The lack of treatment for children with these easily-correctable disorders is the leading cause of exclusion.
Quality of School Vision Screenings

Dr. Noel Brennan, Clinical Research Fellow at Johnson & Johnson Vision Care (JJVC), presented information on the importance of improving the quality of school vision screenings.

Despite the economic, social and health care advances many preschool and school-age children are not receiving adequate professional eye and vision care. About one third of all children have had an eye examination or vision screening prior to entering school.

The long-term effects of having so many school-age children with impaired vision are very serious. A child who cannot see the blackboard will quickly become disillusioned, thus alienating them from the process of learning. Problems like this need to be addressed early in the child’s life. One in four children has a vision problem that affects their ability to learn. Yet sometimes identifying those vision problems can be difficult – especially when the symptoms are related to behavior.

Children with inefficient visual skills perform significantly poorer in coming to and sustaining visual attention as compared to peers who exhibit efficient visual skills. On the surface, behavioral disorders have little to do with vision however, the fact is vision occurs in the brain and not in the eyes, and vision is associated with the social and emotional pathways in the brain related to behavior.

To achieve global literacy a school based model is needed to teach teachers how to screen. JJVC is working with Lions on the Sight For Kids initiative, a community and school-based vision screening program that provides a system to identify, refer, and treat visual impairment for children in Asia Pacific. This partnership with LCIF began in 2002 and has resulted in screenings for nearly 17 million children. It has grown from 2 countries to 11 in this timeframe. Over 600 thousands kids have been referred for treatment and 300 thousand have been treated.
Advances in technology are stimulating innovation in the education sector and they are helping to improve reading and literacy on a global scale. Anthony Bloome, Senior Education Technology Specialist at USAID, moderated the technology session which focused on the scale, evaluation methodologies, and impact of communication technologies in transforming education.

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) are expanding the global literacy framework to support inclusive literacy initiatives. ICTs are an essential foundation of education innovation by providing the tools needed to enhance teaching and learning for those with disabilities.

The main aim of ICT integration is to ensure that children with disabilities are able to develop and receive an education based on equality, participation, and accessibility. Educational programs have begun to recognize the critical role they can play to enable those often having to cope at the margins.

There have been rapid changes in the ICT sector over the last decade, including a dramatic increase in use of assistive technologies, e-readers, computing, internet, and mobile devices. ICTs have enabled improved learning results by providing access to information, improving communication, and supporting inclusion.
The Reading and Literacy Summit helped us explore some of the most pressing barriers to education and provided a unique platform for cross-section deliberation on the global literacy crisis. We were able to hear different perspectives on the challenges and what can be done to overcome them.

Achieving global literacy will require global participation. It is clear that if we are going to ensure universal education we must work together—governments, civil societies, foundations, and private entities—to increase capacity and ensure equity and inclusion. The investment needed to combat illiteracy is large, but its returns are far greater.

There is a lot that has been achieved under the UN Millennium Development Goals, but much work remains to be done. Over the next decade, we must seek creative solutions for reaching those who cannot be reached through traditional literacy efforts. Inclusive education begins with effective means to providing access to culturally- and age-appropriate books to all children, including children with vision loss and other disabilities.

Expanding inclusion for people with visual impairments and disabilities is imperative if we are to achieve global literacy. Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) have a pivotal role to play in the new education model. E-readers, mobile technologies, and other innovative tools are breaking down the barriers and building a foundation of inclusivity.

When a cross section of service minded people come together to share ideas, best practices, and insights, there is not a single challenge that cannot be overcome. It is important that we continue the momentum and work together to make sure that every person has an opportunity to become literate so that they can reach their full potential. It is only then that we can truly empower our communities to eliminate extreme poverty and build a brighter future for the next generation.