

# BOOK WRITE-A-THON

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250 Million Children lack basic reading skills.  
Let's make it zero.



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



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# WORLDWIDE, 250 MILLION CHILDREN LACK BASIC READING SKILLS.

THAT'S THE EQUIVALENT OF THE ENTIRE POPULATIONS OF MEXICO, TURKEY, AND SOUTH KOREA, COMBINED.

These children's inability to read can be attributed in large part to the absence of books in local languages. Even when books are available, quantities are insufficient, quality is low, and they are rarely written in the local languages children understand.

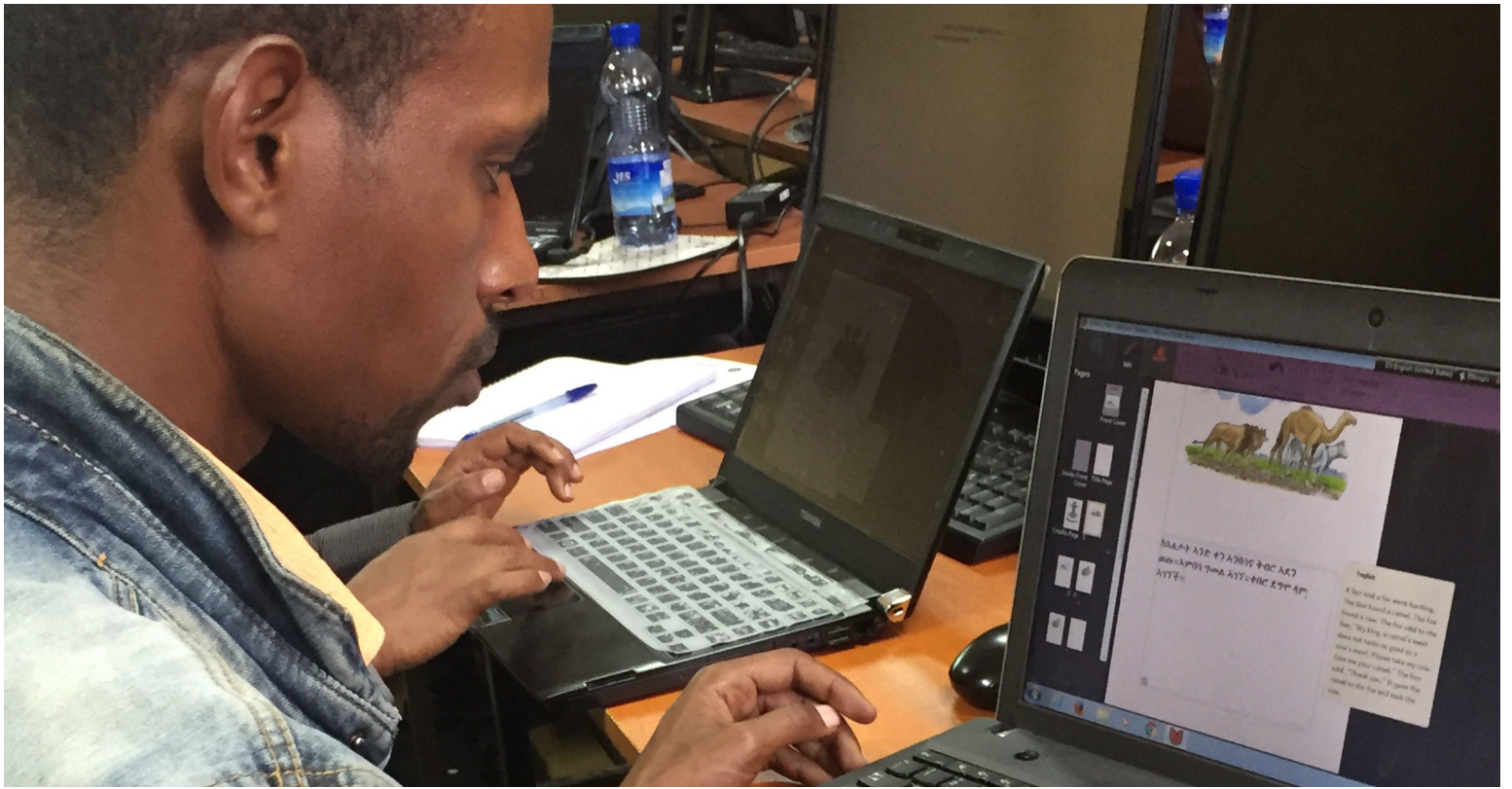


# BOOKS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR LEARNING TO READ

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is committed to helping all children learn to read through several intervention strategies. One of the challenges in doing so—ensuring that every child has access to high-quality early grade reading materials—is not one that any single institution can meet alone. Therefore, USAID is leveraging the power of science, technology, innovation, and partnership in order to accelerate development results.

The Global Book Alliance is an international effort involving multiple stakeholders working to transform book development, procurement and distribution to ensure that no child is without books. USAID encourages anyone who is interested in this issue to go to the Global Book Alliance website to learn more ([globalbookalliance.org](http://globalbookalliance.org)).

As part of these global efforts, the All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development, ([www.allchildrenreading.org](http://www.allchildrenreading.org)) a partnership between USAID, World Vision, and the Australian Government, has developed Bloom, a free, open-source book writing software to help local authors and the global community write, collect, translate, publish, and share millions of reading books in local languages.



# WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Do you want to help 250 million kids learn to read? With your help and the help of the Bloom software, we can raise awareness about the challenges of global illiteracy by engaging American universities, colleges, and communities in the production of children's books. Individuals and organizations alike can join a global effort by participating at events planned and executed by student and community leaders in close partnership with USAID.

All books produced at sponsored events will be added to a digital library - a global repository of open-source books in local languages - that can be downloaded, printed, and shared with children, ultimately empowering early readers everywhere to improve their literacy skills and increase their overall student achievement.

# ORGANIZE A BOOK WRITE-A-THON

If you want to contribute to an effort that is working to get kids around the world access to books in their local language so they can learn to read in order to read to learn—this handbook is for you. Let's walk through some steps you can take to organize a Book Write-A-Thon event in your local community.



## Tools

First—familiarize yourself with the tools that will be the core of your event—download the Bloom software, and learn how it works:

**Link to download:**

[bloomlibrary.org/installers](http://bloomlibrary.org/installers)

**Video tutorials:**

[vimeo.com/channels/bloomlibrary/page:4](https://vimeo.com/channels/bloomlibrary/page:4)



## Build Your Team

When hosting an event on a university or college campus, involve students and faculty from different schools. Make sure to get someone involved from the School of Education and the local community. Here are a few suggested functions to consider as you build your event team:

- Community Engagement
- Campus Engagement
- Content
- Communications & Marketing
- IT Support
- Event Production/Support
- Volunteer Coordinator

# 3

## Plan the Event

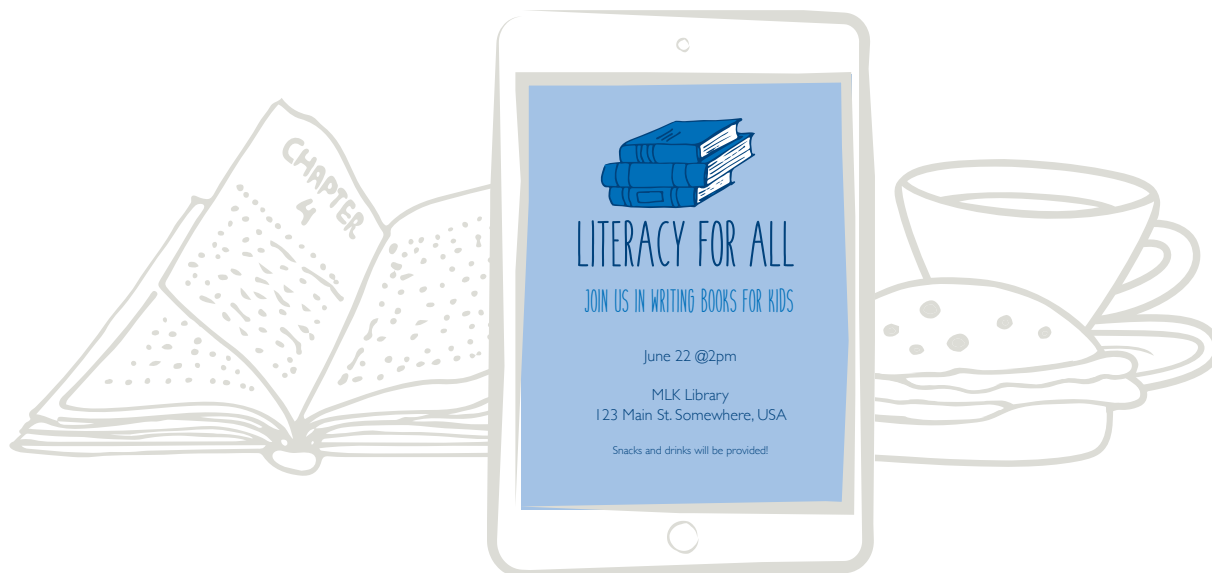
As you design your event, here are some questions to ask:

- Who is your audience?
- What do you want to achieve (i.e.—will this be for a community service, an orientation event, etc.)?
- How can you engage different learners in different ways?
- How can you make this a fun and dynamic event that will make participants want to share what they learned, and even think about hosting an event for another community?

Some ideas include: involving a local author or illustrator, inviting a teacher or parent to bring a group of early learner to read aloud, learning the software and creating a book in team- and of course, having food never hurts!

Once you've answered these questions, be sure and:

- Pick a date, time, location
- Advertise—online, posters, local media
- Ensure all technology is working, and the Bloom software is loaded onto computers



# 4

## Engage Community Partners

If you'll be hosting your event at a college or university, think about engaging undergraduate teacher candidates, business majors, art education majors, international relations/political science majors, graduate students in education or library science, international students, social justice clubs, returned Peace Corps volunteers.

If hosting an event in your community, think about engaging asking immigrant communities or members of a diaspora population, local teachers associations, community service organizations, and small businesses to join as sponsors or to participate.



**Helpful Hint:** Some community partners to consider include your local American Association of University Women, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Center for the Book affiliate, Lions Club, NEA or AFT Affiliate, ONE Campus Chapter, Peace Corps Recruiter, Rotary Club, or a faith-based organization.

Beyond your immediate community, also think about other stakeholders that might be interested in your event. For example, reach out to your local elected officials, celebrity authors and illustrators, or other relevant media personalities. Even if they can't participate, they might be willing to publicize the event to their networks or promote on social media.





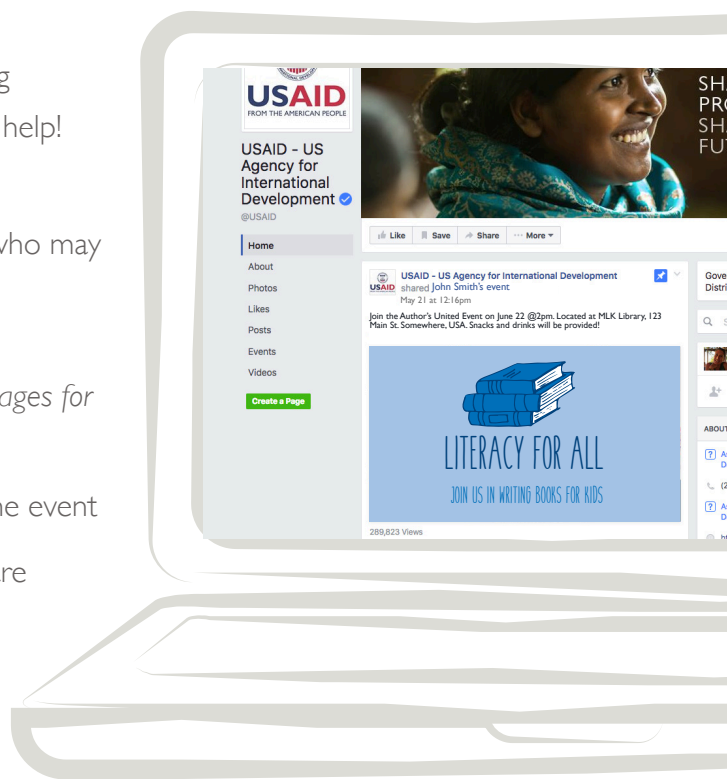
# 5

## Schedule a Training Session

Whatever stage you are in your planning process-- USAID is ready and willing to help!

We are here to help you:

- Connect you with USAID partners who may be operating in your local area
- Promote the event on USAID's social media channels (see following pages for suggestions)
- Produce promotional materials for the event
- Provide IT support for Bloom software
- Other questions - just ask!  
Email [OfficeofEducation@usaid.gov](mailto:OfficeofEducation@usaid.gov) to schedule an in-person or virtual planning session.



**Now—go and have a wonderful event!**

# 6

## Follow Up With Participants

After your event, send an email to all participants and invite them to stay involved. You may even consider setting up a listserv to maintain communications and update participants on relevant topics!



**Helpful Hint:** Use social media to express your gratitude to an even wider audience. This may spark interest from individuals who may not have been able to attend, but would like to find other ways to engage in their community.

# PROMOTING YOUR BOOK WRITE-A-THON

Let everyone know about your Book Write-A-Thon by sending an email, letter or print posters that can be hung up at your local library, college, community center, etc. Make sure to include all of the necessary details like date and time.

## Hosting an event on a university or college campus

Use the text below to get you started.



## LITERACY FOR ALL

### **YOU'RE INVITED TO A BOOK WRITE-A-THON**

USAID is partnering with [UNIVERSITY] on [DATE]- to pilot "Book Write-A-Thon" designed to convene an array of students, faculty, and members of the community to address the issue of global illiteracy. Participants will gather from [TIME OF EVENT] at [LOCATION ON CAMPUS] to learn about ongoing efforts to combat illiteracy, explore the challenges of the creative process with a local writer and illustrator, and even learn how to create their own book with the BLOOM software.

### **BACKGROUND**

Launched in 2011 by USAID, World Vision, and the Australian Government, All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development is an ongoing series of grant and prize competitions that leverages science and technology to create and apply scalable solutions to improve literacy skills of early grade learners in developing countries. The winner of All Children Reading's Enabling Writers competition, SIL International, developed BLOOM, a simple, free, open source book writing software to help local authors and the global education community write, collect, translate, publish, and share millions of reading books in local languages.

## Key Messaging

- ◉ Around the world, children lack access to books. Even when books are insufficient, quality is low, and they are rarely written in languages children understand. Worldwide, 250 million children lack basic reading skills.
- ◉ Promoting literacy by teaching children and youth to read helps reduce poverty, improves health outcomes, and strengthens democracy.
- ◉ Global poverty could decline by 12% if students in low-income countries acquired basic reading skills in school.
- ◉ The lack of high-quality, affordable books is so severe, particularly in the early primary grades, that it cannot be solved without new and innovative solutions.
- ◉ The use of Bloom software, developed by SIL International with funding from the All Children Reading: Grand Challenge for Development, is designed to help develop high-quality early-grade reading material. This tool supports development goals and is free of charge to anyone interested in developing books.
- ◉ Partnerships between the private and public sectors, with NGOs, universities, and individual actors are critical in order to address global illiteracy and achieve Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals - ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning.
- ◉ The pilot event at [UNIVERSITY NAME] at [TIME] will serve as a model for future events to raise awareness about global illiteracy at other U.S. colleges, universities, and community spaces.

## Links

USAID Education: [usaid.gov/education](https://www.usaid.gov/education)

All Children Reading: [allchildrenreading.org](https://www.allchildrenreading.org)

SIL International: [sil.org](https://www.sil.org)

[UNIVERSITY WEBSITE]

# Social Media

## Handles

USAID: @USAID

USAID Education: @USAIDEducation

Christie Vilsack: @ChristieVilsack

World Vision: @WorldVision

All Children Reading: @ReadingGCD

SIL International: @SILLEAD

[UNIVERSITY NAME]: [UNIVERSITY HANDLE]

[UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OR DEPT]: [SCHOOL OR DEPT HANDLE]

## Hashtags

#AllChildrenReading

#Literacy

#allchildrenreading

#SDGs

#EnablingWriters

#smartdev

#LetGirlsLearn

#Periscope

#Education

#reading

#books

## Suggested Tweets

- *[Three days prior to event]* Tune into @USAID pilot event with Bloom software on a university campus-TOMORROW [UNIVERSITY HANDLE] [TIME] via [RELEVANT NAME]
- [RELEVANT HANDLE] will be streaming updates thru-out [HASHTAG FOR EVENT] event via [RELEVANT NAME]. [DATE]
- *[One day prior to the event]* Follow @USAID's 1st ever pilot event with Bloom software on a university campus-TOMORROW at [UNIVERSITY HANDLE] [TIME] [EVENT HASHTAG]
- *[Day of the event]* Watch @USAID [SCHOOL/DEPT HASHTAG] pilot event with Bloom software - TODAY at [UNIVERSITY HANDLE] [TIME] [RELEVANT HANDLES]
- Follow [RELEVANT HANDLES] [UNIVERSITY HANDLE] [EVENT HASHTAG] for live updates at today's pilot event with Bloom software.
- Watch partners [RELEVANT HANDLES] promote global #literacy LIVE! [EVENT HASHTAG]
- LIVE! @USAID joins [UNIVERSITY HANDLE] students faculty & community in [LOCATION] to write books in local languages #Periscope
- Want to contribute to global #literacy efforts? Write a book with @SILLEAD Bloom Software! [bloomlibrary.org/landing](http://bloomlibrary.org/landing)
- Bloom software enables people everywhere to write #books in local languages. Try it! [bloomlibrary.org/landing](http://bloomlibrary.org/landing)
- 250 million children in the world can't read. Let's address the problem together. #AllChildrenReading [globalbookalliance.org/](http://globalbookalliance.org/)
- Children need to learn to read in order to read to learn. #Education #AllChildrenReading [globalbookalliance.org/](http://globalbookalliance.org/)
- Low-cost books in local languages can unlock #education goals. #SDGs #literacy #AllChildrenReading [globalbookalliance.org/](http://globalbookalliance.org/)

# DAY-OF-EVENT CHECKLIST

Use the following handy checklist to ensure your event stays on track. Please note that some items on this list may not apply to your event.

- Name tags for participants are available.
- Sign-in for participants is clearly marked near registration area.
- Pens/markers are available.
- Materials to distribute are printed and clearly displayed.
- Take photos and/or video and share on social media.
- Post-event survey forms are distributed and collected at end of event.

# RESOURCES

## Global Book Alliance - Partner Websites

Global Book Alliance: [globalbookalliance.org](http://globalbookalliance.org)

USAID Education: [usaid.gov/education](http://usaid.gov/education)

All Children Reading: [allchildrenreading.org](http://allchildrenreading.org)

## Let's Grow a Library - Bloom Resources

Bloom Software: [bloomlibrary.org/installers](http://bloomlibrary.org/installers)

Bloom Library: [bloomlibrary.org/browse](http://bloomlibrary.org/browse)

Training Videos: [vimeo.com/channels/bloomlibrary](http://vimeo.com/channels/bloomlibrary)

## Videos

Becoming Mrs. Van Allen: [usaid.gov/news-information/videos/becoming-mrs-van-allen](http://usaid.gov/news-information/videos/becoming-mrs-van-allen)

## Twitter

@USAID

@GlbReadingNtwk

#reading

@USAIDEducation

@ChristieVilsack

#allchildrenreading

@ReadingGCD

#literacy

#LetGirlsLearn

## Email

For more information, email: [OfficeofEducation@usaid.gov](mailto:OfficeofEducation@usaid.gov)

# BOOKS FOR EVERY CHILD

## 250 MILLION CHILDREN WORLDWIDE CAN'T READ.

In many countries, children are struggling to read and do basic math. If you can't read, you can't succeed in school. If you don't succeed in school, that impacts all other parts of your life. Access to books, in languages children understand, is a critical part of learning to read. This basic skill—learning to read—can provide children and youth with a pathway out of extreme poverty. The Global Book Alliance will address this challenge by transforming the development, procurement and distribution of books to ensure they get into the hands of children who need them.



### 1 DEVELOPMENT

**TODAY**  
Many countries do not have enough books in the languages children know.

**TOMORROW**  
Software will allow authors to write books for children more easily and to create versions of books to use across different languages and contexts.



### 2 ACCESS

**TODAY**  
Even when books exist, they are difficult to find in a format that allows for reprinting over time and use across languages and cultures.

**TOMORROW**  
The Global Digital Library will be a library/bookstore in the cloud, allowing everyone to upload, download and print the books they need, whether one copy for a family or millions of copies for an education system.



### 3 PROCUREMENT

**TODAY**  
Book availability is limited, quality varies and costs are high.

**TOMORROW**  
Working through the Global Book Alliance mechanisms, procurement will be streamlined. Costs come down, quality goes up, and millions more books can be purchased.

### 4 DISTRIBUTION

**TODAY**  
A lack of strong supply chain management systems makes it difficult for countries to ensure a steady, predictable supply of books and increases costs.

**TOMORROW**  
Improved planning, “track and trace” technology and strengthened distribution systems will ensure all children have the right books at the right time, year after year.



### 5 USE

**TODAY**  
Even if books reach their destination, they are not always used effectively by teachers and students.

**TOMORROW**  
Teachers will receive the support they need to ensure children learn to read and read to learn.



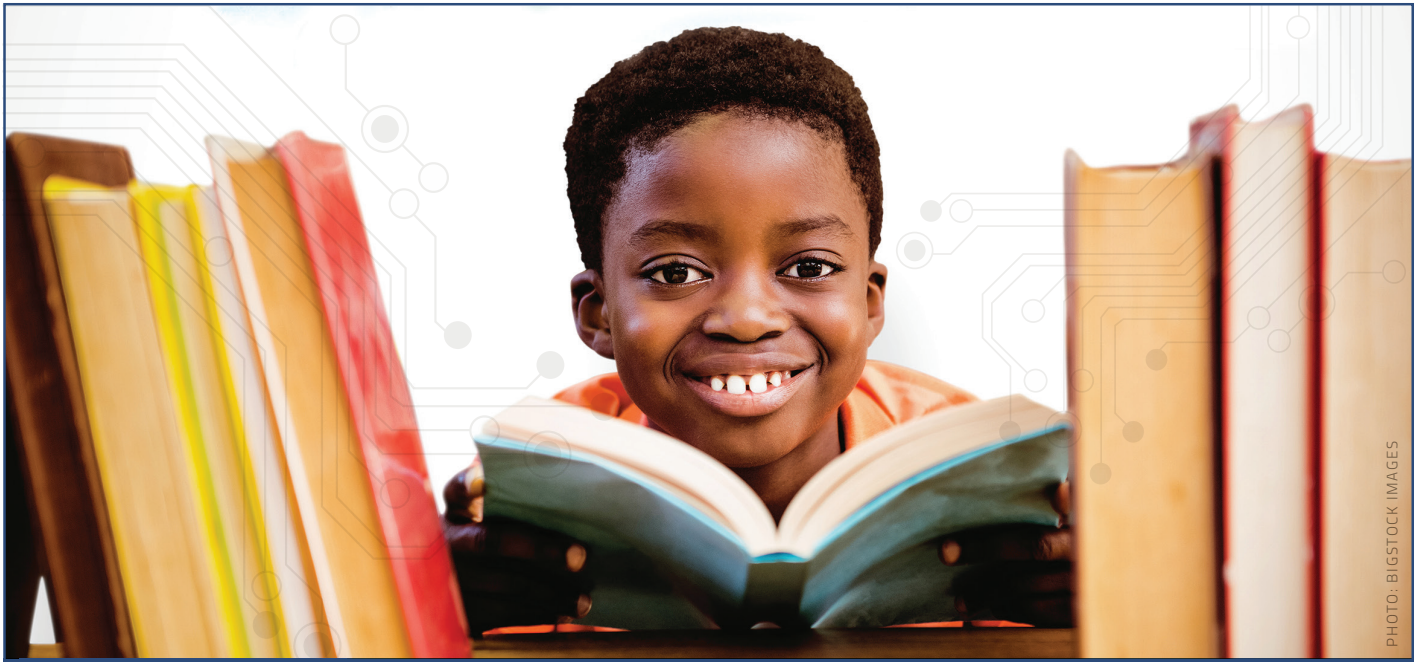


PHOTO: BIGSTOCK IMAGES

## ALL CHILDREN READING:

A GRAND CHALLENGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

## ENABLING WRITERS COMPETITION WRITING MADE SIMPLE

### THE CHALLENGE

One of the main barriers to improving children's reading skills is the lack of appropriate and engaging reading materials in mother tongue languages. This means children are unable to get the reading practice they need in the language they speak and understand.

Without a supply of interesting materials, it is difficult to get girls and boys excited about reading, provide them with the opportunity to practice reading, or have books read to them by family members. This contributes to the fact that, **around the world, at least 250 million children are not learning basic reading skills.**

### THE COMPETITION: ENABLING WRITERS

To address this gap, All Children Reading created the Enabling Writers prize competition to drive the development of a software technology—or the improvement of existing solutions—to make it easier, cheaper and faster to write high-quality early grade reading materials in mother tongue languages.

**In August 2015, All Children Reading awarded SIL International's Bloom software the \$100,000 grand prize.**



All Children Reading is an ongoing series of competitions that leverages science and technology to create and apply scalable solutions to improve literacy skills of early grade learners in developing countries



## THE WINNER: SIL INTERNATIONAL

### BLOOM SOFTWARE ENABLES PEOPLE TO EASILY CREATE MOTHER TONGUE BOOKS THAT GET CHILDREN READING



SIL International's innovative *Bloom* software eases the process of bookmaking so that more people can participate – if you can type on a computer, you can create a book in *Bloom*.

*Bloom* users can create an original text or select a template, called a “shell book,” and insert culturally-appropriate pictures and local translations of text. The books created can then be saved as a PDF and distributed in printed or electronic form.

SIL has been developing and using *Bloom* since 2011. For the All Children Reading Enabling Writers competition, SIL added features to let *Bloom* users create decodable texts and leveled readers.

**DECODABLE** refers to text that only contains letters and sounds a student has already learned. This introduces children systematically to reading.

**LEVELED READERS** are books or stories of increasing difficulty, so children advance their vocabulary, build comprehension skills, and increase reading fluency.

SIL International is a faith-based nonprofit organization committed to serving language communities worldwide as they build capacity for sustainable language development. SIL's linguistic investigation exceeds 2,167 languages in more than 100 countries.

## BUILDING BLOOM INTO EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMING

### DEVELOPING EXCITING MOTHER TONGUE BOOKS THAT GET CHILDREN READING

SIL International can support you by conducting:

- writers' workshops that walks local authors, storytellers, curriculum developers, educational programmers or others through the writing process and the development of mother tongue books using Bloom software, and
- training-of-trainers sessions to teach others how to use the software and roll it out nationwide.

Let SIL International support you in building a library of mother tongue content for early grade readers, leveled and decodable books to supplement the national curriculum, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education (STEM) content to inspire the world's future scientists, and so much more.

## LET SIL HELP YOU GROW A LIBRARY

Download Bloom software for free  
[bloomlibrary.org](http://bloomlibrary.org)

Contact SIL International  
[bloom@sil-lead.org](mailto:bloom@sil-lead.org)



PHOTO COURTESY OF SIL INTERNATIONAL

# THE GLOBAL BOOK ALLIANCE



Photo: Devon McLong Ritzer



**250 MILLION CHILDREN WORLDWIDE CANNOT READ**

Around the world, 250 million children are unable to read. Because of a lack of teaching materials, they struggle to recognize even basic words and numbers. In many countries, learning assessments have found that more than 50 percent of students can't read a single word after several years of school. Without basic literacy, they can't go on to learn math, science, and other subjects. The result is a lost opportunity for personal and intellectual growth and a massive loss in economic growth and development for their countries.



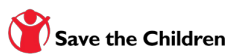
**BOOKS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR LEARNING TO READ**

Children must learn to read in the early grades so they can read to learn for the rest of their lives. Children love reading and can quickly learn this critical skill, but they must have well-trained and supported teachers and early grade books in languages they understand. Despite decades of government and development partner funding, few schools or communities have an adequate supply of early grade reading materials.



**INCREASING QUALITY, DECREASING COSTS: LEARNING FROM THE HEALTH SECTOR**

The Global Book Alliance will use innovative financing strategies from other sectors for book development, production, procurement and distribution, thereby lowering costs and increasing quality. Advances in technology and funding mechanisms make it possible to efficiently provide high-quality books in all languages. A range of partners are commissioning analytical work to explore the potential of The Global Book Alliance.



# 250 MILLION CHILDREN AREN'T READING



## WHY SHOULD PEOPLE CARE?

- Reading is the basic skill of education, and children who don't learn to read can't learn other subjects.
- If students in low-income countries could read, 171 million people would be lifted out of poverty.
- This hidden epidemic costs governments and economies US\$129 billion dollars.



## WHY AREN'T CHILDREN READING?

- Children lack access to books designed to teach them to read in languages they speak and understand.
- Learning to read requires texts, and teaching is difficult without printed materials.



## WHY ARE THERE NOT ENOUGH BOOKS?

Current practices in developing, procuring and distributing reading materials for the early grades do not ensure equitable availability for all young students.



## WHO ARE POTENTIAL KEY PARTNERS?

- Governments
- Publishers
- Private Sector
- Civil Society
- Donors
- The Global Reading Network

The Global Book Alliance would transform the supply of reading materials so that the right books are accessible to children at the right time, and for the right price. With support from government and development partners, the Alliance would strengthen reading instruction, produce dramatic increases in literacy rates and accelerate economic development.



Photo: Dana Schmidt

## WHAT WILL THE GLOBAL BOOK ALLIANCE DO?

1. Develop technical specifications for reading materials, particularly for the early grades, in children's first languages.
2. Collect open source titles and develop agreements with publishers to make content widely available.
3. Stimulate production of more books through software, crowdsourcing, contests and workshops.
4. Support a digital repository of downloadable materials, or a "global library," that would help ministries, reading programs and the public upload, download and print materials.
5. Improve book supply chain management, including distribution systems for print and digital materials.
6. Set standards and group purchases to structure markets, improve book quality, and decrease cost.
7. Monitor and evaluate impact.
8. Work with governments and partners to make these practices sustainable.

