



PRESS RELEASE

UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Worldreader Partnership Brings Digital Books and E-Readers to Students in Western Tanzania

The first pilot of e-readers, designed to improve the lives of persons of concern and host communities, will launch in Mishamo and Katumba settlements this week

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania – 21 February 2013 - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), today launches a new initiative to pilot the use of e-readers in two settlements in western Tanzania. The UNHCR, through its Innovation and Education units, is partnering with Worldreader, the nonprofit enterprise aiming to drive literacy by providing digital books and e-readers to children and families.

Secondary school students from four schools in two settlements in western Tanzania will receive e-readers that will contain books in Swahili and English. Worldreader's program includes books by respected African publishers such as: Longhorn Publishers, Sub-Saharan Press, and Kenya Literature Bureau.

UNHCR and Worldreader expect this project to expand access to educational materials and enrichment texts, positively contributing to the lives of 2,300 students across the four schools.

"This project is part of UNHCR's broader education and innovation strategy to harness the use of new technologies to improve access to quality education programming for refugees and others of concern," said Jacqueline Strecker, ICT & Education Innovation Specialist at UNHCR Innovation. "This is truly a gift which will keep giving. It will increase literacy and expand mental and physical horizons - helping to provide quality education to large numbers of students. It will also enlarge choices for people who can now dream about greater possibilities. The impact for women and girls, in particular, is immeasurable", Ms. Joyce Mends-Cole, UNHCR Representative in Tanzania, was quoted.

Furthermore, all people in both settlements, and in the surrounding communities, will also be able to use the *Worldreader Mobile* service, through which they can access a library of African and international books using a device they already own: their data-enabled mobile feature phone.

The e-reader pilot program coupled with access to *Worldreader Mobile* will enable entire settlements with mobile connectivity to access the books they need to improve their lives.

"At Worldreader we have demonstrated that access to digital books can significantly improve early grade literacy outcomes" said Colin McElwee, Co-Founder of Worldreader. "We are proud to partner with UNHCR and to give

some of the most vulnerable people in the world the opportunity to create a future for themselves and their families.”

About UNHCR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. Providing access to quality education is a core component of UNHCR’s protection mandate.

This project is a joint initiative between the Education Unit and UNHCR Innovation – a multi-year inter-divisional initiative, established in 2012 by UNHCR’s Deputy High Commissioner. UNHCR Innovation aims to develop more efficient, effective and creative solutions to challenges that refugees are faced with across UNHCR operations worldwide. In line with UNHCR’s mandate, the ultimate goal of UNHCR Innovation is refugee protection, self-reliance, empowerment, dignity and education. To fulfill its mandate, UNHCR Innovation engages staff members to re-thinks the way UNHCR works; the way it involves refugees in the design of the programs and the way it looks at good practices in the humanitarian and private sector world.

About Worldreader

Worldreader is a global not-for-profit organization that aims to put a library of digital books in the hands children and families across the world. Founded in 2010 by former Microsoft and Amazon executive David Risher, and former Marketing Director at Barcelona’s ESADE Business School Colin McElwee, Worldreader works with device manufacturers, local and international publishers, governments, education officials, and local communities to deliver it’s programs. Using culturally relevant digital books distributed across mobile phones and e-readers, Worldreader has demonstrated that it’s rapid scaling capacity is the most effective way to eradicate illiteracy across the globe. Worldreader is piloting e-readers in schools and libraries in nine Sub-Saharan countries and on Worldreader Mobile has more than 150,000 regular monthly readers across the world.

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Photos from program trainings



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