

# Worldreader and Pearson Win mBillionth Award for Read to Kids Program

**Program has reached 200,000 low-income households in Delhi region with access to Hindi and English storybooks**

NEW DELHI, August 4, 2017—A grand jury of 21 sector experts announced on Friday that they had awarded the 2017 [mBillionth](#) Learning and Education Award to Read to Kids—a technology-driven early childhood reading program co-founded by Worldreader and Pearson as part of [Project Literacy](#). The mBillionth Awards are given out every year by the Digital Empowerment Foundation to “recognise and honour excellence in mobile communications across South Asia”. The announcement of Read to Kids’ win follows the successful conclusion of the program’s 2-year pilot, which empowered more than 200,000 households in Delhi-NCR to read via a free mobile app.

The Read to Kids program was launched in 2015 with the goal of improving school readiness of Indian children by building their pre-literacy skills. Many children in India are unprepared to start school, with 57.5% of children in Grade 3 unable to read Grade 1 text. This lack of school readiness negatively impacts children’s learning outcomes and has contributed to a national learning crisis. Starting from birth, simple interventions such as parents reading aloud to their children can be powerful antidotes to poor learning environments.

The Read to Kids program works with parents and caregivers to develop habits of reading with the children in their lives via a custom mobile app that can be accessed on any mobile phone— including simple feature phones with 2G connections. The free app provides access to a library of more than 500 high-quality Hindi and English children’s books, along with tips for parents and caregivers on how to engage with their children through storytelling and help prepare them for future educational success.

In the first two years, Read to Kids has demonstrated that mobile phones and digital books can be used to reach hundreds of thousands of parents and caregivers to become their children’s first teachers. In addition to the 200,000 families who accessed the app, nearly a third of parents who were reached through Worldreader’s on-the-ground partners became frequent readers—a promising sign of the potential for deep, long-term impact.

The mBillionth awards—now in their 8th year—recognize precisely this sort of impact,

highlighting the best mobile innovations for social good from a field of hundreds of applicants from across the region.

“The Read to Kids program has the potential to address a problem that handicaps millions of Indian children before they ever enter a classroom,” said Bhanu Potta, Global Executive Member and India Board Director at Worldreader. “We are incredibly honored to be chosen by the mBillionth Grand Jury and are grateful for their recognition of the importance of giving children a headstart towards educational success.”

Emilie Colker, VP, Social Impact & Global Campaigns at Pearson, said: “This Award reaffirms our belief that no family should be held back by lack of access to books in today’s mobile-connected world. Literacy is a fundamental human right that should be available to every child; It helps unlock opportunities and enables future generations to enter the workforce and realise their potential in society.”

Osama Manzar, Founder & Director Digital Empowerment Foundation and Chairman of the mBillionth Awards South Asia added, "The global relevance of Worldreader’s work is something that is critical. The Read to Kids program goes with oral society like India and thus it is making a difference for hundreds of thousands of children in low-income households."

Building on the success of the pilot project, Pearson and Worldreader are working on honing the Read to Kids model to prepare to bring the impact of family reading to households across India. Worldreader is also partnering with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and the Royal Hashemite Court of Jordan to bring the Read to Kids model to Syrian refugees and conflict-impact families in Jordan.

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**About Worldreader**

Worldreader is a global nonprofit that believes everyone can be a reader. The organization provides students and their families free access to its vast digital library via e-readers and mobile phones. Since 2010, over 5 million people across 50 countries have read from a digital library of over 40,000 local and international e-books on Worldreader platforms. Worldreader works with device manufacturers, local and international publishers, government agencies, education officials, and local communities to support readers everywhere. To read free books on your mobile phone, visit [read.worldreader.org](http://read.worldreader.org). For more information on Worldreader, please visit [www.worldreader.org](http://www.worldreader.org).

**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. Our mission is to help people make progress through access to better learning. We believe that learning opens up opportunities, creating fulfilling careers and better lives. Pearson, is the founder of [Project Literacy](#) a convened cross-sector campaign to ensure no child is born at risk of illiteracy by 2030. For more information, visit [Pearson.com](http://Pearson.com) and follow us on [@Pearson](#)