

Media Partners Launch “Newspaper in Education” Project in Zambia

PEPFAR-supported partnership between ZAMCOM and the University of Kentucky is working with the Ministry of Education and the “Daily Mail” to implement school-based program

Reading is a critical skill that can make an immeasurable difference in a child’s present and future life, yet most public schools in Zambia are faced with a tremendous shortage of the reading materials and learning aids necessary to nurture this important competency. As a result, a strong culture of reading — and consequently, more effective learning — simply does not exist in many communities throughout the country.

With funding from PEPFAR and USAID/Zambia, HIV/AIDS Twinning Center partners at the Zambian Institute of Mass Communication Educational Trust (ZAMCOM) and the University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Telecommunications are collaborating with the Zambian Government, the *Zambia Daily Mail*, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and other key stakeholders to support efforts to make reading part of every child’s daily routine through the Newspaper in Education (NIE) project. NIE promotes the use of newspapers as an educational resource and living textbook for many subject areas, such as reading, writing, math, science, and health.

October 13, 2011, marked the official launch of the Zambia media partnership’s NIE project, which will soon be rolled out in more than 100 public schools in Lusaka, Copperbelt, and Central and Eastern provinces. Currently, NIE is being administered in some 900 schools in the United States and in 60 countries worldwide. The NIE project will later be implemented in schools in the Northern, North Western, and Western provinces. Participating schools receive standardized lesson plans, relevant reading materials and teaching tools, and training and curriculum support to classroom teachers.

“We welcome this gesture because we realize it will help restock much-needed reading materials in our schools,” Dr. John Phiri, Zambia’s Minister of Education, Science and Technology, said at the launch. The event was held at ZAMCOM’s Lusaka headquarters and was attended by some a number of guests, including Hon. Fackson Shamenda, MP, Minister of Labor, Youth, Sport, and Gender; Mr. Gabriel Kaunda, Permanent Secretary, Gender in Development Division; Dr. Andrew Phiri, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; and Dr. Kanni Wignaraja, UNDP Country Director and UN Resident Coordinator. Tony Cotter, Ireland’s Ambassador to Zambia; Arve Ofstad, Norway’s Ambassador to Zambia; and Harry Molenaar, Netherlands’ Ambassador to Zambia, also attended the ceremony.

Wick Powers, USAID Education Team Leader in Zambia, also spoke at the launch. “Reading is the single most critical foundational skill in early education,” he told those present. “It is the basis for future learning.”

His remarks were echoed by the teachers in the audience.

“NIE is a good initiative because [the participating schools] will be equipped and enriched with a wide variety of reading materials,” said Henry Muntanga, former head teacher at Muyoma Basic School in Lusaka. “It will provide a platform for children to read, which can stimulate creativity and innovation. The more we read, the more ideas and concepts come to mind,” he stressed.

“Reading is not merely a hobby, it is a culture that is usually cultivated early in a child’s life,” stated Marble Sakuwaha, who teaches at a public school in Lusaka. “Students at private schools often perform better than [public school students] because they benefit from enough reading materials. The NIE project will help change that.”