Sign language and literacy global prize competition

Location: UNESCO Headquarters, Room 6
Date and time: Monday 20 March 2017, 11:30 – 13:00
Presenters: Deborah Backus, All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development

About the presentation:

Worldwide, an estimated 360 million individuals live with hearing loss. Of these, 70 million individuals are deaf. Shockingly, 80% of the deaf community are not provided with access to education. Even when educational opportunities are present, merely 1-2% receive education in sign language—leaving them without access to whole language, the foundation of literacy, and preventing them from reaching their full potential.

All Children Reading a Grand Challenge for Development (ACR GCD)—a partnership of USAID, World Vision and the Australian Government—in its commitment to ensure all children learn to read, conducted the first known adaptation of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) for children who are deaf/hard of hearing in October 2016. The goal was to make the internationally-recognized literacy assessment accessible to children who are deaf/hard of hearing through the use of Moroccan Sign Language (MSL) and was followed by a baseline assessment conducted with 175 children across Morocco.

Historically, deaf and hard of hearing children have faced numerous barriers to quality education and the preliminary results from this assessment demonstrate that they may also be lacking basic access to language if no one around them is signing fluent and connected language.

To further address this challenge, ACR GCD is launching a $500,000 global prize competition to source technology-based solutions that will increase language and literacy outcomes for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind by providing greater access to local sign languages, early grade reading materials and/or reading instruction through family and community engagement and schools.

This session will explore the results of this initial EGRA assessment in Morocco, its implications on education globally and the ACR GCD Sign Language and Literacy Global Prize Competition to launch in 2017.
Meet the presenters:

**Deborah Backus** is a policy and systems thinker that has worked globally to achieve social impact goals. Currently, she is a Program Management Officer at World Vision for All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development. In this role, she designs and manages innovation challenges that leverage technology and partnerships to improve global literacy. Deborah has worked for the Abu Dhabi Government and Booz Allen Hamilton leading policy and governance reform, with UNHCR in Thailand and Cambodia and as a Peace Corps volunteer in Jordan. Deborah holds a Masters of Social Work in from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Internet links related to the presentation:

http://allchildrenreading.org/

http://allchildrenreading.org/innovators/institute-for-disabilities-research-and-training-inc/