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For immediate release

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Kigali, Rwanda—Friday, July 5, 2013

65 primary schools receive solar panels

The Rwanda Education Board (REB) and the USAID-funded Literacy, Language, and Learning (L3) Initiative has been distributing solar panels to 65 primary schools over the past two weeks. The solar panels will support the schools, in 5 districts across the country, in using technology in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning. Today a launching ceremony was held at Kindama Primary School in Ruhuha, Bugesera.

Specifically, the schools will be charging cell phones, netbooks, and projectors, which REB and L3 distributed earlier this year. The cell phones are used to play L3's Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI) programs, which are one component of a comprehensive English, Kinyarwanda, and math program.

"In the quest to improve education quality, REB is constantly looking for innovative platforms to deliver effective and proven content to both teachers and students," said L3's Chief of Party Said Yasin. "The audio materials are a research-proven mechanism for supporting REB in achieving that goal."

The IAI programs support teachers in delivering fun, learner-centered, and effective lessons, guiding them in using new instructional methods and modeling fluent English. An "audio teacher" and "audio students" guide the teacher and children in the classroom and demonstrate learning activities.

"Especially for those teachers who haven't mastered English language, I think those lessons are very useful," remarked REB Education and Quality Standards department head Janvier Gasana.

At the launch, a P2 classroom demonstrated a Kinyarwanda lesson. The teacher wrote several letter blends on the board and pointed to one at a time. The children quickly called out the sound the letters make, increasing the speed at which they match letters to sounds. Additionally, students read aloud together from a text they had studied the previous week. According to Yasin, choral reading improves students' reading fluency, an essential reading skill.

When asked whether students have improved in reading during the three months of using IAI, Kindama Head Teacher Rwingina Moses replied, "very much."

The solar panels will also charge netbooks and projectors, which are used as part of REB's School-based Mentoring Program (SBM Program). The mentors, now deployed across the country, work with teachers at two schools each. Using the netbooks and projectors, mentors show interactive video modules to support teachers in using appropriate English and in adopting new, effective teaching methodologies.

The 65 schools receiving solar panels are among the 90 schools piloting the L3 print and audio instructional materials. By 2016, all public schools across the country will use these materials to support P1 to P4 English, Kinyarwanda, and math.

Funded by USAID, the L3 Initiative is implemented by Education Development Center (EDC) in partnership with REB and with assistance from Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), Concern Worldwide, International Education Exchange, and the Peace Corps.

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