

Donika Dimovska

The Show Must Go On: Harnessing a Diverse Media Landscape to Improve Learning

Are you working in the rapidly diversifying field of mass media? Are you hoping to make better use of increasingly common media avenues to help scale up your impact? And critically, are you interested in furthering a rigorous examination of these exciting new approaches? If so, 'tune in' and join the discussion with Donika Dimovska at Round Table 14.

As media landscapes in low- and middle-income contexts continue to diversify, creative educators are hoping to leverage a variety of platforms to reach students in innovative, effective ways. The Reading Together program in Kyrgyzstan for example, described and assessed in detail by Dr. David Johnson and Burulai Aitikulova, uses television programming to promote positive reading habits among children and family. But just as televisions have become more common throughout emerging markets around the world, so too now are mobile phones, internet connected technologies, social media, and more.

Results for Development (R4D) founded the Center for Education Innovations (CEI) in 2012 to promote understanding about what works in new approaches to education. Here, R4D Senior Program Director Donika Dimovska draws from CEI's global database of over 750 innovative models to highlight promising approaches to harnessing mass media to improve learning. The Discovery Project, for example, uses television programming similarly to Reading Together, but does so with a specific focus on reaching marginalized populations, and especially girls. Or take English in Action, which uses not only traditional mass media like television and print, but also mobile phones, peer-learning, and the internet to help students develop critical language skills for employability.

These examples and others provide a useful reference for implementers looking to scale their impact through mass media. Yet, rigorous assessments as to the actual impact of these innovations remains a challenge. The report by Johnson and Aitikulova is an invaluable addition, but more is needed. That is why Results for Development is particularly excited about their adaptive learning and evaluation activities, which incorporate structured experimentation into programs' ongoing activities, and then use monitoring and evaluation techniques to make design decisions in real-time based on the results of the experimentation.