

BFI – India Update  
Launch Press Release  
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## **Bridges to the Future Initiative (BFI) Launched in India**

*Unique dual-use strategy will make ICT available to out-of-school as well as regular students in Andhra Pradesh schools*

Hyderabad, October 10, 2003 - The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Mr Chandrababu Naidu, hailed the launch of the Bridges to the Future Initiative (BFI) as a landmark for education in the State. Under this initiative the International Literacy Institute (ILI) and World Links, a Washington-based NGO, are implementing a technology-based education program that reaches teachers, students, and out-of-school youth and adults.

The innovative solutions developed in Telugu for the BFI were demonstrated at the launch. While the Chief Minister, who was to have launched the program, was unable to personally attend, the ceremony was presided over by the State Minister for School Education, Sri Mandwa Venkateshwara Rao.

Leading local and international dignitaries and senior government officials also attended the function at the Borabanda Residential School where they interacted with students from the school, and those from the local community who use the same computer lab after school hours to develop their skills in the

use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).



*Sri Mandwa Venkateshwara Rao (State Minister for School Education), Dan Wagner (ILI), Dr I.V. Subba Rao (Principal Secretary of School Education), Manmohan Singh (Commissioner and Director of School Education)*

In his message, that was read out at the function by Dr I.V. Subba Rao, Principal Secretary of School Education, Mr Naidu said, "Andhra Pradesh has been actively pursuing a policy of promoting basic education, literacy, and technological literacy in an attempt to bridge the digital divide and enable the underprivileged to familiarize themselves with ICT and move into the mainstream. This is particularly timely as the United Nations has just launched the UN Literacy Decade."



*Hyderabad, Borabanda School – Launch Day Gathering*

Mr Naidu stated: "The ILI and World Links have developed very innovative curricula and teaching processes in Telugu to enable children, youth and adults, both in and out of school, to be integrated into today's society driven by Information Technology. I am very

happy that this program has been implemented first in the state of Andhra Pradesh, which

has been a pioneer in several aspects of ICT in e-governance and now also in e-education."

Mr Naidu said he was also happy at the dual-use strategy to achieve more with the available ICT infrastructure through the BFI. "During school hours, the computers and other ICT infrastructure will be used for the benefit of the regular secondary school students and teachers. After school hours, those living around the school, who have not had the benefits of a formal education or any education at all, will have access to the same computers and software. I am happy that the BFI has thought of this constructive approach for dual-use of expensive ICT infrastructure in our secondary schools. It will help us to reach out and make available the same infrastructure to more students."

Prof Dan Wagner, Director of ILI, said, "Internet and ICT access is growing exponentially, but at the same time is widening the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.' The vast majority of ICT inputs are going to the wealthiest half of the population around the world, with little left over for the poor. The benefits of ICT are that it can bring high-quality, high-interest local language media directly to the learner, regardless of age or school status – a breakthrough in promoting a truly literate society."

Prof C.J. Daswani, former head the National Scheme of Non-Formal Education and BFI National Research Coordinator, emphasized that the BFI program provides a new opportunity for Andhra Pradesh and all of India to help solve the problems of illiteracy.

"The initial response from out-of-school children clearly demonstrates that ICT can be a powerful motivating tool for enabling these children to enter the mainstream. The specially developed software in Telugu enables these children to learn independently and use IT with minimum of guidance," Prof Daswani stated.



*Prof C.J. Daswani (National Coordinator BFI) with a learner who used the software.*