

**Firelight Foundation Letter of Inquiry 2012**  
**Improving Learning Outcomes for Children in Tanzania**  
**Deadline: February 15, 2012**

**BACKGROUND**

The mission of Firelight Foundation is to improve the well-being of vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa. We support grassroots organizations that help families and communities meet the needs of their children.

Under this request for proposals, Firelight seeks to fund organizations using innovative approaches to improve children's learning in primary schools in Tanzania.

Since the 1990s governments, community-based organizations, and non-governmental organizations have put resources and energy into increasing the number of children who are enrolled in school. While school remains out of reach for millions of marginalized children in Africa, the progress around access is unprecedented. Now that so many children are in school, a key question for all is: *are children learning?*

Unfortunately, in Tanzania, evidence shows that many children are leaving school with low levels of reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. In order for education to fulfill the promise of a better future, greater effort must be placed on improving quality of learning.

With support from the Hewlett Foundation, Firelight seeks to partner with organizations using innovative strategies to improve reading, writing, and arithmetic for primary school children in Tanzania. Under this funding, we seek to identify organizations that are focused on improving children's learning by creatively engaging family and community to help children to succeed in school, while also building a stronger relationship between what is happening in-school and what happens at home. Over a period of three years, we will work closely with organizations to demonstrate the effectiveness of their innovative approaches and assessing their effectiveness in helping to improve learning outcomes. Firelight will facilitate adoption of the most effective approaches among a network of community-based organizations.

**FUNDING CRITERIA**

Firelight receives around 1,000 requests for funding each year and is able to support only a small percentage of them. In order for us to focus our efforts in an effective and sustained manner, we will only accept letters of inquiry in 2012 from organizations that meet the criteria outlined below. Specifically we seek to fund organizations that demonstrate:

- Sound analysis and articulation of the barriers to children's learning.
- Effective and innovative program design specifying how programming and interventions lead to improvements in learning outcomes.
- Support for children's learning that bridges between what happens in school and out of school.
- Robust monitoring and evaluation to track progress and demonstrate learning outcomes.
- Commitment to using data to inform program review and adaptation.
- Track record in improving children's learning.
- Collaboration with a variety of stakeholders that influence and impact children's learning and well-being, including peers, local institutions and relevant government agencies.

**In selecting organizations to support, Firelight Foundation looks for evidence of:**

- Direct support and services that meet the needs and rights of vulnerable children.
- Holistic support for children's development that nurtures children's voice, leadership, and active participation in decisions that affect their lives.
- Approaches that tap into local support and resources and build family and community capacity.
- A history of effective action that spans at least three years.
- Networking and collaboration with other organizations and relevant government agencies.
- Consistency between mission, goals, and strategy.
- Learning and adaptation in response to emerging needs and insights derived from experience and data.
- Effective programming with innovative responses to the challenges affecting children's well-being.
- A track record of accomplishment and innovation in education, particularly in improving children's learning outcomes in primary school
- Sound organizational governance and management systems, including distinct roles between the Board and Director.

**Firelight does NOT fund:** individuals; scholarships for individual use; government entities; organizations or programs designed to influence legislation or elect public officials; organizations or programs solely intended to generate income or provide charity to individuals; academic or medical research; fundraising drives; or endowments. Firelight believes strongly in non-discrimination and does not fund programs that limit participation based on race, tribe, religion, gender, or nationality. **We very rarely fund US-based organizations or branches of international non-governmental organizations.**

## LETTER OF INQUIRY TEMPLATE

If your organization is a charitable organization working with to improve learning outcomes for primary school children in **TANZANIA**, we invite you to send a letter of inquiry and provide us with basic information about your organization. We will give particular priority to organizations working in the **Mbeya, Iringa and Morogoro regions**. Please ensure we have completed contact information for your organization, including:

- Full name of your organization (and acronym, if applicable)
- E-mail and postal mailing address (PO Box and street address, if available) and location of proposed activities
- The names and contact information for three people at your organization (name, title, e-mail, phone)

## BACKGROUND

1. Tell us your organization's founding story. When and why your group was started? Who was involved in its founding?
2. Briefly describe the main activities of your organization.
3. Describe three major accomplishments of your organization since it began.

## PROPOSAL FOCUS

4. What are the key obstacles to children learning well at school? Which of these problems can be addressed by civil society organizations?
5. Which problem(s) will your organization address, and what is your strategy for addressing the problem?
6. Explain what is innovative about your strategy
7. Describe the main activities that you will implement with Firelight funding.
8. In your activities, who are the critical actors in supporting improvements in children's learning?
9. Define the desired outcomes and how you will measure them. Specify how you will measure improvements in children's reading and math skills.
10. What schools are you working with and where are they located?
11. How many children will you reach?
12. What other collaborations will be part of your program implementation?

## FINANCIALS

13. How much money are you requesting in US Dollars? (Remember, **Firelight only awards grants of \$1,000 to \$15,000**. Greater requests will be declined.) Please provide a summary of your proposed budget.
14. What was your organization's budget for the most recent financial year? What were the sources of funding?

We accept any kind of written submission. We currently accept applications in English and Swahili. **Please limit your letter to five pages.**

## THE DECISION PROCESS

The deadline for receiving letters of inquiry is **February 15, 2012**. We will notify you by **March 15, 2012** if we are interested in receiving a full proposal from your organization. Because we are a small foundation with limited resources, we cannot support all of the qualified organizations that submit inquiries. If we decline your request, we will try our best to explain why. Funding awards will be made in July 2012. **Please forward all letters of inquiry via mail, fax, or e-mail to:**

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