

VillageReach and the University of Washington Receive \$100,000 Grand Challenges Explorations Grant for Ground-Breaking Research in Global Health and Development

Mobile scanning application to transform paper data into scalable digital system.

SEATTLE, Washington, May 2, 2011– VillageReach, the Seattle-based social enterprise that increases access to healthcare for remote last mile communities, and the University of Washington's Computer Science & Engineering, announced today that they are a Grand Challenges Explorations winner, an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. VillageReach and the University of Washington will pursue an innovative global health and development research project: *Digitizing Paper-Based Data Via Mobile Image Technologies*. The project will demonstrate the use of a new mobile data capture technology that is effective, efficient, and increases the speed at which data is available to health workers and decision makers at all levels of the health system.

Grand Challenges Explorations (GCE) funds scientists and researchers worldwide to explore ideas that can break the mold in how we solve persistent global health and development challenges. The VillageReach/University of Washington project is one of over 85 Grand Challenges Explorations Round 6 grants announced today by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

To receive funding, VillageReach and the University of Washington, and other Grand Challenges Explorations Round 6 winners, demonstrated in a two-page online application a bold idea in one of five critical global health and development topic areas: polio eradication, HIV, sanitation and family health technologies, and mobile health.

VillageReach and the University of Washington will seek to automate paper-based data collection and make data capture in low-resource field environments more efficient by digitizing paper-based data into usable information via low-cost, image-based, mobile technologies. The project leverages the growing supply of lower-cost smartphones to bridge the gap between the mHealth movement, focused on digitizing all content, and the current paper-based systems that prevail in low-income countries.

About Grand Challenges Explorations

Grand Challenges Explorations is a US\$100 million initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Launched in 2008, Grand Challenge Explorations grants have already been awarded to nearly 500 researchers from over 40 countries. The grant program is open to anyone from any discipline and from any organization. The initiative uses an agile, accelerated grant-making process with short two-page online applications and no preliminary data required. Initial grants of \$100,000 are awarded two times a year. Successful projects have the opportunity to receive a follow-on grant of up to US\$1 million.

About VillageReach

VillageReach is a non-profit social enterprise that extends the reach of healthcare services to remote, underserved communities by creating dynamic delivery and information monitoring systems. Its mission is to save lives and improve well-being in developing countries by increasing last-mile access to healthcare and investing in social businesses that address gaps in community infrastructure. VillageReach has been given the highest-possible charity rating by GiveWell. See www.givewell.org.

About The University of Washington

Computer Science & Engineering at the University of Washington has extensive activities in the area of mobile technologies with applications in resource-constrained environments. The Open Data Kit project (opendatakit.org), led by Professor Gaetano Borriello, is an example of the open-source software that has been developed by the group and applied by many organizations around the world to a variety of problems from public health to environmental monitoring. The Change initiative (change.washington.edu) is a multi-disciplinary group at UW that brings expertise from the many disciplines required to ensure technology interventions have the desired practical effects and are economically sustainable.

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