

## INNOVATIVE GLOBAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE COMES TO SA

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Educators in South Africa have welcomed a new education hub launching at the African Education Week in Sandton today. The Center for Education Innovations – South Africa (CEI-SA) is one of three global education hubs that are working to increase access to quality, affordable and equitable education for the world's poor by showcasing and amplifying non-governmental sector programmes that have the potential to drive learning in poor communities.

Backed by the Results for Development Institute (R4D) with funding from the UK government, CEI South Africa will address an information gap in the South African education system. Currently, too little data exists on the size, scope, and quality of educational services offered by the non-governmental sector and this is preventing the country from capitalising on the potential impact of such initiatives in meeting national education priorities.

“Besides poor data quality and massive underreporting, there is also insufficient knowledge on appropriate public policies towards non-state education and training,” said Nicholas Burnett, Results for Development Institute (R4D) Managing Director. “In some cases, attitudes are still deeply ideological – arguing against any non-state education provision. In order to promote quality education for the poor, the focus must be grounded in evidence and shift to critical issues such as how to harness and improve non-state provision for underserved populations such as girls, out-of-school youth, the disabled, ethnic minorities and illiterate adults.”

The CEI South Africa hub will be housed in the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the UCT Graduate School

of Business and will run in partnership with BRIDGE, an established and well-respected local education NGO.

According to Dr Francois Bonnici, director the Bertha Centre, providing access for the poor to quality education and training is a major challenge for developing economies, where public sector mechanisms such as schools and universities are failing financially and administratively to meet the overwhelming demand.

“Globally, it is the private and non-governmental sectors, through corporate social investment programmes, that are leading the way in innovation in the sector,” he says. “South Africa is a fascinating case when it comes to education. There is an education crisis in the country and because of it many programmes sprung up to fill the gap and are doing very innovative work.”

CEI employs a three-pronged approach which sets out to firstly identify up-to-date information about non-governmental programmes with the potential to improve the way education systems operate for the poor; then to analyse the programmes to find out what makes them successful and finally to connect those who are implementing and funding the programmes to help facilitate the scale-up and adoption of successful models.

Bonnici says this is one of the reasons the initiative is so important. “South Africa has a bustling education ecosystem but when companies decide to invest in education development they often don’t know where to invest and what programme they should fund,” he says.

The core of CEI is an online platform, containing an innovations database of programmes, a research and evidence library with information

on global education and a funders' platform for organisations supporting non-state education efforts around the world.

Bonnici believes the platform will be ideal for showcasing South African innovations. "This initiative could be the answer to the education crisis in the country, because by empowering those organisations and social enterprises that are already actively improving access to quality education, they're enhancing the possibilities that exist and increasing the impact."

CEI South Africa will work closely with sister hubs in India and Kenya to profile non-state innovations in their own regions and create networks of CEI stakeholders to promote the uptake of promising models.

There are more than 113 million children enrolled in non-state schools in developing nations – 62 million of them are in primary school (approximately 11% of total developing country primary enrolments), and another 51 million are in secondary school (approximately 24% of the total). Yet, even though many poor people use non-state education and training services, very little is known about the size, scope, and quality of services offered by non-state providers.

BRIDGE CEO Zanele Twala says, "Bridge understands the value of collaboration and sharing best practice, and being a part of the CEI global platform allows for this approach to go to scale. The easy access to information about 'what works' in other developing countries, will support South African practitioners find solutions to our education crisis."

"CEI aims to address some of the key knowledge and learning barriers that hinder the adoption of effective non-state approaches for education and training. The combination of

targeted information and analysis as well as better linkages among stakeholders will ultimately promote the scale-up of high-impact education and training programmes to serve the poor,” concludes Bonnici.

#### [About the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#)

*The Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship is a catalyst for social impact and for dialogue that promotes and emboldens social and environmental change agents finding new solutions for emerging markets in Africa. The Centre invests in the next generation of social innovators through scholarships; practical, rigorous teaching, exposure and debate; and a focus on applying leading research to responding to challenges that are immediate and critical to the fabric of Africa’s social and economic future – many of which sit on its geographic doorstep. The Bertha Centre was established in late 2011 in partnership with the Bertha Foundation.*

#### [About Bridge](#)

*Bridge is an education-focused non-profit organisation in South Africa. Bridge links innovators in education, including representatives from civil society, government, funders, practitioners, teachers, learners, principals, parents, research organisations and unions. It connects them together in communities of practice that promote the sharing of good and effective educational practices so that there can be an increase in trust, a reduction in duplication, a maximising of resources, and an impact on policy so that the education system as a whole can benefit.*

#### [About Results for Development Institute \(R4D\)](#)

*Results for Development Institute (R4D) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to unlock solutions to tough development challenges that prevent people in low- and*

*middle-income countries from realizing their full potential. Using multiple approaches in multiple sectors, including Global Education, Global Health, Governance and Market Dynamics, R4D supports the discovery and*