

## **USAID Helps THRASS British Phonics Programme Expand into Namibia**

The THRASS phonics programme, pioneered by British Educational Psychologist Alan Davies, has already enjoyed considerable success in many parts of Africa and is being welcomed as heralding the start of a new era in the teaching of English in Africa. Now, with the help of USAID, and following the recent THRASS Accredited Certificate course in Okahandja, THRASS could soon be implemented in every school in Namibia.

Namibia is a country rich in languages. English, Afrikaans and German are the three main languages but their development has been unequal. The introduction of English as the medium of instruction for Grades 4 to 12 means that new approaches and materials are needed to prepare the teachers and learners for that new medium. The THRASS phonics programme is widely accepted as providing a revolutionary approach to teaching English and is used by teachers, parents, educational psychologists and speech and language therapists in thousands of schools in Africa, the UK, Europe and the Caribbean. In addition to teaching handwriting, reading and spelling to learners of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, it also teaches lifelong word solving skills for their own and other languages. THRASS is widely acknowledged as having the potential to more than double the normal rate of progress for learning reading and spelling for primary and secondary school children, and also for dyslexics and those for whom English is not their first language.

Over the years THRASS UK has built a reputation for providing high quality Professional Development Courses in many countries and thousands of educators have been awarded the THRASS Accredited Certificate. The first THRASS Accredited Certificate course in Namibia was held on 14 and 15 September at the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in Okahandja and was part-funded by USAID, the government agency that has been providing US economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide for more than 40 years. The 40 advisers who attended the course now intend to implement THRASS in all regions. In addition, THRASS UK is looking to work with the four teacher training colleges in Namibia to provide an opportunity for Foundation Phase student teachers to gain experience in the same way that it is working with teacher training colleges in South Africa.

An important part of the THRASS programme is the THRASS Phoneme Machine software, a groundbreaking interactive computer programme that uses moving human lips and the International Phonetic Alphabet to teach children, and indeed learners of all ages and abilities, to read and spell in an entertaining and fun way. It has been found to be very helpful to those for whom English is not their first language, and those with learning difficulties, and thousands of teachers and parents, especially in the UK, USA and Africa, have already downloaded it to use with their students or their own children. Users can also download and print calendar charts in many African and European languages, including Afrikaans, English and German, and the English and Afrikaans interactive charts are already associated with children's voices saying the days, dates, months, numbers one to twenty, main colours and names of the twenty-six lower-case letters (and their associated capitals). The German voices will be available in the near future.

An indication of the extent of the success of the Phoneme Machine is the fact that it is now being showcased at the Africa School Technology Innovation Centre (ASTIC), Johannesburg, South Africa that receives major sponsorship from Microsoft. The Phoneme Machine has also received software accreditation from market leader

SMART Technologies Inc, for use on its interactive whiteboards in the countries that THRASS UK is licensed to serve.

All the forty advisers who attended the course in Okahandja, Namibia, were very positive about THRASS. For example, one adviser wrote "If we implement the THRASS knowledge and skills we will completely eradicate literacy problems in Namibia". Another wrote "It is so powerful that while it seems like playing, the THRASS programme opens avenues for further learning, not only for learners but for professionals too" and yet another wrote "THRASS is the best way of teaching children how to read." THRASS UK is now actively seeking a sponsor for the development of THRASS in Namibia to enable it to be implemented in all schools.

THRASS is already benefiting many African children from a wide range of backgrounds and in all types of schools: government schools, such as farm schools in the Kwenas Basin, Mpumalanga, township schools in Orange Farm, Johannesburg, schools for the deaf, remedial schools and prestigious independent schools including Crawford Schools, the largest private schools chain in South Africa. With a small amount of additional investment, it has the potential to benefit all children in Africa.

The THRASS extensive picture-based training website for schools and parents with easy access to a wide range of resources and support materials and extensive evidence of the widespread success of THRASS is at [www.thrass.co.uk](http://www.thrass.co.uk)

For a summary of the main features of THRASS and the benefits of using THRASS (including comments from teachers and parents), visit [www.thrass.co.uk/keyfacts.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/keyfacts.htm)

For video coverage of the THRASS two-day Accredited Course in Okahandja, Namibia, visit [www.thrass.co.uk/nasept07.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/nasept07.htm)

To read the evaluations from the THRASS two-day Accredited Course in Okahandja, Namibia, visit [www.thrass.co.uk/evalsseptnamibia.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/evalsseptnamibia.htm)

For more information about the THRASS Phoneme Machine Version 5 and to register for a free download of the software, visit [www.phonememachine.com](http://www.phonememachine.com).

The THRASS multi-lingual calendar charts and associated software can be downloaded free-of-charge from [www.thrass.co.uk/cart/cc.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/cart/cc.htm)

For details of the full range of THRASS resources for parents and schools, visit [www.thrass.co.uk/resources.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/resources.htm) or (for South Africa and Namibia) [www.pws.co.za](http://www.pws.co.za)

For details of THRASS Professional Development Courses that are held regularly in the UK, Europe, West and Southern Africa, visit [www.thrass.co.uk/courses.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/courses.htm).

The countries that THRASS UK is licensed to serve are shown in blue on the world map at [www.thrass.co.uk/worldmap.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/worldmap.htm)

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