



*EdData II*

# Task Order 3: Early Grade Reading Assessment

## Annual Report

October 2006–September 2007

**EdData II Technical and Managerial Assistance, Task 3**  
**Task Order Number EHC-E-03-04-00004-00**  
**Strategic Objective 3**  
**RTI Project No. 09354.003**

**October 31, 2007**

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by RTI International.

# Task Order 3: Early Grade Reading Assessment

## Annual Report

October 2006–September 2007

Prepared for  
Sandra Bertoli, Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR)  
Office of Education  
Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT/ED)  
United States Agency for International Development

Prepared by  
Amber Gove and Abhijit Nimbalkar  
RTI International  
3040 Cornwallis Road  
Post Office Box 12194  
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194

RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

# Task Order 3

## Annual Report

October 2006–September 2007

### **EdData II Task Order 3**

The purpose of this Task Order (TO)—awarded September 30, 2006—is to provide the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) with a valid set of instruments for assessing the extent to which early-grade primary-school children in USAID-presence countries are learning to read with an acceptable degree of comprehension and at an acceptable rate of fluency. The overarching objective is to provide USAID with an increased understanding of one essential dimension of education quality (reading) in its host countries, and ultimately spur more effective efforts to improve educational quality. The TO specifically addresses the achievement of Ed Data II's Result 5: International education statistics and indicators improved, promoted, and further standardized through collaboration with other USAID activities, Ministry statistics staff, multilateral and other bilateral organizations.

To this end, USAID has asked RTI to develop two reading assessment instruments: (1) an opportunity to learn assessment; and (2) a simple-screening assessment. These instruments will build upon recent experience of USAID, other donors, and country experiences, and will be designed to permit cross-country comparison of the degree of reading skill acquisition in the first few grades of the school system. These assessment instruments, or metrics, and the results obtained through field testing them in three languages—English, French, and Spanish—will serve as a basis for international discussion and will facilitate the establishment of basic standards for early-grade reading.

### **Status and Activities, by Quarter**

#### **October–December 2006**

The first quarter of this task order was devoted to (1) completing final research and preparing drafts of proposed instruments; and (2) convening a workshop of international experts in order to obtain feedback on the validity of the approach overall and the construction of the required instruments.

RTI invited cognitive scientists, early-grade literacy experts, research methodologists, and assessment experts to review the proposed key components of the draft assessment instruments. During the 2-day workshop, held November 16–17, participants were charged with bridging the gap between research and practice; that is, merging advances in the reading literature and cognitive science with assessment experiences. Researchers and practitioners presented evidence on their strategies for measuring literacy acquisition within the early primary grades. In addition, they were asked to identify the key issues to consider in designing a multi-country, multi-language early grade literacy assessment protocol.

The workshop, co-hosted by USAID, The World Bank, and RTI, included more than a dozen experts from a diverse group of countries, as well as some 14 observers from institutions such as USAID, the World Bank, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, George Washington University, the South Africa Ministry of Education and Plan International, among others.

The expert group both confirmed the potential of the approach and reached consensus on the minimum components that should be designed into the instruments. The results of the workshop will be formally summarized and used to further develop the instruments.

### **January–March 2007**

During this quarter of project activities, RTI staff focused almost exclusively on the development of the draft EGRA instruments. Based on the inputs from the November 2006 workshop, RTI staff developed a detailed protocol and testing instruments for Early Grade Reading Assessment which were delivered at the end of March to USAID/Washington staff. Specific details follow:

- January – Review of literature in Reading Theory, Assessment and Teaching Strategies. Review of available assessment instruments. Worked on development of draft instruments.
- February—Delivered presentation at Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) annual meeting on the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). Worked on development of draft instruments.
- March—Developed concept paper for Nicaragua and delivered it to National Director for Education, Dr. Tulio Tablada. Met with USAID/Nicaragua Human Investment Officer Connie Johnson and Education Officer Alicia Slate. Delivered draft instruments and protocol to USAID/Washington.

### **April–June 2007**

During the April–June period, RTI staff advanced in discussions with the Ministry of Education in Nicaragua regarding the pilot. In addition to the USAID TO3-funded activity, staff conducted a pilot of EGRA in Senegal (French and Wolof) and the Gambia (English). Based on these results, updates to the draft EGRA protocol document will be made in Quarter 4.

- April—Conducted World Bank-financed pilot in Senegal and the Gambia, collecting data from nearly 2000 students in grades 1-3. Application experience and results will inform subsequent country applications. Generated draft instruments in French, English and Wolof.

- May—A work plan was presented to the Ministry of Education in Nicaragua, as well as a presentation of the background research and results obtained in Senegal and the Gambia. Ministry staff agreed to allow the pilot to go forward, with plan for application in October or November.
- June—Delivered presentation at World Bank offices to more than 25 participants, including representatives from USAID’s Analytical Agenda Working Group (AAWG). Discussed advances in program to AAWG and other Education Sector representatives at USAID. Drafted Request for Proposals (RFP) for selection of local Nicaraguan firm to collaborate in data collection.

### **July–September 2007**

During this final quarter of FY2007, RTI staff continued to advance in discussions with the Ministry of Education in Nicaragua regarding the pilot. Plans were finalized for the October/November training and piloting of the instrument and the subcontract process was finalized.

- July—Released RFP for Nicaragua data collection, worked on revisions to draft protocol. Developed draft protocol in Spanish.
- August—Received and analyzed proposals for Nicaragua data collection. Awarded subcontract.
- September—Finalized subcontract details for EGRA pilot work. Gave presentation to 20 people at the World Bank regarding EGRA.

### **Anticipated Activities for Next Quarter (October–December 2007)**

- Train Ministry and Enumerator staff in EGRA methods and application.
- Conduct Nicaragua fieldwork.
- Begin planning for EGRA workshop for March 2008.

**Financial Statement**

[REDACTED]