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GEORGIA PRIMARY EDUCATION PROJECT

MONTHLY REPORT
JANUARY 1 – JANUARY 31

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MONTHLY REPORT

January 1 – January 31, 2012

This reporting period was characterized by an activity surge in all technical areas, following extensive planning and preparations in the preceding months. Now that the USAID Mission has approved G-PriEd’s work plan — and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has provided concurrence — the project has begun to work towards fulfilling its commitments and milestones under the work plan.

A series of activities were carried out this month, including workshops to adapt USAID’s Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA) tools, and workshops to develop the teacher training modules in reading and math. A detailed account of activities is described below, broken out by output.

Output 1: Reading fluency and comprehension outcomes improved in grades 1-6

During the reporting period, the G-PriEd team held several workshops intended to (1) develop the professional development modules in reading (discussed under Task 6 below), and (2) adapt the EGRA tool to the Georgian context (discussed under Task 2 below). In addition, G-PriEd staff met to with MES representatives to discuss how to select schools to participate in the G-PriEd pilot (discussed under Task 5 below).

Input 1.1: Reading instruction improved

Create Reading Working Group (Task 1). To date, the project has not reached agreement with the MES regarding the members of the working groups. As G-PriEd staff work to reach that agreement, we have been working with staff from the MES and its agencies on an ad hoc basis in order to ensure that they are involved in project activities from the beginning.

Facilitate activities of the working group in applying national reading standards and developing assessment tests for each grade between 1 and 6 (Task 2). Through the adaptation of the EGRA tool to the Georgian language and context, G-PriEd staff, short-term experts, and MES staff have begun to identify the range of competencies necessary for basic and higher-level reading, building off of the information in Georgia’s new language-arts curriculum.

- *Develop in-classroom assessment tools.* On January 25, Reading Improvement Director Paata Papava facilitated a meeting aimed at summarizing the issues related to the development of the EGRA tool. He engaged participants in completing two tasks: (1) developing Georgian-language test passages for the EGRA tool; (2) developing the list of most frequently used words in Georgian.

Together with Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist Sophie Malashkhia and a team of linguists (Tamar Makharoblidze, Ketevan Datukishvili, Tinatin Bolkvadze and Tamar Tchanturia), Mr. Papava led the process of developing (1) a conceptual matrix for creating the Georgian version of EGRA and (2) a draft sample Georgian-language EGRA test for Grade 2. These two documents were sent for

review to the MES, National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE), and Teacher Professional Development Center (TPDC). After receiving comments from these groups, the team revised the matrix and returned it to the MES and its agencies for further comment.

*Facilitate activities of the working group to study current teacher guidelines in reading for Georgian and ethnic minority students (Task 3).*¹ This work will start in Quarter 2.

Facilitate the development of the paper-based and electronic instructional content (Task 4). This work will start in Quarter 2.

With MES and working group, identify pilot schools through a stratified random selection (at least 270 Georgian and 50 ethnic minority schools) and launch pilot (Task 5). On January 18, G-PriEd assessment experts and representatives from the MES and its agencies met to discuss how to select schools that will participate in the G-PriEd pilot. Chief of Party Jim Wile gave a brief presentation about the project and discussed the rationale for selecting the sample of pilot schools (270 Georgian-language schools and 50 minority-language schools). He also discussed how the selection of pilot schools (how the representation of different categories of school: by size, by type of student population, etc.) would affect the outcomes of G-PriEd's planned impact assessment. After this presentation, Ms. Malashkhia presented the anticipated impact/outcome level indicators to be used by the project and issues related to the impact study.

To prepare to continue the conversation about the sample of schools that G-PriEd will include in the pilot, G-PriEd staff will work with the MES' EMIS Agency to collect data that will help establish the various categories of schools that should be represented in the sample. G-PriEd's M&E specialist has requested relevant data disaggregated by the following categories: regions, public/private schools, city/town/village, number of classes in each school by grades (grade 1-6), number of students in each class (grade 1-6), and number of teachers from grades 1-6 by each school.

Train grade 1-6 teachers in pilot schools to conduct reading courses and tests (including fluency and comprehension); support them throughout the year; and conduct assessment at the end of the pilot year (Task 6). As part of its efforts to support enhanced professional development of Georgia's teachers, the G-PriEd project (during this reporting period) began creating a series of nine modules (covering reading, math, and coaching) to be used to train both professional development leader (PDL) teachers and other teachers. These modules embody a diagnostic approach to teaching, in which teachers learn to help students learn to detect, understand and correct misconceptions in their own and their fellow students work. The best long-term learning depends on developing a robust understanding of a topic at hand with many connections to other topics and applications. Diagnostic teaching helps students achieve this goal.

¹ Note: any work with the ethnic minority schools will depend on the needs of the MES.

- *Develop modules on best practices in reading instruction.* On January 13, Mr. Papava met with nine local reading module writers to introduce the main goals of the reading component and the long-term objectives of the project's work supporting the professional development of Georgian teachers. He also provided an overview of the EGRA assessment tool that PDL teachers would be taught to use. From January 18 to 22, Mr. Papava facilitated a workshop to create training modules covering the three topics listed below:

- Teaching reading in elementary grades,
- Teaching reading in subject areas, and
- Creating environments that support reading.

After reviewing the intended content of the modules, workshop participants developed sample lessons based on the diagnostic teaching approach for each of the three modules. From January 23 to 27 the module writers field-tested the sample lessons in different schools and wrote reports on the impact of the lessons they observed. Based on these observations, the writers revised the draft lessons and developed new sample lessons. International experts Charles Temple, Alan Crawford, and Mary Spor also provided input as needed. On January 28, the final day of the workshop, the writers discussed next steps in the revision process.

- *PDL job description.* G-PriEd staff and TPDC representatives collaborated to create a final version of the PDL job description. The job description specifies the required qualifications of PDL teachers as well as their roles and responsibilities at schools.
- *PDL nomination form.* G-PriEd expects that principals of the pilot schools will nominate teachers within their schools that will serve as PDL teachers in math and reading. To assist them in this process and to ensure the nomination of the best qualified candidates, G-PriEd staff developed a PDL nomination form. The form includes the PDL selection criteria with corresponding questions to be answered by principals. G-PriEd staff shared the draft version with TPDC representatives and their comments were incorporated in the current version.
- *PDL testing tool.* In order to assess the impact of the pilot professional development program (planned for March-June of this year), G-PriEd staff developed a pre- and post-assessment tool. It will be used to evaluate the knowledge and skills gained by the new PDLs during the pilot.
- *PDL standards.* In January, G-PriEd staff, support by Dr. Bean, developed a draft set of standards for PDL teachers. The draft contains six main standards covering:
 - (1) content knowledge;
 - (2) curriculum and instruction;
 - (3) assessment and evaluation;
 - (4) diversity;
 - (5) literate environment; and
 - (6) professional learning and leadership.

The draft document will be reviewed and revised by the module writers and TPDC representatives.

Input 1.2: Reading delivery systems improved

Facilitate working group inputs to revise the national reading assessment methodology (Task 7). This task will be planned on demand.

Develop remediation and promotions programs (Task 11).

- *Launch reading campaign.* G-PriEd staff have opened discussions with the MES' public relations department regarding launching a campaign to spread interest in boosting children's reading skills. We are currently discussing bringing out a communications specialist to begin planning the campaign, and hope to reach agreement with the MES regarding a good time for this international consultant to visit.
- *Develop summer initiative.* This work will start in Quarter 3.
- *Discuss remediation strategies.* This work will start in Quarter 3.

Output 2: Math competencies improved in grades 1-6

During the reporting period, there were two main activities within this component:

- The development of three professional development pedagogy modules including sample lesson plans for math professional development leader (PDL-M) teachers
- The adaption of the EGMA tool for Georgia

Each activity was preceded with preparatory discussions, particularly with math experts from three of the MES centers. These discussions included the collaborative design for the outlines and content of the professional development modules to be developed, and the design and content of the agenda of the math module writing workshop.

Input 2.1: Math instruction improved

Create Math Working Group (Task 1). To date, the project has not reached agreement with the MES regarding the members of the working groups. As G-PriEd staff work to reach that agreement, we have been working with staff from the MES and its agencies on an ad hoc basis in order to ensure that they are involved in project activities from the beginning.

*Facilitate the activities of the Working Group to study the teacher guidelines in math for Georgian and ethnic minority schools (Task 2).*² Through the adaptation of the EGMA tool to the Georgian context, G-PriEd staff, short-term experts, and MES staff have begun to identify the range of competencies necessary for Georgia's new primary-grade mathematics curriculum.

² Note: any work with the ethnic minority schools will depend on the needs of the MES.

Facilitate the activities of the working group to develop paper-based and electronic instructional content (Task 3). This work will start in Quarter 2.

Pilot new technology-based math methodology for grades 1-6 in 270 Georgian and 50 ethnic minority schools (Task 4). As described above under Output 1, the training modules described below are based on a diagnostic approach to teaching.

- *Develop modules on best practices in reading instruction.* From January 12 to 17, G-PriEd staff facilitated a workshop to create training materials for PDL-M teachers. COP Jim Wile provided outlines of the three modules to be developed and also explained the purpose of the final deliverable. By the end of the workshop, G-PriEd staff successfully developed the structure and content of three modules, including drafts of all lesson plans and training materials in written and electronic format for the MES' review and revision. The three modules covered the topics listed below:

- Teaching math in elementary grades,
- Teaching math in subject areas, and
- Creating environments that support math.

The workshop was attended by nine local math experts/trainers who developed sample lesson plans based on the diagnostic teaching pedagogy. Three representatives from the MES' General Education Department also participated in the workshop and will review the final draft materials.

In addition, Math Improvement Director Lasha Kokilashvili is currently communicating with three international experts (Ted Hull, Don Balka, and Ruth Miles), who are editing, revising and refining the training module structure. For example, the three international experts developed the main demonstration lesson plans along with the presentation guidelines for the trainer. The first module has already been reviewed by these international experts and is ready for translation into Georgian. The last day of the PDL-M workshop was devoted to adapting the EGMA tool. G-PriEd staff described the components and purpose of the assessment, and participants then incorporated the components of EGMA into subsections of the training modules.

- *PDL job description.* As mentioned above, G-PriEd staff and TPDC representatives collaborated to create a final version of the PDL job description.
- *PDL nomination form.* As mentioned under Output 1, G-PriEd staff created a form principals can use to nominate teachers within their schools to be PDL teachers.
- *PDL assessment tool.* As discussed under Output 1, G-PriEd staff created a tool to assess the impact of the G-PriEd pilot on PDL teachers.
- *PDL standards.* As mentioned above, G-PriEd staff developed a draft set of standards for PDL teachers.
- *Develop assessment tools.* During this reporting period, G-PriEd staff also began adapting the EGMA tool to the Georgian context. For each of the grades 1 through

6, G-PriEd staff drafted test items and sent the drafts to the MES agencies. In late January, the NCEQE and National Curriculum Center returned the EGMA with comments for grades 1-2. These comments have been addressed and incorporated into the current version of the assessment.

Input 2.2: Math delivery systems improved

Review/revise national assessment methodology (part of Task 4). This task will be planned on demand.

Develop remediation and promotions programs (Task 6).

- *Launch math media campaign.* G-PriEd staff have opened discussions with the MES' public relations department regarding launching a campaign to spread interest in boosting children's reading skills. We are currently discussing bringing out a communications specialist to begin planning the campaign, and hope to reach agreement with the MES regarding a good time for this international consultant to visit.
- *Discuss remediation strategies.* This work will start in Quarter 3.
- *Discuss promotion strategies.* This work will start in Quarter 3.

Output 3. Teacher training delivery systems strengthened

Input 3.1: Teacher retention policies improved

Advise the MES in creating effective induction and retention programs for teachers (Task 1). This work is scheduled to start in Quarter 2.

Propose effective mechanisms for developing a professional cadre for rural and mountain schools (Task 2). This work is scheduled to start in Quarter 2.

Input 3.2: In-service training improved

Help establish Teacher Houses, develop clear policies, and effective professional development approaches (Task 3). This work is scheduled to start in Quarter 2.

Support the Teacher Houses in attracting at least 10 reading and 10 math experts (Task 4). This work is scheduled to start in Quarter 2.

Support the Teacher Houses in nurturing at least 10 reading and 10 math experts (Tasks 5). This work is scheduled to start in Quarter 3.

Provide series of ToT sessions to at least 50 teacher trainers of reading and math (Task 6). As discussed in our previous monthly, during December, G-PriEd staff met with members of the TPDC to develop a profile of the teacher trainers that will work with the project. In agreement with the representatives of TPDC, the following qualification requirements were developed for the national trainers:

- Higher degree in education or in the fields related to the school subject areas;
- Experience in conducting trainings in the field of education;

- Experience in developing training modules in the field of education is preferred;
- Experience in teaching in the elementary school is preferred;
- In-depth knowledge of national curriculum, teacher standards, Teachers' Professional Development Scheme;
- In-depth knowledge of instructional and assessment methodologies;
- Excellent writing and verbal skills in Georgian;
- Excellent teamwork, communication and leadership skills;
- Ability to travel to Tbilisi and neighboring regions in Georgia to participate in the module development workshop and to conduct training sessions;
- Knowledge of minority languages (Armenian, Azeri) for the candidates who will conduct trainings in the ethnic minority schools is preferred;
- Knowledge of English is preferred.

Next, G-PriEd and TPDC staff solicited applications, reviewed some 200 candidates, and interviewed over 90 potential teacher trainers (41 candidates in math and 51 candidates in reading). In the end, the interview panel selected 56 trainer candidates, 32 of them come from Tbilisi and nearby and 24 come from Georgia's different regions. Since these trainers will work throughout the country, it was important to identify candidates that were from the region's in which they would work. Additional trainer candidates are currently being recruited from under-represented regions.

Input 3.3: Pre-service training improved

Review current education programs of universities (Task 7). This work is scheduled to start in Quarter 3.