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Georgia Primary Education Project  
საქართველოს დანახვითი განათლების პროექტი

# GEORGIA PRIMARY EDUCATION PROJECT

**MONTHLY REPORT**  
**MAY 1 – MAY 31**

**Contract No. AID-114-C-09-00003**  
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## MONTHLY REPORT

May 1 – May 31, 2012

During this reporting period, G-PriEd staff finalized selection of the reading and math task forces that will create classroom assessments, fielded an international consultant on diagnostic assessment who helped project staff review their training plan, fielded an international consultant on parent engagement who developed the first draft of a strategic framework, fielded an international consultant on communications who has developed the first draft of a G-PriEd communications plan, and continued to develop the conceptual framework for teacher professional development. (The draft communications plan is being reviewed by the project and will be shared with USAID in June.)

Below we provide further detail of this month's activities.

### Output 1: Math and reading instruction improved (the latter with a focus on the comprehension of informative texts)

During the reporting period, G-PriEd selected the individuals for the task forces on diagnostic assessment (for reading and math), developed frameworks in accordance with the standards of the Teachers' Professional Development Center (TPDC) outlining G-PriEd's training program, continued to identify additional national trainers, and held two workshops to inform the Ministry about the diagnostic teaching approach.

*Develop diagnostic assessments in reading and math (Task 1).* This reporting period, project staff continued to work to assemble the task forces for diagnostic assessment.

- *Create task forces to develop diagnostic tools.* In May, G-PriEd staff worked with staff of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) to interview and select members of the diagnostic assessment task force in reading and math. The table below identifies those individuals selected.

Selected Members of the Diagnostic Assessment Task Force in Reading	Selected Members of the Diagnostic Assessment Task Force in Math
Mzia Tsereteli, Psychometrician	
<b>Marika Zakareishvili, Inclusion Specialist**</b>	
Ivane Kechakmadze, Statistician	
Nino Elbakidze, Education Specialist	
Maia Araviashvili, Gender Specialist	Nino Durglishvili, Gender Specialist
<b>Irina Samsonia, Georgian Language Curriculum Expert**</b>	Khatuna Nanobashvili, Math Curriculum Expert
Avtandil Arabuli, Georgian Language Curriculum Expert	<b>Ekaterine Slovinsky, Math Curriculum Expert**</b>
Rusudan Kiknadze, Georgian Language Teacher	Revaz Tsitskishvili, Math Teacher
Lela Kobakhidze, Georgian Language Teacher	Natia Kobadze, Math Teacher
Maka Makharoblidze, Georgian Language	Davit Zaridze, Math Teacher

Selected Members of the Diagnostic Assessment Task Force in Reading	Selected Members of the Diagnostic Assessment Task Force in Math
Teacher	
Maia Areshidze, Georgian Language Teacher	Natalia Shanidze, Math Teacher

\*\* Those whose names are bolded above work directly for the Ministry of Education and Science. As a result, the project will not be able to hire them due to prohibitions put in place by the Georgian Law on Civil Service. However, if Ms. Samsonia and Ms. Slovinsky move to the National Examinations Center (as is anticipated) and cease direct work for the Ministry, the project will be able to hire them.

- *Develop diagnostic assessment.* G-PriEd has recruited international experts to lead the development of the reading and math diagnostic assessment. They will both visit in June to begin working with the working groups to develop the assessments.

*Develop and conduct impact assessment (Task 2).*

- *Develop study sampling strategy.* G-PriEd’s M&E specialist updated the sampling strategy developed earlier by the project to reflect the actual number of schools and students included in G-PriEd’s sample
- *Develop research design, methodology, and plan for reporting.* G-PriEd’s M&E specialist has begun work to develop the design of G-PriEd’s impact assessment, which she will continue in consultation with international experts who will visit the project in June. The impact assessment is expected to measure two key elements: G-PriEd’s impact on student learning outcomes in reading and math, and G-PriEd’s impact on teacher effectiveness. Change in learning outcomes will be measured using the diagnostic assessments for reading and math. However, the project is still investigating different alternatives to measure impact on teacher effectiveness. One set of strategies under consideration are pre-test/post-tests as part of the coaching training, a survey of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge/attitudes, and classroom observation.

*Develop teacher training program to improve the teaching of reading and math and encourage teachers to use appropriate language for reading instructions (Task 3).*

- *Create working group (TPDC, project, experts, international experts) to develop teacher training manuals.* G-PriEd staff have opened conversations with TPDC regarding establishing a working group to develop the training materials, and TPDC staff indicated they are interested in participating. G-PriEd had previously employed a number of module writers, and TPDC indicated that they are interested in continuing to work with these individuals. The next steps for the project are to: (1) determine whether these module writers are currently working with the Georgian government, and (2) submit their names to the reference committee (of G-PriEd’s five key counterparts) to determine whether they have any feedback on these individuals. G-PriEd will finalize the international experts to work on the trainings in June.
- *Develop training manuals describing methodologies, tools, and strategies for both trainers and trainees (both leader teachers and other teachers).* During the month of May, G-PriEd’s Reading Improvement Director revised a training cycle on

phonics. The project COTR reviewed it and gave feedback. In addition, the Reading Improvement Director and the Math Improvement Director worked with international expert on diagnostic teaching, Marjorie Lipson, to clarify a framework for teacher training that would help teachers understand (1) diagnostic teaching, (2) how to improve the teaching of reading and math, and (3) how to coach other teachers (for the coaches). Currently, the 12 modules of the training program cover the six elements listed below.

- Understanding Diagnostic Teaching
- Understanding the Components of Reading/Math and the Reading/Math Process
- Creating Environment for Teaching Reading/Math
- Teaching Reading/Math in Primary Grades
- Teaching Reading/Math in Subject Areas
- Leading Professional Development

This new training framework will be further elaborated with TPDC staff for both reading and math in June. After a common framework is agreed upon with TPDC, G-PriEd will begin work with the working groups mentioned above to (1) propose any revisions to the framework and (2) develop the training content.

With respect to the module on leading professional development, G-PriEd's Teaching Effectiveness Director revised it to reflect the three-phase model proposed for professional development (these three phases were previously called minimum-basic, minimum-expanded, and advanced). The revised draft of the module is aimed at preparing literacy/numeracy leaders for serving in the first and second phases of the professional development leadership program that mainly involves small group and individual activities with teachers. In addition, the Teacher Effectiveness Director developed new in-class demonstration and guided practice activities by incorporating the video clips from the Literacy Coaching Series created by the LearnSure, Inc. The project is considering securing the rights to use these clips (dubbed into Georgian) during the initial training. In subsequent trainings, the project will replace them with Georgian examples.

The Teacher Effectiveness Director has also developed a matrix for the training sessions on leading professional development (which currently cover three days of the 12-day training). The matrix provides detailed information on the goals and expected outcomes of the training sessions, as well as a detailed agenda of each daily session. The matrix also lists the items from the teacher professional development standards that will be directly or indirectly accomplished as part of the training sessions.

- *Diagnostic teaching workshops.* To give Ministry staff a broader background in diagnostic teaching, international consultant Marjorie Lipson held two workshops for Ministry staff, staff from MES agencies, and teachers. The first workshop covered diagnostic teaching and the second covered using diagnostic assessment to inform instruction. Approximately 15 people attended both sessions. Below, we summarize the topics discussed.

- *Expected learning outcomes.* A fundamental assumption of diagnostic teaching is that all students are expected to reach the same learning standards. The standards do not change to fit the student. However, the teacher needs to provide sufficient and appropriate support for the diverse range of abilities in the classroom.
- *Grouping for instruction.* One of the key characteristics of diagnostic teaching is that teachers spend more time working closely with students who need additional support. This means less time spent on whole class instruction. There seemed to be high level of interest in strategies for organizing students in independent and teacher led groups.
- *Independent learning.* The videos and photographs used during the workshop illustrated that children in classrooms where teachers use diagnostic teaching strategies have acquired skills for managing their own time and directing their own learning. Activities such as collaborative inquiry, literature discussion, or independent practice with manipulatives required children to use important skills for self-management. The question was how much time teachers must spend specifically to teach children these independent learning skills and whether Georgian elementary school teachers are currently providing instruction on learning how to learn.
- *Opportunities to learn.* Attendees at the workshop pointed out that diagnostic teaching methods may require more time than typical classroom instruction currently used in Georgia. It was also pointed out that typical class periods in Georgia are significantly shorter in length than comparable classrooms in the United States. The project will need to find ways of adapting diagnostic teaching to the existing structure or explore creative options for flexible scheduling.
- *Explicit instruction.* Dr. Lipson provided a model that suggested that 80 percent of students will reach target learning expectations simply as a result of effective instruction. Effective instruction was defined as providing students with explicit information not only about what is to be learned and how it can help them in math or reading, but that teachers actually model or think aloud to model the cognitive processes they want children to use when solving a mathematics problem or making an inference when they read. Attending teachers discussed whether such explicit instruction is currently common practice in Georgian elementary schools.
- *Assessment.* Dr. Lipson described classroom assessment as a structured way of “noticing” what students were doing in the classroom. Attending teachers felt that this sort of “noticing” was not currently part of the routine teaching practice.

In general, the reaction of attendees at the workshop was positive, and those present said they felt the use of diagnostic teaching could bring a lot of value to Georgia. However, there was concern expressed about using a term (“diagnostic teaching”) that teachers are not familiar with. Those present felt that “formative-assessment-based teaching” (or something similar) would be more familiar to teachers, that it encapsulated the important elements of diagnostic teaching, and that it would ease their learning process.

- *Hire national trainers.* This reporting period, G-PriEd staff continued the process of hiring additional national trainers, specifically those from the regions. Overall,

the project is seeking 11 additional national trainers. In May, G-PriEd staff collaborated with TPDC to short-list candidates from among the pool of applicants. Through this process, 18 candidates for reading national trainers and 10 candidates for math national trainers were short-listed. These candidates will be interviewed by G-PriEd and TPDC staff in June.

*Develop age- and language-appropriate reading and math materials (paper-based and electronic) (Task 4).* No activities under this task in this reporting period. It is anticipated that the working group that develops the training materials will also support this activity.

*Distribute an adequate supply of age- and language-appropriate reading and math materials (paper-based and electronic) (Task 5).* No activities under this task in this reporting period.

*Pilot the new reading and math programs in 209 Georgian and 109 ethnic minority schools (Task 6).* No activities under this task in this reporting period. The pilot is planned to start in September.

*Facilitate expansion of the new reading and math program throughout Georgia (Task 7).* No activities planned in Year 1.

## **Output 2: Reading and math delivery systems improved**

During this reporting period, G-PriEd staff coordinated with the World Bank regarding their upcoming mission on national assessment and fielded an international consultant on parent engagement.

*Suggest reading and math benchmarks and appropriate policy changes for Georgia (Task 8).* No activities under this task in this reporting period.

*Support the MES' system of testing reading and math outcomes nationally (Task 9).* During the reporting period, G-PriEd staff met with the World Bank to better understand their ongoing work in this area. The World Bank is awarding the Ministry a grant of approximately \$300,000 to improve Georgia's national assessment. In June, they will have a consultant, Vincent Greaney, visit Georgia to work with the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE). The purpose of this visit is to develop a plan to improve the capacity of the NCEQE. G-PriEd and the World Bank have agreed that they will review the content of this plan together (in consultation with USAID) to identify whether there are sections of the plan that G-PriEd could support and sections that the World Bank could support.

*Promote parent and community engagement in children's reading outcomes including through strengthened school management committees if appropriate (Task 10).* In May, G-PriEd's Parent Engagement Advisor Ron Mirr visited Tbilisi in order to begin work with the Parent Engagement Working Group. Mr. Mirr met with the working group and Maia Siphshvili to begin discussion about a parent engagement model for Georgia. Following the meeting, Mr. Mirr drafted a concept paper for parent engagement in which he outlined five best practices recommended for any model that Georgia adopts:

- *Schools and parents need to have a shared vision of how they can work together.* A shared vision ensures that parents and teachers/principals can work together effectively and that they don't frustrate each other in their attempts to support children. Such a shared vision is often supported by written documents (such as a compact) that define the role of each group in the education process.
- *Parent engagement is connected to learning.* Parent engagement should be seen by both schools and parents as part of a broader instructional strategy that is focused on student outcomes. Successful programs do not have family engagement as a goal in and of itself, rather parent engagement is one tool — along with quality instruction — that promotes increased student achievement, particularly in reading and math.
- *Schools should take an organizational approach to parent engagement.* An organizational approach requires leadership from the Ministry and from principals, who must provide teachers with a common set of expectations for parent engagement as well as tools and strategies for them to use to effectively engage parents. Such a common approach reduces parent frustration as their children move from one teacher to another and supports the shared vision mentioned above.
- *The Ministry, principals, teachers, and families must share information effectively.* To keep parents engaged, they need to receive information about what is expected of them, about what they can do to support their child's learning, and how their child is progressing. As the people who know their children the best, parents can also provide key information to teachers about developing problems if they know the school will act on the information if they share it.
- *Data is collected and evaluated to ensure accountability and continuous learning.* Parents and school personnel need to understand the research that ties parent engagement to improved learning outcomes. Then the Ministry should help schools develop the capacity to collect data to evaluate the impact of parent engagement on student outcomes so they can use this information to help all students succeed.

After reviewing the paper, Ms. Sibrashvili and the working group requested some additional examples from programs around the world that illustrate these principles in action. Unfortunately, before Mr. Mirr could comply with this request, he had a family emergency and had to leave Georgia. Equally unfortunately, he will no longer be able to work with the project. G-PriEd is conducting a recruit for his replacement, which we hope to wrap up in June. In addition, G-PriEd has conducted a recruit (in collaboration with Ms. Sibrashvili's staff) for a local coordinator who can continue to work with the Parent Engagement Working Group and who can gather information from parents, teachers, and principals through focus groups.

- *Support development of a communications plan for parent engagement.* During May, a communications specialist visited the project and attended the meetings of the Parent Engagement Working Group in order to prepare to develop a communications plan for parent engagement in July. She will review the group's conceptual framework and focus-group data once they are complete, and will return for a second trip to complete the communications plan in July.

## **Output 2. Teacher training and other systems strengthened that support reading and math**

### **Input 3.1: Teacher retention policies improved**

*Advise the MES in creating effective induction and retention programs for teachers, especially in the rural and ethnic minority areas (Task 1).* No activities under this task in this reporting period.

### **Input 3.2: In-service training improved**

*Develop concept paper for school-based professional development (Task 2).* In May, G-PriEd's Teacher Effectiveness Director revised the conceptual framework on school-based professional development based on feedback from (1) international consultant Rita Bean, (2) Maia Siphashvili (from MES) and Teona Kupatadze (from the Teacher Professional Development Center) and USAID. The most significant changes include the following.

- *Workload of literacy/numeracy leaders and estimated supplementary salaries.* Based on recommendations from USAID, three types of workload options were identified for literacy/numeracy leaders based on the number of teachers and suggested weekly working hours of the teachers. Based on the workload proposals, G-PriEd estimated the amount of supplementary salaries for literacy and numeracy leaders for the first and second phases of the professional development program for each pilot school.
- *Selection of the literacy/numeracy leaders.* Based on recommendations from MES and TPDC, G-PriEd proposed a new proposed mechanism for selecting literacy and numeracy leaders. In this option, principals propose candidates for the professional development leader, and the resumes of these proposed individuals are reviewed by the Ministry and G-PriEd prior to their confirmation as teacher leaders.

The revised version of the conceptual framework on school-based professional development will be presented to the MES and relevant agencies in June. Upon the approval of the conceptual framework, G-PriEd will arrange and hold the orientation meetings for the pilot school principals.

*Support TPDC and MES to adopt an effective, sustainable, school-based approach to teacher professional development. (Task 3).* No activities under this task in this reporting period.

### **Input 3.3: Pre-service training improved**

*Review current education programs of universities (Task 4).* This activity will start in Quarter 4.