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Room to Learn South Sudan

FY 2014 QUARTER I PROGRESS REPORT

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

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AES	Alternative Education System
AET	Africa Educational Trust
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
CAA	Community Asset Appraisal
DFID	(United Kingdom's) Department for International Development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDC	Education Development Center, Inc.
ECEG	Education through Community Empowerment Grants
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FHI360	Family Health International
GESS	Girls' Education South Sudan
GOSS	Government of South Sudan
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RtL	Room to Learn South Sudan project
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMoE	State Ministry of Education
SMS	Short Message Service
SSI	Safer Schools Index
SSIRI	South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction
SSTEP	South Sudan Teacher Education Program
TCN	Third Country National
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. ROOM TO LEARN SOUTH SUDAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Note: This is the first progress report for Room to Learn South Sudan (RtL) submitted by Winrock International. The Cooperative Agreement between USAID/South Sudan and Winrock was fully executed effective August 26, 2013. Some activities described in this report predate the start of the quarter on October 1, 2013.

Qualitative Impact

Room to Learn South Sudan (RtL) is led by Winrock International with three international organizations planned as subgrantees: Family Health International (FHI360), Plan International, USA, and Souktel, Inc. RtL used the first full quarter of the program to begin building the implementation team, establishing operations, carrying out consultations with major stakeholders, and collaboratively developing a work plan that refined the proposed RtL approaches in order to reflect the current operating environment.

Consultations began with the United States Agency for International Development/South Sudan (USAID), and the Government of South Sudan (GOSS), specifically the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) at the national and sub-national levels. These consultations confirmed the selection of five states for implementation of RtL, namely Jonglei, Lakes, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, and Warrap States. RtL also met with education stakeholders from the United Nations (UN), donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure the deepest understanding of the other approaches and activities in South Sudan. With a very vibrant and diverse community of education stakeholders, the focus of consultations was to identify possible areas of collaboration, key lessons learned that could inform RtL's work, and resources that might be relevant for RtL.

The RtL team focused on several technical areas during consultations. These included: access to education by vulnerable or marginalized populations; safety of school environments; quality of education paying particular attention to the acquisition of literacy skills; psychosocial wellbeing of learners and teachers; gender dimensions of education; school governance; alternative education approaches (such as pastoralist education models and community girls' schools); and effective community mobilization.

The development of the work plan was an opportunity to engage RtL stakeholders directly. Using combined teams including representatives from the three organizations with an in-country presence, RtL conducted field visits to all five states and met with the political and technical leaders of the State Ministries of Education (SMoE) in each state, as well as UN agencies, NGOs, and PTA members. Using guidelines and questions the team had developed, the field visits yielded important information and data used to prepare the work plan. Following the state visits, RtL convened a work plan meeting in Juba and invited state representatives to participate directly in the planning process. Through these interactions, RtL identified linkages to strategic education plans (at the central and state level) and established relationships with key education actors and stakeholders.

Stemming from the consultations, MoEST officials invited RtL team members to participate in meetings and workshops related to curriculum and education policy development.

RtL staff also undertook technical work on the grants manual and mechanisms, the Safer Schools Index (SSI), the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Souktel deployed one of their programmers to South Sudan to determine the requirements for the mobile-phone-based applications that RtL will use to reach remote populations.

Quantitative Impact

RtL does not have any quantitative impacts to report for this reporting period during start-up phase.

Project Administration

RtL hired and deployed the Project Director, Director of Grants and the Director of Community Mobilization within four weeks of signing the Cooperative Agreement. Two positions in FHI360's budget were not immediately filled. The Director of Education proposed was no longer available at the time of the award and a candidate nominated in his place withdrew his candidacy. The Director of Monitoring and Evaluation was also not immediately available but was hired at the beginning of November. In mid-November the Project Director tendered his resignation, citing health concerns, and in mid-December the Director of Community Mobilization also resigned. Recruitment for the Project Director began immediately. Three days after the Director of Community Mobilization's resignation, conflict erupted in Juba and quickly spread to other states. International staff were evacuated to their homes of record and recruitment for the Director of Community Mobilization was put on hold.

Drawing on the long-standing presence in South Sudan, Winrock and FHI360 were able to identify and hire technical and operational staff. The organizations made an effort to harmonize benefits and policies so as to build a more cohesive team.

RtL established the Juba office in the compound that Winrock had used for the BRIDGE program. RtL received many of the assets from BRIDGE including vehicles, furniture, generators, and prefab structures in Juba, Kwajok and Aweil, which enabled the team to set up relatively quickly. In November, Winrock held discussions with the AOR about the location of the RtL headquarters and the program's presence in the state capitals. Agreement was reached on establishing RtL's headquarters office in Juba and opening a small presence in each state capital to foster good relationships and improve supervision and effectiveness of the county teams. The RtL work plan proposed related staffing adjustments.

Winrock signed Letters of Intent with FHI360, Plan International, and Souktel, and subsequently signed a full subgrant with FHI360 on December 19, 2013. Before concluding a subgrant, Plan International proposed a new budget with a shortened period of implementation. As of the end of the quarter, discussions were underway between the organizations to resolve the differences. Negotiations with Souktel on their full subgrant were postponed until the following quarter.

With the security crisis on December 15, international staff were evacuated and the RtL offices were temporarily closed and in-country program activities came to a halt. RtL paid local staff in December during the lull in hostilities in Juba so staff had financial resources to help them cover their expenses.

Subsequent Quarter's Work Plan

Due to the security situation which intervened, many activities planned towards the end of the quarter were put on hold, including the submission of a revised costed work plan, the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP), and the Gender Action Plan. Recruiting was halted, along with the development of the capacity needs assessment tools for county and payam education staff, and the refinement of the Safer Schools Index (SSI). To the extent that security permits these activities to go forward in the coming quarter, it is RtL's intent to develop a new work plan that factors in the changed circumstances. Since RtL does not have an approved work plan, Winrock will be in close communication with the AOR and the Education Office Director to discuss appropriate plans. Depending on prevailing conditions, RtL intends to begin working in up to seven select counties in the coming nine months.

II. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS (QUALITATIVE IMPACT)

Pre-quarter activities: Prior to the start of the quarter (for which no progress report was requested by USAID), Winrock was able to complete hiring and deploy the three key personnel positions staffed by Winrock including RtL Project Director John Raleigh, Director of Grants Sahar Al-Rufai, and Director of Community Mobilization Mary Mogga. Following his arrival in South Sudan, the RtL Project Director had the opportunity to meet other Chiefs of Party at a meeting convened by USAID, and then he attended the National Education Forum at which he was introduced to senior national and state MoEST officials, setting the stage for subsequent interactions and meetings during the reporting period. In initial meetings, USAID raised the possibility that it might be appropriate to work in Lakes State rather than in Upper Nile State as envisioned in the Request for Applications, a suggestion that was ultimately endorsed by the national Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and adopted by RtL.

Introductions and consultations: During the quarter, Winrock and its on-site partners, namely FHI360 and Plan International, focused on laying a solid programmatic foundation by conducting extensive consultations and establishing good professional relationships with key government officials as well as education and child welfare stakeholders within the donor, United Nations, and NGO communities at the national and state levels. The purpose of the consultations was to gain additional insights into the educational and psychosocial needs of children in South Sudan broadly and in the five selected states in particular. The team was particularly interested in understanding extant efforts to foster collaboration and prevent costly duplication of efforts.

Meetings at the Ministry of Education: The RTL team organized meetings with a number of Directorates and Departments to introduce the RTL project and its activities. The team met with the Directorate of Alternative Education System, the Departments of Curriculum Development and National Languages and the Directorate of Gender and Social Change. The MoEST Office of the Development Partners organized these meetings at the team's request.

Field visits to the five states and SMoE engagement in work planning: The Project Director convened a one-day meeting in Juba to prepare for team visits to the five RtL states. During the meeting, RtL staff developed a matrix to describe the steps to develop the work plan. The team developed a contact list of national- and state-level senior education officials for initial information collection to support the development of work plan. Team members also developed a set of questions and guidelines that they used to assist in the collection of data and information during the state visits. The Undersecretary of Education paved the way by signing a letter introducing RtL to State Ministries of Education (SMoEs) that urged them to cooperate with program staff.

In October and November RtL teams with representatives from Winrock, FHI360 and Plan International conducted visits to Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, Jonglei, Unity, and Lakes States. The purpose of the visits was three-fold: 1) to introduce the program to State Ministries of Education; 2) to meet with SMoE technical officials to establish an understanding of the linkages between State Education Strategic Plans and RtL activities; and 3) to elicit key information about the educational needs and gaps to inform program design and interventions. Team members also met with NGOs implementing education programs in the states and met with some PTA members. The visit to Lakes State occurred later than the other states because confirmation of its inclusion in RtL occurred in October.

On November 6–8, Winrock organized a meeting in Juba, inviting SMoE representatives that team members had identified during state visits. It was too late to include representatives from Lakes State. The purpose of the meeting was to develop more specific plans for RtL implementation in the first year, with particular attention paid to community mobilization, formal education, AES, and distance learning. Each state team was asked to recommend counties for RtL's higher investment activities. State teams

had rich discussions about the activities that might be undertaken and which counties were suitable for entry in year 1. However, due to the illness of the Project Director the meeting was not as well-planned and productive as expected, although team members pitched in to facilitate sessions that the Project Director was unable to lead.

Review of lessons learned by national and international NGOs to assist RtL

implementation: In December, the Materials and Curriculum Development Specialist conducted consultations with international and national non-government organizations (NGO), based in Juba, to gather information and lessons learned on education activities which are part of RtL's portfolio. These activities include:

- Promotion of literacy: (EDC SSTEP, IBIS, UNESCO, Africa Educational Trust (AET));
- Increase enrollment, retention and completion of girls in community based primary education programs (BRAC);
- Enhance teacher development and improve learning using technological devices (UNICEF, British Council, War Child, GESS and AET supported by European Union);
- Increase access through alternative education programming (Save the Children in South Sudan, Norwegian Refuge Council, BRAC, IBIS, UNESCO, and Windle Trust).

The purpose was to identify lessons learned—successes and challenges—to improve the effectiveness of RtL, RtL may build upon this knowledge in the development and implementation of RtL activities.

Participation in National Curriculum Conference: In November, the Materials and Curriculum Development Specialist represented RtL at the national curriculum stakeholders' consultative conference, held by the Ministry of General Education and Instruction. The purpose of the conference was to create opportunities for education stakeholders' to review the draft South Sudan Curriculum Framework, provide information for gaps and additional suggestions for any further revisions prior to the finalization and production of the curriculum

The conference was chaired by the MoEST Undersecretary; Dr. Brian Male, the Curriculum Foundation UK; and the Director of Quality Promotion and Innovation. More than 200 education stakeholders participated in this conference. This included Central and State Ministers of Education, State Governors, University Chancellors and Professors, education partners, MoEST Curriculum Developer, State Directors General of Education, Directors of Education, School Supervisors, Principals and Tutors from teacher education institutions, teachers and representatives of secondary school students.

The curriculum review included several new areas of development for the South Sudan curriculum:

- Provision for Early Childhood Development – the curriculum framework specifies what should be taught in pre-primary education centers (kindergarten and nursery schools) and teaching methodology
- Teaching of national languages as a subject and introduction of foreign languages from primary grade five
- Student competencies and assessment procedures
- Introduction of Information and Computer Technology (ICT) and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) through an integrated approach
- Inclusion of cross cutting issues and school programs that provide time for “personal development, guidance and career, co-curricular activities”

National and foreign languages: The medium of instruction in ECD centers will be selected by the kindergarten or nursery school to fit the prevailing local circumstances. The medium of instruction in lower primary classes (primary 1 to 3) will be an officially recognized national language. Materials will be

produced in national languages for primary 1 to 3 classes. Oral English (speaking and listening skills) will be introduced and taught as a subject alongside the national language. The oral and aural skills component of the English program will build students' English vocabulary from which their reading will be based at a later time.

Primary 4 and 5 will be considered transitional years, with lesson instruction in English, however, classroom instruction will be supported by the prevailing national language, used in grades 1-3. By the end of primary 5 all subjects other than the national and foreign languages will be taught in English. Kiswahili will be a required subject from Primary 5 to Secondary 2, reflecting its importance as a regional language. Arabic and French will be offered as optional languages from Primary 5; other foreign languages will be optional from Secondary 1. Students opting for Arabic or French at Primary 5 will continue with this course of language study until Secondary 2.

Participation at Alternative Education System meeting: In December, the RtL Materials and Curriculum Development Specialist represented RtL at the MoEST Alternative Education System Advisory Committee meeting. Three donor agencies (European Union, DFID, and USAID) and eight development education organizations (Stromme Foundation, Norwegian Refugee Council, Winrock/FHI360 RtL, Save the Children UK, UNESCO, Windle Trust, BRAC and Lutheran World Federation) participated in the meeting where the Director General for AES updated members on the language policy and progress made reviewing and approving the literacy policy.

Refinement of the Safer Schools Index: The Safer Schools Index is a composite set of ratings that specifies areas of focus and incremental gains required for a school community to offer safer access to quality education, expand education opportunities that are inclusive, improve students and teacher wellbeing, and increase student achievement. School communities will be asked to utilize the SSI to measure and illustrate how safe and inclusive the school community is and they will record the results at specified intervals with the initial measures serving as a baseline. The SSI will inform the development of the School Improvement Plan that will be executed through the use of the Education through Community Empowerment Grants (ECEG).

It is conceived as a community mobilization tool and an accountability mechanism that can be understood by community members. The RtL team had initial meetings with USAID and MSI (contracted by USAID/South Sudan to conduct external evaluations) to discuss how the SSI could be integrated into the planned impact evaluation, and to determine if there might be some elements of the index (such as the gender parity index) that should be excluded to preserve the integrity of the impact evaluation. During the quarter, RtL team members worked together to refine the structure of the Safer Schools Index (SSI) and to establish standard criteria for selecting any particular rating.

Development of overview of School Improvement Plan: In collaboration with the RtL Grants Director, FHI360 staff members contributed to the development of guidelines for use during the new staff orientation workshop and worked on draft guidelines providing an overview of the School Improvement Plan.

The RtL School Improvement Plan is a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to undertake to achieve the following: 1) safe access to quality education and 2) expanded, inclusive education that reaches all children, particularly those in remote communities, children who are socially excluded such as girls, and children with special learning needs. The SIP will also be used to support activities which improve student and teacher wellbeing, increase community engagement, and increase learning achievement. The SIP shows how the planned changes are to be realized by articulating clearly what is to be done, by whom, when and target dates for each activity completion. Improvements, in each area,

will be based on the findings of the RtL Safer School Index. The SIP is also a way through which the public can hold schools accountable as well as measure a school's qualitative improvement.

Souktel technical development: In December, Yazeed Sheqem of Souktel conducted a visit to Juba, to determine RtL's requirements for mobile-phone based solutions and services, including one-way and two-way text messaging, SMS text libraries, audio libraries, and audio messaging. In addition to meeting the RtL team, he met the Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services; Zain, MTM, and Vivacell Mobile service providers; BBC Media Action; and Windle Trust. Souktel will refine the mobile phone-related requirements of the program based on the finalized list of activities as provided by the program team.

Development of revised office structure to better serve programmatic needs: During the quarter Winrock assessed the operational footprint and budget and proposed a new plan to USAID, moving the RtL headquarters from Kwajok to Juba and establishing a small presence at the state level to support county teams. The decision reflects RtL and USAID's understanding of the changed realities on the ground that made it logistically challenging to operate out of Kwajok only a short time after the proposal was submitted (specifically the closure of the airstrip in Kwajok). The decision also shows RtL and USAID's ability to adapt quickly in a fast-changing environment. It would have been more challenging to evacuate expatriates and TCN staff from Kwajok rather than from Juba when the armed conflict started. Having a presence at the state level will facilitate building relations and mutual understanding with each State Ministry of Education and will support closer supervision of the county teams.

Lessons Learned

From the start, Winrock has emphasized to its in-country partners the critical importance of functioning as one Room to Learn team, and not as separate entities with independent scopes of work. As RtL staff meet with officials, they represent the project (rather than Winrock or FHI360 or Plan), and we believe that government and other stakeholders will have a more coherent view of the project as a consequence. In addition, Winrock has found the USAID/South Sudan education team to be supportive and open to discussions and joint problem solving. Promoting the spirit of cooperation and making sure that RtL and USAID are on the same page helps tackle issues together rather than having to defend the decisions taken later.

After suffering a number of illnesses in succession, the Project Director tendered his resignation and departed on November 15. Project and home office staff observed his ill health, and members of the team pitched in to provide the needed support. Both home office program managers, Martha Saldinger and Kate Torre, extended their first stay in country and returned a second time. Flexibility and a willingness to adapt to the realities of South Sudan's harsh environment are requirements to ensure that the program can move forward even when an individual is unable to work.

Communications with other stakeholders on the ground provides collaboration opportunities and helps RtL avoid duplicating efforts. The GESS program has developed the equivalent of a School Improvement Plan that, while not in its final form, is likely to be very useful as RtL County Teams enter school communities and work with them to identify priorities for their RtL grants.

Although originally conceived to have a RtL headquarters in Kwajok, the cessation of direct air service from Juba to Kwajok since the submission of the proposal and Kwajok's limited economy prompted Winrock to propose a change in RtL's base of operations from Kwajok to Juba. Also, although state-level offices had not been planned for all states, a reevaluation of program strategy and the budget impelled Winrock to propose the establishment of state offices. Recognizing issues in the program

design at an early stage and making the necessary changes helps avoid bigger issues, delay and waste of resources and efforts later throughout the program.

The eruption of conflict on December 15, 2013 put into sharp focus the reality that stability in South Sudan is very fragile, and that RtL must develop flexible implementation plans in order to respond quickly and adapt to a variety of changing circumstances on the ground, while keeping an eye on achieving the program objectives. Having a robust emergency and evacuation plan is critical to ensuring the safety of program staff and security of program assets. RtL had a strong local network that allowed the program management to get timely information and take informed decisions during the outbreak of violence in December. RtL has prioritized maintaining contact with staff (both third country nationals and South Sudanese) who left the country or, in the case of South Sudanese fled to their home villages. This has Winrock to keep the team informed of security and program developments and has enabled program work to continue.

The experience of staff has enabled RtL to overcome many of the challenges of start-up. Staff (expatriates and TCNs) with previous experience in South Sudan facilitates quick program start up and increases the chances of success for the program. Local staff who have worked for the three RtL organizations on education programs have also contributed enormously both technically and operationally.

III. PROGRAM PROGRESS (QUANTITATIVE IMPACT)

No quantitative impacts were documented during this quarter of program start-up prior to the submission of the PMP.

IV. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The RtL Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) outlines the performance and monitoring indicators, which are aligned, to the extent possible, with the Ministry of Education's *General Education Strategy (2012–2017)*, and track critical areas in which RtL works. The PMP will enable project personnel to manage and document project performance, and will allow the project's reporting requirements to be integrated and harmonized with those of the USAID/South Sudan Education Team. The PMP collects information to determine whether RtL is meeting activity benchmarks; meeting or not meeting benchmarks will trigger closer inspection of assumptions or other external factors affecting implementation.

During the quarter, the RtL team led by FHI360 developed a narrative to support the PMP and list of draft indicators. However, given the closure of the RtL offices due to insecurity in South Sudan, a review of the indicators and discussion on targets with the larger RtL team did not occur during the quarter and submission to USAID was postponed to await a clearer picture of the future prospects for the program.

Work will continue in the coming quarter to adjust, finalize, and submit the PMP and to draft the initial baseline data collection tools. Once the PMP has been approved by USAID and if and when the security situation permits RtL to field staff to the states, the instruments will be tested and refined, as required. The Room to Learn team will initiate data collection in secure areas.

V. PROGRESS ON LINKS TO OTHER USAID PROGRAMS

The South Sudan Teacher Education Program (SSTEP) and RtL help meetings in December 2013 to identify lessons learned—successes and challenges—to improve the effectiveness of RtL in terms of the promotion of literacy.

Windle Trust is widely associated with delivering intensive English courses targeting teachers and government officials in South Sudan. Windle Trust mainly uses face-to-face workshops to deliver the intensive English workshops. Intensive English is one of the Alternative Education System components. Windle Trust knows the whereabouts of **South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction (SSIRI)** MP3 players and teacher development materials that could be of use to RtL. Since the closure of SSIRI project these resources have been under-utilized. The MP3 players and soft copies of teacher development materials were handed over to MoEST Director General of AES. Underutilization of the closed SSIRI project was further confirmed by the Director AES at the recent AES Advisory Committee meeting which took place at Intra Africa Hotel on December 12. Depending on location, status and relevance of this resource, RtL might utilize the SSIRI materials to support the RtL commitment to teacher development, the Pastoralist Education Program and Early Grade Reading.

VI. PROGRESS ON LINKS WITH GOSS AGENCIES

In September, Winrock renewed its registration with the Government of South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, which is required of NGOs wishing to operate in the country.

During this reporting period, RtL staff conducted a number of meetings with representatives from the national and regional Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST). On November 26, 2013, the Undersecretary of the MoEST, Mr. Deng Deng Hok Yai, wrote a letter to the state ministers of Lakes, Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity and Jonglei, introducing the program.

In coordination with Esther Akuma, MoEST Director of Development Partners and George Ali, Deputy Director, a number of meetings were held at the ministry in Juba with the following Directors:

- Odur Nelson, Acting Director of AES
- Moses Mading Marial, Director of National Languages
- Ben Lou Poggo, Director of Special Needs Education
- Atanasio Mamgbi, Senior Inspector of Girl's Education
- Joy Gordon, Director of Gender.

During October 2013, RtL staff travelled to Warrap, Northern Bahr Al Ghazal, Unity and Jonglei to introduce the program and discuss cooperation opportunities with the state ministries of education. In December 2013, and following USAID's decision to add Lakes State to RtL geographic focus, RtL travelled to Lakes state and conducted meetings with the state minister and the directors of the different departments.

In November 2013, RtL conducted a three-day workshop to discuss the Year 1 work plan. Thirty representatives from the National and State Ministry of Education contributed to the work plan.

RtL received an invitation to attend the national curriculum stakeholders' consultative conference, convened by the Ministry of Education. The purpose of the conference was to create opportunities for education stakeholders' to review the draft South Sudan Curriculum Framework, provide information for gaps and additional suggestions for any further revisions prior to the finalization and production of the curriculum. RtL provided input on the linkages between RtL activities and the national curriculum.

RtL was also invited to participate in the AES Sector Working Group meeting, which includes development of literacy materials relevant to Pastoral Education Program work planned.

In December, RtL was represented at the MoEST Alternative Education Services Advisory Committee meeting. Three donor agencies (European Union, DFID, and USAID) and eight development education organizations (STROMME Foundation, NRC, Winrock/FHI360 RtL, Save the Children UK, UNESCO, Windle Trust, BRAC and Lutheran World Federation) participated in the meeting where the Director General for AES updated members on the language policy and progress made on reviewing and approval process of the literacy policy.

RtL had two meetings in Juba with Jonglei State Minister of Education on December 11 and 13. The Minister provided valuable input on the education situation in the state and the priority counties.

VII. PROGRESS ON USAID FORWARD

During this reporting period, RtL conducted a survey to identify local NGOs who are eligible for RtL funding. Part of the program activities will be implemented through grants to some of these NGOs. So far, 19 NGOs were identified, many of which are based or have offices in one or more of RtL states. Before awarding a grant to local NGOs, RtL will conduct institutional capacity assessments to determine the aspects that require further strengthening.

VIII. SUSTAINABILITY AND EXIT STRATEGY

While RtL staff met with a number of USAID- and other donor-funded programs to identify potential linkages and areas to leverage resources, the ongoing conflict in South Sudan requires a review of some of the proposed approaches in the current context. In the coming quarter RtL hopes to expand partnerships with programs such as the DFID-funded GESS program which utilizes an innovative approach to remotely track school attendance and disburse performance based grants to schools. Additionally, RtL may also collaborate with BRAC to leverage girls' learning centers in remote communities, and explore collaborations with Windle Trust, UNICEF, British Council, War Child Holland and Mango Tree to identify innovative approaches to distance learning, pastoralist education and early grade learning and streamlining training guides and materials across programs. The section titled 'Collaboration with other USAID funded programs' provides details of these opportunities. Given the current circumstances, RtL may collaborate with USAID funded VISTAS program to identify opportunities for quick disbursement of small grants in remote communities. Any interventions designed and implemented will need to be self-sustaining so that in the event of a crisis or prolonged emergency, schools and communities can continue to deliver essential education services without external support.

IX. SUBSEQUENT QUARTER'S WORK PLAN

Planned Activities from Previous Quarter	Actual Status this Quarter	Explanations for Deviations
Submission of the PMP and Gender Plan to USAID	The final draft is completed	Ongoing political and tribal conflict in South Sudan since December 2013 has delayed the completion of this task.

Agreement with USAID on streamlining the Grants Approval process	The final draft is completed	As above
Finalization of the CAA, SSI and SIP	Drafts are completed	As above
Revision and approval of Year I work plan	USAID provided feedback on the Year I work plan (September 2013 – December 2014) on 13 December 2013. Winrock is in the process of revising the work plan to address USAID’s comments and make other adjustments based on consultations with USAID and an assessment of the current situation on the ground.	As above
Recruitment of Project Director	Winrock launched a multi-pronged recruitment effort. Winrock considered more than 60 candidates and interviewed ten. One candidate was selected to present to USAID on January 17, 2013.	This activity—although unplanned—was precipitated by the resignation of the Project Director on November 15, 2013.
Recruitment of Director of Community Mobilization	The planned recruitment of a new Director of Community Mobilization was postponed due to the ongoing conflict.	The Director of Community Mobilization submitted her resignation on December 11, 2013, immediately prior to the outbreak of the conflict.
Recruitment of Director of Education	FHI360 identified one candidate who was presented to USAID, but then later withdrew his candidacy. Recruitment resumed with a special focus on identifying a qualified South Sudanese candidate.	Ongoing political and tribal conflict in South Sudan since December 2013 has delayed the completion of this task.
Completing the recruitment of the local staff for Juba and field based positions	Some positions will be advertised again as they no longer will be based in Kwajok, and Winrock would like as large a candidate pool as possible. For field-based positions, recruitment subject	As above

	to USAID's approval of states and counties	
Developing methodology for baseline survey, baseline tools and protocols	Draft methodology and survey tool is under development	As above
Revising and finalizing the SSI and developing the tools for implementation	Team review had begun with the Director of Grants and Materials & Curriculum Development Specialist taking the lead.	As above
Conducting the CAA and the SSI in the selected counties	Activity on hold	As above
Procurement, delivery and installation of IT equipment	Procurement to be discussed with USAID	As above
Procurement and delivery of vehicles and motorcycles	Winrock to submit for USAID approval in Q1	As above
Developing guidelines for community mobilization	Draft guidelines have been developed	As above
Develop and adapt DRR tools	Draft tools have been developed	As above
Work with the Department of Curriculum Development to incorporate conflict-sensitive and peace-building approaches in the curriculum	Initial meeting with the Department held. Activity will resume once the program is fully operational	As above
Compile existing ALP literacy materials in national languages	Activity on hold	As above
Adapt community engagement and civic education tools and tailor it for RtL use	Activity on hold	As above
Develop capacity needs assessment tool for assessing capacity gaps of education departments	Activity on hold	As above
Gather, compile and translate to local languages articles from policies related to equitable access to education	Activity on hold	As above
Finalize project emergency response plan	The plan has been revised and is in process of being finalized	As above

X. FINANCIAL INFORMATION (shared with USAID only)

XI. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

Constraints and Critical Issues

Insecurity: RtL activities were significantly impacted by insecurity and related challenges at the end of Q1. On December 15, 2013, violence broke out in Juba and spread to other states including Jonglei, Unity, and Lakes. In response and in consultation with the AOR, RtL evacuated all five international staff on December 18 and 19. The program offices in Juba and Kwajok were temporarily closed and due to the risk to staff posed by the ongoing conflict, the majority of staff (28) were placed on administrative leave on starting December 16. For the remainder of Q1, select RtL personnel and home office staff supported the program remotely focusing on finalizing key documents, providing ongoing logistical support to ensure that program personnel and assets are safe and secure, and coordinating with USAID/South Sudan Education team regarding program posture, and relevant security issues. At the time of this report, the situation in South Sudan continues to be fluid despite the signing of a ceasefire agreement by representatives of pro and anti-government groups. Winrock has been in ongoing discussions with USAID regarding potential adjustments to program design and scope given the evolving situation on the ground. The conflict in South Sudan may impact the scope of the program both in the long- and short-term but may allow for creative solutions for children's safe access to quality education.

Personnel

During the quarter, RtL also faced challenges in terms of staff retention with the resignation of two key personnel: the Project Director and Director of the Community Mobilization. In addition to these resignations, the Director of Education position held by FHI 360 remained vacant as the proposed candidate was unavailable upon award. These vacancies placed a strain on the project team, both in terms of morale and workload but visits from home office staff provided consistent support during the start-up phase. An experienced South Sudan operational consultant provided logistical and operational assistance during the second half of the quarter and Winrock deployed an Interim Program Director to provide programmatic and administrative oversight from December 15, 2013 – January 31, 2014. Winrock began the process of recruiting a new Project Director immediately upon the resignation of the previous Project Director and plans to recruit the Director of Community Mobilization early in Q2 (the recruitment was not begun immediately following resignation due to the uncertainty following the violence in December 2013).

FHI 360 recruited for the Director of Education throughout the reporting period, withdrawing a submitted candidate midway through the quarter. As the Director of Education position remained vacant, Dr. Joan Sullivan Owomoyela, Senior Education Advisor from the FHI 360 home office, led all FHI 360 activities relating to the development of the work plan, including serving as team leader for the field visits to Jonglei and Unity States.

Along with the submission of the Year 1 Work plan, Winrock submitted a modified organizational chart where the following positions were added/ modified:

- The Director of Grants position is changed to Director of Grants/ Deputy Project Director/Compliance Officer; removal of the Grants Compliance Specialist
- Replacement of Teacher Development Specialist to begin in Q2 (proposed candidate was unavailable at the time of award)
- Addition of the Development, Outreach, and Communications Coordinator reporting directly to the Project Director; removal of the Communication and Radio Specialist
- Addition of the Security Coordinator, which Winrock will further request to modify in Q2 to a Director of Security reporting directly to the Project Director which is in line with the needs of the program based on recent security developments in South Sudan

- Removal of Gender Responsive School Officer; this position was combined with the Social Inclusion Specialist
- Inclusion of the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and M&E Officer which were budgeted, but previously left off the organizational chart
- Addition of the Information Technology Officer and Administrative Assistant

In addition to those adjustments noted above, Winrock made other changes to the organizational chart based on a revised office structure which moved the headquarters from Kwajok to Juba and operates from state based offices. This revised structure was discussed with the RtL AOR on November 20, 2013 and he directed Winrock to submit a revised organizational structure and budget as part of the Year 1 work plan process. The following changes were made in relation to the revised structure:

- All staff excluding the state- and county-based staff and Regional Grants and M&E officers are now based in Juba
- Logistics Manager and Officers (3) were revised to an Operations Manager and one Operations Officer; logistical issues at the state level will be handled by the State Assistants discussed below
- Revision/expansion of the two Eastern and Western Region Team Leads to five State Team Leads (three positions added)
- Revision/expansion of the two Eastern and Western Assistants to five State Team Assistants (three positions added)
- Inclusion of three additional Junior Accountants and assignment of all five to the state level
- Removal of the Senior Accountant
- Inclusion of Drivers in the organizational chart (previously budgeted but not shown)

Recruitment for many of the local positions began in earnest during the quarter and the project was very close to extending a number of offers for operational and technical positions when violence erupted in mid-December 2013. Both the Director of Grants and Director of Finance and Administration, as well as FHI 360, remained in contact with candidates following the violence and are prepared to extend offers as soon as the project's operational posture becomes clear.

Changes in the Project

Given the ongoing conflict in South Sudan, Winrock has been in ongoing discussion with USAID regarding adjusting the areas of operation and focusing on states that have remained comparatively stable, such as Western Bahr el Ghazal and Western Equatoria. It is expected that there will be further guidance on program scope, areas of operation and key areas of focus during Q2.

The following activities were delayed due to the ongoing conflict:

- Move to new office premises in Juba
- Establishment of state level offices in NBG, Jonglei, Unity and Lakes
- Securing approval for year one RtL counties
- Identification of county bases
- Procurement, delivery and installation of IT equipment
- Procurement and delivery of vehicles and motorcycles
- Developing methodology for baseline survey, baseline tools and protocols
- Reviewing relevant materials that may bench mark the baseline survey
- Pre-qualification of construction firms
- Development and adaptation of DRR tools

- Work with the Department of Curriculum Development to incorporate conflict-sensitive and peace-building approaches in the curriculum
- Compile existing ALP literacy materials in national languages
- Adapt community engagement and civic education tools and tailor it for RtL use
- Develop capacity needs assessment tool for assessing capacity gaps of education departments
- Gather, compile and translate to local languages articles from policies related to equitable access to education
- Finalize project emergency response plan

Changes in personnel are noted in the section above, and the updated geographical operational plan has been described elsewhere.

Winrock entered into discussions with Plan International (and the other proposed international subgrantees) to conclude agreements. After signing a Letter of Intent with Winrock, Plan International proposed a significant budget realignment with a reduction in their level of effort under CLIN I, and to date no subgrant has been signed. In the event that no agreement is possible, Winrock is prepared to identify alternate solutions to ensure that Plan's scope of work may be carried out.

Cooperative Agreement Modifications and Amendments

The first modification to the cooperative agreement was approved on October 4. The purpose of the modification was to:

- 1) Change the description "CLIN" to "Activity" throughout the award
- 2) Revise the budget to incorporate construction as a budget category and
- 3) Revise the reporting requirements, specifically the submission deadlines for the first Annual Work Plans (AWP) from 60 days to 90 days and the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP) from 90 days to 120 days. In addition, add the following sentence under subsection I. Annual Work Plans: "The first Work Plan will be for 15 month period."
- 4) Revise the Director of Grants to the Director of Grants/Compliance Officer and to list the approved sub-awardees: FHI 360, Plan International USA, Inc., Souktel
- 5) Add special provision A.13.2 for construction activities
- 6) Revise the Program Description changing the geographic location of the fifth state from Upper Nile State to Lakes State
- 7) Incorporate new mandatory standard provision M.22 for construction activities

Other changes and approvals of note include:

- The designation of Dr. Peter Cronin as the Agreement Officer's Representative and Mr. Anyieth Ayuen as the Alternate Agreement Officer's Representative for the RtL project
- The designation of Ms. Claudia Koziol as the Administrative Agreement Officer for the RtL project
- The approval of Winrock's revised Branding and Marking Plan on December 10, 2013
- The approval of two property disposition requests

Due to the security situation, Winrock requested approval to extend the deadline for the revisions to the year IAWP, the PMEP, and Gender Action Plan (GAP) and anticipates receiving approval in Q2 based on dialogue with the AOR.

Annex I: Schedule of Future Events

January 31, 2014 South Sudan Education meeting convened by USAID

Annex II: Progress on Links to Other Relevant Programs

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is funded by DFID and is implemented by Mott McDonald with Winrock, BBC Media Action and Charlie Goldsmith associates working as subs. The RtL Project Director and home office team met with GESS team in October to discuss GESS' efforts at school-based capacity building through School Management Boards and capitation grants. RtL had another meeting on December 6 with Charlie Goldsmith Associates to discuss the mobile phone SMS device for reporting on student and teacher attendance in the 10 States. Already 800 schools were using the system, which also monitors student drop out. GESS provides capitation grants through the MoEST. The size of the grants is connected to increased enrollment and top-up grants are linked to regular attendance and are paid into schools' bank accounts. Small cash transfers are also provided directly to girls, from primary 5 on, who attend regularly for one month. Where school bank accounts have been established, it may be possible for RtL to make grant payments into those accounts. Collaboration on the SIPs has been discussed with GESS and is likely to be a priority for both projects. RtL and GESS will need to work together to refine and harmonize the SIP structure, and award grants that are complementary (and not duplicative). The cash transfers to girls may be replicated in Primary 1–4. Coupled with the GESS cash transfers, girls would have a greater pull towards completion of their primary education. RtL may be able to use the GESS attendance monitoring system in schools where both projects are operating. Lastly, GESS and RtL hope to collaborate to develop standard guidelines and training materials that MoEST can adopt across the country.

BRAC works in all Lakes State counties and have established 30 girls learning centers. Each learning center receives 30 students, 70% of whom must be girls age 8–12 living within a radius of one kilometer. Each learning center has one female teacher who either has an O-level or P8 education. Five subjects are taught over the course of three or four years with an abbreviated school day (three hours per day five days per week. When students complete the program (equivalent to P1–P3 they are able to advance to P5. In areas where there are no schools, or not enough schools, the BRAC learning center would give RtL an immediate start on enrollment of girls while being assured of the quality of instruction.

UNICEF, British Council, War Child Holland are attempting to develop on-line teacher development content. UNICEF is supporting an innovative approach to help teachers prepare for teaching. So far 40 schools in five States have pre-loaded content of lesson plans and 50 teachers have been monitored. War Child Holland has provided I-Pad tablets to some of its target groups. RtL will learn more about this and other related innovations, paying particular attention to the objectives, content coverage, methodology and target groups in order to decide how these materials might be helpful. RtL could consider using multiple complementary devices to provide distance education to enhance teachers' professional development.

Mango Tree produces literacy skills charts in the form of a pictorial flip chart, suggesting different language speakers in different states and countries could use it. However, to create impact, such material needs a teachers' guide. Furthermore, teachers need to be trained on how to customize and use the resource to suit the context in which they are teaching. Country specific materials are more appropriate for countries where many teachers are not trained. This material can be found at DFID and UNICEF offices. UNICEF and DFID will supply the literacy flip charts to schools. Mango Tree will work with RtL on developing materials for Pastoralist Education Program and Early Grade Reading in formal primary school classes 1 to 3. The plan is that Mango Tree will design context-specific materials that contribute to increasing reading outcomes. RtL could develop a focused teachers' guide and train teachers the target States on how to use the UNICEF and DFID supplied literacy flip charts.

The **EMIS** team at MoEST has briefed RtL senior program staff and Dr. Peter Cronin on the history, data scope and methodology used in South Sudan. The EMIS team provided the latest CDs with 2012 data for RtL staff to upload onto their computers and has generated specific information requested by team members at the county level. Representatives from EMIS attended the work planning meeting in November. EMIS does not currently provide information on the number of IDPs in the primary schools. RtL may be able, through the implementation of the program, to provide EMIS with this information.