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**TARMIIfp Progress Quarterly Report**  
FY 2012 (October - December 2012)

School Capacity and Innovation Program (SCIP)

**Project Title: TARMII*fp***

Teacher Assessment Resources for Monitoring and Improving  
Instruction in the Foundation Phase



Cooperative Agreement Number: AID-674-A-12-00023

Agreement Start and End Dates: July, 01, 2012 to June, 30, 2015

Project Locations: South Africa (Limpopo, Free-State, Mpumalanga, North-West)

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## **1. Introduction**

The TARMII-fp project has two main goals: (a) to improve teaching and assessment practices through the use of a fully developed TARMII-fp software with literacy Home Language assessment items for grades 1,2, 3; (b) to assess the impact of the use of the TARMII-fp software on teacher classroom assessment practices and on learner achievement in literacy. This report outlines the activities undertaken to achieve objectives set for this reporting period.

## **2. Objectives and activities undertaken during the reporting period**

The objective during the current reporting period was to achieve the following:

- (a) To have project schools selected in Limpopo, North-West and Mpumalanga and Gauteng or Free-State; set up provincial steering committees and have first Steering Committee meetings
- (b) Complete the development of English Home Language assessment items/activities and commence with versioning of English HL assessment items into the prioritised African languages
- (c) Development of TARMII\_fp software - (have interface to allow teachers to contribute assessment tasks; develop TARMII\_fp pedagogic clips; install software on computers; develop TARMII user clips.
- (d) Prepare for pre-intervention data collection

### **2.1 Project Planning**

Project planning continued through the second quarter. During this reporting period, the HSRC core team, which includes, Nolutho Diko, George Frempong, Charlotte Motha, Matthews Makgamatha, Maglin Moodley and Matselane Maja worked extensively on the project, engaging with the districts to select project schools and to set up Steering Committees in the provinces; working with assessment item writers to complete the English HL items and interacting with the software developer to complete the remaining modules of the software. Furthermore, the research team developed instruments for data collection in the provinces and submitted an application to the HSRC Research Ethics Committee for ethical approval.

### **2.1.1 Provincial meetings**

Project meetings took place in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West and Gauteng/Free State province.

#### **2.1.1.1 Limpopo Province**

The meeting between the HSRC (represented by Drs Charlotte Motha and George Frempong) and the Vhembe District Senior Manager, Dr N.G Rambiyana and the Acting District Senior Manager, Mr S. Ravhuanzwo took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the constitution of the Steering Committee (SC) as well as the selection of project schools. We proposed that the following departmental officials should constitute the committee: Circuit Managers of the circuits involved, Foundation Phase Curriculum Advisors, E-Learning Coordinator and that meetings should be chaired by the District Senior Manager or his delegate. Following this meeting, on 4<sup>th</sup> of November we received a list of experimental and control schools from the Nzhelele East and West circuits as well as a list of members of the Steering Committee. An equal number of experimental and control schools were selected from each circuit.

The first Steering Committee meeting was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, at the Soutpansberg East Circuit in Louis Trichardt. The meeting was chaired by the Acting District Senior Manager, Mr S.M Ravhuanzwo and other members of the Steering Committee included, Nzhelele East Circuit Manager, Mr M.D Ramotsheli; Nzhelele West Circuit Manager, Ms N.C Nnduvheni; District Curriculum Coordinator, Mr T.A Manenzhe; Nzhelele West Foundation Phase Curriculum Advisor, Ms N.S Mathivha; Nzhelele East Foundation Phase Curriculum Advisor, Ms M.C Nembahe and the District Technology Coordinator, Mr S. Masuluke. The HSRC was represented by Drs Charlotte Motha and George Frempong. The HSRC presented the project and planned provincial activities for Year 1 of the project. The project presentation covered the following aspects: Background to TARMII-fp (intermediate phase study with recommendations); current study including study design, baseline data collection and ethical matters. The chair suggested that we discuss planned provincial activities with the two circuit managers, Ms N.C Nnduvheni (Nzhelele West Circuit) and Mr M.D Ramutsheli (Nzhelele East Circuit).

Subsequent to this meeting, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, Drs Charlotte Motha and George Frempong had a meeting with the two Circuit Managers (CMs) including the Technology Coordinator, Mr S Masuluke. Matters discussed included advocacy meeting with principals from experimental and control schools, baseline data collection and training of teachers. The Circuit Managers advised that the meeting with principals be held early in January 2013. The meeting was then scheduled for 17 January 2013. The CMs advised that we have separate meetings with experimental and control schools. The meeting with control schools principals was scheduled from 9:00 – 10:00 and for the experimental schools from 11:00-12:30. The CMs undertook to send out a Circular to the principals inviting them to the meeting. Regarding the baseline, the CMs advised that the baseline instruments be brought to the principals' meeting so that they can be handed out to at the end of the meeting. It was agreed that schools would hand in completed instruments to the Nzhelele West and East Circuit Offices by 31 January 2013.

As regards training of teachers, the CMs advised that training sessions be held during the week from 12:00-15:00 and that training should be avoided on Fridays and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of any month. Training sessions will be held at the Vodacom Resource Centre.

#### **2.1.1.2 Mpumalanga**

Two meetings took place between the Nkangala District officials and the HSRC research team on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2012. The October meeting deliberated more on finalising the selection of schools to participate in the study (TARMII\_fp Project) and the formation of the Steering Committee. The November meeting deliberated on the project work-plan to be used to manage project activities in the district.

At the October meeting the HSRC was presented with a list of selected schools. The schools were drawn from the following circuits: Libangeni (10 experimental schools), Siyabuswa (10 control schools), Weltevrede (10 experimental schools) and Tweefontein North (10 control schools) in the Nkangala district. It was agreed that the Steering Committee would be constituted by the following members: the District Director, Mr J.J Mabena; Libangeni Circuit Manager, Mr MEM Makwela;

Tweefontein North Circuit Manager, Ms L.V Mthombeni; Weltevrede Circuit Manager, Mr R.N Ramatsetse; the E-Learning Official, Mr V.J Ngwenya and the Curriculum Assessment Specialist for GET, Mr S.T Tshabangu. The HSRC team would be represented by Mr Matthews Makgamatha.

The other issue discussed at length was the criteria for the selection of schools. The district proposed a deviation from using school quintile ranking as one of the criterion for selecting project schools. The district officials regard factors such as the Annual National Assessments (ANA), the location of the school and the social backgrounds of the learners as better determinants of school performance. It was agreed that the HSRC in collaboration with Nkangala district officials would provide a write up of the criterion used for selecting Nkangala schools.

Regarding the training of teachers, departmental officials proposed that after the teachers from the experimental schools have successfully completed training, they should be awarded with certificate of attendance.

The issue of rewarding control schools raised by the Nkangala district at the meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September was again discussed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October meeting. The HSRC indicated that they would look into the possibility of providing hard copies of all TARMII\_fp system assessment activities to all the control schools at the end of the project.

The meeting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November was held in KwaMhlanga. The following matters were discussed: the project work plan, training of teachers, integrating the workbooks provided by the Department of Basic Education to TARMII\_fp;

Regarding the training of teachers the District suggested that Circuit Managers be trained first so that they would be in a position to support their teachers. The HSRC mooted the idea of linking DBE workbooks to TARMII-fp. The Head of Curriculum in the General Education and Training responded affirmatively to the idea.

The HSRC enquired about the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in the Nkangala schools earmarked for participation in the project. It was indicated that *Sepedi* and *IsiNdebele* were the LOLT in the project schools. This information was to assist the HSRC in prioritising the development of assessment items /activities in the languages used in the relevant provinces.

At the end of the meeting it was agreed that the advocacy meeting with school principals would take place early in 2013. This meeting would be preceded by a meeting of the Steering Committee.

### **2.1.1.3 North West**

Following the HSRC meeting with Executive District Manager of Bojanala district and other district officials held on 17 September 2012, the District Director, Mrs Mokhutle arranged a meeting between the HSRC and representatives from the two selected Area Offices, namely, Madibeng and Letlhabile. On the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2012, the HSRC team (represented by Dr George Frempong and Mr M. Moodley) met with the Area Office Manager of Letlhabile, Mrs Moreme and the Institutional School Governor of Madibeng area office, Mr Moeng to plan the process and logistics of the project. During this meeting, the composition of the steering committee was discussed and accepted. It was agreed that the Steering Committee would comprise six members from the selected district, that is, Madibeng Foundation Phase Curriculum Specialist, Ms R Ndawonde; Letlhabile Foundation Phase Curriculum Specialist, Ms B.Letsatsi; Letlhabile Circuit Manager, Dr R. Ndlovu; Madibeng Circuit Manager, Mr M Moeng; Madibeng E-learning Coordinator, Ms N Tshoma and the Letlhabile E-learning Coordinator, Mr C Mulondo. The HSRC would be represented by Mr Maglin Moodley. During this meeting it was decided that all training undertaken in the two Area Offices should be conducted by both the HSRC and the Area office team members. This would allow for more effective support from the Department. The first Steering Committee meeting was planned for and took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2013. This meeting would be reported on in the next quarter.

#### **2.1.1.4 Gauteng/Free State provinces**

Initially Kwa-Zulu Natal was selected as the fourth province in the study. However due to problems related to making contact with the relevant officials, the HSRC team approached two alternative provinces, Gauteng and the Free State. The Free-State was willing to meet with the HSRC but only in 2013 whereas the Tshwane South District of the Gauteng Province agreed to have a meeting with the HSRC in 2012. We chose the Tshwane South District because it had participated in the initial TARMII study. The meeting with officials from this district took place at the HSRC offices on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October. During discussions at this meeting we realised that the majority of possible schools to be selected for participation in the TARMII\_fp would be from the Gauteng Primary Language and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS) schools. District Officials indicated that it would pose a problem working in these schools due to the GPLMS intervention programme initiated by the MEC.

The said challenges led the team to accept the 2013 meeting with the executive management of the Free State Provincial Department of Education. The purpose of this meeting was to seek provincial permission to implement TARMIIfp in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District. The meeting was scheduled for and took place in Bloemfontein on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2013. The Superintendent General (SG) and his three Deputy Director Generals represented the provincial education department and the HSRC was represented by Dr Nolutho Diko and Mr Maglin Moodley. To prepare for the discussions, the HSRC gave a presentation of the TARMII background, the rationale thereof as well as the concept of the study. The SG and his team voiced support for TARMII and asked for a full report of the old study as well as a TARMIIfp concept paper designed specifically for the Free State province. The SG requested the HSRC to speedily provide a letter of endorsement from DBE so that he could share the project with the MEC and to facilitate implementation. In principle, the SG gave HSRC permission to continue discussions with the curriculum Deputy Director General who would introduce the HSRC to the district sought for project implementation.

### **2.1.2 Internal capacity development and data curation and analysis**

The data curation and analysis process will commence in the third quarter as we start to collect data on the teachers, school principals, learners and their home background and the district. Internal capacity development is an on-going process. The research team had internal capacity development sessions in October/November on the literature review and development of data collection instruments.

## **3. Development of assessment items/activities**

According to the First Year Annual Work Plan, activities planned for this reporting period included continuation of the development of assessment items in English Home Language, versioning of assessment items into the other 10 official languages and quality assurance of test items.

### **3.1 Development of English assessment items and versioning of assessment items**

The development of English Home Language assessment items/activities for Grades 1, 2 & 3 was completed by December 2012. The assessment activities cover the Language components of Phonics, Reading, and Writing (including Handwriting). The process of adapting (translating or versioning) these assessment activities into the prioritised official languages (i.e. Sepedi, IsiNdebele, Tswana, Tshivenda, Afrikaans and South Sotho) would be completed in March 2013.

### **3.2 Quality assurance and field testing of assessment items**

This activity is continuous and occurs at various levels of item development. It starts with the writing of specification tables for developing assessment activities or items, followed by reviewing of the assessment activities and field testing of the assessment activities to obtain feedback from teachers. The following quality assurance steps have been implemented: the CAPS aligned specifications table for writing assessment activities were developed for use as a guide by item writers; assessment activities produced were then subjected to an internal review for correctness. Field testing of items will commence in the third quarter.

#### **4 Development of TARMII-fp software**

The major components of the system have been completed but need to be tested by the HSRC team. The components developed to date include:

- (a) User interface design
- (b) Multi language interface
- (c) Registration page
- (d) Teacher interface for teacher resources
- (e) Admin interface for topic tree
- (f) Teacher interface to contribute assessment tasks
- (g) Admin interface to upload flash videos
- (h) Teacher interface for feedback on assessment items
- (i) Teacher interface to view flash videos

In terms of the milestones set for this reporting period, the input of test items into the computer software, the development of user clips and the installation of software on laptops were not realised because these activities are directly dependent on the completion of the item development process.

The development of the software and its verification and acceptance process is done online. As a result, the webhosting component has been active since July 2012. Presently the development site is hosted on a URL address which is accessible to all who have user rights.

##### **4.1 Development of TARMII-fp pedagogic clips**

The graphic designer, Mr Stevens Mahlangu was contracted to design 30 pedagogic clips that would guide teachers in teaching identified areas in the Foundation Phase. To date a total of 24 pedagogic clips (i.e. ten Grade 1, seven Grade 2 and seven Grade 3) have been developed. These clips are ready to be uploaded onto the software.

##### **4.2 Purchase of 85 laptops and 3G dongles**

The laptops and 3G dongles were delivered to the HSRC on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October and are currently stored in the Education and Skills Development safe. We are currently working with the HSRC Supply Chain and looking at 3G data packages that would

suit the need of the study as well as the insurance for the laptops. The maintenance of the laptops is covered under the Acer 1 Year Fetch Repair Return Warranty.

## **5. Teacher usage of TARMII\_fp and impact on teaching**

Preparations for pre-intervention data collection occurred during this reporting with the development of the following baseline instruments:

- a. Teacher Questionnaire (to be completed by Foundation Phase teachers in the selected schools). The questionnaire covers, teacher background information; classroom assessment practices; access to and use of computers as well as computer support.
- b. School questionnaire (to be completed by the Principal, Deputy Principal or any member of the School Management Team). This questionnaire requests information about the Foundation Phase classes, school infrastructure and conditions; monitoring and support for Foundation phase teachers by the school and the district.
- c. Learner and home background questionnaire (this questionnaire is addressed to the primary caregivers of the learners participating in the project). This questionnaire provides information that is helpful in understanding the learner's home background and language and literacy development in order to determine factors that may impact on literacy and language outcomes.
- d. Curriculum Advisor Questionnaire ( this covers monitoring and support given to schools and in particular to Foundation Phase teachers including ICT training and support)
- e. District Questionnaire (to be completed by the District Official responsible for managing curriculum and assessment in the Foundation Phase). This questionnaire covers staff capacity and responsibility in the District Office; training and support provided to Curriculum Advisors; Monitoring and support to schools and ICT District support to schools)
- f. Classroom Observation Schedule (this will be used by the research team during classroom observations of Foundation Phase literacy classes).These will be implemented during monitoring and support site visits.

- g. Post-lesson interview questions (to be used when interviewing class teachers after lesson observation). These will be implemented during the monitoring and support phase.

In addition to developing the above instruments, the research team prepared the information and consent forms for all the participants who would complete the listed questionnaires. Furthermore, the research team completed the HSRC Research Ethics Committee Application Form and the data preservation forms. These forms together with all the data collection instruments were submitted to the HSRC Ethics Committee in November 2012 for approval. Provisional approval was granted in December 2012.

#### **6. Challenges and opportunities encountered**

The main challenge experienced in this reporting period was securing an appointment to meet with the Head of Department of the Free State Province.

#### **7. Foreseen issues arising for the next reporting period that will constrain the achievement of the goal**

There would be delays in the implementation of activities in the Free State province as they would be coming on board in the third quarter of the project.