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**TARMIIfp Progress Quarterly Report**  
FY 2013 (January -March 2013)

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 for the third quarter reporting period.

## **2. Activities undertaken during the reporting period**

The main activities undertaken during the current reporting period involved:

- Project planning - steering committee and project advocacy meetings
- Pre-intervention data collection in the experimental and control schools in Limpopo and North-West
- Teacher training workshop
- Versioning of English Home Language assessment activities into African languages
- Development of TARMII\_fp software - (completed development of TARMII\_fp pedagogic clips and static teacher resources)

### **2.1 Project Planning**

Project planning continued through the third quarter. The HSRC team continued to engage with the Free State Department of Education to obtain permission to implement the project in the Thabo Mofutsanyana district. These efforts paid off in that in March 2013, the Free State Department of Education allowed the HSRC to commence with the project while awaiting a formal letter of endorsement from the Department of Basic Education. Furthermore, advocacy meetings with school principals took place in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North-West; versioning of English Home Language assessment activities into African languages and the research ethics approval occurred during this reporting period.

## **2.1.1 Provincial meetings**

Advocacy and steering committee meetings with departmental officials took place in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West and Free State provinces.

### **2.1.1.1 Limpopo Province**

#### *Advocacy meeting*

The school principal advocacy meeting took place as scheduled on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January. The meeting with 20 principals from the control schools took place from 9:00-10:00 and the one for 20 principals from experimental schools from 11:00 – 12:30. The HSRC presented the project and explained the baseline data collection. Three baseline questionnaires (school, teacher and home and learner questionnaires) together with consent forms were handed out to the principals. It was agreed that the completed teacher and school questionnaires would be handed in to the Nzhelele West and East Circuit Offices by 31 January 2013.

#### *Training of foundation phase teachers*

The first training of teachers from Nzhelele East and West Circuits experimental schools took place from 11-14 March. The Nzhelele West Circuit teachers were trained on 11 and 12 March and Nzhelele-East on 13 and 14 March. Training was facilitated by Tracey Butchart from the company, Rubricating Works. In total, 60 teachers from grades 1, 2 and 3 received six hours of training on formative assessment. Training was scheduled in the afternoons from 12:00-15:00. Training covered the following aspects:

- designing an assessment strategy to actively enhance teaching and promote learning;
- identifying and making key decisions to plan an assessment task within an assessment strategy;
- choosing from a wide range of different assessment tools when designing assessment;
- creating an assessment tool to guide and engage learners in their learning task;
- using the Assessment for Learning Cycle in the planning of teaching;
- evaluating teaching and learning in the light of assessment.

### Workshop Evaluation

Out of the 60 teachers who attended the workshop, only 44 completed and returned the feedback form. Teachers indicated that they have gained new knowledge and skills in the following areas of assessment:

- Implementation of assessment for learning;
- Planning beforehand and doing baseline assessment;
- Using different strategies for assessing learning;
- Assessment serves as a bridge to teaching and learning;
- Use of assessment tools;
- Differences between observation and checklist.

Teachers raised concerns that six hours is insufficient for this kind of training and that training sessions should be held in the mornings and not afternoons because when training is scheduled in the afternoon, they cannot concentrate as they are tired.

In preparation for the next training, the teachers responded to a baseline questionnaire to determine their current level of computer skills. The ICT questionnaires were handed to the teachers at the end of the first day of training and collected at the end of the second day of training.

#### **2.1.1.2 Mpumalanga Province**

##### *Advocacy meeting*

Advocacy meeting with principals took place on the 01<sup>st</sup> March 2013 at the Siyabuswa Circuit office. The purpose of the meetings was to explain the project to the school principals with the aim of obtaining a buy-in. The first meeting was held in the morning with principals of schools in the experimental group. The second meeting took place in the afternoon with principals from control schools. Present in the meetings were the Siyabuswa Circuit representative, four Nkangala district project steering committee members and the HSRC representative. Twenty principals from experimental schools and 20 from control schools participated in the meetings. Advocacy meetings with teachers was scheduled for 15 to 18 April in the four circuits, namely, Libangeni, Weltevrede, Tweefontein and Siyabuswa and the

training of teachers in formative assessment was planned for 22 and 23 April in Libangeni Circuit and 29 and 30 April in Weltevrede Circuit.

### **2.1.1.3 North West Province**

#### *Steering Committee meeting*

The *first* Steering Committee meeting planned for January took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2013 at the Madibeng Area office. At this meeting, the following issues were discussed and agreed upon:

- Selection process of project schools (experimental and control);
- The Principal advocacy meetings would take place on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013 at Laerskool Brits;
- Completion of consent forms and teacher, principal, and learner questionnaires;
- A tentative date for training of District Officials was set for 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013;
- Training of teachers in the three modules, namely, Assessment, Basic ICT & TARMIIfp software would take place in April/May;
- The district office would put together a list of guests representing North West education for the laptop handover ceremony.

The *second* steering committee meeting took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> March. This was held at the HSRC offices in Pretoria. During this meeting the following key points were discussed and decisions taken:

- District officials from the two area offices would receive training on the TARMII\_fp software and be part of the information sharing session on assessment and Basic ICT;
- The ICT basic analysis would be used to guide the training in Basic ICT;
- Tentative dates for the various modules and activities for TARMII\_fp study were set as follows:
  - Assessment training for teachers from would take place over three days on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of April. There would be separate training sessions for each of the grades;
  - Basic ICT training would take place during the week of the 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> April;

- The official handing over of laptops to schools would take place on the 30<sup>th</sup> April at the Madibeng area office;
- Training of teachers on the TARMII<sub>fp</sub> software would take place on 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of May.

#### *Advocacy meetings*

The principal and teacher advocacy meetings took place in January and February respectively. The advocacy meetings for principals from experimental and control groups took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013. Eighteen principals from the experimental schools and 20 from the control schools attended the two sets of meeting. At these meetings, principals completed the School Questionnaire.

The teacher advocacy sessions for both the control and experimental groups took place at the Madibeng and Letlhabile Area Offices on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> February. During these sessions, experimental teachers were informed about the project and were requested to complete the ICT baseline instrument, consent forms and the teacher questionnaire. The control group completed the consent form and teacher questionnaire.

#### **2.1.1.4 Free State Province**

##### *Advocacy meetings*

The HSRC (represented by Dr Nolutho Diko and Mr Maglin Moodley) had a meeting with the Executive Management of the Free State Provincial Department of Education represented by the Superintendent General (SG) and his three Deputy Director Generals. The meeting was held in Bloemfontein on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2013. The purpose of this meeting was to seek provincial permission to implement TARMII<sub>fp</sub> in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District. The SG and his team voiced support for TARMII<sub>fp</sub> and requested the HSRC to provide the letter of project endorsement from the Department of Basic Education, a full report on the previous TARMII intermediate phase study and TARMII-<sub>fp</sub> concept paper designed specifically for the Free State province. Following this meeting, the HSRC forwarded a request for project endorsement letter to the DBE and provided the concept note and TARMII intermediate phase as requested. The HSRC engaged with the office of the DDG

requesting permission to go ahead with project activities in Thabo Mofutsanyana district while awaiting the letter of endorsement from the DBE. During the month of March correspondence was received from the DDG's office acceding to the HSRC request to commence with project activities in the district. It was only in the first week of April that the DDG's office provided contact details of the contact person in the district. The meeting with the District Director, Mrs Tshabalala and other officials was scheduled for and took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April in the Thabo Mofutsanyana district. The head office was represented by Chief Director, Mr Mthombeni. The District Office indicated that the goal of the TARMII\_fp resonated with their aim as discussions are underway on how teaching and learning can be improved based through the use the Annual National Assessment results. The Foundation Phase officials contended that they would like to peruse training materials before they are presented to the teachers so determine compliance to the new curriculum. It was decided that TARMII\_fp project activities would form part of the district plan.

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

During this reporting period, a number of foundation phase teachers, university lecturers and subject advisors were contracted to version the grades 1, 2 & 3 English Home Language assessment activities into the following languages: Sesotho, Tswana, Northern Sotho, Zulu, Tsonga, Ndebele, Venda and Xhosa. The assessment activities cover the Language components of Phonics, Reading, and Writing (including Handwriting). The versioning process would continue into the fourth quarter and would include Afrikaans and Swati languages.

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

It was reported in the last quarter that the major components of the system have been completed but needed to be tested by the HSRC team. Subsequently, the HSRC ran an internal testing process to upload items onto the system. All software functions were tested and proved to be functioning except the report generation component which is in the process of being finalised. The uploading of English Home Language assessment activities as well as the versioned activities is scheduled to commence in the second week of April.

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

The graphic designer, Mr Stevens Mahlangu has designed a total of 31 pedagogic clips that would serve as a resource for teachers. These clips have been verified and the sound/music added. These clips are ready to be uploaded onto the software.

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

- a) The 85 laptops which were purchased during the last quarter are housed in the Education and Skills Development safe at the HSRC. They have been registered as assets of the HSRC and are covered under the HSRC global insurance.
- b) During February and March, the HSRC contracted temporary workers to verify standard software on all laptops all systems and to install office packages and anti-virus package onto the laptops.
- c) The HSRC signed a contract in March 2013 with Nambiti Technologies for a Top Up data 1Gig for the 80 3Gdongles that will be provided to the teachers participating in the project.

#### **5. Pre-intervention data collection**

The pre-intervention data collection which commenced in January/February 2013 in *Limpopo* and *North West* provinces entailed the administration of teacher questionnaire, school questionnaire and the learner home background questionnaires together with the respective consent forms. With regards to the administration of the teacher questionnaire, each school had to select *three teachers* (one from each grade) to participate in the study. This questionnaire would then be completed by a total of *120 teachers* from the experimental and control schools. The school questionnaire, together with the consent forms was to be completed by 40 school principals or deputy principals of both experimental and control schools. The learner and home background questionnaire had to be completed by a total of 30 (i.e. 10 form each grade) randomly selected parents of learners from grades 1, 2 & 3. Class lists of the three selected teachers were obtained from each school. The HSRC then selected 30 learners from each school. It is anticipated that a total of 1200 parents per province would complete the learner and home questionnaire. However, the parent consent

forms had to be completed the parents of all learners in the classes of the selected teachers. We had to obtain consent forms from the parents of all learners involved in the project because we would be using the grades 2 and 3 ANA results and testing Grades 1 learners to obtain baseline data before TARMII\_fp intervention. The return of questionnaires from the two provinces is on-going, however, we have commenced with data capturing of the instruments received. Our data manager, Ms Lolita Winnaar has commenced with preparations for data analysis.

The collection of baseline data in Mpumalanga and the Free State is scheduled to take place in April.

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

It was anticipated that delays in obtaining permission to commence with project activities in the Free State would have a negative impact on the progress of the project. However, the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Director and her team were able to fast track activities in such a way that in less than two weeks after securing a meeting with the district, schools were selected and the list forwarded to the HSRC.

In the Mpumalanga province, the teacher union go-slow affected the teacher and principal baseline data collection. The HSRC is engaging with the provincial Steering Committee to work out alternative arrangements for data collection.

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

In Mpumalanga, the teacher union go-slow would impact on the training sessions planned for April/May.