



All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development, Round 2 Grantee Name

#2 Quarter Report: 2015

ChildFund International,

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1.0 Executive Summary

During this quarter, ChildFund Afghanistan formally started up project activities at the community level. The Project Manager and Community Mobilizer commenced work and introduced the project to the various stakeholders including community elders, school headmasters and teachers from the three schools of Sheikh Misiri New Township (SMNT),

Meetings were also held the Provincial Education Department (PED) and the Provincial Governor to present the objectives of this project. During the meeting with the PED Director, whilst assuring of his support for the project and its objectives, prior to giving his permission for the project activities to begin, it's required that an MoU between ChildFund Afghanistan and the Ministry of Education in Kabul is in place. With the change in government the previous procedure, whereby NGO's were able to sign MoU's with the Government Ministry at provincial level, has been revoked and replaced by a new system. Although the MoU was submitted with the MoE in April, at reporting date it remains unsigned. ChildFund Afghanistan met with USAID Kabul officials to discuss this issue and solicit assistance with the expediting of this process

ChildFund Afghanistan had proposed using ASER as the baseline and endline measurement for evaluating the impact of the intervention on reading levels. With support from School to School (STS) the project's external evaluator and in alignment with the overall ACR program goals, ChildFund will utilize EGRA for the baseline and endline survey. STS had planned to visit Afghanistan to conduct the baseline survey however due to security this was not possible. In order to facilitate the conducting of the baseline STS contracted Eureka Research, an Afghanistan based evaluator, to undertake the baseline survey.

The delay in the signing of a MoU with the Ministry of Education means the baseline survey has not yet been conducted.

After a long and thoughtful discussion with STS, World Vision and ChildFund a more robust research design was agreed upon. The project will start the intervention for Nazanin and Shaheed at the same time rather than our initial approach to have a delayed entry. We will no longer compare the schools but will compare the children to themselves similar to a pre and post intervention. We will provide full treatment (broadcasts and home visits and reading clubs) to both schools starting September 2015 and concluding in January 2017 for 16 months of the intervention. In September, the project will conduct EGRA and KAP when the new cohort of Frist graders enrol. The gial of this new approach is hopefully demonstrate that children in the intervention group demonstrate a statistically significant positive change in reading levels. While all three schools will receive the intervention, only two schools will be included in the study (as we have decided to exclude the all-boys school as it represents a different sub-population).

Activity Progress Update

ASER testing

ASER testing of 501 Grade 2 and 3 students took place in June, at the end of the academic school year. The purpose of the ASER testing was to identify struggling readers in Grade 1 – 3 to benefit from the intervention. The Grade 1 students were not tested because they will join the school in September (Grade 2 students mentioned above have just passed from grade 1 into 2 in May). This testing also provides sample groups for the baseline and endline testing by the external evaluator. Approximately 300 students will partake in the intervention in the first year with another 300 in the second year.

Some of the data from the ASER test indicate;

- 501 students were tested from Nazanin and Shaheed schools of which 55% are girls. The students were in grades 2 and 3 with the average age of 8 years.
- Both grade 2 and grade 3 students read on average at level 1 (they are able to read letters only).
- 94% of the students say that they are supported in the family in their learning. For the purpose of this project support includes: encouraging students to attend class, following up on lessons and helping with homework. 63% of the supporters are parents, 36% are students' sisters and 1% have said that their uncles support them.
- However when asked for the reason why their caregivers do not support them with their learning 88% said their parents are unable to read and write whilst 9% said their other family members are unable to read and write and 3% said their caregivers are absent.

Baseline survey (EGRA):

As noted above, the EGRA baseline survey will be conducted by Eureka Research, an Afghanistan based evaluator. Due to a delay in the signing of a MoU with the Ministry of Education the baseline survey has not yet been conducted. It is envisaged that this MoU will be signed in late July/ early August. ChildFund has reached out to the USAID mission to seek support in finalizing the MoU so there are further delays.

ChildFund has dedicated considerable time this quarter to the development of M&E documents and adapting the research design with the support of STS. The Education Advisor in Washington, DC and the M&E Specialist in Afghanistan have participated in EGRA trainings held by USAID and have compiled data from other organizations who have conducted EGRA in Afghanistan.

Output 1 - Increased use of ICT to improve family support to early grade readers

Activity 1.1

Development, testing and dissemination of messages and stories by FM radio/mobile phone encouraging family action to improve children's reading

Recognizing the need to provide quality inspiring stories and messages ChildFund Afghanistan is contracting Afghan Education Production Organization (AEPO) as the provider of the broadcasts. AEPO has long-standing experience producing similar broadcasts in Afghanistan having been established by the BBC World Service in 1994 to provide informative radio programs to the population of Afghanistan who had little or no access to information. AEPO has been producing educational and entertaining radio programs for 20 years that includes stories, dramas and feature programs for children and adults. All AEPO programs are broadcasted in Dari and Pashto languages on the BBC World Service's airwaves. In addition to working with BBC, AEPO also has partnerships with local broadcasting agencies. ChildFund has met with AEPO to review the requirements for the broadcasts and the key messages to be incorporated in the stories.

Activity 1.2

Procurement, distribution and maintenance of Mobile Phones, SD Cards and Solar Chargers to project beneficiaries

The procurement of Mobile Phones, SD Cards and Solar Chargers is under process and the phones and chargers will be distributed in July.

Activity 1.3

Development, testing and dissemination of stories by FM radio/mobile phone by local production company (governmental or private)

Once the agreement with AEPO has been finalised the development, testing and dissemination of stories and messages will commence through a local FM radio station that has the highest coverage and audience level in SMNT.

Output 2 - Increased knowledge and action by parents and family members to support early readers from families

This activity has not commenced yet but during initial conversations, parents seemed eager to have their children participate in the ASER assessment and indicate interest in the reading clubs to improve their child's reading levels.

Activity 2.1

Training manual /materials developed

ChildFund Afghanistan's Education Advisor is currently concluding the development of the training manual for the community mentors. This will be completed at the beginning of the 3rd quarter.

Activity 2.2

20 Mentors recruited from within community and by the community for Year 1 and an additional 20 for Year 2:

The positions of 20 community mentors have been announced. Due to the social structure of SMNT, and with ChildFund Afghanistan's knowledge of the cultural sensitivities of this area, it is recognised that to gain community acceptance these mentors need to belong to the

communities of the project. Also the support and agreement of the community elders for the chosen mentors is necessary. The recruitment process will be completed early Quarter 3.

Activity 2.3

Mentors (20 per year) trained on project deliverables, how to use training manual and how to conduct home visits:

Training of 20 community mentors will be conducted in early Quarter 3.

Activity 2.4

Mentors visit homes of struggling readers on a fortnightly basis:

This activity has not been started yet due to having no community mentors in the field. Once the broadcasts commence, this activity will begin. It is anticipated that this will start in mid- August.

Activity 2.5

Mentors receive 1 day per month refresher training:

Once the mentor recruitment is completed the mentors will receive their initial training then the 1 day per month refresher training will commence.

Activity 2.6

Quarterly meetings with end - user feedback groups to provide input into design & implementation of messages and family based activities:

AEPO will test the messages and receive feedback from end-user feedback groups prior to the commencement of the broadcasts.

Output 3 - Increased participation by children in Reading Clubs

Activity 3.1

Meetings conducted with school teachers, principals and provincial directorate of education officials to help raise awareness of reading clubs and verify baseline survey results identifying struggling readers:

Formal meetings were held with various stakeholders including the provincial education department, deputy governor, the community shuras and school administrations. These meetings further introduced the key objectives of the project and discussed the need for ASER testing.

3.1.1 Meeting conducted with provincial education directorate:

A meeting took place between ChildFund Afghanistan and the Provincial Education Director to introduce the project and key activities to provincial education officials. The PED reminded the team that an MoU was required between ChildFund and the MoE in order to commence implementation.

3.1.2 Meeting with headmasters of 03 schools and community elders of SMNT:

ChildFund held Project orientation meetings with Head Masters of the three target schools and community elders of Sheikh Misri New Township.

Activity 3.2

20 Mentors trained in year 1 and expanded to 40 in year 2 on how to establish and facilitate Reading Clubs

With the delay in implementing many of Quarter 2 activities and as the signed MoU is currently delayed, the 20 Mentors will not be recruited and trained until early Quarter 3, with training on the establishment and facilitation of Reading Clubs as part of the training modules.

Activity 3.3

20 Reading Clubs established in year 1 and expanded to 40 in year 2

As noted above, the students for the reading club have been identified by the ASER test. There are 215 students who will participate in the reading club in Nazinin school, which is the only school in year one to receive the intervention. The actual clubs have not started to do the delay of the MoU.

Activity 3.5

Procurement of early grade reading materials made available to reading clubs

This process is ongoing ChildFund is creating an inventory of appropriate reading materials for procurement.

Activity 3.6

Quarterly end - user feedback groups provide input into ongoing design and implementation of reading clubs

This will be achieved when the reading clubs have been established

Output 4 - Increased community support for all children reading in the early grades

Activity 4.1

3 - 6 Education Shuras established and trained on project aims, deliverables and introduced to the training materials for mentors and reading clubs

This will occur once the baseline survey has been conducted and children and families start their involvement in the intervention.

Activity 4.2

Education Shuras and parents regularly monitor all project activities

This activity has not commenced due to delay in establishment of reading clubs and training to be conducted for education shuras,, however as noted above, meeting with elders has been conducted to bring awareness about the program. Once reading clubs are established and education shura are trained, they and parents will be encourage to take an active role in regularly monitoring all project activities..

Activity 4.3

Shuras work with mentors and families to introduce reading activities, such as reading fairs and spelling bees, in the community.

This activity is scheduled for later in the project implementation.

Personnel

Both the Project Manager and the Community Mobiliser commenced this quarter. The Community Mobiliser is female and this appointment will allow ease of access for home visits and full interaction with the female community mentors.

ACR Project Budget

Due to the delay in the signing of the MoU the baseline survey did not take place in this quarter as planned. The cascading effect of not having a MoU saw some activities planned for this quarter not being undertaken resulting in less expenditure than planned.

Communications

N/A

Conclusion

Next Quarter Plans

In Q3, ChildFund plan to accomplish the following activities

- Baseline survey completed.
- Procurement and distribution of 420 Mobile Phones, SD Cards and Solar Chargers.
- AEPO have developed, tested and commenced radio broadcasts..
- 20 community mentors hired and trained.
- Training manual developed and community mentors use this in their role.
- 20 reading clubs established.
- Text books/reading materials for reading clubs procured.
- Education shuras established and members trained.
- Home visits by community mentors commence

7.0 Annexes

Annex 2 – Work Plan Progress highlighted in green, yellow and red

Per the Grant Agreement - The Recipient will provide the WVUS Project Director or other WVUS personnel designated in the grant or cooperative agreement with two copies of all program and communications materials produced under the award. In addition, the recipient will submit one electronic or one hard copy of all final documents to USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse.