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Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Monitoring and Evaluation (READ M&E) Quarterly Report Year 1, Q2: 1 April – 30 June 2015



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Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed
Monitoring and Evaluation (READ M&E)
Quarterly Report
Year 1, Q2: 1 April – 30 June 2015

Submitted to:
U.S. Agency for International Development/Ethiopia
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Acronyms

AIR	American Institutes for Research
CA	Continuous Assessment
CAEB	City Administration Education Bureau
CSA	Charities and Societies Agency
CTE	College of Teacher Education
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
ERA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
IQPEP	Improving Quality of Primary Education Program
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
NEAEA	National Educational Assessments and Examination Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NLA	National Learning Assessment
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
READ	Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed
READ CO	READ Community Outreach
READ II	READ Institutional Improvement
READ TA	READ Technical Assistance
RSEB	Regional State Education Bureau
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar

I. Executive Summary

The Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Monitoring and Evaluation (READ M&E) project is a five-year United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported activity implemented by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). READ M&E is one of the four READ projects on early grade reading launched by USAID Ethiopia. READ M&E focuses on monitoring and evaluation of early grade reading and writing as well as the M&E needs of the overall USAID READ program. The project closely works in partnership with the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Education (MOE) and the National Educational Assessments and Examination Agency (NEAEA). The project also works in collaboration with Regional State Education Bureaus (RSEBs) and City Administration Education Bureaus (CAEBs).

During the second quarter of READ M&E, the project continued to engage in startup activities and launched substantive technical work. Activities in this quarter included an official meeting between the State Minister of the Ministry of Education for General Education, the READ M&E Chief of Party (COP), USAID, and top NEAEA top officials that resulted in formal recognition of the project and policy-level agreement on coordination with other partners and government agencies. READ M&E communicated with the READ Institutional Improvement (READ II) and READ Technical Assistance (READ TA) projects, reviewed their project documents, and prepared plans for performance evaluation. READ M&E completed data collection for the final performance evaluation of READ II and developed evaluation questions for the upcoming performance evaluation of READ TA. The READ M&E project is currently located in the NEAEA building and expects to relocate to a more permanent office space on August 1, 2015. One of the most crucial startup activities is registration with the Charities and Societies Agency (CSA) of Ethiopia, a protracted project registration process that is on-going.

II. Project Overview, Rationale, and Strategy

READ M&E is one of four READ programs that USAID has developed in collaboration with the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. READ M&E is a five-year activity that will contribute to monitoring and evaluation of early grade reading fluency and comprehension, support for National Learning Assessments (NLAs), monitoring and evaluation of the overall USAID READ program, and capacity building of the NEAEA. The project works in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Education, especially with the NEAEA.

The rationale for launching the four READ projects relates to low student achievement in national learning assessments and early grade reading assessments (EGRAs) conducted since 2010. These assessments suggest that poor reading in early grades limits students' ability to read-to-learn in upper primary grades. USAID, the Ministry of Education, and other development partners that support education in Ethiopia have agreed to focus on improving early grade reading and writing to address this challenge. The READ programs funded by USAID seek to improve the quality of reading and writing education for children in early grades in order to enable greater learning in upper grades.

READ TA focuses on curriculum revision, development of textbooks, teachers' guides, teacher training manuals, and supplementary reading materials, training of teacher trainers, and provision of technical assistance in improving early grade reading and writing to the MOE, regional state education bureaus (RSEBs), and colleges of teacher education (CTEs). READ II consists of direct grants to the MOE and RSEBs to conduct in-service teacher training and build the capacity of the education system to improve early grade reading and writing. READ Community Outreach (READ CO) engages parents and communities in promoting early grade reading and writing, and support school and community libraries and establish reading centers.

READ M&E contributes to tracking progress and measuring the performance and impact of key interventions supported by USAID. READ M&E contributes through a) regular monitoring of READ projects to find out if implementation is on track and if outputs are leading to results, and b) assessments and evaluations at defined intervals to gauge the results of the READ program. These efforts inform USAID and other stakeholders including the MOE, RSEBs, and NEAEA about how the combined investments across the READ projects are resulting in the desired changes, and how implementation can be improved.

The specific objectives of READ M&E are to:

- a) Monitor the performance of the USAID READ projects as well as other key projects related to the READ program, conduct mid-term and final evaluations of the three READ projects, and adapt to the evolving M&E needs and priorities of the READ program
- b) Assess student learning progress by analyzing and synthesizing nationally representative EGRA data already collected for seven local languages – as necessary and determined with USAID – as well as collect additional EGRA data to show reading skill gains for seven local languages and English, including determining nationally representative EGRA baseline data for English;
- c) Upon request of the National Learning Assessment bureau of the MOE, support national learning assessments at grades 4 and 8 for reading, comprehension, and writing aligned to the new national reading curriculum developed through the READ program;
- d) Support continuous assessment in schools;
- e) Build the capacity of the NEAEA by providing technical assistance to the MOE, RSEBs, and other development partners

III. Progress and Accomplishments

The second quarter of READ M&E saw a continuation of project start up activities as well as the first major technical accomplishments. Major accomplishments of the project during this second quarter include:

- a) Hiring of a permanent COP, Dr. Jordene Hale
- b) Submission of a draft implementation plan to USAID
- c) Submission of a draft project PMP to USAID
- d) Revision of project deliverables
- e) Continued progress on project registration in Ethiopia
- f) Review of READ TA documents and preparation to undertake a midterm performance evaluation of the READ TA project
- g) Revised evaluation questions for midterm performance evaluation of READ TA

- h) Completion of training for data collectors for performance evaluation of READ II
- i) Collection of complete data in seven languages from five regions, RSEBs, zones, woredas, MOE, and USAID for the performance evaluation of READ II
- j) Solicitation and review of bids from venders for procurement of highest priority office supplies (desktops, laptops, printers, scanners, projector, office furniture, and other necessary office supplies)
- k) Introduction of the READ M&E project to the State Minister of the Ministry of Education for General Education

Result/CLIN 1: EGRA and M&E. In the second quarter, discussions continued with other partners as to how to prepare the roadmap for the mid- and endline EGRA administrations as well as English EGRA.

READ II Final Performance Evaluation: READ M&E trained data collectors and completed its data collection phase. Data translation and transcription is ongoing, and analysis will take place in the project's third quarter. Thirty-eight schools participated in this PE. Furthermore, 31 Woredas, 14 Zones, 148 teachers, 35 experts, 54 trainers as both Master and TOT, and 2 leaders participated on this PE. The total number of interviews conducted was 239. Data for this performance evaluation was collected from five regions (Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, and SNNP) in seven local languages that are used as medium of instruction in the respective regions

READ TA Midterm Performance Evaluation: Preparations for the upcoming midterm performance evaluation are now underway. After collecting and reviewing the project documents, the READ M&E team has developed initial evaluation questions. In the third quarter, these evaluation questions will be reviewed with USAID to determine if revisions are necessary.

Result/CLIN 2: Learning Assessment. READ M&E has continued to meet with the NEAEA to determine the kind of support and assistance the NEAEA may require. READ M&E is developing a road map that details common goals and future activities to enhance coordination with the assessment body. READ M&E proposes an alignment study after the 2015 NLA. Through a review of content standards and actual test forms, this study can evaluate the degree of alignment of the 2015 NLA with the new national reading curriculum. The study will make recommendations for the next NLA administration in 2019 to provide stronger links with the reading curriculum while maintaining comparability with previous test administrations. The alignment study can also suggest the inclusion of items that assess writing in future NLA administrations. READ M&E has agreed with the general director of the NEAEA to form an ad hoc committee with the READ M&E senior assessment expert and two experts from the NEAEA. The purpose of this committee is to develop a road map of all joint assessment activities.

Result/CLIN 3: Capacity Building. READ M&E has not undertaken capacity building activities in this quarter. Capacity building activities will be implemented as part of the regular training, collaboration, coaching, analyzing, and reporting associated with the EGRA and continuous assessment (CA) tools.

Result/CLIN 4: Technical Leadership. Administration and project startup activities, including the registration of AIR and the READ M&E project with the CSA, remained a major focus of the project. The CSA has not yet agreed to register the project to operate in Ethiopia. The COP, Dr. Hale, visited Ethiopia at the end of the second quarter (June 22-July 3) to familiarize herself with the project. She will return on July 20 to begin her residency.

IV. Project Management and Operations

A. Operations

READ M&E is designed to work with close collaboration with the NEAEA and USAID Ethiopia. The DCOP for Programs/Technical, Dr. Solomon Areaya, has been serving as Acting COP in the absence of a permanent COP. Dr. Jordene Hale has now accepted the position as COP and will join the four key staff in Ethiopia at the beginning of the project's third quarter.

The project is currently located in two small offices within the NEAEA building, At the end of the second quarter, AIR was concluding a lease agreement to share office space with a registered NGO operating in Ethiopia, to be effective as of August 1, 2015.

B. Key Meetings with USAID and Partners

The following table summarizes the key meetings that have taken place with the client as well as other partners during the second quarter.

Table 1: Key Meetings

Date	READ M&E Representative	Client or partner	Topic of meeting	Key decisions/outcomes
April 16, 2015	Marc Bonenfant, Solomon Areaya, Daniel Tefera, Zewdu Gebrikidan	UNICEF	Continuous Assessment	Avoid overlap and continue working in collaboration
April 21, 2015	Solomon Areaya, Daniel Tefera	MOE	Discussion on the READ II program	Share the evaluation strategy and working documents
May 19, 2015	Solomon Areaya, Daniel Tefera, and Zewdu Gebrikidan	USAID	Final performance evaluation of READ II	Proposal approved
May 26, 2015	Solomon Areaya	USAID and MOE	READ II	READ II performance evaluation proposal explained and submitted to the MOE
May 27, 2015	Mulatu Keffelew, Solomon Areaya, and attorney	CSA	Registration	Discussion held about registration and the case referred to the next higher authority

May 27, 2015	Solomon Areaya and Mulatu Keffelew	PACT	Office space	Preliminary agreement was reached to share office
June 4, 2015	Solomon Areaya and Mulatu Keffelew	PACT	Office	Draft agreement reached on the number of offices, services, and cost. Decided the detail to be communicated to the home office of PACT and AIR
June 30, 2015	Jordene Hale, Solomon Areaya , Zewdu Gebrikidan	MOE State Minister, USAID (Meshell, Marc. Tesfaye) , NEAEA	Introduction of the READ M&E project to the State Minister and how to work with other partners in general and with the NEAEA in particular.	The State Minister requested the NEAEA and NLA to work with READ M&E.

C. Staff Actions

Dr. Jordene Hale joined the project as COP in the second quarter and will take up residence in Ethiopia during the project's third quarter. The four key field staff hired in the first quarter remain classified as consultants pending completion of official registration in Ethiopia and will be hired as full employees of the project when registration is complete. In the second quarter, the project began planning for hiring the remaining staff. Current staff in-country are:

1. Dr. Jordene Hale, COP
2. Dr. Solomon Areaya, Deputy COP for Programs/Technical
3. Ato Mulatu Keffelew, Deputy COP for Administration
4. Ato Zewdu Gebrekidan, Senior Assessment Expert
5. Ato Daniel Tefera, Senior Evaluation Expert

D. Consultants and Subcontractors

As noted above, four key field staff located in Ethiopia remain temporarily classified as consultants pending registration of the project in Ethiopia. In the second quarter, eighteen data collectors were hired to collect data for the READ II final performance evaluation. The period of performance for each was 13 June through 27 June 2015. Three of these data collectors also assisted in translating the data collection instruments into local languages. Data collectors were hired on the bases of their previous experience with similar activities for USAID projects. All collectors had a minimum of a Master's degree. The higher degree was necessary as all data collectors were required to translate and transcribe interviews from native languages to English.

READ M&E has engaged in a contract with a local attorney in Addis Ababa to assist with registration of the project with the CSA and to review the project's human resources manual in light of local law.

In the second quarter, READ M&E hired Fromseas Education and Training, a small business based in Addis Ababa, to provide logistical services related to the READ II final performance evaluation. These services, including providing a training venue and transportation for data collectors, were more cost-effective to procure through Fromseas given the READ M&E project's lack of registration. AIR has worked with Fromseas in a similar capacity on previous projects in Ethiopia.

E. Staff and Consultant International Travel

No international travel was funded by the READ M&E project during the second quarter. The DCOP for Administration, Ato Mulatu Keffelew, traveled to Washington in April 2015 for meetings with the finance section of the AIR home office. AIR, not the READ M&E project, paid for all expenses related to the travel.

The newly hired COP, Dr. Jordene Hale, traveled to Ethiopia to obtain onsite orientation to the project activities; travel was conducted as AIR's expense

READ M&E staff traveled from 16-25 June within Ethiopia to supervise data collection for the READ II final performance evaluation. Ato Daniel traveled to Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region and Dr. Solomon traveled to the Amhara region each for 10 days. Each staff supervised more than twenty interviews.

In the upcoming third quarter, Dr. Hale and her dependent will relocate to Ethiopia. The project manager, Matthew Murray, will travel for the purpose of helping the field staff expand the office startup by locating more permanent office space, helping procure necessary equipment and supplies, and preparing to hire the remaining field staff.

Table 2: Travel during the second quarter (April – June 2015)

Name	Beginning date	Ending date	Itinerary	Purpose
Mulatu Keffelew	25 April 2015	30 April 2015	Washington, DC to Addis Ababa	Attend AIR Field Finance Manager summit; travel was conducted as AIR's expense rather than the project's
Jordene Hale	24 June 2015	2 July 2015	Addis Ababa to Washington, DC	Obtain onsite orientation to the project activities; travel was conducted as AIR's expense rather than the project's

Table 3: Travel during the third quarter (July – September 2015)

Name	Beginning date	Ending date	Itinerary	Purpose
Matthew Murray	13 July 2015	25 July 2015	Washington, DC to Addis Ababa to Berlin	Provide project management support to the field office team with expanding office startup
Jordene Hale	20 July 2015	N/A	Hartford, CT to Addis Ababa	Relocate to Ethiopia to serve as Chief of Party
David Rabinovitz	20 July 2015	N/A	Hartford, CT to Addis Ababa	Relocate to Ethiopia to accompany Chief of Party (dependent)

F. Procurements

READ M&E has solicited and reviewed bids from vendors for procurement of the highest priority office supplies (five desktop computers, five laptop computers, and one printer). The project also procured other office supplies, including a scanner, a printer, external hard drives, and other small purchases, in accordance with AIR policy and USAID rules and regulations. Project staff began locating vendors and developing an RFQ for the highest priority furniture. The office will be fully equipped when in-country legal registration is complete and tax-exempt status has been received. Vehicles will be procured after the project receives tax-exempt status in Ethiopia.

G. Alignment with Other Related Projects

There are a number of donor funded projects currently working in the education sector to improve student learning outcomes through ensuring strong leadership, high-quality teaching and learning, and solid parent and community involvement. Although each project has its own mandates with different goals and objectives, there is a clear, coherent, and logical relationship across the projects. UNICEF is assisting the MOE in designing, developing, and implementing nationwide standardized classroom-based formative assessments (SCBFAs) for primary grades (1-4) in Amharic, English, Mathematics, and Environmental science subject areas. Japan International Cooperation Agency is supporting the MOE in improving learning achievement in Mathematics and Science education by developing workbooks and modules for INSET and PRESET. USAID's READ TA project is working with MOE in developing syllabi, curricula and materials for both students and teachers for a variety of Ethiopian languages, building capacity of Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) to improve pre- and in-service teacher training, and assisting in community-based campaigns and co-curricular activities on reading and writing. USAID's READ CO has just launched to support MOE, RSEBs, WEOs, and schools to build capacity in mobilizing communities and fund raising activities that would help improve the school cluster centers (SCCs) and schools. USAID's READ M&E project activities have strong connection with the outcomes of the other projects mentioned above either to evaluating their overall impact (e.g., READ TA, READ CO) in improving student reading learning outcomes or

to strengthening the capacity of education agencies (an area of complementarity with, e.g., UNICEF-SCBFA).

This quarter the READ M&E project met with UNICEF to discuss activities and to identify synchronicities. We began an informal document review of READ TA and other partners to begin to identify overlaps and gaps.

V. Challenges and Actions Taken

The registration of AIR and the READ M&E activity in Ethiopia with the CSA continues to be the chief challenge to date. The project has not yet been able to obtain a tax identification number (TIN), open bank accounts, or obtain tax-exempt vouchers to procure materials and collect taxes from vendors. AIR has submitted all of the required documents to the relevant department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reviewed and accepted the documents and written a letter to the CSA, which approves registration applications. The project's local legal advisor and the local READ M&E team have frequently formally communicated with the CSA and informally with the ministry to complete registration as soon as possible.

In addition to proceeding with registration activities as quickly as possible, AIR has taken several actions to mitigate the challenge of the registration requirement, including hiring key local staff as consultants, deploying short-term technical assistance from the AIR home office, and utilizing office space provided by the NEAEA. READ M&E appreciates the hospitality of the NEAEA in providing the project's current office space. Furthermore, AIR has hired Fromseas Education and Training to provide logistics required for the data collection training on 11-12 June in Addis Ababa and to provide travel-related support for data collectors during the data collection that began on June 15. These logistical services do not present an increased cost for the project.

In the second quarter, the CSA responded in writing that it could not register READ M&E because the project "does not provide special benefit or charitable work to the community." The project is discussing this issue with other concerned parties and looking for mechanism to resolve this challenge. In the third quarter, the AIR home office in Washington, DC will file a formal appeal with the CSA, the project's Ethiopia-based attorney will recommend alternative methods of registration, and the COP plans to meet with USAID to discuss options.

VI. Major Activities Planned for the Next Quarter

Table 4: Major activities scheduled for the third quarter of READ M&E:

Task	Deliverable	Time frame
Task 1: PMP DQA on Selected Indicators	Verify and validate USAID PPR Data (indicators) for all READ projects	Preliminary report: September 15, 2015 Final report: September 30, 2015
Task 2: Performance Evaluations and Research	READ II final performance evaluation: 1. Train field staff in use of NVivo qualitative data analysis tool to assist in data analysis 2. Submit draft evaluation report	September 30, 2015
	READ TA midterm performance evaluation: 1. Finalize evaluation questions 2. Finalize sampling design 3. Design instruments, including translate the instruments into seven local languages (with local consultants for translating the tools)	August-September
	READ CO: Monitoring of project implementation 1. Assess monitoring plan 2. Work closely with READ CO to assess current status	August-September
Task 3: EGRA	Prepare proposal and discuss feasibility and implications for conducting mini-EGRA in Q4;	August 15, 2015
Task 4: National Learning Assessment in Reading and Writing at Grades 4 & 8	1. Continue discussions with the NEAEA about the level support required with post-data collection analysis and reporting of NLA results. Introduce Dr. Hale to NEAEA team in person. 2. Discussion with USAID about viability of Task 4	August 30, 2015
Task 5: Continuous Assessment in Reading and Writing	1. Present Concept Paper to USAID 2. Conduct Literature review 3. Plan for development of continuous assessment tools in collaboration with the MOE and the home office experts	1. August 7, 2015 2. September 30, 3. September 30,

Administrative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire six additional staff (Assistant Assessment Expert; Assistant M&E Expert; Data Clerk; Finance Director; Bookkeeper; Administrative/Logistic Assistant 2. Furnish and equip new office space 3. Continue to pursue Registration with CSA 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. August 31 2. August 7 3. On-going
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