



Creating Child-Centered Schools in Malaysia

Quarterly Programmatic Report April – June 2005

Under Leader Award No. GEG-A-00-01-00005-00

Submitted by Pact on behalf of
Children's Resources International, Inc.

I. Executive Summary

During the quarter, CRI conducted various activities closely related to two recent trainings as part of the *Creating Child-Centered Classrooms* program. A follow-up training and technical assistance visit was planned and conducted for a core group of 68 teachers and principals in Kuala Lumpur, as well as an initial training for 27 faculty and administrators as part of a collaboration with the Universiti Sains Malaysia. In total, 95 teachers, principals, administrators and faculty members received training.

Site visits were conducted in both locations. In Kuala Lumpur, CRI visited 3 schools, including 6 Kindergarten classrooms. In Penang, CRI visited 5 schools, including 8 Kindergarten and 16 early primary classrooms as well as a school for children with autism. Ongoing meetings with Ministry of Education representatives as well as meetings at the University focused on program implementation, success stories, current needs, program expansion and next steps.

Ongoing technical assistance provided by CRI program teams in-country added to the success of the follow-up training as concerns, challenges and new ideas were explored and discussed at length.

II. Background

CRI's *Creating Child-Centered Schools* program for primary school children in Malaysia introduces teachers to new teaching methodologies that are democratic in nature and draws families into the life of the school community. The program targets four primary audiences—children, families, teachers, and faculty that train teachers.

The objectives of the program are as follows:

- increased use of democratic, child-centered methods in the education of preschool and primary school children
- increased participation of families in pre- and primary school activities
- increased attendance and retention rates of pre- and primary school children
- increased access to education among pre- and primary school boys and girls

CRI's practices strengthen the development of a democratic culture in very young children through a new type of civic education—one that is inherently participatory. Teaching methods encourage children to make choices, take responsibility for their decisions, express their ideas with creativity, respect the different styles and abilities of their classmates, develop critical thinking skills, and practice independent thinking. Teachers learn to shift the emphasis from rote learning to the construction of knowledge based on the individual interests, needs, and strengths of each student.

By reaching children in their early years, the program aims ultimately to develop within the youngest members of society democratic skills, values, and attitudes that are necessary for success in the 21st Century.

The in-country team, and the new cadre of 35 teachers and 25 principals trained by CRI, is implementing the program and can expand it in future years, training additional kindergarten teachers as well as moving the program into the early primary grades. The program has a five-year developmental cycle that permits an in-country team of educators to practice for one year before expansion and introduction of new program initiatives.

III. Key Results This Quarter

During the quarter, the following activities were accomplished:

Collaboration with the School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia

CRI International Trainer, Professor Barbara Schwartz, Steinhardt School of Education, New York University, and CRI International Trainer and Associate Director Colleen Bane conducted a four-day training for faculty, administrators and local principals at the Universiti of Sain Malaysia, June 19 – 23, 2005. The Higher Education Training introduced two CRI faculty courses, as well as provided an overview of child-centered methodology. (See Appendices B and C.)

While in Penang, the Universiti arranged for several site visits to campus schools as well as local private schools run by members of the Kindergarten Association in Penang. The schools selected for visits are potential model practicum sites for teachers-in-training at USM. CRI visited 5 schools, including 8 Kindergarten and 16 early primary classrooms as well as a school for children with autism.

During the training visit, CRI met with several USM Representatives, including:
The Deputy Dean of Academic & Student Development/School of Educational Studies
The Dean of the School of Educational Studies
The Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academic and International Affairs

Technical Assistance Visit by CRI International Trainer

CRI Associate Director Colleen Bane visited Kuala Lumpur June 12–16, 2005, providing technical assistance to the team and conducting site visits to several local government schools.

At the request of the MOE, school visits were conducted at 3 Government Vision Schools located in Kompleks Sekolah Wawasan, Selangor, Malaysia. This special government school complex, established in 2003, contains 3 schools structured around ethnic and cultural identity -- Indian, Malay, and Chinese. Enrollment in the schools is limited to lower income families. To support government initiatives to improve relationships among the Malay, Chinese and Indian populations in Malaysia, students at the Kindergarten and Primary levels, students from all three schools are integrated for visual arts, physical education, and meals.

All three schools participate in the *Creating Child-Centered Classrooms* program. The three principals and 6 classroom teachers have been trained by CRI international trainers. The Ministry is eager to expand the program at the primary level. (See Appendix A)

Over the course of five days, CRI met with several MOE Representatives, including:
The Principal Assistant Director
The Deputy Director
CRI and MOE Master Teacher Trainers
The Head of Pre-school Unit, Policy, Planning and Curriculum Evaluation

Follow-up Training and Mini Workshops by CRI International Trainer

During CRI Associate Director Colleen Bane's visit to Kuala Lumpur in June, she also conducted a follow-up training and mini-workshops for the core group of 68 participants trained in December 2004. (See Appendix B.)

Ongoing Technical Assistance

Master Teacher Trainers Norbe Binti and visited classrooms and provided technical assistance to the classroom teachers and principals on an ongoing basis.

Modification of the Methodology

The teachers and principals implementing the program offered suggestions for revisions and adaptations to the CRI methodology. The Master Teacher Trainers collected and submitted photographs from government kindergartens for inclusion in the revised publication as well as to made suggestions for a variety of culturally and socially applicable examples.

CRI had expected to finalize the methodology during this quarter. However, Kalthom Musa at the MOE, who is responsible for overseeing the adaptations and edits to *Creating Child-Centered Classrooms*, was out of the office for several weeks during the quarter, due to MOE responsibilities and field work, and is in the process of completing edits before a final printing. There are numerous representatives at the MOE that would like to review the draft as well before it goes to print which will require additional time. All participants in the program have a copy, in draft form, of the translated methodology as reported in the 6th quarterly report. The MOE added this additional step to one, get information into the hands of all participants in the program quickly, and two, allow opportunities for input.

Expansion Plans

The Ministry staff met again with the Master Teacher Trainers and CRI Associate Director to discuss expansion of the program in and around Kuala Lumpur and in rural areas in East Malaysia, including Borneo.

Administrative Activities

At the request of Ms. Musa, CRI continues to work through Zaitoon and Norbi in moving forward with plans for training, translation, equipping classrooms with materials and technical assistance.

Staffing Changes in the Ministry of Education, Kuala Lumpur

Kalthom Bt. Musa, Project Director, Zakaria Zaitoon and Bin Nor Norbe Binti, Master Teacher Trainers, assumed responsibility for overseeing *Creating Child-Centered Schools* with the Ministry of Education

Staffing Changes at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

Professor Madya Anna Christina Abdullah, Deputy Dean Academics and Student Development, assumed responsibility for the program at the University in Penang.

IV. Comparison of Planned and Actual Accomplishments

Activities Planned for this Quarter	Timeline	Status
Plan and conduct a technical assistance visit with the MOE in Kuala Lumpur. Site visits will also be conducted.	April – June	Completed
Plan and Conduct a Follow-up Training for participants in Kuala Lumpur. Training will include several mini workshops.	April – June	Completed
Plan and conduct a training for the faculty at the Universiti Sain Malaysia in Penang. Two college courses will be presented.	April - June	Completed
Program Director and Master Teacher Trainer will visit participating schools and conduct classroom observations. The Master Teachers will continue to make visits at least bi-monthly, providing assistance to classroom teachers and principals.	April – June	Completed
Final edits and adaptation of the CRI methodology will be completed. The final version of the publication will be distributed to all participants and made available to early childhood educators throughout Malaysia.	April – June	Delayed but underway

Early Childhood Professional Team Exchange

The previous report mentioned a CRI proposal to State for an Early Childhood Professional Team Exchange and Training Program between Indonesia and Malaysia. However, this proposal was not approved and the exchange and training program will therefore not be implemented.

V. Activities Planned for Next Quarter

- Request a no-cost extension through March 31, 2006
- At the request of the Ministry of Education, CRI will explore opportunities for future collaborations
- At the Request of the Universiti Sains Malaysia, CRI will explore opportunities for future collaborations

VI. Success Stories/Lessons Learned

The Ministry of Education, Kuala Lumpur

A. Meeting with Kompleks Sekolah Wawasan Principals, teachers and MOE MTTs:

CRI: “Tell me about your successes and challenges.”

- **Morning Meeting**

It is our favorite part of the day.

Children like to share. It’s hard to get them to take turns.

Children like the activities and reading the news.
We need new ideas for keeping the news interesting.”

- **Implementation**

Program implementation is going well, but 25 children to one teacher creates difficulties for making choices.

Our school day is short – it is hard to fit in daily morning meetings, outdoor time, meals and choice time

- **Activity Centers**

The activity centers are good, we had them before, but now we allow children to select materials.

My room is small. How many centers should I have each day?

I like to see what other teachers are doing. Can we have visits to other schools?

I would like more information on arranging my room.

- **Parent Involvement**

Parents are too busy to come in.

The parents want to know why we do not mark all papers in the portfolio.

They think we are lazy.

Parents help with meals in my classroom, but I am thinking about new ways to have them help.

Parents want to know why we are trying a new technique. How can we

Tell them we are covering the curriculum

B. Feedback from Follow-up Training and Mini Workshops:

A letter from the participants to Pam Coughlin:

Dear Pam,

We would like:

Longer training A Training of Trainers

Copies of the Democracy Book

More Handouts

Workshops on Portfolios, Observation and Assessment

A Tape Recording of the Trainers’ Songs to use in our Classrooms with children

More activities using active learning materials

Reference books

Story books/Children’s Literature

To participate in a visiting Program

Translation for all future trainings

Your Program Participants

C. In-kind Contributions

Beginning December 2004 to date, the Ministry of Education has made significant contributions to the *Creating Child-Centered Classrooms* program. To support the December training, the MOE contributed \$22,310 (US \$) toward the training. In subsequent months following the initial training, the Ministry contributed an additional \$13,700 (US \$) for a total of \$36,000 (US \$) to date.

The Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

Goals and Expectations for the training as expressed by participants

- Strengthen Research and Development links between Higher Education and Early Childhood Education
- Acquire knowledge about child-centered program (design, implementation and conducting courses) including building resources.
- Learn about models and contemporary methods of training early childhood teachers
- Acquire new information on learning and development
- Gain new skills/techniques for hands-on classroom activities
- Share ideas and experiences
- Acquire skills to develop and conduct child-centered, hands-on activities
- Understand more about the world of young children
- How do we adapt/adapt this new information about early childhood training into the Malaysian context?
- How do we make the relevant changes and get the faculty to accept and practice the changes

In-kind Contributions

The Universiti Sains Malaysia has contributed \$5,260 (US\$) in support of the recent faculty training on their Penang campus.

The US Department of State

The US Department of State, most notably Riazurrahman Omusa (Riaz), continues to be a tremendous support for this project and has provided assistance on numerous occasions when technological challenges posed a challenge to ongoing and effective communication.