EDDATA II

Task Orders 2 and 4 Annual Report

Oct. 2007–Sept. 2008

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EdData II Defined

In much of the developing world, a lack of reliable data hinders realistic education policy and decision making. Without good measurements of access, learning, and management factors, local and national stakeholders base their policies on vague or erroneous ideas about the needs of their students and schools. Similarly, international donors lack sound data and many times must make program decisions based on this incomplete and unreliable information.

EdData II, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provides survey expertise to help national and local governments as well as the donor community to assess their education status. Project advisors collaborate with USAID Missions, other donors, and stakeholders to find innovative and cost-effective ways to gather and analyze education data. They can then jointly establish relevant benchmarks that help governments, teachers, and parents or guardians provide meaningful education for their children.

The project offers diverse services such as school-based, household, and national surveys. Rapid assessments can examine student-focused issues such as literacy, the education needs of orphans and vulnerable children, and gender disparities. They can also measure school and district management capacity, highlight education needs as perceived by the business sector, and reveal potentially useful applications for information and communication technology (ICT).

The purpose of Tasks 2 and 4

The intent of both Task 2 and Task 4 is to allow the design and implementation of a variety of short and targeted research and assessment-related activities, as jointly determined and agreed to annually by the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) and the EdData II Project Director. The stated purposes of Tasks 2 and 4 are to develop and assess different models of data collection for educational decision making; to assist USAID/EGAT/ED with furthering its assistance to the field of educational data collection for decision making, particularly with survey options and their applications; and to promote the use of educational data collection for decision making by USAID Missions. The task order specifically addresses the achievement of EdData II's Result 2: *Accurate and timely education data collected through the participatory design and implementation of an innovative mix of smaller-scale qualitative and quantitative data collection methodologies.*

Activities

Specific activities under this task order are determined annually through consultation between the COTR and the prime contractor, RTI. Activities from 2007–2008 included the following.

1. Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) as the Basis for an Education Survey Course

The primary activity of EdData II Task 2 was to develop an Education Survey Course (see item 2 below) with the goal of teaching decision makers and managers basic skills in use of simple assessment and statistical techniques in quality monitoring. The chief beneficiaries of this course would be decision makers and managers closest to the schools. These participants were targeted because decentralization efforts have made them responsible for the quality of education services and school support. It should be

noted, however, that the resulting course can be used by other parties that are directly involved in improving school performance (nongovernmental organizations, universities, etc.).

Two secondary efforts took place beforehand that laid a foundation for the course. The first was a small, informal, RTI-funded EGRA assessment. The findings from this assessment, as well as from stakeholder meetings organized by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), indicated that research that examined the impact of an EGRA intervention on student performance would provide the most useful information.

Accordingly, the scope for this early EGRA activity was to develop a limited but scientifically rigorous and well-informed pilot student reading intervention. This intervention activity encompassed the development of remedial interventions materials, the application of these materials, and the measurement of its impact. The EGRA intervention was carried out by the Aka Khan Foundation in the Malindi District in Kenya. The project followed a randomized assignment of schools into treatment and control schools, with pre- and post-treatment measurements relying on the EGRA tool. The intervention consisted of improved training for teachers on reading instruction in a simplified, explicit, and direct manner.

As noted, the lessons learned and findings from these two activities ultimately fed into the Education Training Course that was taught to Kenya's district officers.

Below are highlights of the EGRA activities in Kenya during the 2007–2008 period.

a. January 2008:
   - Lesson plans were finalized and teacher training manual completed.
   - Teachers in treatment groups received training in early grade reading (EGR) instruction methods (40 teachers).
   - Education officers from Malindi District were trained in the provision of EGRA support (9 officers).
   - The *Malindi Reading Report*, which summarized findings from the baseline assessment, was finalized.

b. February: EGR instruction began in treatment schools.

c. March: Mr. David Mumo of AKF attended RTI's EGR conference and presented the EGR experience in Kenya.

d. April: As part of the EGR activity, AKF agreed to informally assess students in treatment and control schools to evaluate the impact that the interventions were having and to make adjustments in the method as needed. Nine treatment and nine control schools were selected for the May assessment and improvements in both treatment and control schools were noted. AKF was advised to investigate the possible "leakage" of the intervention to the control schools. The issue was not necessarily to control but to document, as it may affect the nature of the evaluation.

e. May: AKF conducted its first informal assessment of student performance in the EGR schools in May 2008. A report summarizing the findings from this assessment was sent to RTI on July 3.

f. July: AKF conducted a second informal assessment of the students in treatment and control.

g. August: RTI staff member Ms. Medina Korda gave input to the Kenyan firm East Africa Development Consultants (EADEC) regarding the format of the formal EGRA assessment of the EMACK schools. (A post-intervention assessment is planned for November 2008.)

2. Education Survey Course

The aim of the Education Survey Course organized for Kenya was to provide the most basic skills for monitoring progress in on various learning indicators. By the end of the course, participants were to be equipped with skills to design a survey and implement the survey (including all steps, from constructing a budget needed to implement the survey to writing and disseminating the survey results). As described earlier, participants were to analyze the EGRA data collected in Kenya as part of the course's hands-on activities.

a. November 26–December 1, 2007: Education Survey Course was piloted with EMACK staff and Malindi district education officers (22 participants).

b. December 5–6, 2007: Planning discussions for the implementation of the Basic Education Professional Development (BEPD) project (see additional details below) were held with Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) and other stakeholders.

3. Kenya Education Management Capacity Assessment (KEMACA)

The Kenya Education Management Capacity Assessment was a census-type survey that assessed the national and subnational governments' ability to implement decentralization of education under the Kenya Education Sector Support Program. The survey was carried out at the request of the government of Kenya, with funding from USAID, and executed by RTI International and EADEC. At each level, areas of strength or weaknesses with regard to capacity (in particular skills), and rating of own performance on "objective" performance indicators, were assessed—in short, all the key capacities needed to run an education system. The KEMACA will enable the government to establish which districts are least equipped across all capacities and hence require the most funding or capacity development. It will also give the government a profile of which capacities are most lacking across all districts, and hence require the most technical development.

a. December 6, 2007: Dr. Luis Crouch presented the KEMACA report to Permanent Secretary K. Mutahi and dozens of high-level education officers. There were also some 50 Ministry of Education (MOE) and other education sector staff present. Various comments were made both by the Permanent Secretary and the other education staff, which were taken into account by Dr. Crouch and EADEC. Overall, the presentation was well accepted. Dr. Crouch had discussed with both Ms. Sarah Wright and the Permanent Secretary the need to take action based on the findings of the report, as well as other observations, regarding a framework for capacity development in Kenya. Dr. Crouch also met with Mr. Brown Makotsi of EADEC the week following the presentation and shared with him Ms. Wright's various ideas for how to move forward with the notion of creating a strategic framework for capacity building, as a way of brokering and creating consensus on possible ways forward.

b. December 13, 2007: Dr. Crouch participated in a video conference at the Kenya Institute of Administration. Conference participants included government officials from Liberia, Kenya, Zambia, Cameroon, and Ghana. Its focus was the role of capacity development in decentralizing countries. The Kenyan side was coordinated by Mr. Makotsi. Other Kenyans present were from various institutions such as KESI, the MOE, etc. There were various opportunities to highlight USAID's capacity-development work in Kenya and to discuss both the advantages of a thorough needs assessment, and the need for a strategic framework for capacity development. Present were also key staff from USAID/EGAT/ED, namely Mr. Patrick Collins, Mr. John Hatch, and Ms. Catherine Powell Miles.

c. January 2008: A report that summarized the findings from the KEMACA survey was finalized.

d. March 2008: Ms. Korda presented the district capacity-assessment instrument and highlighted key findings from Kenya at the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference in New York City.

e. April 2008: Ms. Korda submitted an article based on the KEMACA report for publication to the online *Journal of Education for International Development* (JEID).

f. April 2008: Dr. Crouch and Ms. Korda wrote an article summarizing the KEMACA main findings. The article appeared in the Education Quality Improvement Project's (EQUIP2's) *Just in Time* publication.

4. Basic Education Professional Development: Online Learning Project (implemented by KESI)

Starting in December 2007, KESI was given significant feedback (by e-mail) on how to work out the budget and scope of work for this project. RTI provided guidance, advice, and assistance to KESI but little progress was made. A detailed listing of these activities is provided below.

a. December 2007: A scope of work (a Memorandum of Understanding) was developed and agreed upon.

b. January 2008: An outline of activities and a timeline were developed by KESI. RTI provided detailed analysis and reworked the timeline and sequence of activities.

c. February 2008: RTI assisted KESI with newspaper advertisements for the subcontractor selection, and with the scope of work and timeline finalization for the project overall. Assistance on how to go about selecting individual consultants (RTI's approach) was provided to KESI as well. RTI also modified the existing contract in order to transfer funding for the newspaper advertisements.

d. March 2008: RTI sent several e-mails asking KESI for feedback. Additional assistance for newspaper advertisements and a scope of work for subcontractors were provided to KESI.

e. April 2008: KESI published the newspaper advertisements, which turned out to be a call for expressions of interest in the project.

f. April–May 2008: Interested bidders submitted their expressions of interest.

g. May 2008: Given that KESI had not submitted its draft budget until this point, RTI provided a breakdown of the available funding, by activities, as per the mentioned "outline of activities" given to KESI.

h. May 2008: RTI assisted KESI with crafting the evaluation criteria for the selection of subcontractors.

i. June 2008: KESI sent its budget on June 5, and RTI provided a detailed analysis of all budget line items a week later. KESI's budget was almost three times the target amount. RTI provided feedback as to how to cut down the costs and work within the available funding.

j. July 2008: KESI, without a contract in place or agreement on the budget, went forward with a workshop to select a subcontractor. The workshop took place in Nakuru over a period of 10 days.

k. July 2008: RTI expressed concern to USAID/Washington and USAID/Kenya about significant delays that would most likely lead to a contract extension.

l. July 2008: KESI received a new director, Ms. Caroline Kariuki; former director Ms. Murage assumed the role of the Deputy Director for Training.

Anticipated Activities

The following activities are planned for October 2008 forward under Tasks 2 and 4.

a. EADEC will conduct a formal post-intervention assessment of the participating EMACK schools (in Malindi District) to evaluate the impact that the EGRA pilot intervention has had on student performance. Ms. Korda and Mr. Crouch will work with EADEC to summarize these findings in a report.

b. KESI will work with Kenyatta University to develop an online course. KESI and RTI agreed to collaborate on a set of activities that will lead to the revision and use of e-learning course modules, as a part of Basic Education Professional Development Project courseware. The goal of this activity is the improvement of education management capacity of district-level education officers. The overall purpose of the BEPD Project is to advance strategic decision making within the education sector at subnational levels using a distance training/e-learning medium. These course modules will encourage reflective data-based decision making by building the technical and management capacity of district-level education officers and by sharing knowledge about best practice ideas or policy options within common areas of concern in a diverse, global community.