



Quarterly Report:

**Basic Education Support and
Training Project (BEST)**

January 1 to March 31, 2009



Submitted by:

Academy for Educational Development

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List of Targeted Schools under BEST-Yemen Project

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Annual 2009 Work Plan: Accomplishments to Dates

List of Acronyms

AED	Academy for Educational Development
AL	Adult Literacy
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BE	Basic Education Project
BEST	Basic Education Support and Training Project
BEDS	Basic Education Development Strategy
COE	College of Education
COP	Chief of Party
CP	Community Participation
CPF	Community Participation Facilitator
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DOE	District Office of Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FC	Fathers' Council
FFS	Fully Functioning School
GOV	Governorate
GOY	Government of Yemen
ICT	Information Communications Technology
LAEO	Literacy for Adult Education Organization
MC	Mothers' Council
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFC	Mothers and Fathers Council
MFS	Minimally Functioning School
MOE	Ministry of Education
MPC	Multipurpose Center
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PC	Parent Council
PAMP	Project Advancement Monitoring Plan
PMP	Performance Management Plan
SSW	School Social Worker
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistant
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
TEP	Teacher Education Programs
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WP	Work Plan

USAID/YEMEN BASIC EDUCATION SUPPORT AND TRAINING (BEST) PROJECT

Overview

This Sixth Quarterly Report for the Basic Education Support and Training (BEST) Yemen Project covers the period of January 1 to March 31, 2009. The report period can be typified as one of setting a solid foundation for the launching of the fieldwork activities in the new districts in the governorates of Amran, Hodaida and Rayma. At the outset of the quarter, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) approved four very fundamental deliverables essential for this solid foundation. These included the Life of Project (LOP) Work Plan (WP) through December 31, 2012; Annual WP 2009 (now aligned with that of the Ministry of Education); Performance Management Plan (PMP), and Performance Advancement Monitoring Plan (PAMP). In January, the foundation for fieldwork activities in the new districts was further strengthened with the finalization of the selection of the eight cluster schools to be served and the corresponding satellite schools for each cluster across the two new governorates of Rayma and Hodaida and two districts in the south of Amran. Baseline data were enhanced during the January field visits required for the selection process in determining the new school/community sites. The process and resultant decisions were accomplished in concert with the key partners of the BEST-Yemen Project. In addition, at the Central Ministry of Education level, two highly constructive meetings of the Project Advisory Board were held in late-February and the first week of March to discuss, among other topics, the BEST-Yemen Project 2009 Annual Work Plan and the type of interventions to be carried out in the new districts in Amran, Rayma and Hodeida governorates. Also in early March, the project conducted a National Orientation Workshop in Sana'a in order to launch the technical assistance at the Central MOE and governorate levels, acquainting the participants with the project goal, objectives, themes and types of school/community development interventions to be implemented in the new targeted governorates while clarifying roles and responsibilities of all the key stakeholders. As an immediate follow-up to this activity, the project conducted a series of similar yet more in-depth orientation workshops in each of the new districts in the governorates of Amran, Rayma and Hodeida in order to set the stage for the technical assistance fieldwork at the governorates, district and school/community levels.

The report period could also be typified as one of acceleration of the "closing down" of activities that were an extension of those initiated under the previous USAID-funded Basic Education (EQUIP1) Project in the 77 school/communities and corresponding districts in Shabwah, Mareb and Amran. The thrust of these activities was on ensuring sustainability while meeting the commitments made under EQUIP1 and programmed for completion in the approved BEST Closing Work Plan for 2009. Examples of these activities include the significant task in the Shabwah Governorate of the "handover" of two schools, "Faqeed Salem Bakir" and "30 November," in February for renovations by engineering firms and initial progress which, at the time of writing this report (mid-April) were 25 % and 75 % complete, respectively. As described in further detail in this quarterly report, other closing down

activities from the BE Project included national-level Education Management Information System (EMIS) orientation workshops, science subject training, the promotion of girls' education through special "Open Day" activities, adult literacy learners being provided the opportunities to exchange their experiences with learners from other classes, and community participation monitoring field visits, as well as strengthening activities for mothers' and fathers' council members across Amran, Shabwah and Mareb.

BEST Mission and Objectives

BEST is operating within the broad framework of the Government of Yemen's (GOY) Basic Education Development Strategy (BEDS) which emphasizes:

- Access for Yemeni children to basic education
- Equity of opportunity for females and males to education services
- Quality improvements that place the student and the teacher at the center of the education system
- Improved capacity and internal efficiency of the Ministry of Education at all levels
- Sub-national participation in the improvement of education

Given this framework, the Mission Statement for the BEST Project is "bridging the gap between development activities and systems-building by increasing the relevance of policies, especially as related to the achievement of gender objectives."

While building on the experience and achievements of the BE Project, BEST-Yemen has expanded its work in consultation with the MOE and other donor partners so as to ensure sustainability of successful approaches and innovations. The work plan for the project has been aligned with that of the MOE for 2009. The rationale for doing this is to effectively "mainstream" project work plans with GOY's own educational development plans and implementation strategies so as to ensure complementarity. BEST-Yemen is making every effort to simultaneously collaborate strategically with other related donor projects so as to create critical masses within and across programmatic areas for effectiveness, desired impact and optimum sustainability within the targeted communities, districts, governorates and over time, elsewhere in the nation. This is evident in the report on accomplishments and the processes utilized to arrive at the intended results during the period of January to March 2009.

Against this background, the central goal and key objectives of BEST are expressed below as a framework for the reader, especially those who might not be fully aware of these aspects of this basic education improvement project.

BEST-Yemen Goal Statement: To strengthen the capacity of communities, schools and the Ministry of Education to sustain educational improvements for their children and their children's children.

Statement of BEST-Yemen Project Objectives:

- *To enhance the capacity of targeted MOE units at all levels to support educational improvement consistent with the national decentralization policy*
- *To expand work on improvement of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), learning environments, teacher training, Mothers' and Fathers' Councils (MFCs), learning materials and adult literacy in the schools and communities*
- *To develop, with the MOE, a community school policy to address the issue of parity between boys' and girls' enrollment and retention in schools*
- *To support development of policies and actions that result in recruitment and retention of female teachers.*

Charting the Way Forward

As noted at the outset of this quarterly performance report, the period from January through March 2009 can be summarized as one of setting a foundation for launching the approved plans for the new governorates while accelerating the completion of activities intended to strengthen the sustainability of approaches, interventions and the desired results on the select districts that have now been served for well over four years with USAID support to basic education in Amran, Mareb and Shabwah. Emphasis will need to be increased steadily in carrying out the approved plans for 2009 in all five governorates so that the project will be able to continue premiering the US Government support for the Basic Education sector in Yemen for the remainder of the year while setting a solid foundation for the remaining years. This will necessitate a focus on long-term educational policy as well as provision of direct support to basic education schools and systems in targeted communities. The activities, accomplishments, challenges and lessons learned during the report period are covered in the remainder of this document in the categories of Administration and Operations followed by Technical. A set of two 2009 WP Charts on Accomplishments to date are provided at the end of this report as a convenient monitoring tool for this report period and those for the remainder of the year.

1. Administration and Operations

1.1 BEST-Yemen Project Advisory Board Meetings

Two highly constructive meetings were held on February 24 and March 3 of the Basic Education Support and Training (BEST) Project Advisory Board at the Ministry of Education (MOE). The board was created to monitor operations and provide advice to the project, particularly on changes in policy that might impact implementation of planned activities. The meeting in late February was a regular quarterly meeting of the Advisory Board members. In addition to USAID/Y Cognizant Technical Officer, the meeting included the Interim USAID/Y Representative to the Mission as well as the BEST-Yemen Chief of Party (COP) and Deputy COP. Also included were the Deputy Minister of the Projects Sector, who serves as Chairperson, MOE representatives from other sectors, and the Literacy for Adult Education

Organization (LAEO), with whom the project collaborates closely. At the February quarterly meeting, key project deliverables were presented as a general overview and in a discussion session, a working meeting was called on March 3. At the follow-up meeting, the focus was on the approved BEST-Yemen Project Annual Work Plan for 2009. Following a presentation of the 2009 AWP led by the COP in which he described the project objectives, strategies and the types of interventions to be carried out in the new districts in the governorates of Amran, Rayma and Hodeida, board members discussed and resolved those observations and questions arising after their thorough review of the detailed plan. As a result of the involvement of the Advisory Board in the overall monitoring of project plans and achievements, there will be further improvements in MOE ownership, results and sustainability of the efforts being made by BEST-Yemen to contribute to the enhancement of basic education in the targeted populations and institutions.

1.2 BEST-Yemen Project Staff Changes

There were staff changes during the quarter with the resignation as of the first of January of the female Community Participation Facilitator (CPF) in Mareb who also served for six months as the Mareb Team Leader. She was not replaced due to the fact that the project will be closing down in that governorate by June 2009. There remains a male CPF in Mareb who was assigned the Team Leader role. On the 31st of January, the EMIS Coordinator resigned and an immediate search for his replacement was initiated (and his replacement began his employment on 11 April). A volunteer IT Assistant was officially welcomed to the project to assist the IT Specialist as of March 12th. Other staff positions were identified and advertised in the areas of Community Participation and Adult Literacy along with a full-time translator during the report period and are scheduled to join the project in the next quarter.

2. Technical Approach: Themes, Activities, Challenges, Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

2.1 Best-Yemen Project Technical Team Finalizes Selection of Cluster Schools in the Three New Governorates of Amran, Hodaida and Rayma

From January 17 through February 12, the BEST-Yemen project technical team finalized the selection of the cluster schools to be targeted under the project in the eight new districts in the governorates of Amran, Hodaida and Rayma. The team conducted a number of orientation meetings with the relevant stakeholders in these three governorates. The stakeholders included representatives from the following: Governors, Directors General of Education from both the district and the governorate levels, and relevant departments such as Training, Community Participation and School Mapping. Also represented were members of the local governing councils and other influential personalities. The project team provided them with information on the types of interventions by the projects in the form of the draft “Menu of Interventions for Investment in Sustainable Development” and shared a schedule of upcoming activities and events. Participatory sessions were held with the participants to also clarify roles and responsibilities, including the support required or anticipated from the project and local communities. The technical team conducted a number of site visits to the selected

schools and verified that the cluster schools previously selected met with the criteria that was set and approved by the project and the Ministry of Education. Cluster schools that did not meet with the criteria were removed and replaced with ones that did. The major accomplishment of this field trip was that the MOE, local authorities and project team finalized the selection of the cluster schools successfully and that an agreement was reached in the form of signed minutes between all the parties, stating that the number of cluster and satellite schools that will receive technical support under the BEST-Yemen Project is as follows in these three governorates: a) Amran three (3) cluster schools with fifteen (15) satellite schools; b) Hodeida five (5) cluster schools with twenty-one (21) satellite schools, and c) Rayma three (3) cluster schools with twelve (12) satellite schools. (Please refer to the Appendix for the final listing of the cluster and satellite schools with their respective districts and governorates.)

2.2 BEST-Yemen Project Launches Fieldwork in New Governorates

From March 1 through 12, 2009, the project conducted a series of nine orientation workshops (one at the central level in Sana'a and eight at the district level) in order to launch the technical assistance fieldwork to be initiated in the weeks ahead throughout the selected districts in the Governorates of Rayma, Hodaïda and Amran. There were 308 participants (226 males and 82 females) from the central Ministry of Education, the governorate, district and school/community levels, including director generals (DGs) of education and local governing council representatives. At many workshops among the attendees were the Governor of Rayma, Mr. Ali Salem Al-Khidami; Deputy Governor of Amran, Mr. Saleh Abu Awja; Deputy Minister for Teacher Training and Teacher Qualifications at the central MOE, Mr. Abdullah Saleh Lemles; and the DG of the School Mapping Department, Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Samawi. The main objective of these orientation workshops was to acquaint the participants with the project goal, objectives, themes and the types of school/community development interventions to be implemented in the new targeted governorates through December 2012. As a result of the workshop, the participants contributed inputs into the investment approaches to be utilized by the project and also clarified their roles and responsibilities along with those of other key stakeholders.

Training Activities

2.3 BEST-Yemen Project Trains Grade 4 – 9 Science Subject Teachers in Mareb



From February 21 through March 5, the project facilitated a twelve-day training of fifty-three science subject teachers (41 males and 12 females) in Al-Wadi and Al-Jobah districts in the Mareb Governorate. This training aimed to (1) increase student interest in the sciences, related challenges and relevant questioning, (2) prepare students on ways to improve their performance and grades in the science

subjects, (3) strengthen the teachers' ability to apply modern methodologies during instruction in the science subjects from grades 4-9, and (4) increase the skills of classroom teachers in producing educational aides from locally available materials to better help students understand and enjoy science. The twelve-days of training also helped increase the knowledge and expertise of teachers in day-to-day assessment strategies such as questioning, observation, analysis, and checking on the children's understanding during the teaching-learning process. This training and similar ones conducted under the project contribute the Ministry of Education's goal of improving the quality of basic education through enhancing teaching performance at the classroom level.

2.4 Grades 4-9 Science Subject Training (Part III) Summarized as follows:-

Governorate	District	Training Venue	Participants						Duration
			Teachers			Trainers			
			M	F	T	M	F	T	
Mareb	Al-Wadi	Al-Fateh School	25	7	35	2	-	2	21Feb- 5 Mar 09
	Al-Joobah	Al-Noor School	16	5	21	2	-	2	
Total			41	12	53	4	-	4	

2.5 BEST-Yemen Project Trains 108 School Headmasters in Shabwah

During the last week of March and first week of April, BEST-Yemen trained a total of 108 school headmasters (99 males and 9 females) in a twelve-day workshop for representatives from eighty-four schools in the Governorate of Shabwah. This is considered the third stage (Part III) of on-going training which mainly focuses on providing the headmasters with skills required for effective school management. The participants enhanced their abilities to function as positive team players and constructive colleagues in a school setting. They are also prepared to encourage a spirit of optimism, enthusiasm and self-motivation while creating

a positive attitude within the school environment. Among other areas, special consideration was given in the training to addressing the needs of the handicapped, performance assessment, and the use of alternative ways for disciplining students so as to avoid corporal punishment. The skills required to formulate a school-based strategic management plan were also developed in Part III of the headmasters' training program. The training of headmasters in Shabwah and other governorates targeted under BEST-Yemen has contributed to a more dedicated and competent corps of Yemeni school headmasters. In Shabwah alone, the headmasters of the 84 schools who participated in these three stages of training are impacting well over 25,000 school children in grades 1 to 9.



2.6 Part III Headmaster Training Summarized (through 9 April) as Follows:

Governorate	District	No. of Training Centers	No. of Trainers	No of Headmasters being trained			Duration
				M	F	T	
Shabwah	Attaq	2	4	28	4	32	28 Mar-9 April
	Khora	1	2	17	2	19	
	Bayhan	2	4	54	3	57	
	Total	5	10	99	9	108	

Challenges

- The unfavorable environmental factors (terrestrial rains and sand storms) effected transportation in the entire governorate of Shabwah.

Lessons Learnt

- For training to be successful, it should respond to an expressed need. The impression received from the headmasters and teachers was that there was a pressing need for such training, as it included important topics needed for their professional development.
- Due to the importance of the headmaster training, trainees participated in the training despite the weather conditions (terrestrial rains and sand storms) and the lack of transportation in the entire Governorate of Shabwah.
- Proper coordination with the Central Ministry of Education (training sector) as well as the local authorities in the governorates contributes to the success of training events because it demonstrates respect for their position and enables them to attend and supervise the training events.
- Direct supervision of the training events by the project field office team leaders ensures that the training activities go smoothly. This helps prevent and/or timely resolution of difficulties, contributing to the success of training events.

Community Participation Activities

2.7 Best-Yemen Project Facilitates Eight Community Participation Monitoring Visits to 78 Schools in governorates of Amran Mareb and Shabwah

By mid-January 2009, the project facilitated a month of community participation follow-up activities for 78 schools in Amran, Mareb and Shabwah governorates. A total of 19 (8 female and 11 male) community participation facilitators and heads of girls' education and community participation departments from the governorate and district levels in three governorates conducted site visitations and observations with the purpose of gathering information on school progress in community participation through social workers and fathers and mothers councils, including incorporating the implementation of the council plans, documenting key activities, identifying and solving relevant educational issues, and, importantly, promoting girls education. Total number of fathers' and mothers' councils visited during these visits was 125 (76 fathers and 49 mothers).

2.8 BEST-Yemen Project Conducts a two-day Community Participation Evaluation Workshops to Assess Work Progress in Eight Districts in Amran, Mareb, and Shabwah

From January 14-18, BEST-Yemen facilitated a two-day evaluation workshop in Amran, Mareb and Shabwah for a total of 79 (64 males and 15 females) Social Worker Trainers (SWTs), Girls' Education and Community Participation Heads, Director Generals of the Education, Representative of the Local Governing Councils from the district and the governorate levels. This two-day evaluation workshop was organized as a result of the SWT visits to 78 targeted schools in the eight districts in the Amran, Mareb and Shabwah. Based on the SWT observations during the visits, the workshop addressed the areas for improvement in the performance of the community participation activities. They (1) discussed ways of improving the community participation monitoring and evaluation forms used in the previous visits, (2) identified major problems faced by the SWT and Girls' Education and Community Participation Heads for discussion, (c) described points of strengths and weaknesses in the STW performance, and (d) identified means/tools for improvement. Before the end of the workshop, a date was set for an "open day" to promote Girls' Education. (This is the second workshop of this nature to be conducted. The first was conducted end of year 2008.)

2.9 Best-Yemen Project Assisted in the Reform and Training of Mothers and Fathers Council in Amran, Mareb and Shabwah governorates

Extending from December 2008 through March 2009, the project provided technical assistance to the Government Offices of Education (GOE) in Amran, Mareb and Shabwah to reform 56 fathers' councils and 33 mothers' councils in 78 schools in eight districts. The reform councils came as a result of a number of community participation follow-up visits to targeted schools which were conducted by the project Community Participation Facilitators along with heads of girls' education and community participation departments at the governorate and district levels. From the findings of these follow-up visits, there emerged a critical need to reform and train the councils. The "refresher training" served the purpose of reorganizing and strengthening council members' skills while further enhancing their understanding of their duties and responsibilities towards the schools and girls' education. Among other areas of training were included planning and implementing activities as well as sessions on orienting and motivating them about basic repair and maintenance of school building and furniture.

2.10 BEST-Yemen Project Team Facilitates a Two-Day Community Participation Consultative Workshop in Mareb to Assess Work Progress

From February 3 to 4, the project facilitated a two-day Community Participation Consultative Workshop in Mareb for seventeen (12 males and 5 females) Social Worker Trainers from the district and the governorate level along with the Director General of Education and Heads of the Local Governing Councils. In this workshop, all the activities accomplished by the Social Worker Trainers were reviewed, major problems faced by the social workers in schools were discussed, strengths and weaknesses in the social workers performance were identified, and approaches and instruments for activating their roles and responsibilities with the schools and fathers' and mothers' councils were further clarified.

2.11 No. of Fathers and Mothers Council Formed and Trained Summarized as follows:-

Governorates	District	No. of Fathers Councils	No. of Mothers Councils	Total
Amran	Amran	6	3	9
	Thula	-	5	5
Mareb	Al-Wadi	8	7	15
	Al-Joobah	11	5	16
	Majzer	15	7	22
Shabwah	Attaq	4	2	6
	Bayhan	9	3	12
	Khorah	3	1	4
Total	8 districts	56	33	89

2.12 BEST-Yemen Project Facilitates a Training Workshop for Eight Social Workers in Amran Governorate

On February 18, the project facilitated a one-day training workshop for eight (8) social workers (7 males and 1 female) from the Amran District of the Governorate of Amran. The workshop focused on strengthening the Social Workers' (SWs) skills in conducting training for the fathers' and mothers' councils in targeted schools. The training of the fathers' and mothers' councils after their formation is usually conducted by the Social Worker Trainers (SWTs) but this was the first time that SWs were formally trained to conduct this training. The training provided social workers with guidelines on how to conduct and manage such trainings and familiarized them with the topics in the Community Participation Training Manual. The BEST Project Community Participation Facilitator in Amran along with a trainer from the Girls' Education and Community Participation Department in the Amran District facilitated this training.

2.13 BEST Yemen Project Organizes an Open Day to Promote Girls' Education in Mareb and Shabwah

On March 1 and 2, the BEST-Yemen Project, in collaboration with the Governor of Mareb and Shabwah, the Governorate and District Offices of Education (GOE & DOE), organized an Open Day to promote girls' education in six districts in Mareb and Shabwah governorates. This high-profile event was attended by an estimated 1710 participants (990 males and 720 females) from director generals of education, DGs of youth and sports, representatives of the local governing council, a number of sheikhs, school headmasters, teachers, social workers, and heads of fathers and mothers councils as well as other influential community leaders and students from the district schools. The activity provided a forum to discuss ways to promote awareness of girls' education among relevant stakeholders, identify problems that hinder girls' education within district communities, and propose practical solutions to decrease the dropout rate among girls. In Mareb, the governor and the district officers of education honored distinguished teachers, social workers and heads of fathers' and mothers' councils, which were largely from the schools served by the USAID/Yemen-funded basic education projects. The Governor of Mareb expressed words of appreciation for the outstanding performance, support and contributions to promoting girls' education in their schools and communities.



2.14 BEST-Yemen Project Trained the Technical Secretaries of the Supreme Council for Girls' Education in the Rayma Governorate

From March 22 to 25, the project conducted four days of professional development training for ten (10) technical secretaries (6 males and 4 females) of the Supreme Council for Girls' Education in the recently targeted Governorate of Rayma. The technical members were trained in Ministry of Education's Girls' Education by-laws and guidelines. The professional development aimed to develop skills in planning, monitoring and reporting as well as effective communications with the targeted communities. The workshop strengthened participant competencies in carrying out Supreme Council responsibilities and familiarized the participants with the MOE 2007-2008 data base and the indicators related to girls' education that enables them to analyze the current situation related to girls' education. One of the intended results is to prepare the Supreme Council members to be able to plan well so as to contribute to the sustainable improvement of girls' education throughout the Governorate of Rayma.

Challenges

- Delay in the formation of the fathers' councils in Amran which was previously due to the election continues to persist due to conflicts between different political sects.
- One of the biggest challenges to the Community Participation Component activities was that most of the communities were not aware of the importance of forming fathers' and mothers' council and how their activities contribute to improving the quality of education.

Lessons Learned

- Training social worker trainers helped enhance the evaluation and follow-up skills of the social workers as well as the fathers' and mothers' councils in schools.
- Involving social workers in training the fathers' and mothers' councils enabled them to evaluate their performance and follow through with their activities more effectively.
- Proper coordination with the central and governorate offices of education, particularly with the girls' education and community sector contributes to the success of training events because it demonstrates respect for their position and enables them to attend and supervise the training events as part of the sustainability measures being implemented.
- The unified team spirit within the project staff and the support given by the administration and finance staff has positively contributed to the successful implementation of activities in the field.

Adult Literacy Activities

2.15 BEST-Yemen Project Facilitates Exchange of Successful Experiences Visits between Two Adult Literacy Classes in Thula

From January 3 -7, the Adult Literacy Component facilitated three (3) successful visits between two (2) adult literacy classes from Al-Jeel Al-Jadeed School and Al-Sallam (Al-Sheem) schools in Thula –Amran in which twenty-six (26) adult female learners participated. The main objective of these cross-class exchange visits was to provide women with the opportunity to exchange their stories about how they have benefited from the adult literacy classes and how learning to read and write has changed their lives, how they were before and after joining the adult literacy classes. Many felt more empowered and indicated that they possessed more self confidence and were able to express them much better. They also discussed the benefits of the life skills program conducted by the BEST-Yemen Project and how it helped raise the awareness among women about personal hygiene, nutrition, home economic and how it contributed to the reduction of the spread of common diseases among rural women.

2.16 Adult Literacy Coordinator Conducts Supervisory Visits to Assess Work Progress in Adult Literacy Classes in Governorates of Amran, Mareb and Shabwah

From January 3 through 28, the Adult Literacy Coordinator conducted a number of supervisory visits to 56 adult literacy classes in Amran, Mareb and Shabwah that target a total of 1341 adult female learners. The main accomplishments of the field visits were (a) enhanced capacity of the Adult Literacy Facilitators at the cluster level, (b) completion of the review of all the topics covered and difficulties faced by the facilitators, (c) completion of the individual feedback on each of the facilitator’s performance, (d) assessment of the understanding of the female learner, (e) appraised the benefits obtained from topics covered while prioritizing learner needs/difficulties, and (f) the introduction of twelve (12) new life skills and awareness raising booklets which were done in coordination with the Literacy and Adult Education Organization (LAEO) offices at the governorate and the district levels. These books were distributed to learners from the Level II of the Reflect Methodology who knows how to read. The books focus on home economics, child care and development stages, child nutrition, child vaccination, diarrhea, common eye disease, and environmental health.

2.17 BEST-Yemen Project Facilitates Refresher Trainings for AL Facilitators in Mareb and Shabwah Governorates

From February 3 through 28, the project facilitated six (6) Adult Literacy “Refresher Trainings” for fifty-nine (59) Adult Literacy Facilitators (all females) in six districts in Mareb and Shabwah governorates, with two days of training for each district. This training was also attended by six (6) AL inspectors and twelve (12) LAEO officials from the district level in both the governorates. This series of refresher trainings came about as a result of the inspectors monitoring visits to the adult literacy classes in January. Based on the inspectors’ observation, it was determined that there were weaknesses in the facilitators’ performance;

especially the new facilitators in the new AL classes, which had just begun. This refresher training focused on strengthening the facilitators' skill in dealing with the adult female learners, encouraging them to actively participate in the AL classes. They were also taught to provide constructive criticism to the adult female learners, motivate them to speak up and discuss their problems and linking them to the life skills and functional literacy curriculum being taught in the class. The training also strengthened the learners' problem-solving skills.

Challenges



The biggest challenge that is faced to date in the adult literacy activities is that there are local authorities, especially in Mareb, who do not fully cooperate and do not recognize the importance and benefits of adult literacy for their communities. It has been a challenge getting them to understand the supportive role they can play in promoting AL activities.

Lessons learned

- The adult literacy activities helped fill a gap in places where LAEO did not have a presence.
- Close contact with the local authorities and communities is important as they are influential in encouraging women to continue with AL classes.
- The adult literacy classes empowered participants, helped boost their self-esteem, and enabled them to express themselves with confidence. Remarkable changes in attitude were noticed in inspectors, facilitators and the women participants. As a result of continuous training and follow-up, inspectors and facilitators now have the ability to conduct literacy classes effectively, facilitate discussions smoothly, and solve problems raised by the mothers.

- Mothers were able to read and write within a very short period of time. They found the REFLECT methodology very interesting as it helped them identify their problems and come up with solutions. This is what differentiates the REFLECT methodology from the LAEO curriculum.
- Life skills programs help raise awareness among women about the importance of personal hygiene, nutrition and home economic issues and most importantly, reduce the spread of common diseases among rural women.
- Effective coordination with field office team leaders helps to solve problems in a timely manner that might arise during the implementation of AL activities, which might otherwise hinder the implementation process.

School Renovation Activities

2.18 Signing Renovation Contracts and Actual Start of Major Renovation of 30 November and Salem Baker Schools in Governorate of Shabwah

Mid-January, the School Renovation Component signed two contracts with renovation firms and two contracts with monitoring engineering firms so as to proceed with the renovation of two schools in Shabwah, including multipurpose centers in each of the schools. Actual renovation of the two schools started in early-February and progress was noteworthy at the time of the writing of this report. At Salem Baker School in Koran District, the project is renovating 27 classrooms, 7 latrines, as well as the teachers' residence in the school. Major renovations are also being carried out at the 30th November School in Bayhan district, where 22 classrooms and 8 latrines are being renovated. The BEST-Yemen Project Chief Architect has conducted a number of orientation meetings with the renovation subcontractors and the monitoring firms emphasizing quality control, safety consideration on the site, and revising the implementation time schedule provided by the subcontractors in coordination with the school administration and local communities. Discussed were held for provision of alternative learning places for students while the school is being renovated so as not to disrupt classes. The 30th November School administration and the local community in Bayhan decided to replace the glass windows with metal ones which they determined are more durable and sustainable. This is being taken into consideration. Also the renovation team finalized the Request For Proposal draft for structural design of the multi-purpose community center and the advertisement was placed in the newspapers towards the end of February.

2.19 The BEST-Yemen Project Mobile Repair Team Finalized Needs Assessment and Delivery of 270 Three-student Desks in 16 Schools in Majzer

From January 6 through 23, the project Mobile Repair Team (MRT), with the help of community volunteers, delivered 270 three-student desks to 16 schools in Majzer District in Mareb. The delivery of these desks was a result of the needs assessment conducted in these schools with the help of the heads of the fathers' councils, school social workers and school headmasters.

Challenges

One of the biggest challenges is the unstable security condition of the road from Shabwah to Sana'a via Mareb, which has caused the slow down of the monitoring process. Engineers have been stopped and personal items stolen.

Lessons learned

- Consulting local community members is important in identifying and assessing community needs when locating or considering the addition of new facilities such as multipurpose centers, new classrooms, latrines, privacy walls as well as school furniture.
- Structural assessment should be conducted before renovation in order to make sure that the school buildings to be renovated can tolerate the structural stress of renovation without risking collapse or other harm to the students and teachers.
- For school renovation to be sustainable, it is important to use locally available raw materials and human resources such as the fathers and other community volunteers.
- In order to address sustainability concerns adequately, school renovation maintenance committees should be activated after the major renovation process is complete so as to ensure that schools are maintained regularly.

Education Management Information System Activities

2.20 BEST-Yemen Project Team Facilitates a National Level Educational Management Information System Orientation Workshop in Mukalla

On January 28, the project facilitated a one-day Educational Management Information System (EMIS) Orientation Workshop in Mukalla for forty-two (42) participants (38 males and 4 females) from different sectors of the Ministry of Education (including MOE, GOE and DOE representatives) such as the Information and Communication Technology Department, Statistics and Planning Department, School Mapping Department, School Maintenance Department, Teacher Training and Qualifications Departments, Girls' Education and Community Participation . Also included were participants from LAEO representing all the three governorates of Hadramout, Al-Mahra, and Shabwah. The workshop was formally opened by the Director General of Education in Mukalla, who thanked USAID for their support in this significant field, expressing how it will help raise awareness of the importance of EMIS in decision making. The main objective of this workshop was to acquaint the participants about the importance of the Management Information System in the education sector.

Challenges

- The recruitment, screening and selection of a qualified professional for the vacated position of EMIS Component Coordinator is most challenging and success in doing so is essential to component progress. (As of the writing of this performance progress report, the vacancy has been filled by a qualified professional.)
- Dealing with the three different departments (ICT, Statistics and Planning, and School Mapping) is challenging at various levels, such as trying to come to an agreement on a mutually-convenient date for a workshop.
- There are no standard payments (transportation, per diems and incidentals) for the participants for all the governorates to Mukalla.
- The MOE has received ADSL Internet access for approximately ten months and has yet been able to limit it to the select number (maximum of 40) of users as per the Memorandum of Understanding.

Lessons learned

- The workshop dates should be closely coordinated with the Ministry of Education and appropriate authorities should announce the dates and required participation of key representatives.

Statement of Work for Next Quarter

The next quarter of the project, April through June 2009, will be one of intensification of activities in all thematic areas, from Education Management Information Systems (which suffered a setback at the outset of the new calendar year with the vacancy in the position of EMIS Component Coordinator) to the increased activities in the School Renovations Component with the acceleration of the sub-contractual work for structural assessments and the designs for constructions of multipurpose centers in the school sites in the new districts in Amran Governorate and those in the Governorates of Hodaida and Rayma. In the 77 school/community sites that have been served by USAID/Y for over four years, first under the BE (EQUIP1) Project and since mid-2008 by BEST-Yemen, final activities as laid out in the approved 2009 “Closing Work Plan” will be completed on or before the end of June with a focus on sustainability. The activities that will extend beyond June 30th of 2009 are those related to the school renovation, rehabilitation and monitoring activities that are associated with the two schools, “Faheed Salem Bakir” and “30 November,” in Shabwah. Other key activities of significance for the quarter ending the 30th of June include the consultancy work by three international specialists, the first in Monitoring and Evaluation, the second in EMIS and the third in Gender Equity. The M&E consultant will assist in the completion of instruments, support manuals and training required to carry out the baseline study for use in administering the PMP and the PAMP. The EMIS consultant will focus on cooperation with the Ministry of Education in establishing a foundation for substantive reform that will support relevant and sustainable educational development in

Yemen. The Gender Equity consultancy will provide technical support to the recently named project GE Component Coordinator in addressing her new role, the design of an in-depth gender assessment, training of key project and MOE staff, and the development of a central location for gender equity materials recourses for use from the central MOE, project to school/community levels. The pace of activity implementation as per the approved work plans for the two sets of school/community sites will also intensify in the areas of community participation, adult literacy and training. All these will be done in an integrated manner with a focus on quality while accelerating the pace of project implementation and spending required to meet or exceed established performance criteria.