

Projet D'Amélioration de la Qualité de l'Éducation « PAQUED »

QUARTERLY REPORT April 1- June 30, 2010



The Lifeplayer: technology selected to distribute the IRI lessons

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INTRODUCTION

On September 15, 2009 Education Development Center received an award from USAID to implement the PIEQ (Package for Improving Education Quality) program. Later USAID allowed EDC to use the French equivalent acronym “PAQUED” (Projet d’Amélioration de la Qualité de l’Education) as the official name of the project.

PAQUED will:

- provide teachers with a continuous professional development program centered around the design and implementation of innovative, meaningful learning experiences;
- ensure that that program is delivered at the local level, and that it includes supports to incrementally build teachers’ capacity as they experiment with new practices in the classroom;
- provide teachers with incentives to change their practices, and publicly reward them;
- furnish teachers and students with the basic resources and materials necessary to support their learning, including a safe, inviting learning environment; and
- encourage parents and communities to advocate for and take a leadership role in school improvement.

The following is a narrative technical report of PAQUED for the period April 1 – June 30, 2010. The report describes achievements in terms of general operations and programmatic activities.

Key accomplishments under general operations included the hiring of Provincial Office Managers and the acquisition of essential equipments and vehicles. Major technical achievements included the recruitment and initial training of Master Trainers, the development of teachers’ training modules 1 and 2, the development of IRI programs, the testing of EGRA/EGMA instruments, and the training of community structures in participatory school management. Despite delays in signing a contract with the sub-contracting recording studio, the project was generally on track during the reporting period.

1. OPERATIONS

1.1. Staffing

The project hired three “Office Managers” to support each of the provincial offices. They will be responsible for providing all the administrative, logistical and financial support in the provinces. Training Coordinators were promoted to take on the additional responsibility of overseeing project operations at the provincial level.

1.2. Office set up

During the reporting period, the rehabilitation of the temporary project office in Kisangani was completed, and members of staff moved in. However, due to insufficient space, the office will be relocated within IFCEPS compound once it is rehabilitated. In Mbandaka, rehabilitation work began in May, and is expected to be completed next quarter by mid-July.

1.3. Procurement

At a long last, the project acquired the first three Toyota Land Cruisers. Although they are expected to be shipped to the provincial offices, we are using them at the Kinshasa office while we wait to receive the remaining two vehicles.

2. PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

2.1. SCHOOL SELECTION

As mentioned in the last progress report, the project did encounter serious difficulties working with some of the schools that had been selected. Those were mostly “hard-to-reach” schools, or schools that did not have any reliable radio coverage. We worked with provincial authorities to replace the problematic schools. By the end of the reporting period, negotiations were still ongoing as we waited for more reliable information about dozens of schools to determine whether they met all the selection criteria. The final list of schools to be targeted by the project will be produced by the end of the fourth quarter, well before the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year.

2.2. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 1

2.2.1. Recruitment and initial training of Master Trainers

The project recruited 120 school inspectors (40 per province) to serve as Master Trainers (MT). As a first intervention with them, we organized a week-long training session in each province to introduce them to the PAQUED project, to organize the neighborhood cluster system, and to administer the data collection instruments. Provincial authorities such as the Inspecteurs Provinciaux Principaux (IPP) and and PROVEDs also attended the workshops. The participants were thrilled to have the PAQUED project in their zones and welcomed both the intervention and the innovation.

After that initial training, MTs introduced the project to all pre-selected project schools and carried out baseline data collection. Neighborhood clusters and schools (cellules de bases) have been asked to elect their leaders, and they will be trained in October 2010.

2.2.2 Developing instructional materials

Two experts in the design of instructional materials from MEPSP along with 2 curriculum experts and four inspectors joined the PAQUED scriptwriters and education team for a week-long workshop in making and using instructional materials. This team then took their new expertise to primary schools

on the outskirts of Kinshasa to hold workshops for the local teachers. Follow up observation and training visits were done by members of the education team and the MEPSP instructional materials experts. These activities served to inform the PAQUED education team and their ministry partners as they entered into the development of the training module “Using and Making Instructional Materials”.

2.2.3 School Kits and Self-Directed Learning Modules:

The school kit procurement list was finalized with Ministry materials experts and procurement began in June. There are five kits: neighborhood cluster kits, school kits, teacher kits, classroom kits, and materials kits.

The project began developing two self-directed learning modules including:

- 1) How to Use IRI Effectively, and
- 2) How to Use and Make Instructional Materials



Filming of videos for multi-media support tools in Kimpokoschool

Filming began in June for video segments to be integrated with audio segments for “multi-media sessions” for meetings of neighborhood clusters. Outlines, master plans, and evaluation tools for Modules 1 and 2 were developed during the reporting period.

2.3. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 2:

2.3.1 Audience research

In the last week of May, the scriptwriters were dispatched in the periphery of Kinshasa to conduct audience research in grade 3 and 4 classrooms. Following a similar structure to the grade 1 and 2 study, research included the observation of math and reading/writing lessons, teacher and student interviews, and observations of materials (didactic materials, books), language, and pedagogy employed in typical classrooms. Other visits were made to pedagogic sections of high schools to determine the curriculum and pre-service training teachers were receiving. The findings related to teacher beliefs and practices, materials used (or not used) in classroom, parental involvement, student participation and interests. For example, it was found that teachers had difficulty exploiting group work with their students. Such information will support the development of more context-relevant IRI lessons for grades 3 and 4. To do so, the IRI programs will be adapted to help teachers manage and incorporate group work into their lessons.

2.3.2 Script advancement

In the third quarter, the team of eight scriptwriters produced 60 scripts of the literacy and numeracy support IRI programs for grades 1 and 2. These programs provide an extra hour a week of more specific support for literacy and numeracy programming to the existing 2h30 of the PAGE programs. Twenty of these support scripts have already been field-tested. Results of the testing show that programs are adapted to the realities of the classroom and are greeted openly by the teachers and students testing them. The rest of the programs are beginning to be field-tested post-recording in the Magic Tree studio.

2.3.3 Grade 3 & 4 series mapped out

The structure and scene of the grades 3 & 4 series was conceptualized by the 8 scriptwriters. It is in process of being validated by the Ministry.

2.3.4 Distribution strategy finalized

In April, under supervision of the PAQUED coordinators and in cooperation with one international consultant, nine local consultants conducted a questionnaire in 100 schools per province and all surrounding local radio stations to determine the best distribution strategy for the IRI programs, the community radio programs, the teacher support materials. The results of the study concluded that the solar-powered wind-up Lifepayer mp3 is the best option for IRI lesson distribution. The advantage of this technology is that it allows for radio distribution and eventual program uploading in mp3 form. It is a user friendly, weatherproof, rugged, and solar-powered/ wind-up model similar to the successful Lifeline radios used across numerous radio projects in Africa. The Lifepayer also provides built-in tracking of when programs are used and for the mp3 option, how long it takes a teacher to use each program. The mp3 option gives the opportunity to teachers to stop the program when they need more time to execute activities with their students. Likewise, this can be seen as a disadvantage because breaking up an IRI program too much can make it lose its upbeat style. Moreover, providing teachers with an mp3 may present a scheduling challenge in regard to the incorporation of the IRI lessons into their daily class schedules. To address this challenge it was decided that programs would be broadcasted via radio in the first year of airing and then will be uploaded in mp3 format for use in the following years.

2.3.5 Testing of the IRI scripts

Due to the delay in a studio contract, the IRI scriptwriting team was not been able to field-test the majority of the scripts written up to date. However, this will be rectified very soon with the recent signing of the studio contract.

3.6 Analysis of EGRA/EGMA pre-test and revision of EGRA and EGMA instruments:

Analysis of pre-test EGRA/EGMA data was completed in April. This analysis included psychometric statistical tests to identify changes that should be made to the instrument in order to ensure reliability. In addition, because the EGMA assessment was too long, this analysis enabled the team to identify items that could be cut from the instrument without compromising the assessment, to ensure that we would fully assess the core competencies targeted in the assessment. Changes made included, for example, removing the number-line sub-section from the grade 2 mathematics test due to profound floor effects (it was too hard for the students and did not provide any additional information not found through other sections) and utilizing only one geometry task at this level. Similarly, a number of individual items in procedural sections across the grades, and particularly in grade 6, were identified and cut, in order to ensure that the test would be feasible to administer without losing information on the targeted competencies. Some items in the EGRA assessment were similarly adjusted, though there were not as many such changes needed.

2.3.7 EGRA/EGMA baseline pilot in Equateur, Orientale, and Bandundu:

As was discussed in the previous quarterly report, the revision of the EGMA instrument involved more significant changes after pre-testing than have been needed in EGMA applications in other countries. This is, in large part, because the instrument is being applied in a wider range of grade levels than has been done in other contexts. As such, we determined that it would be necessary to undertake a second round of piloting, to ensure the final instrument would be fully reliable and valid. In addition, by undertaking a pilot in April and May, we were able to carry it out in the three target provinces, Bandundu, Equateur, and Orientale, whereas there was not sufficient time to do the pre-test outside of the Kinshasa area. This will not only reinforce the technical reliability of the assessment, but will also increase face validity, helping to ensure that local and central ministry officials would recognize the assessment as being valid for the contexts of the three target provinces (for example, reducing potential for any complaint that the assessment was only pre-tested in the Kinshasa area).

Pilot data collection was carried out by central and provincial ministry officials who had previously participated in instrument development and pre-testing. Refresher training for the officials was facilitated by RTI EGRA/EGMA specialists Emily Miksic and Wendi Ralaingita, together with the RTI/PAQUED research and evaluation specialist, Boanerges Kabengele. Ms. Miksic and Dr. Ralaingita also supervised the first round of pilot data collection, in Bandundu, in order to ensure quality control and to prepare the central ministry officials for data collection in the other two provinces. Bandundu data collection took place between May 2 and 6. While the other two provinces were initially scheduled to take place immediately afterwards, the dates for these collections were changed to May 15 to 22 and June 5 to 12. The reason for this re-scheduling included both the eventual need to take time between each provincial data collection to ensure logistics were sufficiently prepared and because of unavailability of ministry officials (discussed further in the challenges and constraints section below). Overall, the pilot data collection was carried out without subsequent problems and included 12 schools and 516 students.

Because the schedule was changed for piloting, data entry and then analysis is currently scheduled to begin in early July, and preliminary results are expected to be ready by mid-August.

2.4. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 3

2.4.1. Creating and strengthening various school committees

Preliminary baseline results revealed that in the majority of year one 300 targeted schools, Parents' committees (COPAs), (School Management Committees (SMCs) and Students' Representatives Committees (CREs) do exist. However, several of them do not include all required members. As a result, the project put in place two lines of actions. First, it helped create structures where they did not exist. Thus, 66 COPAs, 67 SMCs and 148 CREs were created. Second, the project undertook to strengthen some of the existing structures by helping them organize democratic elections to obtain the required minimum numbers and types of members in each structure. In that vein, the project intervened in 184 COPAs, 148 SMCs, and 102 CREs.

2.4.2 Developing Community Radio Programs

To more effectively support community mobilization activities, the project began developing community radio programs that will be aired throughout the life of the project. Fourteen such programs were developed, seven of which were translated to Lingala during the reporting period. We expect to record them during the next quarter in MoEPSP's studio.

2.4.3 Training COPA and CGE members in participatory school management

With the support of consultant with expertise in good governance, CRS developed a training module on participatory school management. The consultant subsequently trained 24 project community animators as trainers of trainers (ToT). In turn, these ToT's trained 3,418 community members including 1,315 women in participatory school management in all 300 schools targeted this year.

2.4.4 Training in psychosocial support

CRS began developing training modules on psychosocial support during the period under review. It is anticipated that the module will be tested and finalized in July -August (Quarter 4). The community workshop trainings will take place immediately after the module is approved.

2.4.5 Developing school Improvement Plans (SIP)

Community Animators organized workshops targeting COPA and CGE members to help them develop school improvement plans (SIP). At the end of the workshop, each community developed small projects to address some of the burning issues within their school environment. By the end of the reporting period, CRS/PAQUED's mobilization team had received a total of 261 proposals.

2.4.6 Resource Center Construction/Rehabilitation

Three construction companies were contracted to rehabilitate IFCEPS Kisangani. It is expected that rehabilitation work will be completed in September. However, lack of electricity at the IFCEPS site may constitute a major difficulty that will delay the completion of that rehabilitation work. The project is exploring options (local versus third country purchase) to purchase a quality transformer (the missing equipment) to restore power supply to the site.

As for Bandundu and Mbandaka, environmental and feasibility studies were completed, and tenders subsequently issued. Contracts will be issued towards end of July, and it is anticipated that actual construction work will begin early August.

3. M&E ACTIVITIES

Project baseline data has been collected, and data entry has begun. There may be some schools that were not surveyed in this collection because of changes in the school selection. Any new schools will be surveyed during the next series of trainings.

The project has hired 20 temporary data entry clerks to help enter data collected during the baseline survey. Despite the number of clerks, entering all the data has proven to be a very lengthy and delicate exercise, as we have to ensure that the data are correctly and reliably entered.

CRS's M&E specialist from HQ supported the education team with EDC's and RTI collaboration to develop the M&E system of PAQUED's Objective 3. As soon as they are validated, these tools will be integrated in the global M&E system of the project.

4. NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND TRENDS

Our collaboration with other key education players such as VVOB (the Flemish Cooperation), AFD (the French development Agency) is likely to help us further strength the sustainability and ownership of some of the project products such as the teachers' profiles. We have agreed to meet in the coming months to harmonize the teachers' profiles that we have prepared with their interventions. This will result in the profiles not being viewed as only a PAQUED product, but one that is also owned by those other players.

5. SUCCESS STORY

There is no success story available this quarter.

6. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS VERSUS PLANNED ACTIVITIES

(See annex 1)

7. CALENDAR FOR NEXT QUARTER

(See annex 2)

8. CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

8.1 School selection

Trainings and field site visits revealed some problems with the school pre-selection. Provincial Coordinators spent the end of the quarter reviewing selection lists with MTs, IPPs and IPPAFs, and Sous-Proveds to rework problem areas (the problems targeted are radio coverage, accessibility, and security). The lists were nearly finalized at the end of the quarter and are expected to be final in August, well before the beginning of the school year. Meanwhile, the reworked lists are being reviewed by Proveds and Provincial Ministers for final approval.

8.2 Data collection

Logistics of getting data collection documents to provincial capitals and Kinshasa has taken much longer than anticipated. Each province has looked for its own solution – using TENAFEP and Exetat structures, the help of IPPs and IPPAFs, collaboration with Caritas, etc. As a project, we need to 1) look for reliable ways to gather data and send them to a central place as fast as possible. **[Insert rest of sentence....]**

8.3 Studio delay

The delay in contracting to a studio has posed a challenge to the IRI section. This has delayed the field-testing of scripts, in addition to the development of Modules 1 and 2. However, the studio team at Magic Tree has hired extra hands to try to meet the deadlines set and is working to produce the materials already developed by the scriptwriting and technical team.

8.4 EGRA and EGMA baseline data collection

The primary challenge during this quarter, once the decision was made that the EGRA and EGMA instrument should be piloted in the three provinces, related to the need to change the schedule of piloting in the three provinces. The schedule was changed in part due to the realization that more time should be taken to ensure adequate logistical preparation. However, the schedule was further delayed by the unavailability of ministry officials. Specifically, the team was told by ministry officials that they had other meetings and workshops to attend, even though they had previously been informed of the activities and had not informed us of conflicting commitments at that time. When the

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PAQUED EGRA/EGMA team approached the ministry to ask for advisement on dealing with such conflicts, we were told that we must negotiate directly with each ministry official, and we were told unofficially that if the officials had found other opportunities that offered higher per diem, they would be likely to prioritize those opportunities over our activities. This necessitates the clarification of a per diem policy that is in line with what other projects and organizations offer and the reaching of an understanding with the ministry that will ensure that activities are not undermined at the last minute by the sudden unavailability of ministry officials.

CONCLUSION

The project made significant strides forwards during the reporting period. Our approach of involving Ministry officials at all levels as well as key players in the education sector has significantly helped us start actual project implementation in the field with relative ease. However, delays beyond our control, and the logistical difficulties inherent to the DR Congo have somewhat hampered progress. We are well aware that these difficulties might become even more complex and impeding as we continue to implement the project. However, the PAQUED team is determined to address any such difficulties with due diligence in order to achieve the best results possible within the most reasonable timeframe.