



PAQUED QUARTERLY REPORT
October 1 – December 31, 2012
Submitted to USAID/DRC,
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Training of Members of National APES in Kinshasa, December 2012

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
CGES	Comité de Gestion Scolaire
COP	Chief of Party
COPA	Comité des Parents
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
EDC	Education Development Center
EGMA	Early Grade Math Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
IFCEPS	Institut de Formation des Cadres de l'Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire
IPAF	Inspecteur Principal Adjoint Chargé de la Formation
IPP	Inspecteur Provincial Principal
IRI	Interactive Radio Instruction
MEPSP	Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel (MoE)
MTR	Mid-Term Review
PDI	Professional Development Institute
PIEQ	Pacakage for Improving Educational Quality
PAQUED	Projet d'Amélioration de la Qualité de l'Education
PROVED	Directeur de la Province Educationnelle
SIP	School Improvement Plan
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance

1. 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.

Project performance during the reporting period (October 1 – December 31, 2012) was primarily a re-design effort in response to the main recommendations of the mid-term that had taken place the previous quarter. These conceptual activities include the following:

- Realigning the project to USAID’s Goal One of improving reading skills for children in primary grades;
- Developing training and support tools aimed at increasing teachers’ skills in teaching reading;
- Finalizing IRI teachers’ guides
- Designing activities to involve communities and parents to more effectively support in
- Developing M&E tools, especially a new PMP aligned with USAID’s new policy guidelines (ADS 203).

In addition to this conceptual work, which was the main focus of project activity during this period, two major training events were organized. The first training was provided to inspectors and school principals so that they can better support teachers in the effective use of IRI in the classroom. The second training targeted the Federation of Parents’ Association (APES) to help them gain clearer understanding of their roles and to play those roles more effectively.

The following is a narrative technical report for the period under review (October 1 – December 31, 2012). In addition to the introduction, it covers the following major sections: (2) Operations; (3) program realignment; (4) programmatic achievements; (5) Monitoring and Evaluation; (6) New trends and opportunities; (7) Success story; (8) Accomplishments versus planned activities; (9) Calendar for next quarter; and (10) Major challenges faced.

2. OPERATIONS

2.1. STAFFING

The project did not recruit new staff during the period under review. To the contrary, due to the end of IRI programs design, many contracts ended on December 31. Thus, eight IRI specialists officially left the project. However, as will be reported during the next quarter, most of them applied for new pedagogical and field support positions that the project created.

One Provincial M&E Assistant (Djodjo Aluma) who had just been posted in Kisangani left the project to join another organization. The recruitment process to fill the vacancy hence created began immediately. A replacement is expected to join the project early next quarter.

2.2. PROCUREMENT

Other than the recurrent procurement of regular office items, flight tickets and the like, no major items were procured during the period under review.

3. PROJECT REALIGNMENT

Much of project team's efforts focused on responding to key MTR recommendations, namely: revising project's goal so that it is aligned with USAID's Goal One of improved reading skills for children in primary grades; developing an M&E system that has increased resources and that links key project inputs and outcomes. In that context, the team developed a draft concept paper describing the key elements of the realigned project. The new project goal is to "Increase the number of students in the DRC with improved reading and math skills". The readjusted objectives consist of (1) Establishing standards for teaching and learning in reading and math; (2) Improving the quality of teaching in reading and math; and (3) Improving the school learning environment.

In addition to describing key realigned components of the project, the concept paper includes a new PMP, and a realigned budget. Most importantly, the project designed a model that will be tested in 45 experimental schools carefully selected in all three targeted provinces.

A first draft of the concept paper was submitted to USAID in November 2012. USAID's comments were received earlier January, 2013. Further developments ensuing from those comments will be discussed in the second quarter report.

4. PROGRAMMATIC ACHIEVEMENTS

4.1. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 1

The PAQUED education team engaged in a number of activities specifically addressing key recommendations made in the MTR report¹ to improve outcomes (especially in reading).

The team began designing an intensive training and teaching program focused on improving reading outcomes in selected project schools. This set of activities was carried out under the assumption that USAID would approve the realigned goal of the project. The two-fold aim of these activities is to 1) develop a comprehensive program to enhance teaching and learning capacity in reading in DRC elementary schools and 2) develop an effective in-service teacher-training model for potential adoption and large-scale implementation by the Ministry.

4.1.1. DESIGNING A TRAINING AND TEACHING PROGRAM IN READING

A key achievement during this reporting period was the development of training materials and of ongoing assessment tools intended to support the proposed reading program. This self-directed program (or “package”) is designed to enhance the impact of existing IRI programs while serving as a model for both children’s learning and in-service teacher training. PAQUED will launch the program in about 15 selected, “experimental” schools in each province – chosen from among existing, PAQUED target schools.

The aim of the 18-month experimental schools reading initiative is to test, evaluate and refine an enhanced package of teaching and learning materials and activities, which are designed to achieve measurable gains in reading among DRC students. Using new and existing evaluation tools (i.e., EGRA testing), PAQUED will measure and compare improvements in reading among experimental school students with those of students in the regular target schools. The goal is to achieve an even greater impact on reading indicators through the use of IRI and the reading package than with IRI alone. Additionally, the project will use a set of quantitative and qualitative tools to measure the frequency and quality of application of reading activities among experimental school teachers (at baseline, midline and following completion of the program).

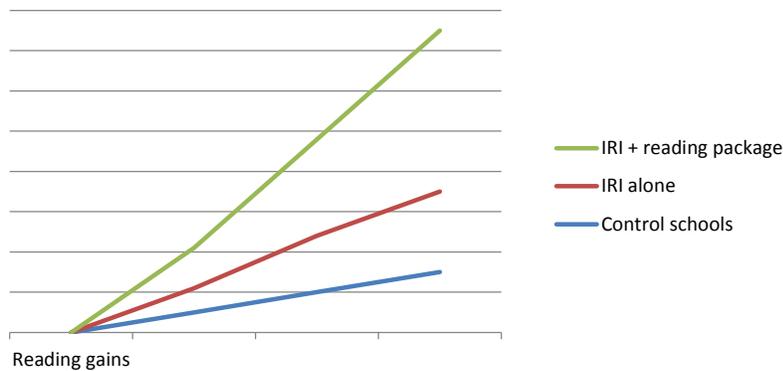
The proposed experimental schools reading initiative will include the following components:

¹ For details, see the report, Mid-Term Review: Package for Improving Education Quality, produced by School-to-School International.

- self-directed teacher professional development modules, including pedagogical strategies and programs of weekly activities for developing student skills in reading and writing (for Grades 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6);
- training of school inspectors and principals in school-based “pedagogical supervision” (i.e., mentoring) techniques to support autonomous teacher development;
- PAQUED pedagogical supervisors (six total, two in each province) trained to guide inspectors, principals and teachers in the use and support of reading program activities;
- training of local COPA and COGES members to develop school improvement plans (SIPs) for improving reading; and
- training of parents and other community members in the use of strategies to monitor and support students’ reading outside of school (ex. organizing “buddy readers”, so that older students can read with and guide younger readers).

Figure 1 (below) illustrates the projected, relative outcomes of proposed and existing PIEQ activities on reading over the remaining two years of the project:

Figure 1: Projected relative gains in reading for PIEQ activities



The education team expects to begin an initial orientation and training phase of the experimental schools program during the second quarter of Year 4.

4.1.2. INITIAL DIALOGUE ON READING BENCHMARKS

The project initiated a dialogue with other major stakeholders including the MEPSP, UNICEF and OPEQ to discuss the relevance and the importance of establishing benchmarks and indicators for measuring actual reading gains. The idea was very well received and it was agreed that this should be a collective effort that has to involve as many important

stakeholders as possible. It was also agreed that in view of its strong experience with the development of standards in the DRC, EDC would provide the required technical leadership. The stakeholders also agreed that a workshop would be held in the third week of February to establish benchmarks and to determine the process of developing reading assessment tools. The conclusions of the workshops will be discussed in the next technical progress report.

4.2. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 2

4.2.1. FINALIZING TEACHERS' GUIDES AND ARCHIVING IRI FILES

The team of scriptwriters finished their activities by completing two major tasks including the finalization of teachers' IRI guides for grades 5 and 6. These guides will be printed and distributed in targeted schools during the second quarter. Additionally, the team endeavored to archive all IRI files.

4.2.2. IRI REFRESHER TRAINING.

The team organized and launched IRI refresher training for all teachers in the 3,000 target schools. The training is designed specifically to improve the level and quality of teachers' participation in new and existing IRI programs by involving school principals more actively in program implementation

PIEQ organized the first of three major activities, a two-day training of all Grades 1 to 6 teachers in the use of interactive radio instruction (IRI) beginning in September 2012. The comprehensive training, which marked the launch of Grades 5 and 6 IRI programs, is part of the project's renewed efforts to monitor, evaluate and support sustained IRI use across the 3,000 target schools. Based on survey results and other available data the project estimates the level of participation in this latest IRI training among school principals (who facilitated the training) and teachers at 90% and 75%, respectively.²

During the survey of participation and impact following the IRI training, approximately 63% of the schools surveyed were able to demonstrate that IRI was being integrated into schools' regularly weekly teaching schedules. The high level of participation among school principals is especially important, given the key role principals play in teachers' ongoing professional development. The training provided an opportunity for the project to replace solar panels on all 3,500 radios as well. These and other measures are designed to improve the level and quality of teachers' participation in IRI programs, including the implementation of a new monitoring, evaluation and support mechanism. The project anticipates that use rates will continue to improve, once new M&E and school support mechanisms are in place and fully operational (in January/February 2013).

² Estimated figures based on initial surveys of school principals following training activities held in September and October.

4.3. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 3

4.3.1. REALIGNING COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION WITH THE NEW READING GOAL

One of the main recommendations of the midterm review was to re-focus project goals on improving students' reading and writing skills. During the first quarter of Year 4, project activities under objective 3 consisted of designing strategies to involve parents and communities to build an environment that enhances a culture of reading. CRS worked to identify innovative strategies and activities that would empower parents and communities to play this important role. Some of the major interventions that were identified include:

- Training parents (i.e. COPAs and COGES) to support children's reading learning at home;
- Training parents to use home-school reading trackers to monitor students' progress;
- Training parents to manage reading/math materials to ensure accessibility to students (i.e., for home use); and
- Encouraging the development of SIPs/community activities to establish a "culture of reading" (via reading clubs, buddy reading, older students reading with younger students, etc.).

4.3.2. TARGETING AND CLUSTERING YEAR 4 SCHOOLS

One of the consequences of the realignment of project activities to focus on reading and writing and global budget cuts was a reduction in the number of schools to be reached in years 4 and 5. Initially, CRS and partners expected to reach 1,420 new schools in years 4 and 5; however, the number of schools has been reduced to 600.

The global budget reductions also caused CRS to reduce the number of implementing partners from 6 to 5, as the overall geographic reach of the project was concentrated more towards larger urban areas. For this reason, as well as possible security considerations, Caritas Isiro was removed from the program in years 4 and 5.

For project Year 4, 24 mobilizers have been selected to lead community mobilization activities. The mobilizers will receive training on strategies for communities to promote reading and writing in the next quarter.

4.3.3. NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON STRENGTHENING APES ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the leadership of CRS, the project organized a national workshop in Kinshasa with support from the MEPSP to discuss the roles and responsibilities of APES (Association des Parents des Elèves, a kind of federation of COPAs) and to strengthen their capacity to more effectively support COPA members. The workshop was very well received. Participants

considered it as an extremely important endeavor that is most likely to further strengthen the capacity of APES to play the role expected of them in children's education. This positive reaction was also expressed by the Secretary General of the Ministry in an official correspondence that he sent to the Minister citing as exemplar, the support that PAQUED provides to strengthen parents' involvement in children's education. APES should be able to replicate the training they received by training COPAs even beyond PAQUED's target areas.

Key recommendations of the workshop to the MEPSP included:

- Strengthening the capacity of Associations focusing on management, advocacy and school project development;
- Promoting women's participation in all APES and COPA activities;
- Ensuring better connection between COPAs and School Management Committees for sharing experiences and more effective collaboration;
- Strengthening communication between APES at National and Provincial levels;
- Strengthening ongoing dialogue between APES and "*Observatoire Educatif*" for the evaluation of all decisions made together;
- Negotiating with the MEPSP for revision of the rate of financial support to APES.

4.3.4. IFCEPSP/KISANGANI

One section of the wall of IFCEPS was destroyed by a large storm. This has been a recurring problem, which the project addressed by contacting the services of a reputable construction company. The project expects the work to be conducted and concluded early in Quarter 2.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1. EGRA AND EGMA

5.1.1. MODIFICATION OF EGRA/EGMA REPORTS.

Following extensive discussion with EDC technical staff in the field and M&E staff in D.C., it was agreed that the 2012 Midterm EGRA and EGMA reports be substantially amended. The original submissions were written as impact reports. However, due to the fact that there was very little impact to report or analyze, the decision was made to reframe the reports so as to better improve their utility for discussions around setting student learning benchmarks. Thus, the focus was shifted to emphasize item-level analysis of the assessment results. Both the EGRA and EGMA reports were submitted, and both have been approved.

5.1.2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE COHORTS.

The 2010 Baseline EGRA and EGMA assessments were conducted among 144 schools across 3 provinces. The 2012 Midterm EGRA and EGMA assessments were conducted among 95 schools across 3 provinces; however, only 16 of those schools fit the 2010 sampling frame's criteria as well as the 2012 sampling frame's criteria. Understanding the extent to which the 16 '2010-like' schools in the 2012 cohort are comparable to the 'full' 2010 cohort will be an important factor in determining whether the 2010 EGRA/EGMA study or the 2012 EGRA/EGMA study is the most appropriate 'point of comparison' for the 2014 Endline EGRA/EGMA study. A detailed analysis of these two groups of schools was begun; a formal report will be completed in Q2 of FY13.

5.2. M&E SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR PIEQ PROGRAMS

The project began developing and implementing new monitoring, evaluation and support mechanisms to better promote the use of IRI and other PIEQ programs in the field. PIEQ is currently working to implement an enhanced monitoring, evaluation and support mechanism designed to improve the level and quality of participation in its existing programs. This second activity, which the project began during the quarter, has several components. Following recommendations from the MTR, the project has hired six additional staff members as "Education Support Specialists" (ESS) who will be stationed in the largest towns³ within the three target provinces. One more ESS is being recruited to be posted in the town of Bunia. The role of the ESS will be to work within PIEQ schools to ensure use of programs and materials distributed by the project. The education team trained the new staff members in observation techniques and the use of IRI and video materials in December to deploy them by January.

Another component involves using a diagnostic tool to evaluate each school's initial support needs. Each ESS will use the data collected to organize and prioritize his or her work in the schools. The goal is for each ESS to visit as many schools as possible by mid-February, so as to identify those schools that are most in need of support.

Finally, the education team began developing and testing protocols for sampling PIEQ schools, collecting data and sharing the results with Ministry partners on a regular basis. This renewed M&E effort is designed to assess the level and quality of implementation of existing programs while making efficient use of new and existing project resources. The ESS and other project staff members will first work closely together to monitor school use of existing programs and materials, especially IRI. Both the project M&E staff and the ESS will then assist in analyzing these data in order to set priorities (e.g., what data to collect and/or which schools need support), provide input for evaluating outcomes and inform next steps. PIEQ will use the resulting reports to provide information on indicators to USAID and to engage Ministry

³ ESS are currently deployed to Bandundu Ville, Kenge, Kikwit, Mbandaka, Gemena and Kisangani. The project plans to add a staff member in Bunia as soon as possible, depending on the security situation in Orientale Province.

partners (both in the field and at the central level) more actively in the monitoring and support processes.

6. NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND TRENDS

As mentioned in the previous technical report, the MEPSP has decided to heighten the importance of reading as a school subject. PAQUED saw in that decision as a golden opportunity to more firmly realign itself with the donor's and the host country converging priorities on reading. Thus for example, in November and December 2012, the project worked closely with UNICEF to help the Ministry lay the foundation for a new reading curriculum. During that ten-day workshop funded by UNICEF and attended by key Ministry staff, the project provided technical support consisting of helping participants gain clearer understanding of:

- Key driving principles for developing a reading curriculum, and what is actually involved if such an effort is to bear fruit;
- Processes of developing reading M&E tools
- Creating an enabling school environment that supports a reading culture

7. SUCCESS STORY



USAID | DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Spreading the USAID-Funded PAQUED project' impact beyond its 3,000 targeted primary schools in the DRC.



"Learning in pairs" is a strategy the project encourages in its effort to promote self-directed learning among teachers. Here, a teacher explains a math concept to a colleague during the Math PDI.



Facilitating training activities with peers is an important skill the project is cultivating among teachers and school principals. A facilitator leads her colleagues in a vocabulary-building exercise during the French PDI.

Education officials in the region of Gemena in Equator Province has extended the successful Mathematics Professional Development Institute (PDI) to include teachers in an additional 30 schools. According to the head of elementary education in Gemena, the difference in the quality of education between PAQUED and non-PAQUED schools is too great to ignore. As one education official said during a recent evaluation of the project's impact on teaching and learning, « We now have schools moving at two speeds: PAQUED schools, and the rest ». Other regions will soon be following Gemena's initiative so that these key PAQUED activities can soon benefit teachers in need of training and support.

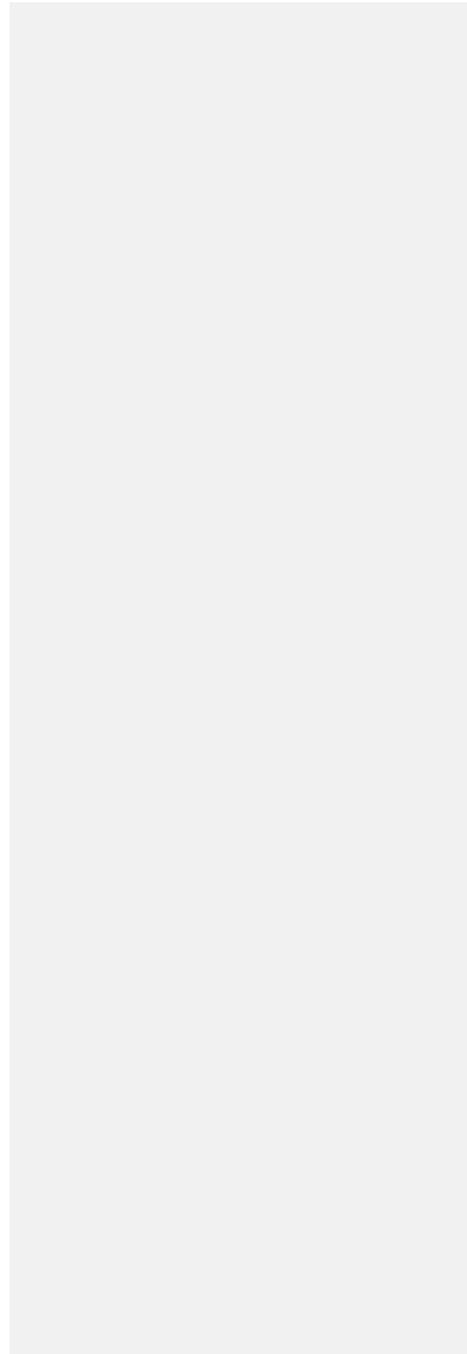
Over 31,000 teachers participated in the Math PDI, representing 95% of the teachers in PAQUED targeted schools. The French PDI, held in 2011, experienced the same high level of participation. The extension of these activities is a true testament to the quality and success of the PAQUED training model. The self-directed model trains selected teachers, school principals and inspectors who in turn facilitate the same training activities for teachers at the school level. The ultimate goal is for participants to begin taking charge by organizing training activities on their own initiative. The Gemena case is just one example of such initiative, which is critical to improving the quality of education in the DRC.

The aim of the two, nine-day professional development institutes is to improve teachers' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The effort has involved organizing trainings in nearly 900 sites simultaneously, all organized and led by teachers and school principals. This approach to delivering high-quality training to so many DRC teachers has been well-received by the Ministry of Education, other partners and the teachers themselves. Such success has come despite significant logistical challenges in one of the largest countries in Africa.

The Gemena initiative is therefore a noteworthy example of a newly-emerging culture of "self-directed learning" among Congolese teachers, which promises to revitalize the country's long-dormant teacher training system.

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8. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS VERSUS PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Table 1 below summarizes project accomplishments compared with planned activities for the reporting quarter. It should be noted that activities partially done or not done during that period will be completed in the second quarter.

Table 1 : Project Accomplishments

Main Activities	October	November	December	Status
Overall Project Management				
Issue newsletters				To be completed next quarter
Attend quarterly meetings with USAID and other partners				Done
Continue to hire staff (when appropriate)				Done
Sign contracts with radio stations if necessary				Not done
Organize steering committee meetings				Not done
Organize quarterly meetings with all staff				Done
Develop and submit a concept paper to realign the project				Done
OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVE TEACHERS' DELIVERY OF SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY				
Finalize, present and validate EGRA/EGMA results				Finalized, but not presented
Finalize, present and validate pre/post test results (math summer institute)				Finalized, but not presented

Table 1 : Project Accomplishments

Main Activities	October	November	December	Status
Finalize self-directed learning Modules 4 and 6				Done
Identify and select experimental schools for enhanced interventions				Done
Develop and administrate baseline study instruments for experimental schools				Not done
Develop self-directed teacher training module to facilitate IRI use				Done
Identify and train school support teams for experimental schools				
Develop plan and instruments for evaluating experimental school interventions				Done
Develop and pilot teacher training module in reading (experimental schools)				Partially done
Use IRI programs in class				Done
Develop tools to help strengthen effective use of IRI programs				Done
Archive IRI files (both print and electronic)				Done
Finalize the second part of teachers' guide				Done
Identify textbooks being used in DRC primary schools for reading				Done
OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE THE SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT				
Broadcast second generation community programs				Done
Monitor the use of small grants disbursed to communities				Done
Provide support for the organization of elections / strengthening committees (COPAs, CGES)				Done
Train CGES/COPAs/CRES in participatory management and child rights				Done
Train CGES/COPAs et CRES in SIP development				Done
Develop SIPs in year 4 communities				Not done
Provide small grants to support SIP in year 3 communities				Not done
MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES				
Finalize and Present EGRA/EGMA results				Partially done
Design an evaluation model (as per MTR Recommendations)				In

Table 1 : Project Accomplishments

Main Activities	October	November	December	Status
				progress
Experiment IRI broadcasting through "Fondation Hirondelle" in big towns				Not done
Monitor the use of IRI programs in class				Done

9. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER

Table 2 below presents a timeline for project activities scheduled to take place during the second quarter (January 1 – March 31, 2013).

Table 2

Planned Activities for Quarter 2

Main Activities	Jan				Feb				Mar			
Overall Project Management	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
Issue newsletters												
Attend quarterly meetings with USAID and other partners												
Hire staff (especially field staff to strengthen M&E activities & experimental schools)												
Sign contracts with radio stations if necessary												
Organize steering committee meetings												
Organize quarterly meetings with all staff												
Develop and submit a concept paper to realign the project												
OBJECTIVE 1: ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN READING AND MATH												
Finalize, present and validate EGRA/EGMA results												
Develop benchmarks for reading												
OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN READING AND MATH												
Identify and select experimental schools for enhanced interventions in reading												
Pilot evaluation tools (baseline, mid line, end line) for reading program												
Administer baseline study instruments for experimental schools												
Conduct orientation sessions in experimental schools												
Identify and train school support teams for experimental schools												
Train DPs and Inspectors on reading strategies and pedagogical supervision techniques												

Main Activities	Jan	Feb	Mar
Self directed training sessions for teachers (reading program)			
Finalize self-directed learning Modules 4 and 6			
Design and distribute French and Math self-learning materials for teachers			
Use IRI programs in class			
Develop tools to help strengthen effective use of IRI programs			
OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVED SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT			
Broadcast second generation community programs			
Monitor the use of small grants disbursed to communities			
Hire consultant and develop reading tools and modules			
Provide support for the organization of elections / strengthening committees (COPAs, CGES)			
Train CGES/COPAs/CRES in how to support children's learning in reading and writing			
Identify and train senior students to support younger students in reading			
Train CGES/COPAS et CRES in SIP (that incorporate reading and writing activities)			
Develop SIPs in year 4 communities			
Provide small grants to support SIP in remaining selected communities			
Monitor SIP implementation in communities			
MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES			
Design an evaluation model (as per MTR Recommendations) for experimental schools			
Experiment IRI broadcasting through "Fondation Hironnelle" in selected big towns			
Monitor the use of IRI programs in target schools			
Review, and possibly redesign project M&E database			
Conduct regular monitoring of project activities			

10. CHALLENGES

Unfortunately, implementation of self-directed video learning modules has met with logistical challenges affecting future use of these tools. These include technology issues, notably defective solar panels and batteries on all 750 video players. Efforts to replace these items have been hampered by exoneration issues with the DRC Government, which have prevented the project from replacing the defective parts. Consultations with the manufacturer have revealed significant battery life problems brought about by these persistent delivering delays. (The most recent shipment delay involves 150 solar panels and 295 batteries, which arrived in country in July 2012. However, these items have yet to clear DRC customs.) The project has therefore reluctantly decided to suspend distribution of newly produced video modules. The project will continue to promote and support teachers' use of existing video Modules 1 and 2, which focus on the use of IRI and classroom instructional materials, respectively.