



PAQUED QUARTERLY REPORT
January 31 – March 31, 2013
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COGES: A teacher from Ilema Primary School in Mbandaka explaining typical management challenges facing their school,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.	OPERATIONS.....	5
	2.1. STAFFING.....	5
	2.2. PROCUREMENT.....	5
3.	PROGRAMMATIC ACHIEVEMENTS.....	5
	3.1. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 1.....	5
	3.1.1. BENCHMARKING WORKSHOP.....	5
	3.1.2. CIES PRESENTATION.....	7
	3.2. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 2.....	8
	3.2.1. BASELINE OF TEACHING AND READING PRACTICES IN EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS.....	8
	3.2.2. SELF-DIRECTED TRAINING SESSIONS.....	8
	3.3. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 3.....	10
	3.3.1. REALIGNING COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION WITH THE NEW READING GOAL.....	10
	3.3.2. TRAINING MODULE DEVELOPED FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS.....	10
	3.3.3. TRAINING COMMUNITY MOBILIZERS.....	11
	3.3.4. SUPPORT TO COPAS AND COGES.....	11
	3.3.5. COPA AND COGE MEMBERS TRAINED.....	12
	3.3.6. COPAS AND COGES DEVELOPED SIPS FOCUSING ON READING NEEDS.....	13
4.	MONITORING AND EVALUATION.....	14
	4.1. EGRA AND EGMA.....	14
	4.2. DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATION OF PIEQ ACTIVITIES.....	15
5.	NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND TRENDS.....	15
6.	SUCCESS STORY.....	16
7.	PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS VERSUS PLANNED ACTIVITIES.....	19
8.	PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR QUARTER 3.....	22
9.	CHALLENGES.....	24

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	Package for Improving Educational Quality
PAQUED	Projet d'Amélioration de la Qualité de l'Éducation
PROVED	Directeur de la Province Educationnelle
PS	Pedagogical Supervisors
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 (January 1 – December 31, 2013) consisted mainly of taking concrete steps towards the newly defined goal of increasing the number of readers. While detailed information is provided in the body of this report, a quick summary of the main activities conducted during this period can be described as follows:

- Organizing a multiple stake holder workshop to define performance benchmarks for reading in primary schools;
- Developing training and support tools aimed at increasing teachers’ skills in teaching reading;
- Developing and submitting a package aimed at testing tools and approaches to improve reading skills in 45 experimental schools

The following is a narrative technical report for the period under review (January 1 – March 31, 2013). In addition to the introduction, it covers the following major sections: (2) Operations; (3) programmatic achievements; (4) Monitoring and Evaluation; (5) New trends and opportunities; (6) Success story; (7) Accomplishments versus planned activities; (8) Calendar for next quarter; and (9) Major challenges faced.

2. OPERATIONS

2.1. STAFFING

In response to the mid-term review recommendations, the project reinforced its M&E capacity by recruiting seven field staff. Of these, three were former scriptwriters, the remaining had previously worked for the project as consultants. In addition to their traditional M&E role of collecting and reporting data, these new staff will also have the responsibility of accompanying schools in effectively using the various tools and techniques that the project has put at teachers' disposal to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Désiré Ligaga was hired to replace the Orientale Provincial M&E Assistant (Djodjo Aluma) who left the project in the course of the last reporting period.

While waiting for the official approval of the realigned project design, PAQUED hired 6 consultants to help launch a reading program in selected experimental schools. These consultants will become full time employees to serve as Pedagogical Supervisors (PS) when USAID approves the proposed realignment of the project.

2.2. PROCUREMENT

In addition to the recurrent procurement of regular office items, flight tickets and the like, the project issued bids for the procurement of school kits. Actual purchase of the kits will take place during the coming quarter.

3. PROGRAMMATIC ACHIEVEMENTS

As explained in the last quarter report, the project has been realigned to focus on improving reading skills among targeted students in the three provinces. During the reporting period, the project completed a number of activities to prepare for the launch of the realigned program at the start of the 2013-14 school year.

3.1. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 1

3.1.1. BENCHMARKING WORKSHOP

PAQUED worked with partners OPEQ/IRC/USAID and UNICEF to organize a national workshop for establishing initial performance standards for reading at the elementary school level. Some 40 people took part in the 5-day event including Ministry of Education officials, researchers, international partners and members of the Ministry Reading Commission, which has developed a draft elementary school reading curriculum. There were two key deliverables. First, workshop participants established performance indicators (for reading fluency) and benchmarks for Grades 1 to 6 – for both French and DRC national languages. For example, the

participants established a benchmark of 30 to 35 words per minute for 3rd-grade students, meaning students should be capable of correctly reading and/or recognizing at least 30 words in one minute from a list of grade-level words (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Indicators and benchmarks for reading (in words per minute read)

Language		1 st Grade	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
	French			15 to 29	30 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 70
	National language	10 to 15	15 to 29	30 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 70

Second, participants developed a “road map” of related tasks to be completed for advancing efforts to improve reading in the DRC. These tasks include the establishment of a pilot committee and revision of the draft reading curriculum. An EDC consultant facilitated the workshop and development of the two deliverables, which the participants submitted to the Minister of Education for review. PAQUED is currently working with UNICEF, OPEQ and other partners to facilitate revision of the new reading curriculum and completion of other priority tasks identified in the road map. The latter is pictured in the following diagram

Diagram 1:

Reading Diagram



3.1.2. CIES PRESENTATION

The PAQUED education adviser presented a case study on the DRC standards process, including the success of the reading benchmarks workshop, at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) in New Orleans, Louisiana on March 11. The presentation was part of a panel organized by Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to discuss issues surrounding standards and indicators in reading. Presenters provided information on individual country cases in the DRC, Nigeria and Zimbabwe as well as the international standards movement. The PIEQ presentation was well received by the approximately 40 participants in attendance. The project plans to organize a more comprehensive and detailed presentation at next year's CIES meeting, including DRC MoE participation.

3.2. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 2

3.2.1. BASELINE OF TEACHING AND READING PRACTICES IN EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS

The project completed a baseline study of teaching in reading and writing in the experimental schools. Over 300 teachers throughout the three provinces took part in the study, which was designed to measure the quality and frequency of teaching strategies for reading and writing. Project technicians are currently compiling and analyzing data collected during the baseline study. The results of the baseline will be compared with those that will be compiled at the end of the project to determine the impact of the tools and strategies introduced in the experimental schools. Additionally, PAQUED developed a set of draft instruments during the quarter, which will be used for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of experimental school program activities.

In addition to completing the baseline study and instrument development tasks, the PIEQ education team identified, recruited and trained six pedagogical supervisors (PS) to support teachers in the experimental schools. The project has posted the PSs in teams of two at each of three training sites: Kikwit (Bandundu Province), Mbandaka (Equateur Province) and Kisangani (Orientale Province). During the past quarter, the PSs organized and facilitated two activities in the experimental schools. The first activity was a series of orientation sessions for school inspectors, principals and teachers. More than 350 teachers, school principals and school inspectors participated in the half-day sessions organized to discuss expectations, roles and responsibilities for the reading program.

3.2.2. SELF-DIRECTED TRAINING SESSIONS

The second activity consisted of a series of self-directed training sessions to introduce strategies for teaching letter sounds in Grades 1 and 2. School principals and experienced teachers facilitated the activities at school and school-cluster levels. These initial activities were designed to build support for the planned reading program while testing the effectiveness and appropriateness of the proposed teaching strategies. The Pedagogical Supervisors trained approximately 60 school inspectors, principals and advanced teachers to facilitate the training for Grades 1 and 2 teachers at the school level. Over 80% of the 134 grade 1 and grade 2 teachers in the experimental schools participated in these initial trainings.¹ The project will use the results of these first experimental activities to develop and finalize training tools for the reading program. Much of this work will take place during Q3 of Y4.

¹ The project plans to increase the number of experimental school participants in time for the official program launch, starting with the teachers' training scheduled for July and August.

While equipment issues (batteries and solar panels) continue to hamper widespread use of the video players and self-directed teacher learning modules, the quality and consistency of these activities continues to improve. School officials and teachers in parts of Equateur Province meet regularly to organize and monitor the use of the training modules, which are designed to enhance IRI use and the development and use of instructional materials (school kits).

Bandundu Province has made progress as well, especially in the quality of support and frequent monitoring of teachers' video training sessions. Data collected to date show nearly 600 teachers in the two provinces participated in these activities. Data collection for Orientale Province has been hampered somewhat by security issues (i.e., transportation constraints), which has delayed its submission to the provincial offices.

Unfortunately, 200 batteries and 150 solar panels have been delayed in the DRC customs process for nearly 9 months now. These and other logistical and repair issues explain the modest participation rates in self-directed teacher learning activities to date. Table YY below shows the participation rates by province for the quarter.

3.3. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 3

3.3.1. REALIGNING COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION WITH THE NEW READING GOAL

Based on the mid-term evaluation's recommendation to realign the project interventions with the USAID education strategy and refocus the scope of PAQUED on improving children's reading skills, the project has ensured that community mobilization rallies around building capacity of parents and communities to support children's after school reading needs.

Specifically, over the reporting period, the mobilization component worked with parent members of Parent's and Teacher's associations (COPAs) and School Management Councils (COGEs) to:

- Identify after school reading opportunities;
- Increase capacities to support reading in their communities through parental training on how to use the modules used for after school reading reinforcement;
- Develop SIPs (School Improvement Plan) that focus on the community rallying around after school reading activities for children.

During this quarter, CRS and partners ramped-up activities in 200 schools, 40 for each of the project implementing partners (Caritas Kisangani, Kenge, Kikwit, Mbandaka and Lisala). Aside the finalized school targeting based on jointly established criteria to ensure community-ownership and avoid any resentment; key achievements within these schools this quarter include the establishment of COPAs and COGEs through the organization of transparent elections of COPA members and strengthening of COGEs and COPAs through targeted trainings. Details are provided in the next section.

3.3.2. TRAINING MODULE DEVELOPED FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

The project hired the services of a Professor from the University of Kisangani to lead the development of training Module aimed at transforming the notion of community's role in enhancing the ability of their children to learn to read, including key activities that can be undertaken together, after-school, to encourage and rally energy around this important life-skill. In order to ensure ownership and inputs during this process by the communities themselves, this workshop brought together several PAQUED-supported COPA members. The workshop was a first-time opportunity for parents and PAQUED staff to discuss various opportunities within the communities to improve children's' reading abilities. The discussions and decisions taken during this workshop resulted in the development of the Module that will be used by PAQUED in all communities.

3.3.3. TRAINING COMMUNITY MOBILIZERS

A total of 24 Community Mobilizers were selected based on their past performance to continue PAQUED's community mobilization over the remaining two years of the project. In order to ensure the utmost quality of their work, PAQUED's CMTA Team Leader and all three of CRS' Provincial CMTA first participated in the Kisangani workshop and immediately afterwards were deployed to the field to strengthen the capacity of these Mobilizers in children's reading skills. By the end of these trainings, Community Mobilizers understood the community's important role in ensuring the proper environment, conducive to learning how to read, and were equipped with the tools to be able to start their important work in the communities where they work.

To further enhance the quality of their work, all Community Mobilizers received additional training on school management, SIPs and the implementation strategy for these important activities.

3.3.4. SUPPORT TO COPAS AND COGES

Prior to beginning any community mobilization activities, PAQUED ensures the foundation is conducive to the proper and continued implementation of these activities through the establishment of functional COPAs and COGEs within each school. PAQUED then collaborates with both of these structures to involve the entire community in creating an environment within the schools and communities conducive to learning.

In alignment with the new decree from Minister of Primary and Secondary Education (MEPSP), CRS and partners hand-in-hand with target communities ensured the establishment of COGEs and the election of COPAs. After this, the project went further to ensure training of both COPAs and COGEs to ensure that they understand and implement their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the learning environment in their schools and communities. These elections and capacity building activities were implemented based on gaps detected from the results of the survey conducted within all communities. Specific actions taken based on findings are synthesized in the table below.

Structure	Findings	Actions taken
COPAs	Non functional	Elected new COPA
	Unmotivated COPA members	Election of new members
	Lack of women's participation	Integration of women within COPAs through the identification and action plans to address detected barriers
CoGes	Lack of women's participation	Increased women's participation through sensitization
	Lack of parents representation	Increased parents within CoGe through sensitization
Both COGEs and COPA	Absence of Decree	Decree distributed - Role and responsibility explained

A total of 200 COPAs and 200 COGEs were established. Notably, CRS and partners emphasized the importance of women's participation during all steps of the election process to reach 40 % of women within COGEs.

3.3.5. COPA AND COGE MEMBERS TRAINED.

After the first big step of establishing COPAs and COGEs within the schools, PAQUED moved to the next crucial mobilization step to strengthen the capacity of members, empowering them to play their respective roles well. Capacity building activities for COPAs included:

1. Training on importance of education,
2. children's rights to quality of education,
3. the role and responsibilities of parents in their children's learning,
4. participatory management and
5. SIP development and implementation.

The new and previous COPA members and community leaders receive three days of training. Details on the number of men and women COPA members trained are presented in the table below:

Site/partners	# of members trained		
	Man	Women	Total
Kikwit/ Masimanimba			Ongoing
Kenge/ Bandundu Ville	495	225	720
Kisangani/ Bunia	475	253	758
Mbandaka/ Bikoro	467	218	685
Lisala/ Gemena	=	=	518

3.3.6. COPAs AND COGEs DEVELOPED SIPs FOCUSING ON READING NEEDS

The project conducted an assessment in each community on after school reading needs (see Annex 4). The survey was followed by training in Mbandaka and Bunia in 80 communities. These trainings are ongoing in Lisala, Kenge and Kikwit. The consolidated report with the results of the baseline survey will be available next quarter with the report from the ongoing trainings.

At the end of his series of trainings which aims to equip COGEs and COPAs with the knowledge and tools to emphasize reading in their homes and communities, each COGE/COPA (from Bunia and Mbandaka) developed SIP's which integrated community mobilization activities seeking to improve and result in their children's ability to read. Examples may include discussion groups focused around books, school libraries, etc.

This two-day training in Bunia and Mbandaka reached 1,413 COPA and COG members and Communities Leaders as presented in the table below.

Site	COPA members trained in children after school reading			Comment
	Men	Women	Total	
Kisangani/Bunia	475	253	728	
Mbandaka/ Bikoro	467	218	685	
Kenge/Bandundu ville	=	=	=	Ongoing
Kikwit/ Masimanimba	=	=	=	Ongoing
Lisala/ Gemena	=	=	=	Ongoing



COPA from the Odari Primary School in Bunia, is listing actions for after-school reading-encouragement, to be integrated in their SIP.

Photo Augustin Issov CRS. March 2013

While conducting field work, project staff noted two important situations that affect COPA functioning:

- 1) There exist some independent parents associations; even if they are not always very active, there is opportunity for them create synergy with the formally established COPAs. The elections held during this last quarter involved for the first time the provincial level parent's associations, creating an opportunity for COPA members to know and meet the head of their affiliated association. This has created an opportunity for networking and sharing lessons learned across COPAs. The project intends to take advantage of this provincial-level structure to further strengthen COPAs.
- 2) There is lack of knowledge of DRC's Government laws and documents describing the different roles of COPAs and COGEs within schools. The project will distribute these documents to all schools for reference.

4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

4.1. EGRA AND EGMA

RTI completed and submitted to EDC a Comparative Analysis of Sample Cohorts that examined various salient characteristics – including SES, rurality, composition, and performance on EGRA tasks – of the schools assessed in 2010 and in 2012 with the goal of informing a planning meeting between the EDC and RTI technical teams. Following the

planning meeting, RTI provided EDC with the full dataset from the 2010 assessment which included the urban/rural variable.

A very brief discussion of the use Tangerine vs. other methods of data collection was initiated during the planning meeting. It was agreed that a fuller discussion should be held at a later date following a demonstration to be provided by RTI of Tangerine's various functions. The Tangerine demonstration has been scheduled for the next quarter.

4.2. DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATION OF PIEQ ACTIVITIES

The IRI specialists conducted a diagnostic evaluation of IRI and other PIEQ program activities in key city centers in each of the three administrative provinces. The diagnostic was designed to provide information on the implementation of IRI, video training and kit materials to support PAQUED programs in Grades 1 to 6. Nearly 400 schools took part in the evaluation. The IRI specialists evaluated each school based on 1) accessibility and 2) use of IRI and related materials (ex. teachers' guides). Approximately 65% of the schools visited have been performing satisfactorily in implementing IRI, in which materials are available and used regularly by the teachers. However, many of these schools need regular support, according to the results of the evaluation.

The project is using the information from the diagnostic exercise to identify those schools in need of additional support. The specialists are currently conducting classroom observations in these schools to measure the quality of IRI implementation, identify problem areas and provide technical advice and support to teachers.

5. NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND TRENDS

The RDC continues to experience a momentum in favor of reading as a cornerstone for the quality of education. The momentum was further heightened with the benchmarking workshop that the project organized in collaboration with other key education partners. Taking advantage of this momentum, EDC/PAQUED developed an unsolicited proposal aimed at strengthening the MEPSP's efforts to develop and implement a national reading program. EDC believes that the implementation of this proposal can constitute a catalyst that will help build a strong reading program in the DRC.

6. SUCCESS STORY



Educators in PIEQ schools show a strong commitment to the project's many programs. Here, PIEQ trainers learn how to use the radio to lead lessons in reading, writing and math.



Participating in a radio lesson can be both challenging and fun! A PIEQ teacher leads students in writing exercises, following guidance provided via the project's radio programs.



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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Equateur Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) become a model of success for the USAID-Funded PIEQ project

Education officials have taken the responsibility of leading PIEQ programs on their own, with less and less intervention from project technicians. These programs include interactive radio instruction (IRI), video-based teacher training and schools kits to provide much-needed classroom materials for both teachers and their students. For example, officials in Mbandaka, the provincial capital, organize regular teachers' meetings make sure they are well-trained, have access to materials and use them properly. Officials there and in the nearby town of Gemena motivate teachers to organize video training sessions each month, in order to take full advantage of PIEQ materials.

There is thus a strong sense of commitment to PIEQ innovations among educators in Equateur Province. As a result, over 90% of teachers and students in Mbandaka project schools participate regularly in IRI programs lessons in French language and mathematics. Teachers and schools in the major provincial centers of Gemena, Gbadolite and Lisala are likewise well-organized and committed to PIEQ programs. As a result, teacher performance during training activities in reading and math has been consistently strong throughout the province. Gemena officials even extended training activities to an additional 30 area schools, so that more teachers and students might benefit. According to provincial education officials, these initiatives are important because of the dramatic improvement in the quality of teaching and learning among PIEQ schools when compared with other schools in the province. But these changes have not come easily, especially given the

challenges of introducing new technology in a vast and complex country such as the DRC.

7. 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.

Project Accomplishments versus planned activities

Main Activities	Jan			Feb			Mar				Status		
Overall Project Management	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	Status
Issue newsletters													Ongoing
Attend quarterly meetings with USAID and other partners													Done
Hire staff (especially field staff to strengthen M&E activities & experimental schools)													Done
Sign contracts with radio stations if necessary													Not done
Organize steering committee meetings													Postponed
Organize quarterly meetings with all staff													Done
Develop and submit a concept paper to realign the project													Done
OBJECTIVE 1: ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN READING AND MATH													
Finalize, present and validate EGRA/EGMA results													Not done
Develop benchmarks for reading													Done
OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN READING													
Identify and select experimental schools for enhanced interventions in reading													Done
Pilot evaluation tools (baseline, mid line, end line) for reading program													Done
Administer baseline study instruments for experimental schools													Done
Conduct orientation sessions in experimental schools													Done
Identify and train school support teams for experimental schools													Done
Train DPs and Inspectors on reading strategies and pedagogical supervision techniques													Done
Self directed training sessions for teachers (reading program)													Done
Finalize self-directed learning Modules 4 and 6													Ongoing
Design and distribute French and Math self-learning materials for teachers													Ongoing

Main Activities	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Use IRI programs in class				Ongoing
Develop tools to help strengthen effective use of IRI programs				
OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVED SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT				
Broadcast second generation community programs				Not done
Monitor the use of small grants disbursed to communities				Ongoing
Hire consultant and develop reading tools and modules				Done
Provide support for the organization of elections / strengthening committees (COPAs, CGES)				Done
Train CGES/COPAs/CRES in how to support children's learning in reading and writing				Done
Train CGES/COPAS et CRES in SIP (that incorporate reading and writing activities)				Ongoing
Develop SIPs in year 4 communities				Done
Provide small grants to support SIP in remaining selected communities				Not done
Monitor SIP implementation in communities				Ongoing
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				Not done
Monitor the use of IRI programs in target schools				Ongoing
Review, and possibly redesign project M&E database				Ongoing
Conduct regular monitoring of project activities				Ongoing

8. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR QUARTER 3

Main Activities	Avril	May	June	Status
Overall Project Management				
Issue newsletters				
Attend quarterly meetings with USAID and other partners				
Continue to hire staff (when appropriate)				
Organize steering committee meetings				
Organize quarterly meetings with all staff				
OBJECTIVE 1: ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN READING AND MATH				
Work with the Ministry to revise reading profiles as per roadmap developed in February				
Discuss with USAID and OPEQ to determine the best ways of counting “improved readers”				
Participate in discussions with the MEPSP and other partners on the way forward regarding reading benchmarks				
OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN READING				
Finalize self-directed teacher training module to facilitate IRI use				
Develop and pilot teacher training module in reading (experimental schools)				
Finalize curriculum for reading program launch (see above)				
Develop teaching, training and learning materials for reading program				
Organize training of pedagogical supervisors for reading program				
Finalize self-directed teacher learning modules (to pilot in selected schools)				
Develop self-directed modules to strengthen teachers’ reading skills				
OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE THE SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT				
Provide small grants				
Monitor the use of small grants disbursed to communities				
Provide support for the organization of elections / strengthening committees (COPAs, CGES)				

8. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR QUARTER 3

Main Activities	Avril	May	June	Status
Train CGES/COPAs/CRES in participatory management and child rights				
Train CGES/COPAS et CRES in SIP development				
Develop SIPs in year 4 communities				
Provide small grants to support SIP in year 3 communities				
MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES				
Monitor the use of IRI programs in class				
Demonstrate the use of Tangerine data collection system				
Revise and update the project database				

9. CHALLENGES

Despite tremendous efforts devoted to ensuring proper functioning of solar radios, the project continues to face the challenge of fixing various technical and logistical problems associated with the use of those radios. Thus for example, technicians were deployed to the three provinces to replace original solar panels by new ones with higher capacity. Still in some cases, even the new panels did not work as well as we would have expected. Another problem that the project faced was the theft of radios or especially that of memory cards. Rather than continuing to replace the lost units, we demanded that inspectors take the responsibility of demanding that school directors be held accountable. We even threatened to withdraw support to schools that would not find the stolen items. Next quarter we will report on the status of those items.

Other than technology-related problems, collecting data from sites outside big towns in a timely fashion continue to challenge the project's M&E system.