

PAQUED QUARTERLY REPORT

July 1 – September 30, 2013

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LIRE DES MAINTENANT



NOUVEAU PROGRAMME DE LA LECTURE DEGRE ELEMENTAIRE



Children in Kisangani enjoy reading the new texts provided by PAQUED

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
CGES	Comité de Gestion Scolaire
COMCON	Comité de Concertation
COP	Chief of Party
COPA	Comité des Parents
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ECELS	Community Reading Spaces
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
OIF	Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
PDI	Professional Development Institute
PAQUED	Package for Improving Educational Quality
PAQUED	Projet d'Amélioration de la Qualité de l'Education
PROVED	Directeur de la Province Educationnelle
PS	Pedagogical Supervisors
SIP	School Improvement Plan
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance
TENAFEP	Test National de Fin d' Etudes Primaires

1. INTRODUCTION

On September 15, 2009 Education Development Center received an award from USAID to implement the PAQUED (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’Éducation) as the official name of the project. The project targets 3000 primary schools in Bandundu, Equateur, and Oriental provinces.

On May 10, 2013 USAID approved EDC’s proposed modification to the program description based on recommendation following a mid-term review (MTR) conducted in 2012. The new program description seeks to realign project interventions with USAID’s new strategy on reading (Goal 1). Additionally, the modification responds to the GDRC’s renewed determination to raise reading to the level of a “stand-alone school subject” rather than leaving it as a subset of French (a major school subject) in order to improve reading outcomes in the early grades.

The goal and objectives of the realigned PAQUED are as follows:

Goal:

Increase the number of students in the DRC with improved reading and math skills.

Objectives:

- Establish standards for teaching and learning in reading and math
- Improve the quality of teaching in reading and math, as defined by benchmarks
- Improve the school learning environment

A two-tier strategy was designed to contribute to the achievement of these objectives. In that regard, the project : (1) continued to support the targeted 3000 schools through the provision (and the accompanying technical support) of additional self-directed teacher learning tools; (2) focused especially on 45 schools to experiment the introduction of enhanced pedagogical strategies aimed at improving reading skills among students.

Project performance during this period (July 1 – September 30, 2013) consisted mainly of the following:

- Harmonizing reading standards in collaboration with counterparts and across donor projects;
- Facilitating the initial development of readability criteria for texts in French and in Congolese national languages;
- Continuing to develop training and support tools aimed at increasing teachers’ skills in teaching reading;
- Implementing the reading program in experimental schools;

- Reinforcing teachers' professional development in how to teach reading
- Enhancing a strategy for a deeper community involvement in support of a reading culture among children

The following is a narrative technical report for the period under review (July 1 – September 30, 2013). In addition to the introduction, it covers the following major sections: (2) Operations and Management; (3) Progress towards results; (4) Quality Assurance, 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 AND MANAGEMENT

2.1. STAFFING

As the project enters the final year, the start-up of new education projects has exacerbated the high staff turnover rate mentioned in the last quarterly report. Within a two-month period, the National Training Coordinator (Didier Niki Niki), two Pedagogical Supervisors (Paulin Poshi and Rose Gozalet), and a Field “Encadreur” (Chantal Kasweswe) were hired by other projects. PAQUED had invested heavily in the professional development of these members of the technical team. Hence their departure represents a significant loss to the project at this time. The project Management Team had mixed feeling of frustration and satisfaction. Frustration stemmed from losing some of PAQUED’s best employees at a critical moment in the life of the project. There was, however, reason for satisfaction, as these departures demonstrate the excellent work that the project had accomplished in recruiting and nurturing highly qualified staff.

Having to deal with these successive losses constituted a two-pronged challenge for PAQUED. On one hand, the project had to rapidly find the right replacements; on the other hand, it had to train and coach them to bring them to speed in a relatively short period of time so that they could effectively support teachers in the field. In some cases, we made internal switches; in others, we recruited from among people who had been closely associated with the project. Hence for example, Eric Kabitshwa, the former Pedagogical Supervisor in Mbandaka was brought back to Kinshasa to replace Didier Niki-Niki as the National Training Coordinator. Betty Nzembula and Amina Muzama who had previously served as consultants were hired to replace Eric in Mbandaka, and Paulin in Kikwit respectively. Discussions are underway to move Serge Chigeregere from Gemena to Kikwit (in replacement of Chantal Kasweswe) and to recruit to additional field staff.

2.2. PROCUREMENT

PAQUED planned to purchase and distribute school kits towards the end of the reporting quarter. However, PAQUED decided to reissue the RFQ's and as a result, the planned procurements will be finalized in the next quarter.

3. PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

PAQUED has taken the lead in trying to address a critical issue that USAID has so rightly raised in its Education Strategy:

“ in many developing countries, reading curricula are often not standards-based nor do teacher preparation or professional development programs teach teachers how to teach children to read; (emphasis added) rather, many systems assume that reading will be acquired through the teaching of language using traditional teaching approaches. Based on assessment data from more than 20 countries to date, we now know that this is not the case”.¹

PAQUED has done this by assisting the DRC government and other partners to develop reading standards (in addition to language standards) and also by revitalizing and experimenting with a teacher professional development approach that seeks to build teachers' capacity to build strong reading skills among children. Project performance in that regard is described under objectives 1 and 2 below.

3.1. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 1

As mentioned in the previous report, and in response to a COMCON recommendation to harmonize reading standards produced by a number of implementing partners, PAQUED has taken the lead in coordinating this process. Suzanne Simard, EDC's International Technical Advisor facilitated a two-day workshop on August 29 - 30, 2013 aimed at achieving this goal. In attendance were the members of the Reading Commission which, in addition to senior officials and representatives from the MEPSP, includes key partners such as UNICEF, OPEQ, and DFID. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- harmonize standards for grades 1 and 2;
- develop criteria for leveled texts (levels 1 to 9); and
- establish performance reading levels for grades 1 and 2.

Context and Justification

Below are a few paragraphs describing the context and the rationale of the workshop for the reader to gain a clearer understanding of its critical importance.

¹ USAID Education Strategy Technical Notes, revised April 2012, p.4

Since inception, the project has provided ongoing technical support to the MEPSP to develop content standards. In Year 1, PAQUED facilitated the development of standards in French and Math for Grades 1-6. As donor and national priorities shifted to focus on early reading, PAQUED's technical support has also shifted its focus. As mentioned in the Year 4, second technical report (January 1 – March 31, 2013), EDC has provided much needed technical support to the Reading Commission that culminated in the drafting of a roadmap. This constituted a major foundational milestone in MEPSP's effort to develop and implement a strong reading curriculum in the DRC.

The roadmap called for a number of key activities that the Reading Commission should undertake:

- Update competency standards (référentiels) for:
 - i) reading in national languages in Grades 1 and 2;
 - ii) transitioning to reading in French in Grade 3; and
 - iii) strengthening reading skills in both languages in Grades 3 and 4.”
- Finalize text readability criteria to support the developed of appropriate leveled text for early grade readers.

It is important to note that during these past several months, the OIF (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie) has launched a 3-year program in 8 Francophone African countries including the DRC in order to promote reading in local language. The program has developed a set of generic standards for each country to adapt to its own context. Therefore, harmonizing OIF standards and those that PAQUED had produced became not only a necessity (as recommended in the road map), but also the logical and right thing to do.

Key outcomes

During the August 29-30 workshop, the participants found that the sets of standards developed through PAQUED and the OIF provided nearly the same content. However, the standards differed somewhat in how the competencies are organized. Participants also added a number of crucial items they felt were lacking in both documents such as the schedule of implementation indicating by when in a school year, children should master any given skill. In the end, the participants produced a single document on reading standards for Grades 1 and 2.

During the workshop, the participants also produced readability criteria for texts to be used by Grades 1 and 2 students in French and in local languages. The readability criteria provide guidance for the development of texts appropriate to the student's level, from “emergent” to “independent” reader. The participants determined that texts in local languages for Grade 2 students should be at level of 9 (beginning independent reader), and those in French should be at level 5 (emergent reader)

Next steps and conclusions

It was agreed that the Reading Commission should continue the process in order to complete the harmonization of the reading content standards and determining

readability criteria for Grades 3 to 6 by November 15. PAQUED committed to support that process during the first quarter of year 5.

Once the work has been completed, the validation process will be organized at both technical and political levels. Technical validation will involve a wider range of stakeholders (including key departments of the MEPSP and implementing agencies). The political validation process will involve the Minister and key donor agencies such as USAID and DFID.

In conclusion, the workshop made a significant contribution in advancing road map activities by aligning and harmonizing the standards documents that are currently being used in the DRC. This realignment has produced a coherent set of parameters for guiding the development of reading curricula, assessment tools, and materials (e.g., leveled readers for students) to improve the quality of reading education across the country. Most importantly, the workshop helped lay the foundation for the development of parameters necessary to (a) determine grade level performance benchmarks, (b) write grade level texts, and (c) develop appropriate instruments to assess achievement in reading.

3.2. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 2

PAQUED identified four key activities for Result 2 for the fourth quarter in its work plan. These include:

- launching the training module in reading (experimental schools)
- developing additional reading program materials
- providing ongoing training to field staff to support reading program
- launching the self-directed learning modules

Due primarily to the high staff turnover rate mentioned earlier, the project team completed three of the four activities. The project plans to complete work on the fourth activity – launching the self-directed learning modules – during the coming quarter.

3.2.1. IMPROVING TEACHER CLASSROOM PRACTICE (SUB IR 2.1)

Teachers across the DRC have been unable to effectively teach reading and writing. The project's EGRA baseline evaluation showed that nearly 3 in 10 boys and 4 in 10 girls could not correctly identify a single vocabulary word in French. Classroom observations showed teachers engaging more in oral repetition and dictation rather than actually teaching students how to read and write. Teaching and learning materials were almost non-existent. However, despite numerous implementation challenges PAQUED's new reading program in the experimental schools is designed to address these challenges and thus to bring about improvements in reading outcomes. Initial results have been promising. Classroom observations indicate that teachers are already applying new instructional practices and students have begun their knowledge of

letter-sounds and their ability to decode words. Teachers are observing each other's classroom practice every week in order to provide mutual support for improving instructional skills. The remainder of this section describes project inputs, outcomes and challenges to achieving real improvement in teachers' practices and learners' performance in reading.

Launch teacher-training module in reading (experimental schools)

PAQUED launched the new reading program in July 2013. The launch began with a 12-day training for 90 school principals, inspectors and other resource people. The training focused on reading and writing pedagogy and mentoring techniques. The resource people then helped to facilitate a 10-day training workshop for nearly 220 teachers in Grades 1 and 2 in August. The two workshops focused on modeling the application of the program's instructional activities in a classroom setting. The trainings provided opportunities for teachers and their mentors (i.e., program facilitators) to practice applying new literacy instructional strategies and teacher support techniques.

The reading program was designed using EDC's innovative *ReadRightNow!* approach. The approach uses authentic reading and writing activities to build learners' language skills in five key areas: alphabetic awareness; phonological awareness; fluency; vocabulary; and comprehension. In keeping with the RRN! approach, the PAQUED technical team developed and organized activities in daily lessons around the use of texts (i.e., stories). A new text is introduced each week of the program, along with accompanying writing activities, based on themes provided within the existing DRC curriculum. The five weekly lessons in Grades 1 and 2 include one IRI lesson per week. The PAQUED program is designed to provide meaningful, appropriate reading and writing activities every day to students while supporting development of key skills, as called for in Goal 1 of the *USAID Education Strategy*.

Teachers began using reading program activities in September, supported by a series of refresher training sessions. This series includes three one-day seminars scheduled across four weeks to hone teachers' developing instructional skills drawing on their experience in the initial implementation. The sessions are designed to bring teachers together on a regular basis to reflect upon their experiences and discuss how to best apply the new literacy instructional practices. Regular teacher learning forums will follow, with ongoing guidance from project field staff and school-based 'mentors'. PAQUED is distributing new materials including texts for teachers and students during these seminars.

The project plans to provide additional support to Grades 3 to 6 teachers in the experimental schools during the coming quarter. PAQUED will provide this training via self-directed learning activities and regular support from field staff. This approach is designed to take advantage of existing inputs, including existing IRI programs and video teacher learning modules to improve the quality of instruction in reading and writing in the upper grades. The approach thus provides support to all experimental

school teachers in Grades 1 to 6 while allowing more intensive experimentation, evaluation of program effectiveness and support to Grades 1 and 2 teachers.

Provide ongoing training to field staff in support of reading program

The second and third phases of the reading program both included training of field and central office technical staff. These staff members include 6 field support staff members (two of them working in each of the three experimental school sites) and key pedagogical experts in the central office. All in all, 9 staff members received a total of 144 hours of training in reading instructional pedagogy and mentoring techniques during two separate workshops. These staff members will in turn provide ongoing training and technical support to the resource people in each site (e.g., school principals) to help ensure the sustainability of the teacher development model. Trainings for field staff in advanced mentoring techniques are planned for the coming quarter via a 3-day workshop and regular field visits from key pedagogical staff.

One key challenge to reading program implementation is how to provide regular support to all teachers in the experimental schools in a sustainable way. To address this issue, the project is identifying and training resource people from within the schools themselves to provide mentoring and other forms of support to teachers. This approach, coupled with regular, self-directed teacher 'learning forums' as described previously promises to provide adequate support and continued, professional growth opportunities to participating teachers. PAQUED will continue experimenting and developing these approaches to best ensure a sustainable quality of support to teachers as the reading initiative advances beyond the life of the project.

Finalize and launch self-directed teacher learning modules

As detailed in the last quarterly report, the project piloted a new series of teacher learning activities. These activities are designed to enhance the use of classroom strategies and materials already introduced. The new modules draw content from both of the Professional Development Institutes (PDIs) in French language and mathematics, respectively, organized in August of 2011 and 2012. The modules are designed to improve use of existing IRI materials and enhance application of group work techniques and other strategies contained in these materials and programs.

As noted in the previous quarterly report, data on participation in self-directed learning activities is being compiled. The project will provide further information as soon as it becomes available.

Collecting data on such large numbers of schools remains a challenge. However, the situation has improved significantly with the hiring of additional M&E field support staff. Results of the recent USAID-led data quality assessment (DQA) showed substantial improvement in the project's capacity to collect, manage and report analyses of the data collected on PAQUED program indicators. Field staff members are expected

to continue to play an active role in these activities as the project moves into its final year of operation.

Training in the use of project materials (IRI)

A training workshop in the use of existing project materials was scheduled for mid-September. However, staff development needs for the experimental schools required rescheduling the training for the following quarter. As planned, the self-directed training will focus on the use of IRI materials (i.e., radio and video) as well as printed materials, such as IRI teachers' guides, to further enhance project outcomes (e.g., EGRA). These trainings will make use of school principals, teachers and other resource people experienced in radio use to help better sustain support mechanisms in the field (see below).

PAQUED is confident that the upcoming training, combined with field technical assistance, can boost radio use. The project has plans to continue deploying technicians as well, as needed, to keep radios in good working order and to resolve issues as they emerge. Above all, ongoing support to teachers is necessary to ensure sustained use of IRI programs through, and beyond, the life of the project. The experimental schools reading program aims to enhance the effectiveness of the IRI by bridging the gap between 1) application of effective literacy instructional strategies, as modeled by radio lessons, and 2) the integration of these strategies within teachers' regular classroom practice.

3.2.2. IMPROVING CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION (SUB IR 2.2)

Develop additional teaching, training and learning materials for reading program

The project technical team developed 16 new texts for teachers and students in Grades 1 and 2 during the quarter, for use during the first trimester of school. This process began with the development of a rigorous scope and sequence document to guide teachers in planning and introducing lessons. The project plans to distribute these materials during the coming quarter. In all, the project plans to provide nearly 100 different illustrated texts – half for the teacher's use, half for student use – to the experimental schools. The materials to be distributed during the coming quarter include additional radios to adequately support IRI use during reading program implementation. Teachers in Grade 3 to 6 will benefit from additional radios as well as IRI Guides to enhance the use of radio lessons and supplementary activities already developed.

Teachers and students use the two kinds of texts developed by the project in a number of ways. First, teachers use one of the 'guided' or classroom texts each week to teach a series of lessons. The text and the lessons are designed to teach one or more letter-sounds through a series of 'text-based' activities. For example, teachers introduce each text at the beginning of the week following a series of questions about the theme of the text, such as a child's first school experiences. The teacher then reads the story to the students while pointing to each word read, then asks them what happened, who was in

the story and what they did, and so on to gauge students' understanding. Students then recall and read the text with the teacher's guidance during subsequent lessons. These guided lessons (with text) help students develop their knowledge of the targeted letter-sounds (Grade 1), new vocabulary words (Grade 2), and the ability to write letters and words. Second, teachers introduce a 'student' text (i.e., student reader) at the end of each week. The teacher then leads the students to discover the text, just as she does with the guided stories. Students learn the meaning of all of the words in the student text before trying to sound out or 'decode' the words. Pictures help to build understanding of the text as students point to words and say the letter-sounds that make up the words. Students can then take the text home with them to read on their own. In this way, students use the knowledge of letters and letter-sounds that they studied during the week to 'sound out' new words made up of these letters and sounds. This includes letter-sound combinations (especially in Grade 2), such as "in", "on" and "pl", which are found in large numbers of words, and can help students to recognize and decode words more and more quickly. Teachers and students repeat the same series of lesson activities the following week, but with a new set of guided and student texts.

The rush to read

Teachers in the city of Kikwit in Bandundu Province are amazed at the students' reaction to the new texts they are reading each week in class. Since introducing the pictured 'story books' in Grades 1 and 2 in PAQUED's experimental schools, teachers report that students are more eager than ever before to learn how to read. "It makes sense," said one teacher. "Reading with pictures is easier for students, since they can see and understand what is in the story."

Students in one Grade 2 classroom were leaping from their chairs to react to the pictures and describe what they saw. Using the pictures, they were better able to recall what the story was about, responding to questions from their teacher about each of the characters and what they were doing.

School kit distribution

As noted previously, procurement issues required rescheduling the launch of the planned self-directed teacher training in the use of existing materials. Although the training is still scheduled to proceed (mainly to support IRI use through the final year of the project), the planned distribution of school kits may not take place until January (Q2) of Year 5.

Video module production

PAQUED has completed production work on the two remaining, video-based self-directed teacher learning modules (one on reading and writing, the other on math). The technical team will need to finalize accompanying print materials (ex. teacher's guides) prior to any potential distribution and use following the project.

The new video modules are important for several reasons. First, they provide “models” of best classroom practices, such as how to work with students most effectively. These models of practice are necessary for teachers to see and understand how to apply the practices they are learning. Second, the modules can help teachers to assess students’ learning and learning needs while adjusting their teaching accordingly.

Teachers cannot improve the quality of their practice until they learn to assess whether or how students’ are actually learning in the classroom. This focus on continuous assessment of learning will be critical as teachers begin to 1) extend IRI teaching approaches beyond the radio lessons to their regular classroom practice, 2) implement the Ministry’s new reading curriculum (once finalized), and 3) adopt the literacy and math teaching and learning tools PAQUED has developed. These tools include IRI, which the modules are designed to support, and the new experimental reading program activities and materials. The goal is to finalize, validate and submit the two modules to the Ministry of Education before the project close out in September of 2014.²

3.3. ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER OBJECTIVE 3

3.3.1. Develop community Reading strategy

The Technical Community Mobilization Team collaborated closely with the education specialists to harmonize reading approaches at the classroom and community levels. This synergy has proved very effective for the common definition of interventions for the fifth and last year of the project in order to achieve satisfactory results.

After reviewing ideas for after-school reading suggested by beneficiary communities, PAQUED decided to put in place a common approach within all communities. PAQUED will thus support the creation of community reading spaces (ECELs) by continuing to mobilize communities and parents to accompany their children in reading. The approach will be tested and its outcomes measured at in March-April 2014.

PAQUED hired an independent expert to develop a strategy on the establishment and functioning of ECELs to address the after school reading needs of first and second grade students. Through the ECEL approach, PAQUED aims to create a playful reading space to improve students’ reading skills and instill in them a culture of reading. ECEL

² PAQUED has already submitted the two video modules to the Ministry for consideration, at the request of the CAT (Cellule d’Appui Technique). The Ministry plans to introduce audio-visual materials, of which PAQUED has been a leader, in Equateur Province during the 2013-14 school year. This process is part of the pilot phase for introducing in-service training tools prior to adoption and implementation on a national scale.

activities involve learning letters and words through songs and rhythms, free drawing, stories telling, competitions, etc.

ECEL activities will take place in communities twice a week for approximately one hour per session. Volunteers chosen by the communities will be trained to facilitate ECEL activities which will be piloted in a limited number of 30 communities -10 in Bandundu, 10 in the East Province and 10 in Equateur. The strategy also includes parents' sensitization to ensure effective support to the implementation of ECEs as well as monitoring their activities.

During a two-day workshop held Sept 26-27, the strategy was discussed with partners as well as ways and plan to roll-out it out in the field. ECEL materials development is ongoing. The strategy paper is annexed to the report.

3.3.2. Monitoring SIP implementation

CRS and its Caritas partners strengthened the monitoring of SIP through weekly deployment of community field agents. As a result, the speed of SIP implementation improved during the quarter under review, especially in Kenge.

An increase in engagement was observed within some COPA that doubled their efforts and reached respectable levels of implementation. In some instances community contributions were remarkable as well. A case in point is that of OMAR primary school featured as a success story in this report (see section 7).

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING & EVALUATION

4.1. EGRA AND EGMA

As per project work plan, no assessments were conducted during the quarter. Instead, preliminary activities were undertaken in preparation for the next and final round of assessments. The following is a brief description of such activities.

Establishing parameters for the endline EGRA/EGMA

Meetings were held between RTI and EDC to establish the parameters for the 2014 endline EGRA/EGMA. An agreement was reached that the most appropriate comparator for the endline dataset would be the 2012 dataset. The general timeframe of Mai-June 2014 was identified, although final dates remain to be established.

Tangerine® for data collection

Following consultation between RTI headquarters and EDC headquarters, the decision was taken to use electronic data collection methods in conducting the 2014 Endline EGRA and EGMA..

Tangerine allows to directly capture student results in an electronic format will eliminate the risk of transcription errors by data entry clerks and reduce the time elapsed between fieldwork and initial data processing by at least two weeks.

RFP for 2014 Endline EGRA/EGMA subcontract issued.

RTI issued an RFP to a set of 6 potential subcontractors. This group included 2 which had been subcontracted in 2010 (CNONGD) and 2012 (CENADEP), and four other organizations with strong reputations: FOLECO, DIP/ASBL, Croix Rouge, and HDW International.

4.2. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE

As mentioned in the previous progress report, EDC's M&E Unit in Washington, DC continued to support the project. During the reporting quarter EDC's Senior Technical Advisor visited the project in August to conduct an internal data quality assessment (DQA) exercise, and to review the project's overall M&E system. Five major issues were examined: (1) verification of database; (2) organization of files; (3) organization of data entry; (4) establishing data flow; and (5) demonstrating the project's theory of change.

Whereas the full report can be found in Annex 1, the following are a few highlights of key observations / recommendations:

- a. Verification reveals high level of accuracy: overall **98,9%** of data entered in the database was correctly entered based on verification of hard copies
- b. The M&E department has done an excellent job of organizing and archiving files by indicator, year, and province (for number of youth enrolled)
- c. During the trimester, data will be entered weekly and forms filed at the provincial level. With the close of the quarter, forms will be batched and sent to Kinshasa for addition to the central archive.
- d. The M&E department should close the data collection period (say at the end of the first week after the close of the quarter)
- e. PAQUED needs to have an overall strategy for linking performance to program inputs: that is, to demonstrate the project's theory of change

5. NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND TRENDS

As has been mentioned in several past progress reports, the Ministry of Education is committed to elevating reading to the level of a school subject rather than keeping it as a subset of the French language. In addition, the Ministry is encouraging the use of local languages to teach reading to grades 1 and 2 children. The Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) has seized the opportunity to launch a pilot project that teaches reading in Swahili in Kisangani (Oriental Province)

6. CHALLENGES

During recent discussions with international partners, the government has restated its policy to teach reading in local languages in the first two grades. This represents a tremendous challenge for the project in a context where reading materials and manuals are scarce, and teachers are not trained to build students' skills in local languages. As it has been doing with its IRI programs, PAQUED is encouraging teachers in its newly launched experimental schools program to use local language to build skills required for reading in Grades 1 and 2.

Although serious effort has already been made to overcome the poor quality of Lifeline solar radios, the project continues to experience frequent breakdowns, hence affecting the optimal use of IRI programs.

Managing the number of teachers participating in the experimental program is one of the major challenges to effective implementation. The project technical team plans to address the issue by identifying resource people in the experimental school sites.

As mentioned in the previous progress report, collecting data from sites outside big towns in a timely fashion continues to challenge the project's M&E system. PAQUED has devoted more efforts by dispatching field staff (even non-M&E individuals) to collect data.

7. SUCCESS STORY



USAID | DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) for Omar Elementary School in the town of Bandundu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)



OMAR school before the COPA received a grant....



Matched by in-kind community participation, an USAID grant of \$2000 has helped the OMAR primary school COPA- completely refurbish the roof of its school

The OMAR PTA was facing a big challenge for the 2012-13 school year. How would it provide the proper environment for local children to learn? With walls made from clay and a leaky thatched roof, the school building was makeshift at best. Parents were reluctant to send their children to school there, citing the poor state of the school facilities. Fortunately, the USAID-funded Package for Improving Education Quality (PIEQ) was launching its Small Grants Program. The program aims to provide modest resources to schools in need while fostering local engagement in support of children's schooling.

With the help of a \$ 2000 grant, Omar Elementary School managed not only to replace the roofing; it increased enrollment as well. More important, the grant helped spur enthusiasm among PTA and community members alike. One member, motivated to do more, contributed a modest amount of roofing materials on his own. This gesture brought the PTA to decide to fix the roof for all six classrooms, well beyond the two classrooms called for in the community's initial grant request. More parents were excited about the success of the school and enrolled their children in that school. As a result, total enrolment jumped from 149 students in 2011-2012 to 210 students in 2012 – 2013.

The success of the Omar School PTA is just one of many that PIEQ has experienced through the Small Grants Program. Some 215 classrooms were repaired or built during the first two years of the program alone while providing much-needed classroom space. But the ultimate goal of the program is to mobilize communities to act in support of their schools.

About 23,000 members in 1,500 school governance and school management organizations have benefited from PIEQ-organized training activities. These activities have focused on such topics as the importance of education, participatory management, and the responsibilities of parents to support their schools. To qualify for a small grant, each PIEQ-supported organization had to complete a school improvement plan (SIP) designed to bring parents and others to better support schools.

The approach seems to be working. As work progressed to replace the roof at Omar Elementary School, parents agreed to enroll their children when the project was completed. And they are keeping that promise: enrollments this school year have increased by over 40%, and new enrollments continue. All of this was made possible because one PTA member helped move others to become involved, including parents whose children otherwise might not have gone to school at all.

In this way, the PIEQ Small Grants Program is not just assisting DRC communities to improve their schools and involve parents. Rather, the program is providing a model for increasing school-community capacity to support children's education. In a vast country such as the DRC, where over 7 million children do not attend school, the PIEQ model is a welcome approach to addressing one of the most challenging problems facing the country: how to provide greater access with limited resources. With the help of the PIEQ community mobilization model, the DRC can begin to close the gap.

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 fourth quarter.

TABLE 1: Planned versus Completed Activities (July - September, 2013)

Main Activities	July	August	September	Status
Overall Project Management				
Attend quarterly meetings with USAID and other partners				Done
Continue to hire staff (when appropriate)				Done
Organize quarterly meetings with all staff to prepare for the final year of the project				Done
OBJECTIVE 1: ESTABLISH STANDARDS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN READING AND MATH				
Work with the Ministry to revise / harmonize reading profiles as per roadmap developed in February				Done
Continue to discuss with USAID and OPEQ to determine the best ways of counting "improved readers"				Done
Continue to participate in discussions with the MEPSP and other partners on the way forward regarding reading roadmap				In progress
OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN READING				
Train a group of facilitators as trainers for experimental schools				Done
Train teachers in experimental schools				Done
Finalize self-directed teacher learning modules (to pilot in selected schools)				Done
Develop self-directed modules to strengthen teachers' reading skills				In progress
OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE THE SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT				
Provide small grants				In progress
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				In progress
Train CGES/COPAs in how to meet outside of school reading needs for children				In progress
Train CGES/COPAs et CRES in SIP development				Done
MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES				
Conduct a DQA exercise				Done
Monitor community projects funded through small grants				Done

9. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR QUARTER 1, YEAR 5: OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 2013

Table 2: PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR QUARTER 1, YEAR 5

Main Activities	OCT	NOV	DEC	STATUS
Overall Project Management				
Supervise and organize various activities related to prepare for project close out				
Participate in quarterly meetings with USAID				
Participate in, and contribute to COMCON quarterly meetings				
Participate in, and contribute to coordination meetings with other USAID projects (OPEQ, EAGLE)				
Write quarterly reports (and final project report)				
Sub IR 1.1: Student assessments conducted in literacy and math				
Prepare for endline EGRA and EGMA				
Present EGRA and EGMA results to USAID, the Government, and other partners				
Provide technical assistance to the reading commission whenever appropriate and feasible				
Support the reading commission in organizing a workshop on defining standards pertaining to scope and sequence of readers for grades 3 to 6.				
Support the reading commission in organizing a meeting involving key partners for the "technical validation" of reading standards (referentials, norms of performance, scope and sequence of readers, etc.)				
Support the reading commission in organizing a meeting for the « political » validation of reading standards				
Support DIPROMAD to organize a workshop to harmonize math referentials				
IR 2: Quality of teaching improved in literacy and math				
Sub IR 2.1: Teacher classroom practice improved through professional development activities				
Identification of participants and training sites				
Develop, validate, print and distribute self-directed training module and materials				
Training of Master Trainers and other resource people in how to establish and support neighborhood clusters				

Main Activities	OCT	NOV	DEC	STATUS
Develop, pilot and apply monitoring and evaluation tools				
Train teachers and principals to use IRI effectively				
Develop and implement IRI training module				
Train field staff, Master trainers and other resource people to support teachers during IRI use in schools				
Develop and apply monitoring and evaluation tools				
Train teachers for reading program (experimental schools)				
Identification of participants and training sites				
Training of field agents, facilitators and other resource people (TOTs) to support teachers in experimental schools				
Develop, pilot and apply monitoring and evaluation instruments, including fidelity of implementation tools				
Document and share results and experiences of all education activities (including "lessons learned")				
Sub IR 2.2: Classroom instruction improved through provision of innovative instructional materials				
Develop, validate, print and distribute IRI training and materials (school kits), including additional IRI guides				
Develop, validate, print and distribute reading intervention materials (i.e., texts)				
Finalize, validate and distribute two remaining video modules (in French language and math)				
IR 3				
Distribute, and explain to COPA / COGES members the ministerial decrees that define their roles and responsibilities				
Support APES in organizing COPA members training				
Support the organization of general assemblies of COPAs in all year 5 schools				
Monitor the implementation of all SIP's				
Evaluate SIP's already completed to draw lessons learned				

Main Activities	OCT	NOV	DEC	STATUS
Organize awareness raising campaigns on the necessity of parental accompaniment in reading				
Train COPA members and parents of experimental school children (grades 1 and 2) in how to fabricate and use didactic materials as tools to support reading at home				
Train COPA members in how to organize and manage a reading space (ECEL) at the community level (experimental schools)				
Provide ongoing support in the management of 30 ECEs (10 per province)				
MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES				
Produce and distribute M&E protocols				
Monitor IRI use, the functioning of neighborhood clusters, and of experimental schools				
Collect data needed for quarterly reports				

