



Educational Quality Improvement Program
Policy ▪ Systems ▪ Management

**Ghana Basic Education Comprehensive
Assessment System
(BECAS)**

**Quarterly Report #4
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INTRODUCTION

The implementation phase of the first administration of the NEA under the auspices of the Basic Education Comprehensive Assessment System (BECAS) began this past quarter. In collaboration with the Assessment Services Unit personnel and consultants, the BECAS staff developed, revised and piloted the National Education Assessment (NEA) tests in English and Mathematics. This process involved the refinement of the NEA assessment components, development of new NEA items, development of the core objectives for the NEA, and the specification of logistics for the administration of trial NEA tests (March 1-4).

With members of the Technical Working Group (TWG) and ASU personnel, the BECAS staff and consultants began the preparation for the School Education Assessment pilots, which will be piloted in April. This quarterly report presents an overview of the work completed by the field and home offices, as well as technical and consultant staff for the period January through March 2005.

FIELD OFFICE ACTIVITIES

Procurement

- The Home office procured **Opscan equipment** in the U.S. for use in the zonal regions (4 central locales within the 10 regions) identified by the BECAS staff in consultation with Wes Snyder, Senior Technical Advisor. These machines will be used to scan the answer sheets for the NEA tests that will be administered in July 2005 in the 10 regions of the country. Additionally, 2 high-volume machines have been purchased and will reside in the ASU for central scanning.¹ It is expected that EARC will provide training to the BECAS staff, ASU personnel and regional office staff in the next quarter.
- The field office obtained 2 **UPS** and 10 **printers** to accompany the 10 computers for the regional education offices. These computers and printers will be delivered during training sessions provided by EARC between April and May 2005.
- The office also procured a **risograph**, which allows the team to do high volume copying of tests. This risograph proved invaluable during the printing of the administrators' manuals (NEA) and SEA pilot test materials and made the process much more cost effective in comparison to contracting a local business to make copies for the project.

¹ The BECAS/ASU team continues to explore various ways to structure the scoring of the SEA. The Opscan equipment is not capable of scoring the volume of answer sheets that the SEA will produce. The BECAS team recommends that the Regional offices manually score and evaluate the SEA. A sample of the answer sheets can be collected and recorded onto scannable sheets for central scanning, which would provide data for the linkage of the SEA to the NEA. As was reported in the last quarterly report, this recommendation addresses the handling of high volumes, lack of technical expertise, and a portion of the costs are absorbed by the regular activities of the Regional Offices. This approach also allows for greater capacity building at the regional level.

Field Staff Activities

- AED interviewed and hired Elizabeth (Bess) Long as the BECAS Program Manager in early February. She began working immediately as a part-time consultant and was hired as a full-time member of the AED field staff on April 1, 2005. She has worked alongside the BECAS staff, ASU personnel and BECAS consultants, orienting herself to AED and USAID policies, the BECAS office, the assessment system and the demands of keeping the program running efficiently. She has established bimonthly team meetings and more regular communication with the home office. Bess has also been instrumental in reviewing and editing the NEA and SEA and ensuring that the tests were ready for piloting.
- John Adu participated in two workshops conducted by the EQUALL project and the Center for Applied Linguistics. There, Mr. Adu contributed his vast knowledge toward the further development of Early Literacy Standards and Benchmarks.
- This quarter's activities in the field office focused first on piloting the NEA, then on the development of the SEA pilot tests. Even though an item bank was set up by Eric Smith at the end of last year, it did not have a sufficient number of items to create the various forms needed. Therefore, two parallel forms of English and Math tests for P3 and P6 were developed by the field staff and consultants. It is expected that Mr. Smith will be returning to Ghana mid-year to further expand this database.
- The field office developed Test Administrator manuals and scripts to accompany the NEA pilot test, as well as evaluation forms for the administrators and monitors.
- During the last days of February, BECAS/ASU personnel distributed test materials to 4 district educational offices (except in the Ashanti region where they were delivered to the regional office, where 80 test administrators picked up the materials.) The administrators were responsible for delivering the tests to the individual schools and conducting the pilot. BECAS staff then picked up the tests for analysis.
- In early March forty primary schools and five Junior Secondary Schools piloted the National Education Assessment. A total of 3,000 students in primary grades 3 and 6, as well as Junior Secondary School 1, in 40 schools took part in the test. Fifteen people, including the entire BECAS field office staff, the university consultants and Mr. Acquaye (the Director of the CRDD) monitored the administration of the pilot test and later met in Accra to discuss their experiences and suggest changes for the NEA in July. [See **Annex I** for recommendations to improve test administration.]
- BECAS staff in partnership with EARC began to evaluate and analyze the results of the NEA pilot tests. The results of the pilot are expected to be released in April 2005
- Immediately following the NEA pilot, the BECAS field team met with members of the TWG, BECAS consultants and ASU personnel to begin work on the SEA items for the April pilot. This group reviewed items, linked them to objectives in the syllabus and rewrote them when necessary.

Meetings

- Bess Long represented BECAS at the Partners meeting held at USAID on March 31, 2005. The focus of the meeting was to develop the education strategy. During the meeting, several organizations were asked to make presentations related to the goals and objectives of their programs. Bess did a power point presentation about the BECAS project to the other partners and made contacts with other projects. BECAS staff hopes to collaborate with other projects on development of test items, social marketing of the assessment system and logistical support during test administration.

- Regular contact with representatives from the EQUALL project and the other AED projects working in Accra has been established. EQUALL and BECAS have established a regular exchange of information regarding assessment systems, including development of test items, linking those items to literacy standards and sharing sources of illustrations. Since the EQUALL project will continue on after BECAS, they can support the continued sustainability of work completed under BECAS.
- The BECAS staff has had regular meetings and frequent phone contact with Mr. Acquaye, Director of the CRDD, to discuss the following issues:
 - Need for internet service in the BECAS office.
 - Payment for use of building's internet service, which the project later learned will not be required.
 - Need for phone service in the BECAS office. After discussions with Mr. Acquaye and the AED home office, the BECAS team decided to purchase a cellular telephone for project use. It is a less expensive option to installing phone service in the field office at this time.
 - The ongoing challenge of involving the ASU personnel in BECAS activities to build the capacity of the unit to develop and implement tests. These challenges remain unresolved, although in March, two ASU members increased their work time and engagement in BECAS activities.
 - When the BECAS project was initiated, the GES indicated that the project would be provided with a driver and vehicle. To date, no driver has been provided to the project and the vehicle was donated by USAID/Ghana.
 - NEA and SEA pilot tests. The Ghana BECAS project will provide funding to the GES to implement the NEA for two years. However, it was agreed that funds for the SEA would be provided by the GES from the inception of the project. To date, no such funding has been put into the GES budget. If BECAS is to successfully implement the SEA, the MoE/GES will need to plan funds for the test administration. Moreover, in the long term interest of sustainability of such national and school level tests, the GES will need to begin planning for future budgeting.
 - Inform Mr. Acquaye of overall program activities and timeline, including upcoming events and test administration.
- Scheduled Meetings:
 - The program manager has scheduled meetings with Peace Corps, as well as representatives of the Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT) project, in an attempt to establish a relationship of collaboration with these organizations. It is our hope that GAIT and BECAS can work together through GAIT's scheduled community activities - especially through the PTAs and SPAMs - to inform members of the communities about the NEA and SEA and how they can be used to assist in their children's improved learning.
 - The program manager scheduled a meeting with Larry Dolan at USAID to discuss the results of the NEA pilot and continued challenges with the ASU personnel assigned to the BECAS project. Wes Snyder presented the results of the NEA pilot to Larry and discussed the challenges with ASU staffing, as well as potentially conflicting assessment activities with the World Bank and the Ministry of Education. Larry expressed his support for and encouragement of BECAS throughout the meeting. USAID and project staff will begin collaborative discussions with the MoE and World Bank to ensure that no duplication of efforts occurs, but that the projects are mutually supportive of each other.

- The field office contracted EARC to deliver ten computers, printers and two UPS to the Regional Education offices in March. The BECAS office staff scheduled dates with EARC for the training for the regional officers in the use of these computers for processing of test data. Training is scheduled for August. During this training, regional education officers will learn how to use programs (run on new computers donated by BECAS) for analyzing test data. The training will directly contribute to the sustainability of the assessment system, as the regions will be able to utilize the test scores to diagnose gaps in instruction. The BECAS staff and consultants will participate in the training.

Consultants

During this quarter Drs. Mereku, Etey and Amedahe (university consultants) participated in and led a variety of activities which are listed below:

- Developed Mathematics tests and accompanying TA manuals for P3 and P6 in preparation for the NEA pilot
- Linked NEA and SEA test items to Mathematics objectives in the syllabus
- Monitored NEA pilot and met for debriefing with other monitors
- Participated in Team Building workshop with Dr. Audrey Moore, from the AED home office, and Dr. Wes Snyder
- Led and/or participated in a four-day workshop for test administrators preparing them for the administration of the NEA and SEA pilots.
- Reviewed, formatted and reordered the Mathematics items for the SEA pilot

Dr. Kofi Quansah – curriculum consultant for BECAS

- Participated in Technical Working Group revision of English language items for NEA pilot test, as well as items for the SEA pilot test
- Developed a preliminary plan for the Continuous Assessment component of BECAS, which has yet to be finalized. Dr. Quansah has written a plan for CA in Grades 1-3 in literacy and numeracy. Diane Fladmo will assist in elaborating and finalizing the CA plan. Additionally, Dr. Quansah is writing a teacher training manual and training plan, to which Diane will contribute her expertise in finalizing.

Trips to The Field

Dr. Wes Snyder traveled to Ghana in March 2005. The purpose of the visit was to assist in the development of the SEA pilot (given April 14-15), to conduct item analysis and to review the NEA P6 and P3 pilot assessments. Dr. Snyder presented the NEA pilot results/data to the BECAS consultants, field staff, ASU staff and Larry Dolan, USAID Education Officer. We had hoped BECAS would have been formally presented to the Senior Advisory Board (SAB) during Wes' visit, because the SAB is critical to the long-term sustainability of BECAS; however, the SAB still lacks an appointee from the Ministry of Education and has therefore not yet convened.

Dr. Audrey Moore also traveled to Ghana from January 28 – February 8, 2005. The purpose of her visit was to conduct a day long teambuilding workshop (in collaboration with Dr. Wes Snyder) with the BECAS team and ASU in an effort to create increased collaboration and involvement with the ASU. Four members of the ASU, all BECAS staff members, the Deputy Director and Director of the CRDD all attended the workshop. The outcomes of the workshop included a clearly defined set of challenges and potential solutions, clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for everyone on the project, and strategies for increasing BECAS' involvement with not only the ASU, but with other local organizations. While in Ghana, Drs. Moore and Snyder also recruited a BECAS program manager and provided AED training to the

selected candidate. Dr. Moore also began to establish the monitoring and evaluation system for the project. It is expected that baselines for several evaluation studies will be completed in June 2005.

ACTIVITIES BEHIND SCHEDULE

Formation of the Senior Advisory Board

PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR APRIL THROUGH JUNE, 2005

The major activities for this period revolved around item analysis, item revision and the preparation for the NEA (and the SEA) assessments. The following specific activities are planned:

- Preparation of NEA budget
- Development of marking schemes (scoring rubrics) for English and Maths SEA constructed response items
- Selection of sample schools for NEA (Sandem)
- Further analysis of SEA items so that some may be used in NEA in July
- Input of items into item bank (involves creation of new items, as well as continued revision of SEA and NEA pilot items) in preparation for the NEA
- Eric Smith will spend two weeks in Accra during the month of May with BECAS staff. During this time, he will provide guidance and technical support during the final input of items into the bank, as well as final coding of items with objective numbers. Eric will guide the BECAS staff through the initial creation of NEA test forms from the item bank.
- Diane Fladmo will visit the project in June to assist Dr. Kofi Quansah in finalizing the continuous assessment plan.
- Audrey Moore and Wes Snyder will also travel to Ghana in June 2005. They will review the final NEA test and administration processes before it is given the week of July 11th and establish baselines for evaluation of the project, including the development of a data collection database for the project.

COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES PLANNED

- Bess Long and John Adu will meet with representatives from the GAIT project to discuss possibilities for building awareness of and interest in BECAS at the community level and possible support of the School Performance and Appraisal Meeting. The objective of the meeting is to explore collaborative avenues for GAIT and BECAS to educate members of the school communities, especially PTAs and SPAMs, about the importance of the assessments (especially the SEA).
- Bess will participate in a Peace Corps Career Panel for volunteers working in schools throughout the country. PC Staff and volunteers work in schools throughout the country, and could potential share information about BECAS with teachers and schools. The objective of this strategy is to ensure that more people in the field of education are made aware of BECAS' work, in an effort to contribute to the sustainability of the program
- John Adu and Kofi Quansah will participate in the review of a pupil assessment instrument developed by CAL consultants at the EQUALL office in April. This review will provide BECAS with added assessment feedback for the NEA and SEA tests in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The ASU is now institutionalized. However, of the seven personnel originally assigned to the unit, only two regularly participate in BECAS activities. Their responsibilities at the CRDD have not been reduced, so their time at the BECAS office is sporadic, which makes planning for their time difficult. Their sporadic participation also has long term implications for building the assessment capacity within the ASU unit. Additionally, their continued absence from BECAS activities has meant that the field office staff, the TWG and local consultants carry out the bulk of BECAS test development. This has contributed to the hasty nature of both pilots. The two ASU personnel want more structured training, while the BECAS field staff can only provide “on-the-job training.” This presents a less-than-ideal situation. The long term implications of an Assessment Services Unit without adequate training are clear – the National Education Assessment and School Education Assessment tests will not be used successfully to improve the quality of learning in the classroom. Moreover, it will be difficult to establish sustainability because the capacity of the staff within that unit will not be improved. Additional support, commitment and flexibility from the GES regarding ASU personnel working at Ghana BECAS is needed, as well as more interest on the part of the personnel. BECAS staff will continue to work with the ASU and CRDD to reach a mutually beneficial agreement around this issue, because we do recognize the resource constraints faced by the CRDD at this time.

Challenges also exist around the management and provision of equipment for BECAS. The project continues to operate without a functioning vehicle and no phone lines. USAID/Ghana will provide a new vehicle to the project in April, and it is also expected that internet will be installed during the same period of time.

UPCOMING TRAINING SCHEDULE

<u>May, 2005</u>	TWG workshop for creation of additional NEA items
<u>August, 2005:</u>	District Officers (EARC will provide this training)
<u>September, 2005:</u>	National Dissemination of Results (<i>Still to be discussed and planned</i>)

ANNEX ONE**TEST ADMINISTRATOR'S AND MONITOR'S FEEDBACK
NEA PILOT MARCH 2005**

Problems TAs and Monitors Encountered During Pilot	Suggestions For Improved NEA Administration	Solutions or Changes for July 2005 NEA Administration
<p><u>Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head teachers did not know the purpose of the NEA pilot• Changes in schedule of testing were not fully communicated to the schools• Monitors had some trouble finding their schools• There were not enough test materials in some schools, due to under-enrolment, and materials were photocopied	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform head teachers as to purpose of NEA• Provide regions and districts with time-table of testing, allowing for enough time, so that heads can notify schools with plenty of advance notice• Provide monitors with maps, TA's testing schedule and contact numbers of district heads, test administrators, and schools (if possible)• Make heads aware of reasons for and necessity for correct reporting of enrolment. Underreporting of enrolment in some schools caused shortages of materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send letters to the head teachers explaining the purpose of the NEA• Send letters to regional education officers 6 weeks before testing is to occur - to inform district officers and head teachers of dates of upcoming assessment. Include a list of assignments of Test Administrators.• At TA training (June) label schools on maps to be given to monitors and TAs• At same TA training collect contact numbers for all district head and TAs and provide master list to all• When possible, circuit supervisors should visit schools to verify enrolment by consulting attendance records rather than relying entirely on head teachers' reporting
<p><u>Materials Packing and Delivery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Materials arrived late• TAs needed test booklets, along with TA manual, during administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get manuals to administrators with time enough to allow them to prepare adequately.• Provide TAs with test booklets (all forms) during administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send materials 4 weeks before testing date

Problems TAs and Monitors Encountered During Pilot	Suggestions For Improved NEA Administration	Solutions or Changes for July 2005 NEA Administration
<p><u>Materials Packing and Delivery (con't)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration manuals arrived inside locked bags of test materials; TAs could not easily access them for study beforehand • There was some confusion about which test materials were needed for the difference classes, due to poor labeling • Administrators had too much to carry from school to school 	<p>forms) during administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate TA materials from test materials • More clearly package and label test materials to avoid confusion, possibly in plastic envelopes • Share booklets among schools tested by same TA to prevent TA from "hauling" so many materials from school to school. This would also reduce printing costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include copies of all test forms in a separate administration packet, sent with bags, but not inside • Clearly label and package materials, in sturdy plastic envelopes, if possible • Schedule TAs so that they test the same class at their different testing sites and provide them with one set of that class' booklets
<p><u>Test Format</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests contained typographical and numbering errors • Sections of tests not clear • Hard to see test form # on the front of test booklets • Many students could not read well enough to complete the tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofread more thoroughly the tests and manuals • Create and label sub-tests within each test (Maths, English) • Make Test Form # more prominent on booklets • First time for many students – provide for practice • Simplify language and provide more examples and illustrations to help students functioning at a low reading level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more time for proofreading thoroughly the test items (in the bank) and manuals • Verify that item bank can format for sub-tests and set it up, if possible • Change font size of test form # and bold font • Include practice page in test booklet • Review items for language difficulty and create more examples and illustrations, where needed

Problems TAs and Monitors Encountered During Pilot	Suggestions For Improved NEA Administration	Solutions or Changes for July 2005 NEA Administration
<p><u>Test Administrators' Manual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials, including TA manuals, arrived late, so TAs were unable to fully prepare for administration of the pilot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver manuals to TAs with enough time for them to prepare for administration of the test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give TAs their administration manuals at the training/workshop one month before testing
<p><u>Answer Sheets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many students were unfamiliar with shading an answer sheet and required lengthy directions • Some pupils marked their answers incorrectly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunity to practice shading of answers. Answer sheet was completely foreign to most pupils, required lots of explanation • Provide schools with answer sheets or suggestions for practice activities that would educate pupils about shading • Add practice sheet as first page of all tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop practice booklet to include list of suggestions for teachers to prepare students and classrooms and a practice test • Send this booklet with the letter to head teacher mentioned above to each school selected for testing no later than May 31
<p><u>Administration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students were disruptive during the test administration • Some TAs did not actively monitor during the administration and some students did not receive the assistance they might have needed, especially with the answer sheet and understanding of written instructions • Some monitors reported loud talking during test by the TA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More vigilance on the part of the TAs, in regard to discipline during test-taking (monitors) • More active monitoring by TAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address behavioural expectations and importance of quiet environment during TA training, as well as in letter to schools • Model active monitoring

Problems TAs and Monitors Encountered During Pilot	Suggestions For Improved NEA Administration	Solutions or Changes for July 2005 NEA Administration
<p><u>General</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some TAs and monitors paid for expenses out of pocket² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance payment of per diem and transportation costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At TA training, provide half of expected per diem and transportation costs for NEA administration
<p><u>Listening Comprehension</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some TAs used different listening forms for the same class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use only one form per class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time at the TA training on administration of listening test

● ² Many TAs have not come to Accra to collect the per diem and transportation costs from administration of pilot