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## Quarterly Report

**READING FOR SUCCESS – SMALL SCALE EXPERIMENTATION (RFS-SSE)**  
Contract No. AID-OAA-I-14-00055 Task Order No. AID-608-TO-15-00002

Year 1 Quarter 1: September – December 2015



Submitted January 29, 2016

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## Table of Contents

<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>I. PROJECT OVERVIEW</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>II. ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>A. Cross-Cutting Activity: Early Grade Reading Assessment</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>B. Result 1: Arabic Reading Materials for First and Second Grades</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>C. Result 2: Summer Reading Enrichment Activities Tested for Reducing Learning Loss (Grants Program)</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>III. MONITORING AND EVALUATION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>IV. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>A. Challenges</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>B. Lessons Learned</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>V. FINANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>A. Personnel</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>B. Modifications and Amendments</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>C. Financial Information</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>VI. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER (JAN-MAR 2016)</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ANNEXES</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Annex 1: Executive summary French</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Annex 2: Deliverables for the Quarter</b>	<b>16</b>

## ACRONYMS

ALCO	ALCO Alternative Consultants
AREF	Regional Academy for Education and Training
COR	Contracting Officer’s Representative
CNEE	National Center for Evaluation and Examinations
CRMEF	Teacher Training Institute
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DOEVS	Directorate of Organization and Evaluation of School Life
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MELP	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan
MOE	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
RFS–SSE	Reading for Success — Small Scale Experimentation
SPSS	Statistical Package
SSME	Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness
STS	School-to-School International
UCFC	Central Unit for Teacher Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WP	Work Plan

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

The USAID/Morocco Reading for Success – Small Scale Experimentation (RFS-SSE) Project is pleased to present the first quarterly report, covering the period of September 23 to December 31, 2015. RFS-SSE is implemented by Chemonics International in partnership with School-to-School International (STS), Association Al Jisr, and ALCO Alternative Consultants (ALCO), and works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Chemonics and its partners began mobilization immediately after contract award. This first quarterly progress report outlines our progress in mobilizing the project team and highlights the successful completion of several technical workshops in a very short amount of time. Even during the holiday season, the team made significant progress in the development of the project objectives despite administrative and operational hurdles along the way.

The first quarter of project implementation usually focuses on administrative and operational mobilization and technical work planning to focus the teams on the work ahead. As part of the cost share structure of the contract between USAID

### Main Accomplishments this Quarter

- Project Mobilization: most staff hired and moved into permanent office space
- Year 1 Work Plan and MELP submitted to USAID for review and approval
- Successful EGRA tool adaptation and validation workshop held
- EGRA Data Collection Pilot test completed
- Pivotal Arabic Reading Lessons Development Workshop completed

and the MOE, the project offices were to be located in one of the MOE buildings. However, the office space was not available for move-in until December 14, which also delayed the make ready upgrades, furniture purchases, and IT installations. Unfortunately, many of these operational functions remain pending due to a delay in completing registration in country; however, we are optimistic that this will be finalized during the second quarter of the project. Similarly, due to internal government shifts in Morocco, where the country was realigning its regional boundaries, there was a delay in technical decisions as the project, in collaboration with the MOE and USAID, could not confirm the regions where the intervention would take place. This delay in deciding which regions to work in had a trickle down affect, as it would be imperative for the success of the project to involve inspectors and coordinators from the regions where we will be working.

Despite all these obstacles, RFS-SSE has had a very successful first quarter. Even though there was a delay in confirming the regions for the intervention, the project in close collaboration with USAID began a series of preparation and validation meetings in October 2015. These meetings with the MOE Curriculum Directorate, headed by Mr. Chafiqi, and the National Center for Evaluation and Examinations (CNEE), headed by Mr. Sassy, were the start of a successful and collaborative relationship for the project. Technical direction was further solidified in a November work planning session, which was attended by the Chemonics team and partners and USAID. The

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive Summary in French has been included as Annex 1

session allowed the project to achieve a common basis and shared understanding of the project results, key stakeholders, and integrated activities for year 1 of the project.

The month of December saw a real change for the project. With the green light from the MOE and USAID, the project moved full speed ahead with the design and implementation of the baseline study. In a three week period, the project in close collaboration with partner, STS, hosted an EGRA adaptation workshop, piloted and finalized the EGRA and Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness (SSME) tools, and obtained the Ministry’s written approval of the tools. The last days of the quarter ended with a successful launch of Result 1 activities through the Arabic Reading Lesson Development workshop.

## I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The goal of the RFS–SSE project is to test activities and strengthen stakeholder engagement to improve reading skills in the early grades. Hence, the project is a learning activity that will develop an evidence base of effective approaches for improving reading skills, both in target primary

### RFS-SSE Major Objectives

- To improve the teaching of reading in grades 1 and 2 of primary education;
- To improve the level of reading in grades 1 and 2 of primary education; and
- To use the project's results to contribute to the reform of the school system.

schools and in non-formal education settings. It will test activities and strengthen stakeholder engagement, using prior research and evidence from activities carried out in Morocco and other countries, to test two reading interventions - new Arabic reading lessons and summer enrichment activities.

RFE-SSE will develop Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) reading lessons based on a phonetic approach combined with vocabulary enhancement techniques that will ameliorate reading comprehension and communication for primary school students in grades 1 and 2. The aim of the project once the new lesson plans have been developed and tested is for the results to feed into the planned MOE curriculum reforms that are linked to the Interim Measures for 2015-2020.

MOE staff will be engaged in the design, training, implementation and evaluation of the lessons at all levels. These efforts will be undertaken to understand the required technical assistance for implementing activities that improve reading instruction in formal primary schools and test the effectiveness of reading materials. Similarly, it will engage Civil Society

### RFS-SSE Activity/Results

Cross-cutting Design and Implementation of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA).

Result 1: Developing Arabic Reading Materials for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades.

Result 2: Summer Reading Enrichment Activities Tested for Reducing Learning Loss among 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Students.

Organizations (CSOs) and support and test their efforts to reduce reading loss over the summer months through enrichment activities.

RFS–SSE will initiate a range of assessments related to improving early grade reading competencies among Moroccan primary school students.

In practice, the project will develop lesson plans based on two parallel and interlinked strands: lessons that provide a greater focus on phonology and phonics; and lessons involving oral listening and discussion of engaging, well-known Moroccan stories, which will lead exercises that will increase vocabulary and reading comprehension. Both of these strands will support the reading skills targeted by the EGRA instrument, as well as the current curriculum, and will at the same time provide an enjoyable and rewarding experience for teachers and learners.

The new lessons will replace the current Arabic reading curriculum in grades 1 and 2, and will follow a unit-based structure based on the current three-week syllabus structure.

## II. ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### A. Cross-Cutting Activity: Early Grade Reading Assessment

In October 2015 a kick off planning and coordination workshop was held at the National Center for Evaluation and Examinations (CNEE). The purpose of the workshop was to identify the different steps and processes that need to be undertaken, in collaboration with the MOE, in order to develop the EGRA and SSME tools and plan the various steps to lead to the baseline study data collection. The full presentation from this early planning workshop is listed in Annex 2.

Following the five day planning and coordination meeting, in order to plan for the EGRA/SSME tool adaptation workshop, the project worked very closely with the MOE to identify appropriate participants from the



Group photo during the EGRA Adaptation Workshop December 2015



selected regions, as well as carefully identify and select schools for the pre-test of the instruments.

The EGRA/SSME Adaptation Workshop took place in Rabat December 7 – 15, 2015. The objective of the seven-day workshop was to develop and pre-adapt EGRA and SSME tools: student tests, questionnaires for teachers and students, and a class observation grid. The workshop was facilitated by Chemonics and our partner, STS, for a total of 19 participants that had been carefully selected and invited by the CNEE. On December 11, the eight selected participants were divided into three groups in order to pre-test the designed tools in three schools in the Rabat area. The workshop continued on December 14, to amend the tools based on the pre-test outcomes.

The pretest of the tools was followed by a formal pilot process to test the tools on December 17-18, 2015 by the eight participants. The pilot took place in 16 schools across the 4 target regions: Sous Massa, Rabat/Kenitra, Oriental and Fes/Meknes. The below table shows the four regions, the two selected provinces within each region, the local language spoken in each province, as well as the name of the data collector and the schools visited. Data collectors were advised to pick an even number of girls and boys for the testing in each school.

The pilot was comprised of a sample of 276 first and second grade students, among which 137 were girls (49.6%) and 139 were boys (50.4%). Four different versions of the EGRA were administered to the students. All four versions have the same first three tasks (Letter Sound Identification, Oral Reading Fluency and Non-word Reading). These versions differ as to the text used to test reading and listening.

Region	Province	Local language	Enumerators	School	R/U
Sous Massa	Inezgane-Aït Melloul	Amazighia	Ahmed El Hanafi	Oum el Ouminine	Rural
				Addifaf	Urban
	Tiznit	Amazighia	Mohamed Abdarrazak	Al Ain Azzarkaa	Rural
				Lala Meriem	Urban
Rabat/ Kénitra	Kenitra	Darija	Abdrrahim Hrach Rass	G.S Almnasra	Rural
				Al maghrib Al Arabi	Urban
	Temara	Darija	Mohamed Al Hamri	G.S Sidi Mohamed Echrif	Rural
				Tarik bno Ziad	Urban
l'Oriental	Oujda Angad	Darija	Mohamed Salhi	G.S Al yarmouk	Rural
				Al Mountazah Al Baladi	Urban
	Figuig	Darija	Abdallah Addaif	Allal Benabdallah	Rural
				Mohamed El Mokhtar	Urban
Fès/Mèknes	Taounate	Darija	Mohamed El Abdi	Idriss Al aoual	Rural

				GS Awlad Ali	Urban
	El Hajeb	Amazighia	Mohamed	GS Adayaa 429	Rural
			Bouchikhi	Al Yasmine	Urban

The data from the pilot was collected, analyzed, and summarized in a final report from STS. The report identified the necessary changes and revisions that needed to be made to the EGRA sub-task tools as well as to the SSME questionnaires. On December 23<sup>rd</sup> a validation meeting with the CNEE was held, during which the RFS-SSE team obtained ministry approval of the revised EGRA and SSME tools. Obtaining CNEE approval is an extremely important step in validating the tools and subsequently the results of the assessment for use by the MOE. For the project’s records, a document was signed by Mr. Chaibi as well as the two data collectors (*inspecteurs*) as evidence of the Ministry approval. The approved tools can be found below in the deliverables section.

## B. Result 1: Arabic Reading Materials for First and Second Grades

The month of December saw the launch of Result 1 of the project. During this month, at least four coordination and planning meetings took place with the RFS-SSE team, USAID, and the MOE. The meetings focused on presenting the proposed approach and discussing the proposed work plan for this component. During these productive meetings, some of the main points discussed included the number of schools in which the intervention would take place, whether the intervention would include satellite schools (informal multi-grade schools), the structure of the material being developed (supplemental to the current curriculum or not), the timeline of the intervention, and which grades would be included in the intervention. The following is a summary of decisions made as a result of these meetings:

- The reading materials being developed will not be supplemental to the current curriculum, but instead will replace the whole reading component of the current curriculum. Hence, RFS-SSE would need to develop 50-55 minutes of teaching material per day for the intervention, and not 25 minutes as originally designed.
- The materials will include a phonic component and a vocabulary enhancing component, which will be emphasized through common Moroccan stories.
- The intervention will take place in 90 government schools. Of these 90 schools, 45 will be a control group and the other 45 will be the treatment (experimental) group that will receive the new materials.

“Primary schools in Morocco have two separate subjects, arts education (drawing, coloring and calligraphy) and reading. This approach will allow us to consolidate these two subjects matter into one.”

*Mr. Chafiqi, Director of Curricula, MOE.  
(December 2015)*



- The project will consider including satellite (informal multi-grade) schools in the experiment. Further discussions will take place on this subject in order to determine the feasibility of this suggestion.
- The intervention must start in time to be implemented during the second semester of the year, which commences in February.
- The intervention will only take place in first grade classes this year, and not both first and second grades as originally designed. The second grade intervention will commence in September 2016 for the new school year. In order to accommodate this decision, an additional EGRA baseline study will need to be added to the work plan so that complete baseline data can be collected in September.

In order to commence the consensus building for introducing a new approach to teaching reading, the Lesson Plan Development Workshop was held in Rabat from December 28 through 31, 2015. The main participants and focal group invitees were 25 school inspectors and CRMEF trainers. Additionally, there were several MOE representatives, USAID representatives, and RFS-SSE local partners - Al Jisr and ALCO.



The workshop objectives are:

Working session during the Reading Lessons Adaptation Workshop - December 2015

- Understand the importance and scientific reasoning for using a phonetic approach to reading.
- Introduce the new proposed pedagogical and vocabulary enhancing approach.
- Orient, debate, and reach consensus among the participants about the new approach.
- Develop a draft template for a lesson plan according to the proposed approach.

The first day of the workshop was critical in terms of building understanding and acceptance for the need of having a new approach to teaching reading. This was achieved through introductions and presentation by Mr. Chafiqi, Director of Curricula, USAID Contracting Office Representative (COR) Ms. Brittel-Swift, Mr. Khalid Alioua from ALCO, and a project presentation by Mr. El Ghordaf. However, the technical importance of the approach was solidified by showcasing a video of Hanada Taha (external consultant and specialist) from USAID's November 2014 State of the Art workshop, as well as critical presentations made by three technical specialists from the Laboratory of Cognitive Science at the Jaamiat Sidi Ben Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fes. The three professors outlined in detail the importance and scientific rationale for teaching Arabic

reading according to the phonics approach from three different perspectives: linguistics, neuropsychological and pedagogic.

The remainder of the workshop, days 2-4, was led by an external consultant, Andy Smart, who introduced and explained in detail the two part approach (phonics and vocabulary enhancement). The approach was exemplified through presentations of sample lessons from the USAID/Egypt GILO<sup>2</sup> materials, where participants were requested to analyze them and use them as a point of departure for the phonics track in order to propose an adapted version that would be unique to the Moroccan educational context.

The workshop culminated with the participants working in smaller groups to draft sample lesson plans that included both phonics and vocabulary enhancing teaching elements. These draft lesson plans were discussed as a group, and would later be the basis of a final template that would be used to write all the lesson plans for the intervention. The workshop was successfully concluded by a closing session attended by the Minister of Education, Mr. Rachid Belmokhtar. The Minister stressed the importance of sustaining this kind of initiative by building the capacity of the ministry staff, as well as their commitment in taking part in a project like this that aims at contributing to primary education in Morocco.

### **C. Result 2: Summer Reading Enrichment Activities Tested for Reducing Learning Loss (Grants Program)**

The RFS-SSE project team in collaboration with summer reading activity partner, Al Jisr, has commenced preliminary activity planning and is in the process of formalizing a work plan. The following quarter will be critical for Result 2, as the grants program will be designed in detail and activities will start in March after the grants manual and templates have been designed.

## **III. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

There are no indicators to report on this quarter. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (MELP) was submitted to USAID on December 23, 2015, and is pending final approval.

## **IV. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

### **A. Challenges**

- The RFS-SSE activity formally started on September 23, 2015, however, local staffs were hired at different times, and thus, one of the challenges was to ensure that everyone was on the same page and ensure the timely kick off of technical activities.

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<sup>2</sup>USAID-Funded Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes

- Recruiting for key positions has been a challenge, in terms of identifying candidates with the necessary balance of technical knowledge and expertise, and project implementation experience. The project is still in the process of recruiting a Reading Advisor, a key position that we are hoping to fill by mid February 2016. Similarly, in December, Chemonics in collaboration with USAID decided it was in the best interest of the project to replace the Program Director. The position is currently being filled by a home office employee, until a decision is reached on how to fill the position for the lifespan of the project. The void created by not filling, or not having the right person, in both of these key positions led to some delays and challenges for component 1 of the project.
- The operational startup has been a challenge for the project. This has been due to the delay of not being able to move into the permanent office space in the MOE building until mid-December. However, after moving in to the new office space, completing the operational set up of the office has been further delayed due to the delay in completing the registration of the project. This delay has prevented the project from opening a bank account and obtaining services that require a registered fiscal number, such as internet and phone services.
- Another challenge was establishing a work plan that took into consideration both the timeline from USAID and the required timeline from the MOE, which was based on working around the start of the second semester and conducting trainings during holidays for the teachers involved. For example, the lesson plan development workshop had originally been designed as a five day activity at a minimum. However, due to the delays of the project activity and the timing of the public holiday, the workshop had to be condensed into three and a half days. The workshop was successful, but shortening it significantly meant that a final draft of the lesson plan template was not completed, as originally anticipated – which subsequently has delayed all other activities.
- Another challenge has been relying on the project counterparts for logistical coordination. The MOE has been a reliable and valuable partner in this project. However, it has been a challenge to secure the conference space and lodging for participants at the MOE center ahead of time. Similarly, it has been a challenge informing participants ahead of time regarding their required attendance at workshops, as well as informing the pilot schools about our testing in their schools, as all communication must (and understandably) go through the MOE.

## **B. Lessons Learned**

- When technical decisions are taken, we must ensure that all project stakeholders are in approval of the decision. A participatory approach is highly encouraged to ensure effective communication and informed decisions.

- Participants for the workshops should be consulted and invited ahead of time along with their supervisor, namely, AREF directors, to ensure that they can participate in the planned workshop or activity without jeopardizing their day-to-day duties.
- Engaging with the CNEE in the enumerator’s selection process was key and ensured quality selection which resulted in strong engagement of the enumerators during the EGRA workshop.
- External documents should always be made available in both French and Arabic, and English when possible.
- Working with different ministerial divisions/unit requires much flexibility and explicit communication. This quarter has shown us that it takes several formal and informal meetings to reach such agreements.

## V. FINANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND ADMINISTRATION

### A. Personnel

As of December 31, 2015, the following personnel were engaged under the Morocco RFS-SSE project:

Morocco RFS-SSE Field Office Team	
Position Title	Name
Acting Program Director	Ms. Shamineh Byramji
MEL Advisor	Mr. Abdelaziz El Ghordaf
MEL Specialist	Ms. Selma Talha Jebril
Reading Specialist	Ms. Iman El Haddouzi
Director of Operations and Finance	Ms. Tahra Kham
Finance Specialist	Ms. Fatima Azzahra El Mansour
Administrative Assistant	Mr. Driss Chaouki
Driver and Logistics Officer	Mr. M’Hammed El Hamzaoui

### B. Modifications and Amendments

There were no modifications or amendments to the prime task order during quarter 1.

### C. Financial Information

The total budget under this task order is [REDACTED], of which [REDACTED] has been obligated. The first quarter of the RFS-SSE activity has been completed with invoice submissions to USAID on the following dates:

Invoice 1 - Oct.2015    November 25, 2015

Invoice 2 - Nov. 2015 December 28, 2015

The RFS-SSE accruals through the end of the first quarter are as follows:

Accruals as of December 31, 2015	
Total Contract Ceiling Amount	██████████
Total Funds Obligated	██████████
Projected Expenditures for Current Quarter* (September 23, 2015-December 31, 2015)	██████████
Remaining Obligated Funds Available at End of Current Quarter (As of December 31, 2015)	██████████

*\*Based on October, November, and draft December invoice.*

Below is the estimated monthly expenditure summary for Morocco RFS-SSE during the reporting period for both programmatic and operations costs.

Monthly Project Expenditures for Morocco RFS-SSE				
Month	Total Amount Spent in Month	Total Amount Spent to Date	Obligated Amount Remaining	Total Contract Ceiling Amount Remaining
Oct-15	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
Nov-15	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
Dec-15**	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████

*\*\*Based on draft December invoice, not yet sent to USAID.*

## VI. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER (JAN-MAR 2016)

- Training of the EGRA data collection team. The seven day workshop will be held in Rabat in early January. Training will be facilitated by partner, School-to-School International.
- EGRA and SSME Data Collection for baseline information for first graders.
- Development of the Lesson Plans for the second semester of Grade 1 by the regional teams (inspectors and CRMEF trainers – Teacher Training Institute).
- The development of guide books for trainers, teachers and for coaches.
- A Lesson Harmonization and Validation Workshop will be held in order to finalize the second semester grade 1 lesson plans. The workshop will be co-facilitated by Hanada Taha and the University of Fes Professors.

- Using the guide book for trainers, a training of trainers' workshop will be held at the end of January to teach the trainers how to pass along this new teaching method to teachers in their schools.
- Following the training of the trainers, the trainers will hold workshops to train the teachers in their schools on the new method.
- The new lesson plans will be rolled out on February 8 in the target schools.
- In February a training for coaches will be held in order to train one teacher per region to be a coach as needed to help support the other teachers.
- In March, the project will commence the development of the first semester of lesson plans for first grade, and planning for the development and approach for grade 2.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Executive summary French

Le projet de l'USAID/Maroc Lire pour Réussir – Expérimentation à Petite Echelle (LPR-EPE) présente son premier rapport trimestriel pour la période du 23 Septembre au 31 Décembre 2015. Le projet est mis en place par Chemonics International en étroite collaboration avec le Ministère de l'éducation (MoE) et en partenariat avec School-to-School International (STS), Association Al Jisr et ALCO Alternative Consultants (ALCO).

La première partie du trimestre a été consacrée à la planification des activités techniques. Ces activités ainsi que l'exécution des tâches administratives et la mobilisation opérationnelle sont décrites ci-dessous. Malgré les contraintes administratives et le retard lié au déménagement dans les locaux du ministère, l'ensemble de l'équipe technique et opérationnelle ont travaillé sans relâche même pendant la durée des vacances de fin d'années pour assurer le bon déroulement de deux ateliers technique, à savoir, l'atelier d'adaptation EGRA et l'atelier de développement de leçons de lecture de la langue arabe pour la première année.

Ce trimestre a également été marqué par des retards au niveau du ministère, tel que la proposition de critères de sélection des régions et des provinces. Ces retards ont eu un impact sur la durée des ateliers technique, ils ont été courtés afin de s'adapter avec les contraintes du terrain. Dans l'avenir, il est préférable d'obtenir les approbations en avance afin d'allouer le temps nécessaire pour chaque atelier et ou activité dans le temps initialement accordé.

Cependant et malgré tous les obstacles techniques et administratifs, le premier trimestre a connu beaucoup de réussite. Plusieurs réunions de démarrage et présentations ont eu lieu lors des mois d'octobre et novembre, notamment, avec la Direction des Curricula représentée par Mr. Chafiqi et le Centre des Exams et des Evaluation (CNEE) représenté par Mr. Sassi Lors du mois de Novembre, Chemonics a organisé une réunion de planification en présence des consultants School-To-School et Al Jisr. Cet atelier de trois jours avait pour objectif la réalisation d'une base d'informations commune sur le projet et une même compréhension des résultats du projet.

Lors du mois de décembre, les deux ateliers techniques ont eu lieu à Rabat, à savoir, l'atelier d'adaptation EGRA et l'atelier de développement des leçons de lecture pour les élèves de

#### Principales réalisations de ce trimestre

- Mobilisation: Presque l'ensemble du personnel a été embauché et travail à partir du bureau au sein du ministère
- Plan de travail pour la première année ainsi que le MELP ont été soumis à USAID pour validation
- Réalisation de l'atelier d'adaptation et de validation EGRA avec succès
- Collecte d'informations pour le pilotage des outils EGRA/SSME complétée avec succès
- Atelier de développement des leçons de lecture de la langue arabe pour les élèves de premières années complété avec succès



première année. Les objectifs assignés au deuxième atelier été comme suit : comprendre les bases des éléments de lecture dans les premières et deuxièmes années ; assimilation d'une nouvelle approche dans le développement des leçons de lecture ainsi que le développement de modèles de leçons à suivre dans le développement des autres leçons par les équipes provinciales

Enfin, nous avons obtenu l'approbation du ministère pour les outils EGRA et SSME développés lors de l'atelier d'adaptation EGRA qui s'est tenu du 7 au 15 décembre à Rabat. Cette approbation nous a permis l'utilisation des outils lors de la formation des enquêteurs durant l'atelier organisé au mois de Janvier 2016.

## **Annex 2: Deliverables for the Quarter**

Note that all of the below listed deliverables from quarter 1 are made available on the Google drive shared folder.

- Work Plan (WP)
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (MELP)
- EGRA and SSME Tools
- Sample methodology report (STS and CNEE)
- STS EGRA Pilot Study Report