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USAID *READ Community Outreach* (READ CO)

Quarterly Report (Q2 Y1)

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Save the Children

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Abbreviations

ABE: Alternative Basic Education

ANFEAE: Adult and Non Formal Education Association in Ethiopia

BEN-E: Basic Education Network of Ethiopia

COP: Chief of Party

COO: Community Outreach Officer

CSPP: Community School Partnership Program

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

CTE: Colleges of Teachers Education

DCOP: Deputy Chief of Party

DECD: SC/US's Department of Education and Child Development

DFID: Department for International Development

DPO: Disabled Persons Organization

ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education

ECCSA: Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectorial Association

EDC: Education Development Center

EGRA: Early Grade Reading Assessments

EMA: Educational Media Agency

EMC: Education Media Center

ENLA: Ethiopian National Learning Assessments

ESAP: Ethiopia Social Accountability Program

ESAP 2: Ethiopian Social Accountability Program 2

ESDP IV: Education Sector Development Programme IV

FAWE: Forum for African Women Educationalists

FLCWNDP: Fostering Local Capacity by Working with New Development Partners

GEAC: Girls' Education Advisory Committees

GEQIP: General Education Quality Improvement Project

GOE: Government of Ethiopia

ICCM: Integrated Community Case Management

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

IQPEP: Improving Quality of Primary Education Program

IREX: International Research and Exchanges Board

ITELE: Improving the Teaching of English Language in Ethiopia

KETB: Kebele Education Training Boards

LB: Literacy Boost

M & E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MCH: Maternal and child health

MCHIP: Maternal and child health integrated program

MEAL: Monitoring Evaluation and Analysis and Learning

MESA: Malawi Education Support Activity

MOE: Ministry of Education

MOPME: Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

MOWCYA: Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs

NALA: National Archives and Library Association

NGO: Nongovernmental organization

OWDA: Ogaden Welfare Development Association

PAGES: Pastoralist Afar Girls' Education Support Project

PDP: Peace and Development Program

PDP: BASES

PROTEEVA: Promoting Talent through Early Education

PTA: Parent Teacher Association

PVO: Private Voluntary Organization

RBWCYA: Regional Bureau of Women, Children and Youth Affairs

RCBI: Rwanda Children's Book Initiative

READ CO: Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Community Outreach Project

READ II: Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Institutional Improvement

READ TA: Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Technical Assistance

RRSP: Regional Reading Support Plan

RSEB: Regional State Education Bureau

RTI: Research Triangle International

SC: Save the Children

SCC: School Cluster Centers

SCEPs: Strengthening Education in Primary Schools

SC/US: Save the Children US

SIA: School Incentive Award

SIP: School Improvement Plans

SIRIP: Somali Interactive Radio Instruction Program

SMT: Senior Management Team

SNNPR: Sothern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region

TDA: Tigray Development Association

USG: US Government

WaSH: Water Sanitation and Hygiene

WEO: Woreda Education Offices

WETMB: Woreda Education and Training management Board

ZED: Zonal Education Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The READ Community Outreach Project faced a number of challenges in its first quarter. Most significant has been the increasingly apparent need to redesign the project to better align with MoE and USAID priorities. Shortly after the project submitted the draft implementation plan in March, USAID formally requested that Save the Children redesign the project.

The USAID Education Team and READ CO Chief of Party met in late March to discuss realignment parameters within the scope of the original RFA. It was agreed that the SC project team would revise the project description, implementation plan, PMP and budget during the second quarter. The project is enlisting the help of SCUS program support staff from its Washington, DC office to coordinate the redesign effort and ensure proper alignment of the required documents with the existing RFA. The program specialist is due to arrive in mid-April.

During the current quarter, the READ CO Project management team actively recruited new staff. The new staff members will start work in the coming quarter. However, the project plans to modify some staff positions and add short-term technical assistance to better meet the long-term needs of the proposed redesign, which will be broader in scope than the previous design. Whereas the original project design was primarily regional in focus, the redesign will require more significant capacity building support on a national level.

The present report describes these changes, attendant challenges and the approaches that READ CO envisions for meeting these challenges.

OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

The READ CO Project is pleased to report that management and operations needs were well supported during the quarter. The hiring of the DCOP prior to the COP's arrival helped to ensure that recruitment, office set up and other startup tasks could begin soon after the signing of the award. SC/Ethiopia has dedicated support staff in education, finance and awards management as well, who have provided programmatic and systems support to the project. The present section describes the challenges and tasks that the project managed during the quarter.

When Save the Children International members merged into a single federation over a year ago, awards management, finance, procurement and other support functions were centralized for all projects and programs implemented by the Ethiopia Country Office. These systems have been helpful during startup to ensure adequate support to the project. READ CO is recruiting a Finance and Operations Manager as well to facilitate management of project activities. The proposed title change from Finance/HR Manager (the title identified in the original proposal) is necessary to ensure that the project has adequate, dedicated finance and operations management support within the project (i.e., at 100% LOE), in addition to country office support systems. The new title aligns with SC/Ethiopia human resources guidelines while avoiding duplication of effort between central and project-based support functions while facilitating implementation and follow up for project activities.

READ CO began planning for implementation with the organization of a launch workshop in February 2015. However, due to emerging Ministry of Education and USAID priorities since the RFA was first issued in 2013, USAID asked the project to limit the proposed launch activity to a series of planning exercises with the four NGO implementing partners that READ CO had already identified. The AOR has since formally requested that SC redesign the project while remaining within the scope of the original RFA. The request came in response to the initial draft implementation plan submitted earlier that month, which needs to be realigned with current MoE priorities in reading—especially the need for curriculum-aligned supplementary reading materials. The COP called upon SCUS and SC/Ethiopia staff to support the redesign process, with input from the MoE and USAID.

The project team expects to complete the redesign process and submit the set of revised documents (including project description, implementation plan, PMP and budget) to USAID/Ethiopia Education Unit by mid-May for review. The project will provide details of this process in the next quarterly report. Further details on the February planning workshop, startup and other activities completed during the quarter are included in the following section on project progress.

Budget versus expenditures

Despite a limited initial obligation of $100,000, READ CO was able to manage project finances quite effectively during the quarter. SC/Ethiopia support staff has provided

adequate support during this initial startup phase, including timely reporting. Including SCUS costs, the project spent approximately 95% of this initial obligation. The budget variance was due in part to the COP's absence and the need to conserve the limited initial funding obligation.

USAID issued a modification on March 3, 2015, including an additional obligation of $2.5M. READ CO awards management projects these funds can last until mid-June, given current spending levels and planned procurements. However, as of this writing the recent obligation had yet to enter the SC system. The COP will appeal for an additional funding obligation by the middle of the next quarter.

The table below provides a summary of actual versus budgeted expenditures, including SCUS costs:

Table 1. Budgeted versus actual expenditures for READ CO, Q1 of Year 1 (year-to-date)

Donor Budget Line		Year to Date (since Jan. 1, 2015)	Total	Budget	Variance	Total % to Budget
001	Salaries	45,665.97	45,665.97	39,421.25	(6,244.72)	115.84%
002	Fringe	9,783.42	9,783.42	29,850.45	20,067.03	32.77%
003	Travel	10,445.70	10,445.70	6,000.00	(4,445.70)	174.10%
005	Supplies	4,170.95	4,170.95		(4,170.95)	0.00%
007	Other Direct Costs	108.43	108.43	6,884.07	6,775.64	1.58%
008	Program Activities	7,546.73	7,546.73		(7,546.73)	0.00%
Direct Expense Subtotal:		**$77,721.20**	**$77,721.20**	**$82,155.77**	**$4,434.57**	**94.60%**
ICR Earned Amount:		**$17,028.72**	**$17,028.72**	**$17,844.23**	**$815.51**	**95.43%**
Contract Fee Income:						**0.00%**
Award Total:		**$94,749.92**	**$94,749.92**	**$100,000.00**	**$5,250.08**	**94.75%**

Cost-share targets are difficult to establish, since these are based on implementation. These may include, for example, community contributions to project activities, such as to support reading camps. Cost-share figures (projected versus actual) will be provided in detail in future quarterly reports.

Staffing

READ CO succeeded in recruiting and hiring a DCOP, M&E Advisor and Program Support Officer during the quarter. The COP arrived in early February, following delays in securing visas for him and his spouse. Fortunately, he and the DCOP were able to start the process of recruiting staff prior to his arrival, with support from SCUS. However, the READ CO realignment has slowed recruitment somewhat, since less time has been available for pre-screening and interviewing candidates. On a positive note, the project is taking advantage of the realignment process to review staffing needs and ensure effective implementation.

Although READ CO management has interviewed a number of qualified finance/HR candidates the salary offering appears to be low for the required level of experience. The project is now reviewing salary levels as part of the budget realignment process to attract and hire a qualified person for this position.

SC/Ethiopia is in the process of building capacity to support a number of functions, including awards management and finance. The country office has hired additional awards staff, including a new awards coordinator experienced in the management of USAID-funded projects. This individual joined the organization in March to support READ CO at 50% LOE. The project hopes to increase the awards LOE to better support its needs, once the SC/Ethiopia country office is able to hire additional awards management staff.

The project team is currently interviewing candidates for a Reading Materials Advisor and Inclusion Advisor. Given how new and underdeveloped these professions are in the Ethiopian job market, it has been difficult to find qualified candidates. Recruitment has begun for field positions in SNNPR as well, starting with the Field Coordinator position. However, the coming national elections may impede the project's ability to interview and hire new staff for field-based positions. The processes of reviewing and revising project documents for the redesign may slow recruitment and hiring as well. For these reasons, the READ CO management team expects to complete hiring for remaining staff positions only after the next quarter—in July/August 2015.

The project did encounter some difficulty with the search for a Social Accountability Advisor. Given the sensitivities surrounding the Ethiopia Social Accountability Program (especially in the current election year), the USAID Education Team—in consultation with the COP—requested that the social accountability pilot originally planned for the project's second year be postponed. Both parties have since proposed that a more modest set of activities be developed and/or integrated

within existing trainings and related activities. The goal is to avoid potential political issues with the Government of Ethiopia. The project plans to propose a more modest set of activities, which it will include in the redesign.

The following section provides a summary of progress toward achievement of project results.

PROGRESS TOWARD RESULTS

The goal of the READ CO Project is to strengthen community outreach resulting in improved reading and writing skills of primary school children. The intermediate results include:

- IR 1 – Access to supplementary reading materials in vernacular languages increased
- IR 2 – Opportunities for children to practice reading and writing created
- IR 3 – School community engagement to support learning in reading strengthened

These revised, intermediate results are designed to provide clear intermediate outcomes in line with USAID and MoE priorities. At the same time, READ CO formulated the proposed IRs to align with the goals and objectives of the RFA and the strategic role of community outreach in supporting improved reading achievement. The proposed intermediate results are also better aligned with the three-part implementation strategy that Save the Children originally proposed for the project.

READ CO has not yet begun to implement activities. However, a number of startup tasks have been completed. These tasks include staff recruitment (see the preceding section), office set up, baseline and impact assessment planning, and planning for partner assessments. The present section provides a summary of these READ CO achievements, as well as a description and rationale of the proposed results framework and an overview of the project's implementation strategy.

IR 1 Access to supplementary reading materials in vernacular languages increased

Providing supplementary reading materials to primary school students is one of the MoE's most urgent tasks. Given the importance of this issue, READ CO plans to focus first on supporting the development of quality supplementary reading materials. There is a particularly urgent and so far unmet need for three kinds of materials for early grade students and teachers: *decodable texts*, *leveled readers* and *read-aloud texts*.

A preliminary review of reading materials produced by a variety of partners in Ethiopia has revealed a number of potentially useful books and other resources to support learning to read in schools and communities. For example, texts produced by World Vision, SIL and other partners were developed to target the five core reading skills. However, many of these materials were developed prior to the development of the new mother tongue curricula and the recently drafted guidelines for the development of supplementary materials. While most of these partners have worked closely with MoE and RSEB technicians to ensure quality and proper curriculum alignment, it is unclear to what extent these efforts have included a clear, consistent process of testing and review using research-based criteria.[1] Further, scope and sequence documents have been unavailable to help guide the development of grade-level appropriate materials specifically focused upon the developmental needs of students—especially in the early grades. For these reasons, the MoE has been reluctant to distribute these reading materials to schools and is instead asking that new materials be developed. However, there is a need to develop both public- and private-sector (i.e., publishing) capacity to address these challenges and meet the need for quality materials.

READ CO has proposed using four NGO implementing partners (IPs) to help build local capacity and guide implementation: Adult and Non Formal Education Association (ANFEAE), Amhara Development Association (ADA), Tigray Development Association (TDA) and Ogaden Welfare Development Association (OWDA). Two of these, ANFEAE and TDA, are currently supported directly by USAID/Ethiopia and so have significant capacity to support literacy-related activities. However, given the newness of national reforms in literacy and mother-tongue education, and the national scope of READ CO materials development efforts, these IPs and other partners may lack certain technical capacities to support some large scale project activities. For example, significant technical assistance will be necessary to properly guide and support development of MoE, RSEB and private-sector capacity to increase the availability of quality reading materials.

READ CO is taking three actions to address capacity issues among its partners. First, the project will conduct a thorough assessment of all proposed IPs. The project will then tailor the roles of IPs to provide mainly local-level support for implementation of activities in target woredas and school communities. Second, the project will implement directly any initial activities designed to build system capacity to develop, review and produce reading materials nationally and regionally. Third, READ CO will work to strengthen IPs' capacity to provide broader, higher-level support (such as to RSEBs and publishers) starting from Year Two of the project.

In summary, READ CO—under the newly proposed IR 1—plans to focus first on building the needed system capacity to develop, review and produce curriculum-

[1] Neither the MoE nor READ CO have properly reviewed existing supplementary reading materials. However, a thorough review is necessary to take advantage of any existing, usable materials to meet the expected demand in Ethiopian schools.

aligned, culturally and grade-level appropriate supplementary reading materials in Year One of the project. Further details of planned activities under this IR are included in a later section of this report.

IR 2 Opportunities for children to practice reading and writing created

Providing regular and frequent opportunities for practicing reading and writing skills is critical to developing students' capacity to read effectively and independently. The primary goal of READ CO's implementation strategy is to facilitate the establishment, proper organization, functioning and monitoring of grade-level appropriate mechanisms and activities to better support the development of students' skills as readers. These mechanisms and activities will include spaces for learners to read and write in schools and communities, reading and writing clubs held after school, and reading camps organized within the surrounding community.

Save the Children's aim under READ CO is to expand the number, frequency, quality and capacity of members of school communities throughout Ethiopia to practice using these skills to enhance reading achievement. For IR2, the focus is on strengthening local capacity to promote and support reading/writing activities in three important contexts: school, home and community. SC will draw upon its significant experience in literacy and community outreach—and models developed by a variety of partners—to achieve this result. Details of planned activities are included in a later section of the report.

IR 3 School community engagement to support learning in reading strengthened

Generating adequate support for, and participation in students' reading and writing activities will require active parental and community engagement. To achieve this goal, READ CO is developing a range of activities to raise awareness about the importance of learning to read and supporting ways in which teachers, parents and students themselves can engage more effectively with one another. On the one hand, improving reading achievement will require a well structured, disciplined effort to support development students' skills for reading and writing. This effort will require the engagement of educators, parents, students and others at all levels: national, regional and local.

On the other hand, improving reading achievement long-term will require a strong, vibrant literacy culture. SC has developed successful models in Bangladesh, Rwanda and other countries to strengthen literacy culture. Planned activities may include book fairs, support to community libraries, reading and writing competitions and related activities to raise awareness. One key aim of activities under this IR is to promote and guide the development of national policy initiatives and other mechanisms to support and sustain the development of literacy culture. READ CO's theory of change is still under development. However, it will include these two

important components toward better ensuring long-term improvement of reading achievement in Ethiopian primary education.

Monitoring and Evaluation

As stated previously, READ CO hired an M&E Advisor at the end of the quarter. This new staff member will start work in April, in time to support the project redesign. Meanwhile, the COP and DCOP have been working on a few selected activities to ensure that baseline data is collected in a way that meets project goals and objectives. This includes participating in March in a series of strategy sessions with the USAID/Ethiopia Education Team and the USAID/NORC Impact Assessment Team. Additionally, the READ CO Team began planning baseline assessment tasks.

The COP and DCOP worked with USAID and the Impact Assessment the two teams on a number of tasks, including: 1) reviewing the project's initial implementation plan; 2) reviewing some of the pertinent literature on literacy support mechanisms; 3) addressing impact assessment challenges, including identifying appropriate treatment arms and measurable intermediate outcomes; and 4) planning out next steps and identifying actionable items. The most immediate task is for the project to clarify selected implementation strategies, including home-based learning activities, and to develop measurable intermediate outcomes in each of the proposed treatment arms.

The series of Impact Assessment sessions was useful in clarifying READ CO's implementation strategy and in defining appropriate contexts (school, home and community) for further developing possible treatment arms, identifying intermediate outcomes and planning baseline assessment work (tentatively scheduled for September 2015). Based upon the success of the sessions, and the limited time and resources available to properly plan and execute the planned READ CO baseline assessment,[2] the project team has since decided to meet its own baseline needs within the scope of the NORC baseline assessment.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS VERSUS TARGETS

READ CO was able to meet most all of its spending targets for the quarter (see table in the Operations and Management section). However, these targets are not representative of the planned level of project activity, given previously cited funding limitations. The project has been able to achieve most of its targets in terms of staffing. Regional (i.e., field) staff needs will be met during the coming two quarters. Procurements are lagging somewhat, due to factors already cited in this report.

[2] Due to national election activities in May and early June of this year, fieldwork for the planned baseline assessment was not possible before September.

No other data is available, since the project is not yet implementing activities. READ CO will provide additional data in future reports, subject to USAID and MoE review and acceptance of the revised implementation plan.

ALIGNMENT TO PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

READ CO has spent much of the quarter in meetings with the MoE and USAID to ensure proper alignment of project strategy, deliverables (e.g., materials) and planned activities to current Ministry priorities. The project has since realigned its results framework (as noted previously) to better respond to these priorities. Specifically, READ CO has developed a results framework that better reflects SC's strategy of improving access to materials, creating opportunities for reading/writing practice and enhancing parent/community engagement at the local level. The realigned strategy and results framework are focusing, first and foremost, on providing support for system capacity building in materials development. This is a national priority for the Ministry of Education and a key USAID concern: providing nationwide support to build capacity for sustainable development of curriculum-aligned supplementary reading materials.

The realigned project strategy and results framework should allow READ CO to better meet Ethiopian national priorities in terms of providing materials and the capacity to develop and produce them. Further, the proposed intermediate results will facilitate better alignment with—and contribute to realizing—Goal One of the current global USAID Education Strategy to increase the numbers of children who are able to read.

READ CO and READ TA management teams met twice during the quarter to discuss potential areas of collaboration and overlap. Each team raised issues of MoE decision-making processes, teacher capacity for reading instruction and the challenges of providing technical assistance to support materials development (and capacity building for the latter). Both parties agreed that more clarity is needed from USAID and the MoE to determine the most productive areas of collaboration for the two projects. However, both projects want to develop concrete activities in their work plans for collaborative activities to address, for example, gaps in teachers' skills and knowledge in reading instruction. READ CO will share these ideas during the redesign process and will try to specify substantive areas of collaboration within the revised implementation plan. The same is true of READ M&E, which is in its startup phase as well. Areas of complementarity and overlap between the latter two projects will likely become clearer after the redesign process is completed.

READ CO has likewise discussed areas of possible complementarity and/or collaboration with World Vision, PACT (both funded by USAID), Whiz Kids, SIL, NALA (National Archives and Library Association) and IREX. These areas include

potential collaborations on the development of models for reading camps (e.g., World Vision) and other mechanisms to enhance opportunities for students to practice reading and writing. The upcoming Technical Working Group Meeting in April will provide opportunities and a structure for generating ideas and actionable items for potential collaborations with these and other partners.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

READ CO is planning the following project startup and capacity building activities for the coming quarter:

- Capacity building workshop on development of supplementary reading materials (June 2015)
- Implementing partner capacity assessments;
- Development, review and signing of MoE and IP agreements;
- Hiring of remaining central office staff;
- Development and review (by the MoE and USAID) of materials development, review and production timeline;
- Identify woreda and school community sites for implementation;
- Development of project M&E framework and database setup;
- Baseline / impact assessment planning; and
- Revision, review, finalization and approval of the project's redesign proposal.

However, progress on these tasks during the coming quarter will likely depend upon 1) review and acceptance (by the MoE and USAID) of the READ CO redesign proposal and 2) Ethiopia national election activities in May/June.

The project is aiming to complete and submit the redesign proposal documents to USAID for review by mid-May, with a formal MoE review of the implementation plan and proposed targets taking place in early June. Election activities could easily delay the review process, as could any major changes in MoE leadership. Any delay in implementing planned activities in June or July will likely delay implementation of materials development, training and reading and writing activities at the school community level.