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IMPROVING READING, ACCESS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE DRC (ACCELERE!) ACTIVITY 1 (A!1) - Distance Learning Activity “Lecture pour la vie”

Background. In response to COVID-19 school closure, the USAID/DRC Accès, Lecture, Redevabilité et Réention! Activity 1 (A!1) designed a distance learning program, in consultation with USAID and DRC government partners. Lecture pour la vie will use interactive audio instruction (IAI) to ensure that children maintain literacy skills during school closure, and receive psycho-social and emotional support before and during school re-opening. A!1 also aims to support a safe community transition back to school, which includes support for parents, teachers, caregivers and families.

Pilot phase. The pilot phase focused on student materials for Grades 1, 2 and ‘*Centre de Rattrapage Scolaire*’ (CRS) or Alternative/Accelerated Learning Program CRS 1 in Kiswahili and Lingala. The target provinces are Kinshasa, Haut-Katanga and North Kivu (including Béni and Butembo).

- A!1 converted existing Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) into sets of audio lessons, which include time for facilitated interactive exercises, games and songs.
- A!1 TLMs are already scripted which makes the process of turning them into audio quick.
- The programming accommodates households under a variety of circumstances, where parents, siblings, relatives or other household members serve as a ‘*Facilitateur familial*’ (family facilitator)
- The recorded lessons themselves contain instructions for the Family facilitator to effectively prepare a learning environment.
- To support the delivery of programming, the project will engage community stakeholders to serve as ‘*Relais Communautaires* (A!1 *Champion communautaires de lecture and/or local CSOs*)’ and *Agents de projet* (A!1 *mobilisateurs de lectures* (MLs)) for onsite coordination, logistical support, quality assurance, and data collection.

Extension period. In line with USAID’s Phase 1 Education Emergency COVID-19 response plan to support children’s continuous/distance learning in advance of and once schools reopen, A!1 will expand distance learning activities to an additional language and area, and new grades. In the extension period of the distance learning program, A!1 will add Ciluba language and the Kasai Central region, as well as Grade 3, Grade 4, and CRS 2.

Radio lessons. To design and deliver programming, A!1 partners directly with the *Direction des Programmes et Matériel Didactique* (DIPROMAD), community radios, and community organizations. DIPROMAD provides access to their production studio and DIPROMAD specialists contribute to lesson production. A!1 broadcasts lessons three-times per week per local language, for approximately 30 minutes. Lessons are rebroadcasted the following week for Grade 1, Grade 2 and CRS 1, and rebroadcasted the following day for Grade 3, Grade 4 and CRS 2. Radio lessons are also available to the public on YouTube, VIAMO’s 42502 platform, and the Ministry of Education and VodeEduc websites.

- Lecture pour la vie will create 108 radio lessons during the program, targeting 200,000 students from A!1 schools. It is important to note that many more students will have access to Lecture pour la vie, as they will be broadcast on national, provincial and community radio stations.
- A key goal for this expanded programming is to also create a tested and widely accessible IRI program in Congolese languages, that can be used in a variety of future circumstances, both to complement formal education, support the transition back to school as well as to fill gaps when schools are closed.
- Lecture pour la vie will also create and transmit, through a variety of mechanisms, messages and feedback loops to support the psychosocial wellbeing of students, families and educators, as well as a safe return to formal education.
- A!1 will also closely monitor activities through data collection channels including phone interviews and electronic data collection of a sample pool of approximately 3,200 families from target schools. A!1 will supplement this with direct beneficiary interviews for qualitative data, stories, and experiences.