REQUEST FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (RCE)
USAID/SA RGDO - BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM FY 2011–2015

PROGRAM/ACTIVITY DATA:

Program Number:       674-2010-00
Country:             South Africa
Functional Objective: 3: Investing in People
Program Area:        3.2: Education
Program Element:     3.2.1: Basic Education
Funding Period:      FY2011-FY2015
Authorized Funding Level: $25,000,000
Prepared By:         Nalini Reddy – USAID/SA Project Management Specialist - Education
Current Date:        September 21, 2011
RCE Expiration Date: December 31, 2016
Amendment (Y/N):     N

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION RECOMMENDED: (Place X where applicable)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Categorical Exclusion:</th>
<th>Negative Determination:</th>
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<th>Positive Determination:</th>
<th>Negative Determination with conditions:</th>
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Deferral:                         

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

Distribution:
USAID/SA Basic Education COTRs/AOTRs
USAID/SA Basic Education Activity Managers
USAID/SA Basic Education Team Leader
USAID/SA General Development Officer
USAID/SA Supervisory Acquisition & Assistance Office Chief
USAID/SA Supervisory Program Officer
USAID/SA Mission Environmental Officer

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

Program/Activities Description

The USAID/South Africa (USAID/SA) Education Program will be operating under the framework of the Assistance Agreement 674-2010-00 signed on 30 September 2010. The details of activities to be implemented will be in accordance with USAID’s Education Strategy 2011 – 2015 and pursuant to the Assistance Objective of improving reading skills of primary school learners, USAID/SA’s program will comprise of two overarching capacity building activities:

a. Building teacher effectiveness in the classroom; and
b. Strengthening classroom and school management.

In each case, support for education infrastructure (schools, training facilities, etc.) is NOT part of the anticipated program, nor is support for any non-basic education activity (e.g. vocational education).
Specifically, the Regional General Development Office (RGDO) Basic Education Program anticipates that these two activities will consist of the following entailed actions:

- a. Development of teacher/management training curricula;
- b. Procurement of books and consumable education materials to support such basic skills training;
- c. Equipping training facilities with non-consumable training tools like data projectors, white boards, laptops, etc.; and
- d. Promotion of the education opportunities being provided by the program.

This indicative list of entailed actions is illustrative and is intended to define the scope of “building teacher effectiveness in the classroom; and strengthening classroom and school management” activities sufficiently for the purposes of this environmental examination, and to permit a reasonable person to determine whether any given proposed action is consistent with the activity definition.

**Recommended determination**

As defined, all activities are recommended for **Categorical Exclusion** from environmental review, pursuant to 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(i) (Education, technical assistance and training) and (xiv) (activities to develop the capability of recipient countries and organizations to engage in development planning).

**Implementation and Monitoring**

The categorical exclusions recommended above are contingent on full implementation of the following requirements:

- a. The Education Coordinator will actively monitor and evaluate the Education Program to ensure that all the activities it funds remain within the scope of activities covered by this RCE. Education COTRs/AOTRs, activity managers and Implementing Partners (IPs) will provide all necessary inputs and assistance to this monitoring;
- b. Should additional activities not described in this RCE be proposed for implementation, an RCE amendment must be prepared and duly approved prior to the implementation of such activities;
- c. IP quarterly reports to USAID will include a brief review of activities being implemented against the scope of activities approved in this RCE. Any planned new activities that may require RCE amendment will be noted; and
- d. Implementation will in all cases adhere to applicable South African environmental laws and policies.
4. APPROVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION RECOMMENDED:

4.1. CLEARANCE:

Mission Director: Jeff Borns

Date: 7/22/12

4.2. CONCURRENCE:

AFR Bureau Environmental Officer: Brian Hirsch

Date: 6/5/12

Approved: ☑
Disapproved: ☐

File No: ____________________________ (AFR BEO issued)

4.3. ADDITIONAL CLEARANCES: (Type name under signature line)

General Development Officer: Blake Chrystal

Date: 7/15/11

Mission Environmental Officer: Charles Mandivenyi

Date: 7/26/11

Supervisory Program Officer: Dean Sabini

Date: 7/27/11

Regional Environmental Advisor: Camilien J. W. Saint-Cyr

Date: 7/12/11
APPROVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION RECOMMENDED:

CLEARANCE:

Mission Director: ________________________________ Date: __/___/____
Jeff Borns

CONCURRENCE:

AFR Bureau Environmental Officer _______________________ Date: _____/ _____/ ____
Brian Hirsch

File No: ____________________________________________ (AFR BEO issued)

ADDITIONAL CLEARANCES: (Type name under signature line)

General Development Officer: ________________________________ Date: ___/___/____
Blake Chrystal

Mission Environmental Officer: ________________________________ Date: ___/___/____
Charles Mandivenyi

Supervisory Program Officer: ________________________________ Date: ___/___/____
Dean Salpini

Regional Environmental Advisor: _____________________________ Date: ___/___/____
Camilien J.W. Saint-Cyr
REQUEST FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (RCE)
USAID/SA BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM FY 2011–2015

Program Number: 674-2010-00
Program Title: USAID/SA RGDO - Basic Education Program FY 2011–2015
Country: South Africa
Functional Objective: 3: Investing in People
Program Area: 3.2: Education
Program Element: 3.2.1: Basic Education

1. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.1 Purpose and Scope of RCE

U.S.G. basic education assistance in South Africa is re-emergent and an important component for bilateral engagement. USAID/SA’s education program will implement basic education (3.2.1) activities, with a focus on Sub-Element 3.2.1.7: Education Systems. These activities will contribute to sustained improvements in education quality, efficiency, as well as through strengthened management of education services. A range of activities may target the national, regional, district, and community levels of the education system in the pre-primary and primary sectors.

In accordance with 22 CFR 216 ADS 204.5, and ADS 203, this RCE reviews the reasonably foreseeable effects of USAID/SA Education program activities on the environment for the period 2011—2015. On this basis, this RCE recommends categorical exclusion for these activities.

This RCE also sets out general implementation and monitoring requirements, intended to assure that the Education Program remains within the scope of activities approved under this RCE or its future amendments. These procedures are themselves a general condition of approval for the RCE, and their implementation is therefore mandatory.

This RCE is a critical element of a mandatory environmental review and compliance process meant to achieve environmentally-sound activity design and implementation.

1.2 Background

Seventeen years after democracy, South Africa has made enormous strides in providing access to schooling for all learners. By 2009, 98.8% of children aged 7 to 14 were enrolled in school.\(^1\) Yet, despite high enrollment rates and a massive investment in education (5% GDP), South Africa is struggling to provide a quality education in most schools. Only 38% of youth aged 19 to 25 have Matric/NTC III (general/vocational pathways) while 17% were still in secondary

\(^1\) (Education, 2010)
school (GHS 2007)\(^2\). Most learners exiting the school system are not equipped with basic skills and core competencies necessary to succeed in the workplace, much less in a highly competitive global market. SA’s youth unemployment rate is extremely high, with 48.3% of youth aged 14 - 23 and 28.5% aged 25 - 34 out of jobs in 2009\(^3\). Employers consistently cite the inability to hire qualified workers as one of their greatest challenges. The South African government has identified improving the quality of education as a primary national priority. 

There are many systemic factors which contribute to the poor educational outcomes in South Africa, ranging from inadequate infrastructure in schools to high rates of HIV/AIDS in the workforce. There is wide agreement, however, that an underperforming teacher corps and weak school management present a fundamental challenge to the South African basic education sector.

The Department of Basic Education acknowledges: “A number of international testing programs, such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS) and The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) have demonstrated that South Africa’s learner performance in reading, writing and mathematics is well below what it should be…. The national Systemic Evaluation program and the Grade 12 examinations have also demonstrated that learner performance is well below what one would expect given the resources available to the schooling system. Clearly, there is a need for teaching and learning to improve.”\(^4\)

The current corps of nearly 387,837\(^5\) teachers is plagued by limited content knowledge, ineffective pedagogic practice and debilitating teacher morale. In addition, there is a persistent systemic challenge of low expectations and accountability for teachers, weak school leadership and incapacitated district support.

Yet, there are also pockets of excellence and signs of promise in many South African schools. There are many schools that lack resources, but succeed due to strong school management and effective classroom practice. In many cases, teachers and principals are utilizing specific methodologies or innovative interventions in order to drive improved learning outcomes.

In addition to local examples of schools that have successfully strengthened teacher and principal capacity, there is a growing body of national and international research that documents both the need for strong professional development of teachers and principals, as well as the key interventions that build educator capacity and drive improved learning outcomes.

Also, the South African government has signaled its commitment to a strengthened corps of teachers and principals. The national reform strategy, Delivery Agreement and the Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025 outline specific actions and outputs to build teacher effectiveness and strengthen classroom and school management. In addition, the government intends to strengthen district capacity to promote enabling teaching and learning environments.

In her recent 2011 Budget Vote Speech, subtitled “A delivery-driven basic education system,” Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga specifically noted the need for new roles for principals:

\(^2\) (Surveys, Social, 2010)
\(^3\) (OECD, 2010)
\(^4\) (Education, Delivery Agreement For Outcome 1: Improved quality of basic education, 2010)
\(^5\) (Education, Education Statistics in South Africa, 2010)
Principals should see themselves as instructional leaders in the main, districts as supporters of schools on instructional delivery and just the entire system should appreciate that it exists in the main for instructional purposes... The Department is reinforcing the training of principals, particularly those from underperforming schools. The focus will be on making principals also appreciate their role as instructional leaders.6

1.3 Program Overview

USAID has developed the School Capacity & Innovation Program (SCIP) to expand pockets of innovation and promise for the purpose of strengthening an overall weak South African education system, and to align with the Department of Basic Education’s prioritization of building the effectiveness of teachers and quality of school management. SCIP is also guided by the new USAID education strategy, which supports interventions to improve learning outcomes with a focus on primary grade reading as a measure of performance.

The overall purpose of SCIP is to improve primary grade reading by building teacher effectiveness and strengthening classroom and school management. SCIP intends to invest in innovative, local interventions that will positively impact primary grade reading outcomes. USAID does not have a single, prescribed approach, but recognizes that effectiveness can be enhanced in a variety of ways including improvements in content knowledge, instructional practice, management capacity and/or morale.

Models must not be completely untested, but rather have been implemented with promising results, as evidenced by improved learner performance and/or increased demand for their services by schools and districts. SCIP seeks models or interventions that desire to further expand and have a vision for growth, including implementation at the primary school level. Applicants must be prepared to refine and rigorously test their model so that there is clear evidence of its cost effectiveness and impact in order to gain broad and sustained public support.

USAID seeks programs that can progress from implementation at a school or district level to the provincial or national scale. USAID will provide support in order to transition programs from current operating levels through a process of expansion, refinement and evaluation in anticipation of broad-based scaling. USAID intends to work with government to promote the commitment to and capacity for scaling by provinces and/or national departments. USAID is working to develop partnerships with other donors in order to develop a multi-donor network to support this initiative.

In addition to seeking initiatives that demonstrate innovation, impact and a vision for growth, USAID will give special consideration to entities that demonstrate existing partnerships with school districts and provincial departments of education. USAID will also give special consideration to applicants who draw on the respective expertise of a partner organization or organizations (e.g., NGOs, universities, for-profit ventures) in order to enhance overall program effectiveness and efficiency.

Successful applicants will observe the following elements:

i. Demonstrate knowledge of and experience working in the education or other relevant sector;
ii. Present activities that are technically feasible;
iii. Address the development needs of South Africa in ways that are aligned with

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6 (Education & Mrs Angie Motshekga, Budget Vote Speech – 2011/2012 F/Y; A delivery-driven basic education system, 2011)
national policies and strategies;
iv. Offer promise of significant development impact, as measured, for example, by the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries of the program, and/or by the potential for replication or scaling-up over time; and
v. Demonstrate successful performance in the past.

2. COUNTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

2.1 South Africa Environmental Baseline profile

South Africa has a land surface area of 1,219,912km² and is the located southern extremity on the African continent. Most of the country lies over 1000m above sea level with a narrow coastal strip. Its river systems are the primary source of water. Its escarpment has a positive influence on the climate of the country. Conditions are semi-arid with a national rainfall of about 500mm with abundant sunshine. The country has the third-highest levels of bio-diversity in the world.

2.2 Locations Affected

The activities covered under this education program could be implemented anywhere in South Africa. The provinces will be determined after the selection of the implementing partners.

2.3 South African Environmental Policies and Procedures

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) published its Environmental Policy in 1997 which manifested The National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998). Although environmental impact assessment (EIA) is provided for in this act, it does not totally replace all previous legislation, namely The Environment Conservation Act (No. 73 of 1989) which makes provision for identification of activities that require EIAs. The EIA regulations exclude mining. EIA is the responsibility of both national and provincial government institutions. Provincial governments may devolve this authority to their local authorities.

3. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDED DETERMINATIONS

3.1 Directly financed activities

The FY 2010 as well as residual funds from previous years have been obligated. FY 2011 funds will be obligated under the Assistance Agreement 674-2010-00 in September 2011. The details of activities to be implemented will be apparent only after USAID/SA has received and reviewed applications, and determined the awardees.

However, as described above, in principle the USAID/SA program will consist of and be limited to two activities in pursuit of improving primary grade reading:

a. Building teacher effectiveness in the classroom; and
b. Strengthening classroom and school management.

In each case, support for education infrastructure (schools, training facilities, etc.) is NOT part of the anticipated program, nor is support for any non-basic education activity (e.g. vocational
Specifically, the RDGO Basic Education Program anticipates that these two activities will consist of the following entailed actions:

e. Development of teacher/management training curricula;

f. Procurement of books and consumable education materials to support such basic skills training;

g. Equipping training facilities with non-consumable training tools like data projectors, white boards, laptops, etc.; and

h. Promotion of the education opportunities being provided by the program.

This indicative list of entailed actions is illustrative and is intended to define the scope of "building teacher effectiveness in the classroom; and strengthening classroom and school management." activities sufficiently for the purposes of this environmental examination, and to permit a reasonable person to determine whether any given proposed action is consistent with the activity definition.

**Potential environmental impacts & Recommended Determination**

Basic education activities as defined above conform to classes of activities eligible for categorical exclusion pursuant to 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(i) (Education, technical assistance and training) and (xiv) (activities to develop the capability of recipient countries and organizations to engage in development planning).

No contra-indication to this categorical exclusion exists in this case; the activities defined above are of their nature extremely unlikely to result in significant adverse impacts.

In addition, further activities in support of the USAID Education Strategy 2011 – 2015 will be implemented from 2011 to 2015 by the basic education program in accordance with Annex 5 of Assistance Agreement 674-2010-00, These activities will be similar to those already described in this RCE; none of these activities will adversely impact the environment.

Should it be determined either through further basic education programming as well as existing monitoring and evaluation processes that an amendment to this RCE is necessary, such an amendment will seek further clearance.

**Accordingly, a Categorical Exclusion for these activities is recommended.**

**4. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

The categorical exclusions recommended in this RCE are contingent on full implementation of the requirements of this section.

a. The Education Coordinator will actively monitor and evaluate the Education Program to ensure that all the activities it funds remain within the scope of activities covered by this RCE. Education COTRs/AOTRs, activity managers and IPs will provide all necessary inputs and assistance to this monitoring.

b. Should additional activities not described in this RCE be proposed for implementation,
an RCE amendment must be prepared and duly approved prior to the implementation of such activities.

c. IP quarterly reports to USAID will include a brief review of activities being implemented against the scope of activities approved in this RCE. Any planned new activities that may require RCE amendment will be noted.

d. Implementation will in all cases adhere to applicable South African environmental laws and policies.