



1. Historique

1.1. Allo Ecole Creation

The World Bank “ICT for Accountability in Primary Education” Technical Assistance was developed to assess the use modern means of communication to fill the connectivity and accountability gap between education providers and the Ministry of Primary, Secondary, and Professional (MINEPSP), on the one hand, and parents and students, on the other. This pilot project aimed to test how a specifically developed ICT platform, named « Allô École! », improves communication channels within the primary education sector of the DRC and increases the ability of the government at different levels to manage the quality of primary education. The Pilot also targeted to strengthen social accountability mechanisms by amplifying parents’ voices in holding education providers accountable for improving the quality of education services. This work has been financed by Belgian Development Cooperation under the **Externally-Financed Output (EFO) agreement #1030** ‘Using Digitization to Enhance Governance of the Education Sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo’.

More specifically, the Platform has been designed to address two major constraints:

1. **Lack of effective communication channels** between national-level primary education policymakers/administrators, on the one hand, and provincial- and district-level departments of education, on the other. Both MINEPSP and multiple expert assessments have singled out the absence of tools for real-time communication among the Ministry, 30 educational provinces (PROVEDs), and 258 educational sub-provinces (Sub-PROVEDs) as a key constraint to the implementation of education policies in the DRC’s vast territory. Currently, communication is limited to occasional formal reporting; there are no reliable means to assess the quality of information supplied; and the system of primary education management does not allow for timely internal communication, feedback, or correction of identified issues.
2. **Lack of transparency and accountability of service providers:** The country’s size, poor state of infrastructure, and, importantly, hierarchical nature of institutions governing primary education preclude the population from having a strong voice in providing feedback on education quality. Mechanisms to lodge a complaint about various aspects of education provision are lacking, let alone channels and protocols to provide meaningful response and redress from service providers (MINEPSP, PROVEDs and Sub-PROVEDs, school principals, and teachers).

1.2. Institutionalisation of Allo Ecole

The project has been implemented in close collaboration with multiple departments within MINEPSP. The ministry demonstrated strong ownership and commitment to the Pilot that manifested itself, among others, in:

- A ministerial decree institutionalizing « Allô École! » as its main accountability platform
- Designation of its communications management department (SGC) as the main back-end office for the platform operations;
- Appointment of the Head of Educational Provinces as the Platform Main Coordinator and designation of focal points within key units to respond to population feedback garnered through the platform, and to feed the platform-sourced data into the policymaking process.

(Organigram)

1.3. Technical development of Allo Ecole

On the implementation side, WB team has partnered with an international tech startup and social enterprise VIAMO to develop « Allô École ! » platform and mobilized local IT talent from Kinshasa to build technical capacity of MINEPSP to operate it.

Technical infrastructure

- Platform setup and activation: Successful WB-VIAMO coordination and synergies reached with MINEPSP led to the installation of the server and activation of the GSM gateway at the telecom regulator ARPTC, allowing for calls and SMS messages to be linked from an end-users' phones to the technical platform over the local telephone network of three MNOs. While other mobile-based surveys have been implemented in DRC, this marks the first-time infrastructure has been installed in country for long-term use and government management.
- Negotiations and contracts with MNOs: The Ministry directed the process of signing contracts with the MNOs over airtime cost to ensure that voice calls and SMS messages are free-of-charge for users. The Ministry also facilitated the process for obtaining of a three-digit number, or short code 178, from the telecom regulator for users to call into the Platform.
- Platform integration with major MNOs: The Platform was fully integrated with Vodacom, Orange, and Airtel.

Technical capacity building

Following the identification of the SGC team as the Platform back-end unit, WB delivered 13 laptops and computer accessories (e.g. computer mice and wireless headsets) to facilitate platform operators' daily work on the Platform. VIAMO worked with different units to build the capacity of each focal points and operators with ICT tools by:

- Developing a Platform user manual, which included screen shots and descriptions of actions on each functionality on the platform; and

- Conducting technical training, which included exercises on the fully functional (beta) version of the Platform;
- Conducting training, which centred on the importance of efficacy and timeliness of responses to end users who submitted their answers to the platform in the form of surveys.

Additionally, each focal unit from MINEPSP (DIFORE, DIPROMAD and N'Sele Sub-PROVED) received consulting support and training on the Platform functionality and the response protocols developed in relation to the piloted surveys. A significant 'by-product' of this training is that it increased digital literacy of civil servants on the use of internet and computers for professional purposes (e.g. use of spreadsheets, word processing software, presentation programs, e-mail).

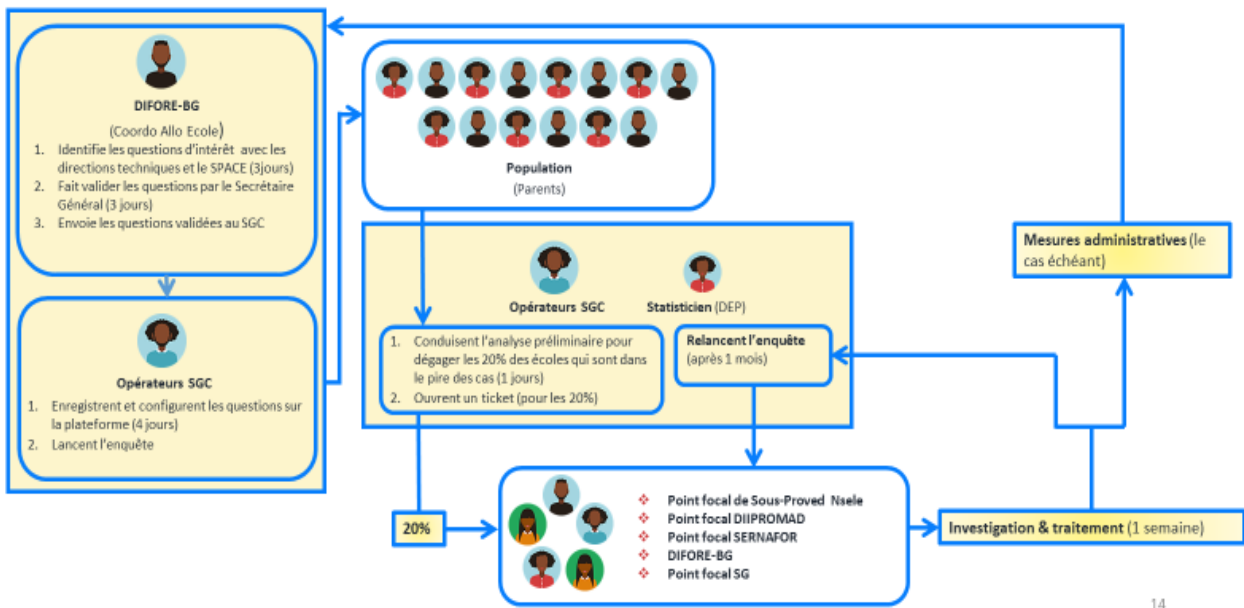
Platform operationalisation: How does it work?

Accessible via simple mobile phone, « Allô École! », is a web-based software application that enables IT professionals (operators) in the back office (in this case, staff from MINEPSP SGC) to create and analyse messages or surveys that people can access via short message service (SMS) or interactive voice response (IVR), a key technology in to garnering feedback from population with low literacy levels.

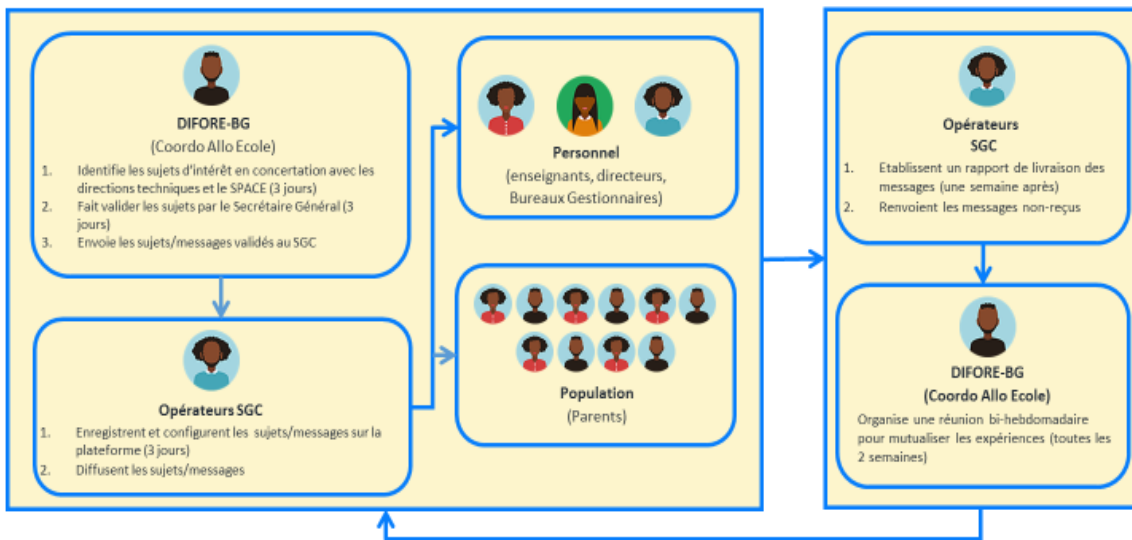
The platform creates two communication pathways; a G2G (government-to-government) channel which intends to facilitate internal communication between MINEPSP (General Services department, General Inspection department, Communications Management Service, and policy units) with educational provincial bodies (PROVEDs, Sub-PROVEDs) and a P2G (people-to-government) channel which enables communication from parents to service providers.

The back-office build questionnaires through a special online interface (or dashboard), analyse them looking at dashboards and respond to specific issues using a ticket management system. Its G2G channel is set up in a way that a representative of MINEPSP (a user) can blast out instantaneously a voice message or send an SMS to one or a group of subscribers with a recorded message or a survey. This user can also garner feedback to his or her recorded message, as needed. Thus, the platform facilitates internal communication between the Ministerial central apparatus and its local administrations (PROVED and Sub-PROVED), thus creating de facto a mobile intranet premised on the use of SMS and voice. To utilize the P2G channel of the Platform, a parent of a student in a project target school (a user) makes a voice call (outgoing call) or sends an SMS to a toll-free short code **178** to access the survey. Think of it as a free, automated phone survey in a variety of local languages allowing users to respond to a set of questions, which informs policymaking and triggers

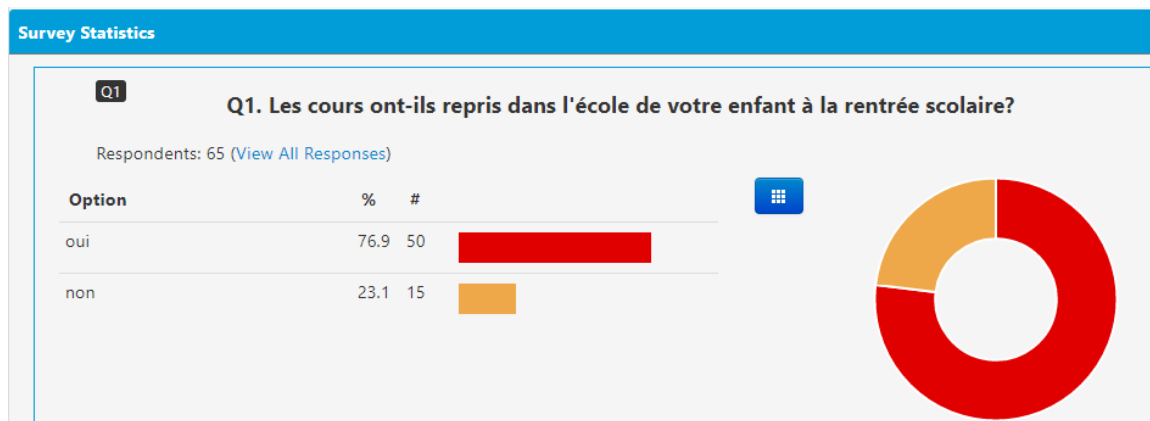
action from the government. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate communication pathways of both G2G and P2G channels.



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For the piloting of « Allô, École! » throughout 2016-2017, the Project included a choice among several topics: textbooks, school construction, school fees, and teacher and student absenteeism. The Platform automatically captures responses to the questions. Results are automatically aggregated by question across respondent category and response content. Visualizations in the form of pie charts and bar charts are provided in the analysis interface to facilitate interpretation of results by policymakers (see an example of a pie chart in figure 3 below).



1.4. Outreach

The process of civil society partner identification included a landscape analysis of local partners to identify those with the highest levels of commitment to ensure effective information dissemination and awareness-raising in the pilot population. Partners signed agreements detailing their roles and received training on the Platform. Coalition Nationale de l'Éducation Pour Tous (CONEPT) was selected as the Kinshasa-based training and outreach partner, and Fédération des Scouts de la République Démocratique du Congo (FESCO) as the Kinshasa-based information dissemination partner. In Tshikapa, Centre d'Appui au Développement de la Femme en Action (CADEFA) was designated as a training partner, and Fraternité pour le Développement Rural (FRADER), as an information dissemination Partner. The Catholic Church provided additional facilitation in Tshikapa.

Outreach activities began during the middle of the 2015-2016 school year and reached 325 pilote schools in Ngaliema, N'Sele and Tshikapa. This was followed by a pause to take stock of the experience and discuss any lessons learned. This sequencing approach enabled the training team to incorporate necessary adjustments into outreach and awareness-raising activities later in the 2016-2017 school year in N'Sele where SGC staff accompanied the training team periodically to gain insight into these activities and the end-user experience. 211 schools were reached including several new surveys thematic to build the capacity of the government to supply responses.

2. Key partners engaged in the implementation of "Allo, Ecole!"

The implementation team engaged several government and nongovernment stakeholders while pursuing a highly collaborative approach to fostering country ownership over the accountability platform. These key actors include:

- **PROSEB:** The implementation team coordinated closely with WB and DRC managers of PROSEB, who provided feedback on information materials developed for awareness-raising, training, and outreach activities, and provided in-kind contributions to the organization of the population outreach campaign, undertaken under the Pilot in 2016.

- **PAQUE and PEQPESU:** Similarly, the implementation team closely coordinated activities with these projects' WB and DRC managers to facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas and knowledge on innovative ICT for education and to ensure the Platform sustainability through financing under these projects.

3. Key results to date and future of the platform

To date, the platform has accumulated more than 13 thousand calls through its P2G channel and has generated a considerable number of surveys reaching over 1000 schools and all the PROVED and S-PROVED. In preparation for a significantly higher number of responses coming through the Platform's P2G channel, the next step for MINEPSP should include a change management effort and deliver a targeted capacity development program to ensure that SGC staff and focal points within key policy units have the skills and tools needed to effectively close the feedback loop and affect change. The issue of how MINEPSP will communicate with constituents on the actions taken to resolve issues raised via « Allô, École! » also must be further explored and addressed. There is scope for civil society to report back to teachers and parents on aggregate results of Ministry actions, or resources within the Ministry could be identified to perform this function.

The progress in achieving institutional change should inform the pace of roll out. Rolling out slowly creates more chance of closing the accountability loop and providing actual redress to issues raised by Platform users. It is thus recommended that over short term MINEPSP should focus on mastering the art of providing the feedback response and supervising the accountability workflow to keep their existing constituents motivated to use the Platform again and again, while gradually increasing the number of beneficiaries (through the increase in the number of participating schools).