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**“Road to Reading”
USAID / PHARE**

**THIRD ANNUAL REPORT
(For the period of October, 2010 - September 2011)**

October 31, 2011

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USAID/PHARE Third Annual Report (for the Period of October 2010 – September 2011)

I. Introduction and highlights

USAID/PHARE had a busy and productive third year of program implementation, working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Literacy and National Languages (MEALN) to improve the quality of education in Mali, with a particular focus on literacy and access to education for targeted populations. As the third year represents the mid-point of the program, it was also a time to evaluate the work done thus far, identify areas of weakness and make plans to ensure sustainability. This report reviews the main activities, achievements and challenges of the 2011 fiscal year.

Major achievements this year, organized by domain, are:

Improved educational policies and strategies

- Completing and validating by the Ministry of Education, Literacy and National Languages (MEALN) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the sector policy on the use of technology in education and submission of the document to the Ministry of Communication
- Completing and validating the sociolinguistic study on the concordance of teacher and student languages in the Mopti administrative region

Support to improved pre-service and inservice education

- Establishing the eight remaining Virtual Training Centers (VTC) required under this contract in Mali's Teacher Training Colleges (Institut de Formation des Maîtres / IFMs) and providing internet connections to twelve of the thirteen VTCs
- Further training in the didactic of reading and writing for the early grades of 99 French language and educational psychology professors from the Teacher Training Colleges in February and 151 in March 2011
- Launching of the first on-line course for the IFMs on the teaching of reading and writing for the primary grades and completion of the introductory modules by 24 professors
- Development of an observation tool for courses in reading and writing pedagogy in the IFMs
- Training of 12,705 principals and teachers in use of the grade 2 Interactive Radio Programs (IRI)
- Further training of 8998 principals and grade 1 and 2 teachers from volunteer schools in November 2011 in the balanced literacy approach to improving literacy instruction and 8883 again in April/May 2012
- Training 135 principals and teachers from the education district (Centre d'Animation Pédagogique / CAP) of Djenné on the use of smartphone technology to improve reading and writing lessons
- Supporting the department's initiative to update and generalize the national curriculum

Improved supervision of teachers

- Training of 419 pedagogical counselors and supervisors from the regional (Académie d'Enseignement / AE) and district (CAP) education offices on the various observation tools for reading classes in primary schools and the IFMs

Improved instructional materials for teachers and students in grades 1 – 4

- Completing and distributing the grade 2 reading kits
- Broadcasting of the grade 1 and 2 series of interactive radio instruction programs
- Completing the recording and editing of all 120 radio programs for grade three French

- Completing a companion document to the standards framework to assist teachers in determining what skills should be mastered at which points during the 1st and 2nd years of school
- Translating into Bamanakan storybooks and texts to support implementation of the balanced literacy approach in curriculum schools

Improved systems of student evaluation

- Adapting and administering the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
- Administering EGRA to students in the mid-term evaluation sample

Improved French instruction in Mali's medersas

- Training of 2271 principals and French teachers from 1154 medersas in the use of the IRI radio programs and the balanced literacy approach

Improved access to education for targeted or hard to reach populations

- Further training of teachers from 35 single classroom schools (Ecoles à classe unique / ECU) and supporting the creation of 14 new ECUs in the Tombouctou region including teacher training and the provision of school kits
- Establishing eight mobile schools and school management committees (Comités de Gestion Scolaire / CGS) in migrating communities of the Mopti region and training of teachers and CGS members
- Assessing the special education courses taking place at the Institute for Popular Education

Establishment of Public-Private Partnerships

- Implementing the first phase of the public-private partnership with Simon Fraser University for pedagogical support and teacher training
- Presenting program objectives and opportunities for partnership to a cross section of private businesses and entrepreneurs

Program monitoring and evaluation

- Completing data collection and analysis for the program's mid-term evaluation
- Conducting regular data collection, entry and analysis on the PHARE program indicators

External relations and communications

- Presenting at the annual conference of the Comparative International Education Society (CIES)
- Production of two short films on the program's work in establishing VTCs and in improving literacy instruction
- Holding program mid-point review retreats with the cabinet of the Ministry of Education, with the directors of the regional education offices and with program staff

Program milestones

- Submitting four program milestone reports and supporting documentation

Information on the various consultants and home office staff who supported program implementation throughout the year is regularly included in the quarterly reports. For the fourth quarter of this fiscal year, the following consultants traveled to Mali:

Jennifer Spratt	July 31 – August 10, 2011	RTI International
George Murnaghan	August 17 – September 7, 2011	EDC

This report covers program implementation during the 2011 fiscal year. It is organized thematically under the broad intermediate result areas. Expected activities are based on the Year 3 workplan.

II. INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1: Improved Quality of Instruction for Grades One through Six (Results 1-14)

II.A. Expected activities for the reporting period by sub-result

The full list of expected activities for the entire year is available in the approved year three workplan. A summary of those expected activities by sub-result is presented here:

Improved educational strategies / policies (Sub-result 1.1)

- Complete one study intended to support policy-making focused on the quality of education (12-month goal for year three)
- Complete the final edits to the policy on the use of technology in education (quarter four goal)
- Validate the sociolinguistic study (quarter four goal)
- Begin the decision process relative to the completion of the next study (quarter four goal)

Improved pre-service and inservice teacher training (Sub-result 1.2)

- Complete the installation of the VTCs, the training of the VTC management committees, and the connection of the VTCs to the internet (12-month goal for year three)
- Launch an on-line course for professional development of IFM professors (12-month goal for year three)
- Provide professional development to staff in the teacher Training Colleges on teaching student teachers how to teach reading (12-month goal for year three)
- Strengthen teachers' understanding, in the 3,559 schools participating in the balanced literacy interventions, of successful techniques for teaching reading to young learners (12-month goal for year three)
- Prepare the printed material for distribution to balanced literacy schools in 2011-2012 (quarter four goal)
- Improve the understanding of the cabinet-members and decision-makers of the tenets of balanced literacy instruction (quarter four goal)
- Continuing to support the department's initiative to update and generalize the national curriculum (quarter four goal)

Improved teacher support and supervision (Sub-result 1.3)

- Develop and introduce a set of instruments for the observation of pre-service training institute courses in reading, and for the observation of reading instruction in primary schools and medersas (12-month goal for year three)
- Collect and analyze data on pre-service training institute courses in reading, and on reading instruction in primary schools and medersas (quarter four goal)

Improved instructional materials for elementary-level teachers and students (Sub-result 1.4)

- Deliver to all public and community schools 120 interactive radio instruction programs and learning materials for grade two (classic) and grade three (curriculum) French instruction (12-month goal for year three)
- Complete the production of 120 interactive radio instruction programs and accompanying learning materials for grade three (classic) and grade four (curriculum) French instruction (12-month goal for year three)
- Continue support to the committee charged with pursuing a dedicated channel for educational broadcasting (12-month goal for year three)
- Secure radio time for grade three (classic) and grade four (curriculum) broadcasts (12-month goal for year three)

Improved systems for student evaluation (Sub-result 1.5)

- Report out on the data from the EGRA local exercise (12-month goal for year three)
- Enter and analyze the EGMA data (quarter four goal)
- Enter and analyze the EGRA data in the national sample identified to measure the impact of the Road-to-Reading interventions on student performance (quarter four goal)

II.B. Actual Activities and Achievements

II.B.1. Sub-result 1.1: Improved educational policies and strategies

The research and policy analysis team at USAID/PHARE in the course of this fiscal year surpassed its contractual obligations. According to the program performance monitoring plan, the team was to complete one study intended to support policy making focused on the quality of education. In the course of the year, the team validated the time-on-task study (October, 2010), completed and validated a policy on the use of technology in education (September, 2011), and validated the sociolinguistic study (September, 2011). In the final quarter of the year, the teams also began the decision-making process regarding which topic to study during year four of the program.

II.B.1.1. Validating the Time-On-Task Study

The USAID/PHARE “opportunities to learn” study calculated the average actual learning time for a Malian child in grades one through six. The analysis team began with the number of days per year officially decreed by the ministry of education (172) and subtracted from that number the average numbers of days lost for different reasons. The data demonstrated that a student in Mali benefitted from 122 days of real learning time in 2009-2010, or 71% of the time decreed by the ministry. After mid-term tests (compositions), that same student benefitted on average from **91** days of real learning time. A student in this situation, in the course of six years of schooling, would really only benefit from three years to acquire all the competencies required based on the curriculum.

The opportunities to learn study was validated on October 27, 2010. Participants at the ceremony included the ministry of education, the Academies and CAPs of Bamako, USAID, RTI, IEP, PRADDE-PC, and representatives of the press. Based on the recommendations from the opportunities to learn study, the program team developed, at the ministry's request, an action plan for achieving the recommendations of the study. For each recommendation, the team determined actions that would need to be undertaken in the short, medium, and long term to ensure that the recommendation was carried out. This action plan has since been used as a point of reference for ministry committees working to complete the fast-track initiative application and to identify concrete measures that could better ensure a higher quality of instruction during the school year to come.

II.B.1.2. Validating the policy on technology in education

During the second half of this program year, PHARE personnel worked with representatives from the MEALN, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS) and the Ministry of Communication to update the ministries' draft policy related to the expansion and use of technology across the education sector. In order to carry out this plan and update the policy, the PHARE personnel in quarters two and three conducted a situational analysis (état des lieux) of the use of ICTs at the primary, secondary, and university level. The situational analysis revealed, among other things, that:

- There are great inequities in the use of technology across the sub-sectors and within institutions. The university sub-sector has a comparatively high degree of access and use compared to the secondary sub-sector, which in turn has a significantly higher degree of access and use than the primary sub-sector. In a school, a director is more likely to have a computer than a teacher, who is in turn significantly more likely to have access to computers than his/her students.
- Significant challenges related to infrastructure slow the integration of technology in the sector. Access to both electricity and the internet is costly, and there are no strong government interventions that would favour a resolution of these challenges for a majority of institutions.

- When technology is used in the sector, it is almost always used for administrative purposes, and not for the purpose of teaching and/or learning.
- In the curricula across all levels, little allowance is made for the use of technology in the service of reaching learning goal and almost no content is available on-line or through another technological means (i.e. for use via telephone).
- Few human resources exist to install or maintain machines and/or to digitize content; training programs for the use of technology are not broadly available and those that exist are sometimes beyond the financial reach of the education personnel.
- Donor interventions in technology, in the absence of an overall sector policy or a strategic plan, are not coordinated in any one direction, and do not progressively expand access or usage of technology to any of the sub-groups in the education system.

Based on this analysis, the MEALN working group with the PHARE program's support refined the objectives of the policy and developed a series of strategies and actions to undertake in support of those objectives.

During the fourth quarter of the year, PHARE held a validation meeting on the document with the cabinets of both the MEALN and the MESSRS. The officials present reviewed the document and recommended some minor additions and changes. The most major recommendation was expanding the action plan annexed to the document to include a series of estimated costs for the actions retained and an approximate timeline for their completion. In order to facilitate the completion of the document, the PHARE program sponsored a 3-day workshop in August to allow for the implementation of this recommendation. The finalized draft policy, complete with an expanded and updated action plan, was forwarded to the Prime Minister's office (via the Ministry of Communication¹) in September for validation at the highest levels of government and integration into the national policy. The finalized policy document will guide the incorporation of technologies in the education sector at all levels.

II.B.1.3 Validating the Sociolinguistic Study

USAID/PHARE also this quarter validated the sociolinguistic study undertaken in the administrative region of Mopti. The main research questions this study asked were: what language is used in common by students in each school located in the administrative region of Mopti? Is the national language being taught in the "curriculum" schools² the same as the one identified as the common language of the students? Is this a language in which the teachers in that region are trained to teach? Are there any materials available in the schools for teaching of that language? Are the IFMs in that region prepared to teach teachers to teach in that language? Based on these factors, what overall can be determined about the degree to which the Malian ministry's bilingual education policy is being put into practice?

USAID/PHARE presented the final results of this study to the cabinet for validation during the program retreat in Sikasso on the 3rd of September, 2011. Encouragingly, the study found that even in a region as linguistically diverse as Mopti, it is possible to identify the language used in common in each school and plan for teacher training and assignment, as well the provision of instructional materials accordingly. However, the study also found that the "curriculum" expansion that Mali has been intending to implement since 1998 has been slowed and/or stymied due to significant challenges in teacher training, teacher placement, and the availability of instructional materials. Based on these conclusions, the team recommended:

¹ In the reorganization of the Malian Government that occurred in early April 2011, the name of this Ministry has been changed to the "Ministry of Communication / Spokesperson of the Government", and New Technologies was shifted to the Ministry of Postal Services which has become the "Ministry of Postal Services and New Technologies."

² Mali has two curricula: a classic or traditional curriculum where instruction is carried out only in French and a bilingual, competency-based curriculum where instruction begins in one of Mali's national languages and French is gradually introduced beginning in grade 2. These latter schools are called "curriculum" schools.

- That the MEALN adopt the methodology used in this study to have the CPS develop a full-scale map of the languages required in each CAP in Mali and of the human resources currently available to teach in those languages;
- That the MEALN then proceed, through a consultative process between its levels, to develop a detailed and realistic action plan for confronting the significant operational challenges that the generalization of the curriculum currently is encountering. This plan would need to take into account the fact that for the reform to be sustained, significant investment in building the capacity of the decentralized level actors to continue the change will be required;
- That Mali's donor and technical assistance community make a concerted effort to commit resources over the long-term to the realization of this action plan, particularly if the action plan includes an element of volunteerism and/or initiative through which actors in a given area opt for implementing the bilingual curriculum (rather than having it imposed from the center throughout the school system).

It is the PHARE program's hope that the methodology used in this study can serve as a model for future similar studies that the CPS (statistics and planning unit) of the ministry can undertake to better guide the generalization of the bilingual curriculum nation-wide.

II.B.1.4 Determining the topic of the next research study

The PHARE program staff took advantage of their retreat with the ministry cabinet in Sikasso to begin the process of determining what the topic will be of the next PHARE-sponsored study. Program staff asked participants to generate a list of priorities for each of their departments. There was particular interest in carrying out the sociolinguistic study in another linguistically complex region such as Kayes or looking in particular at time-on-task in language arts and/or mathematics classrooms. The PHARE program staff will do their best to ensure that research topics retained for the fourth year of the program are coherent with the priorities of the various ministry departments.

II.B.2, Sub-result 1.2: Pre-service and inservice teacher training

All of USAID/PHARE's pre- and inservice teacher professional development activities focus on improving the instruction of reading. Throughout program year three, PHARE teams deepened and expanded their efforts to strengthen teacher preparation for teaching reading in the first two grades of the primary cycle. The teams devoted extensive attention in quarter four to preparing for the 2011-2012 school year. Pre-service annual and quarterly results are presented below, followed by those for the inservice portion of the PHARE contract.

II.B.2.1 Pre-Service Training

PHARE's interventions in pre-service training could be said this year to have "achieved cruising altitude." In program years one and two, much time had been spent organizing the procurement for the virtual training centers and drafting content for training tools for IFM professors. In year three, the program finished establishing a firm basis from which to work with the MEALN and the professors on affecting lasting change in the way in which student teachers are prepared for their jobs.

II.B.2.1.1 Completing the installation of all of the VTCs, training the VTC management committees, and connecting the VTCs to the internet

During the first quarter of program year three, the PHARE staff completed the installation of the final 8 virtual training centers. By January of 2011, the teacher Training Colleges in Aguelhoc, Diré, Gao, Kayes, Koro, Nara, Sevaré, and Tominian had all had their virtual training centers installed. This brought to 13 the total number of virtual training centers installed by the USAID/PHARE program.

Each training center had a dollar value of approximately \$50,000.00. Table 1 details the equipment installed in each VTC:

Table 1: Equipment Installed in the Virtual Training Centers

DESCRIPTION	QUAN-TITY	DESCRIPTION	QUAN-TITY	DESCRIPTION	QUAN-TITY
Serveur Proliant ML330G6 Intel Xeon E5504 2 GHZ 8 GO DDR3, 2 x 500 GO SAS avec Contrôleur P400 Raid + Ecran 18,5 + logiciels	1	Disque dur externe 1 T0 USB2	1	Câble EasyCap Capture USB 2.0	1
Ordinateur de bureau Compaq CQ 500B Duo Core 2,7 GHZ - 2 GO - DD 250 GO - LAN Gigabit + Ecran 17 + logiciels	12	Imprimante HP P3015DN	1	Coupe-papier/Guillotine A4,A5 Followes Plasma	1
Ordinateur de bureau (n°2) Acer Veriton M68WS - Intel Core 2 Quad Q8300 2.5 GHZ - Windows 7 Pro 64 bits avec Windows XP Pro 32 bits Dual Load - 4 GO - 2 x 750 GO + Ecran 17 TFT + Logiciels	2	Cartouche de rechange pour P3015DN	1	Machine à reliure FELLOWES Perforelieur - Pulsar 300	1
Ecran TFT 17 pouces ACER avec haut parleurs	10	Imprimante HP Deskjet D2660	1	Machine à plastifier : FELLOWES Plastifieuse vitesse 50 cm/minute, format A4, température variable	1
Clavier AZERTY PS2	10	Jeu de cartouche noir et couleur pour D2660	1	Réseaux informatiques (voir équipements) 20 barres de goulottes 100/40 avec séparateur + 2 rouleaux de câble paires torsadées de 305 mètres	1
Souris PS2	10	Scanner HP Scanjet G3110	1	Routeur Wireless Linksys Dual-Band Wireless-N Gigabit Router WRT320N - Routeur sans fil et commutateur 4 ports -Ethernet, Fast Ethernet, Gigabit Ethernet, IEEE 802.11b, IEEE 802.11g, IEEE 802.11n (draft 2.0)	1
Housse de protection au complet	30	Casque logitech stereo	25	Switch rackable 3COM 4210 24 ports 10/100 Mbits	2
Licence Antivirus Kaspersky Business Space Clients/Serveurs pour 1 serveur et 14 postes 1 an mise à jour	1	Web Cam Logitec C300 1,3 Mégapixels, 1280 x 1024 - jusqu'à 30 images/s micro intégré	2	Prises réseaux RJ45 Ingelec	30
Souffleur	1	Haut parleur 90 W 80 Db	1	Câble réseaux RJ45 industriels 3 mètres	30
Boîte de tournevis	1	Photocopieur Canon ImageRunner 2318 - 18	9*	Coffret/Armoire de brassage : une baie de	1

DESCRIPTION	QUAN-TITY	DESCRIPTION	QUAN-TITY	DESCRIPTION	QUAN-TITY
		ppm A4, 10 ppm en A3, résolution : 600 x 600 dpi, 256 MO avec CAD (chargeur automatique de document CRV-AB1) de 50 feuilles, module de finitionagrafeur		brassage rack 19 pouces, 9U avec 2 panneaux de 32 ports RJ45, 30 cordons de brassage industriels	
Vidéo projecteur Benq MP625P - Projecteur DLP - 2700 - Rapport de contraste d'image 2600:1 - Résolution XGA (1024 x 768) (natif) / 1600 x 1200 (redimensionnement)	1	Caméscope Sony - Caméscope Haute Définition - Disque dur 60 Go - Zoom optique 10x - Écran LCD 2,7" - Capteur CMOS Exmor 4Mpix	1	Equipements et installation électrique (installation et retouche) : câble électrique 3 x 2,5 mm2 et 3 x 1,5 mm2 souples Ingelec + mise à la terre du CVF et accessoires (voir équipements ci-dessous)	1
Ecran trépied de projection 1,8 x 1,8 m	1	Appareil photo numérique SAMSUNG ES25 12,2 Mégapixels, zoom optique 4X, Prise en charge SD et SDHC,	1	Rallonge multiprises parafoudre MGE à 6 ports, 2 mètres	10
Stabilisateur de courant S6-3000 VA	2	Encarta 2009 Multi-utilisateur copie CD/DVD Media Kit	1	Driver pour le Scanner copie CD/DVD	1
Onduleur APC 3000 VA	2	Driver Contrôleur RAID pour le Serveur DVD original Media kit (vendu avec le serveur)	1	Driver pour l'imprimante noir et blanc copie CD/DVD	1
Prise électrique étanche avec terre Ingelec	12	Driver Windows 7 Pro pour les ordinateurs de bureau 1 copie DVD	1	Driver pour l'imprimante couleur copie CD/DVD	1
Microsoft Windows 7 Pro Français copie CD/DVD Media Kit	1	Driver Windows 7 Pro pour les ordinateurs de bureau 2 copie DVD	1	Logiciel de l'antivirus pour 1 serveur et 14 ordinateurs copie CD/DVD Media Kit	1
Microsoft Windows 2003 serveur R2 edition standard X86 copie CD/DVD Media Kit	1	Camera Flip et chargeur	1	Clés USB (conformes au nombre des professeurs de l'IFM)	1 par professeur
Microsoft Office 2007 Pro Copie CD/DVD Media Kit	1	Chaises	24	Tables pour l'ordinateur	24

Joint delegations of MEALN officials and PHARE program staff attended the ceremonies for the delivery and installation of the material in each of the 8 teacher Training Colleges concerned. At these ceremonies, the ministry expressed considerable thanks for USAID's and the PHARE program's efforts to assist the teacher Training Colleges to have access to modern technologies for pedagogical purposes.

For each virtual training center established in a teacher training institute, the PHARE program guides the institute in setting up a management and training committee for that center. The management and training committees are comprised of a president (usually the director of the center), a manager, a maintenance officer, a treasurer, two trainers, and a representative of the students from the institute. While the president's job is to ensure the proper functioning of the center, the maintenance officer attends to the functionality of the machines; the treasurer maintains the accounts, the trainers provide orientation sessions for center users on the equipment and software available, and the student representative ensures

that the decisions taken (the prices for services, for example) are acceptable to the student body at large. Except for the student representative, each member of the committees is a professor at the institute in question. None of the members receives any additional remuneration for his/her services to the virtual training center.

Committee members use the VTC functionality grid, which is a tool that the National Directorate of Basic Education (DNEB), now the National Directorate of Fundamental Education (Direction Nationale de l'Éducation Fondamentale / DNEF) and PHARE staff finalized this year, along with a variety of other documents such as the visitor register, the book of current accounts, the stock list, and a CVF committee self-report, to assess a center's performance each three months in nine categories:

- The percentage of *French literature and educational psychology professors* that have come to the VTC at least once a month for any reason
- The percentage of *French literature and educational psychology professors* that have come to the VTC at least once a month to conduct a pedagogical activity
- The percentage all *professors* that have come to the VTC at least once a month for any reason
- The percentage of all *professors* that have come to the VTC at least once a month to conduct a pedagogical activity
- The percentage of 3rd year students that have come to the VTC at least once a month for any reason
- The percentage of 3rd year students that have come to the VTC at least once a month to conduct a pedagogical activity
- The percentage of students that have come to the VTC at least once a month for any reason
- The percentage of students that have come to the VTC at least once a month to conduct a pedagogical activity
- The financial management of the VTC
- The stock management in the VTC
- The dynamism of the VTC managing committee

Based on the score achieved in each category, the committee members determine, on a four-point scale, the overall degree of functionality of their VTC.

To assist committee members in carrying out their duties and in using the program-mandated tools to assess their centers, staff from the DNEF and their PHARE program homologues offers periodic training and professional development opportunities to the members of the VTC management and training committees. In December, 2010, after the final installation of the remaining 8 centers was complete, the program organized trainings for all of the committees from each of the centers. The trainings were intended to assist the committee members in:

- Managing the use of the center, its finances and its stock of materials
- Developing pricing indexes for center services and scheduling sessions to train colleagues on the use of the computers
- Conducting routine maintenance for the center equipment
- Completing and returning the grid on the functionality of the virtual training centers

The trip report for these trainings, filed by PHARE staff members, stated that “during the three days of training, the participants demonstrated a high level of attention to the maintenance of the machines and the management of their centers. With a judicious application of all that has been learned here, the CVF should be better prepared to achieve their objectives.”

A two-day follow-up session to the December trainings was held in June, 2011 in Bamako with the managers of the 13 virtual training centers. This session gave the managers the opportunity to clarify with the USAID/PHARE personnel any questions they had about the use of the grid or the operations of their

virtual training center. At that meeting, the USAID/PHARE staff determined, (among other findings), that all but two of the centers had a positive current account balance; this seemed to indicate that the centers were all to some degree serving the scholastic communities in the IFM. More recent analysis of the data from the center functionality grids indicates that the centers are being used, but that the educational psychology and French literature professors are still possibly unclear as to how to use them for pedagogical purposes. By working during the upcoming year on creating additional indications in the syllabus of the IFM as to how to use the VTC for pedagogical purposes, the PHARE staff hopes to provide more concrete guidance to these professors on how to make the best *instructional* use of the centers.

During quarter four, the PHARE program also completed connecting twelve of the thirteen teacher Training Colleges to the internet. As of October 1st, 2011 the Orange Corporation, PHARE's sub-contractor for this work, had installed an internet connection for all of the VTC's except Aguelhoc. Work in Aguelhoc was due to be completed in early October, but as of the writing of this report has been postponed due to security considerations. PHARE's agreement with the MEALN is to cover the first year's cost of the internet connectivity for each institute. It is assumed that the CVFs will be financially self-supporting by that time, or will have been able to secure alternate funding from the MEALN or other sources. Some of the leading benefits to USAID and PHARE of having installed these internet connections include:

- Being able to receive more regular reporting from the VTC managers on the state of their machines and their centers
- Being able to conduct better follow-up with professors trained by the program regarding their use of PHARE-provided material
- Being able to offer the on-line course in the teaching of reading and writing to a greater number of professors.

PHARE looks forward to working with the colleges, the VTC managers, and the MEALN to ensure that the internet connections can remain active even after the period during which PHARE covers the cost comes to an end. PHARE intends to offer refresher trainings to the VTC committees during the 2011-2012 school year.

II.B.2.1.2 Contributing to the development of a pedagogical platform for Mali

At the ministry's request, the PHARE program worked during quarters two and three to assist the National Directorate of Pedagogy to generate terms of reference for a new pedagogical platform. PHARE's goals in proffering this assistance were two-fold: one was to provide the ministry with help in developing a truly interactive tool, and a second was to ensure that the learning portal that PHARE was contractually obliged to create for the IFM could be congruent with the larger plans developed for the development of the pedagogical platform.

PHARE staff and consultants in December of 2010 presented the National Directorate of Pedagogy (Direction Nationale de la Pédagogie / DNP) decision makers with three options for developing the platform. These options were: a) a standard website devoted to the dissemination of information, b) a blog site hosting sample lesson plans for teachers, and c) an on-line course developed in the open domain. After discussion and exchange, the DNP opted for the third of these options and named a working group to be in charge of the platform's development. For an additional two and ½ weeks, PHARE staff worked with the DNP to develop a detailed "terms of reference" (or "cahier de charges") document for the working group's development of the pedagogical platform. This document describes the platform as having the following characteristics:

- Prioritizing learning
- Being a living space constantly brought up to date and filled with new ideas and information
- Being dedicated to a specific community made up of people having the same goals, affinities and experiences and having needs for very specific information

- Serving as a management system for learning that requires the user to both produce and consume information
- Being an area where carefully chosen documents to support the user's learning and to enhance his/her daily work are available
- Capitalizing on the advantages of the internet (creating, collaborating, sharing the results of this collaboration)
- Serving as a site where professional trainers and teachers can access practical resources that will enable them to simplify daily tasks and help accomplish them with greater success
- Creating a space where engagement or participation in the proposed activities could be considered as an official part of teacher training or inservice professional support
- Not requiring of the administrator a profound knowledge of a complicated programming language
- Being accessible via the home web site of the Ministry of Education of Mali

In addition to outlining these characteristics, the terms of reference document outlined the intended audiences of the platform, which include: the professors and student-teachers in the teacher Training Colleges, professionals associated with basic education (teachers, principals, pedagogical counselors, etc.), and professionals associated with secondary education (teachers, principals, pedagogical counselors, etc.). The TDR also describes how the platform will be developed, the structure and content of the platform, the technical specifications of the platform, the actors involved in the development of the platform, the pre-requisites to launching the platform, a risk assessment related to the launching of the platform, and a timeline for the completion of the major actions related to launching the platform.

The further development of the platform has been cited by the MEALN as a top priority for the 2011-2012 school year. In the coming year, PHARE program staff will examine in greater detail with the MEALN how best to move this development forward.

II.B.2.1.3 Launching Mali's first-ever on-line course

It is a contractual obligation for PHARE contract to develop and implement a learning portal for professors in the country's IFMs. This obligation is directly in line with the commitment USAID has made in its 2011-2015 policy framework to "apply science, *technology*, and innovation strategically." In year three, PHARE successfully founded a learning portal for IFM professors by launching a 7-module on-line course to provide IFM professors of French literature and educational psychology with a better grounding in how to teach the teaching of reading.

The seven modules in the course were first drafted on paper in 2009 by joint working groups from the (then) CNE, the (then) DNEB and the PHARE program. They are articulated around the central tenets of balanced literacy instruction and are organized into introductory, intermediate, and advanced topics. In each module, the on-line user finds sections entitled: a) objectives, b) learn more (renseignez-vous), c) practice your skills, and d) evaluation. Each module requires the on-line learner to complete one or more journal entries and one or more homework assignments. The modules in the course are as follows:

Table 2: The Modules of the On-Line Course in Reading and Writing Instruction

LEVEL	MODULE AND TOPIC
Introductory	One: The reading and writing standards framework Two: Balanced Literacy Instruction
Intermediate	Three: Language Mechanisms (I) Four: Language Mechanisms (II)
Advanced	Five: Reading Six: Guided and Invented Writing Seven: Evaluating Reading and Writing Instruction

The modules have been placed online at the address <http://dev.phare.edc.org/>³. In order to post them on line, EDC staff entered them into the moodle content management system.(More information about moodle can be found at <http://moodle.org/about/>). EDC staff chose moodle because it is a free tool requiring no specialized computer programming knowledge to operate. It seemed likely therefore that the MEALN, with coaching, might be able to identify someone to continue the upkeep and updating of the site even after the close of the PHARE program.

With the approval of the MEALN, PHARE selected participants in the first iteration of the course on a voluntary basis. Because not all the IFMs were connected at the time the course was launched (in February of 2010), the first colleges invited to submit candidates were those possessing internet connections: Bougouni, Niono, and Sevaré. PHARE wrote to each of these colleges, inviting interested professors to submit their names for enrollment and explaining clearly the ground rules for enrollment, completion, and reception of a certificate for the coursework, as follows:

- Completing the initial modules is a prerequisite for further, more advanced coursework on line;
- All coursework must be turned in on time according to the distributed schedule;
- Coursework will be graded according to a three-category rubric (content, form, and use of the technological options available) with four possible grades (acceptable, good, very good and excellent) for each category;
- Late coursework will not be accepted unless a prior arrangement has been made with the instructor and the instructor has agreed that there is a case of extraordinary circumstances in play;
- Anyone with more than 2 weeks' delay for the submission of a piece of coursework will be automatically excluded;
- At the end of modules 2 and 4, a certificate of partial completion will be made available to all participants whose coursework is up-to-date; a certificate of final completion indicating a level of mastery of the course concepts and signifying the ability to be a resource person for further training on this module will be distributed to all participants in good standing at the end of module 7.

By February, 2011, the **enrollment** totals for the first on-line course were as follows:

Table 3: Enrollment in the On-Line Course

IFM	Number of French and Educational Psychology Professors in that IFM	Number of Professors Enrolled	% of French and Educational Psychology Professors Enrolled
Bougouni	13	11	84%
Niono	13	5	38%
Sevaré	13	13	100%
TOTAL	39	29	74%

From February to June, each of the professors enrolled and continuing in the course completed the two introductory modules and 15 homework assignments. In total, 360 assignments were corrected by the team from the Division of Teacher Education (Division de l'Enseignement Normal / DEN) and the

³ For the time being, the moodle site is being hosted on EDC's server, as it was important to create a stable hosting environment so as to avoid mechanical glitches in the implementation of the first round of coursework. During the next two years, PHARE program staff will work with MEALN technicians to migrate the site to the MEALN servers.

PHARE program. The correction team provided feedback on each assignment according to a rubric attributing a rating for content, for form, and for use of the internet. A score of “acceptable” in each category indicated a minimum of effort, a score of “good” indicated a good-faith attempt to engage with the topic at hand, a score of “very good” indicated that the participant had demonstrated a solid understanding of the topic and had worked carefully on his/her response and a score of “excellent” indicated perfect mastery and extraordinary effort to deliver a professional product.

In June 2011, 24 of the original 29 enrollees successfully completed the introductory level of the course. All five of the people who dropped out originally came from the IFM in Sevaré⁴. In all, a record 82% of those enrolled completed the first two modules and participated in the launching ceremony for the learning portal and on-line course. The ceremony, held on June 30th at the Mandé Hotel with full press coverage, was presided by the Minister of Education along with the Deputy Chief of Mission of the United States Embassy. The ceremony included speeches from the USAID representative and the representative of the IFM professors, a short PowerPoint and video presentation of the on-line course and the learning portal, presentation to each professor of a certificate of completion, a speech by the minister⁵ to officially launch the learning portal, and a question and answer period with the course graduates. During this question and answer period, the graduates were able to demonstrate to the audience their growing mastery of the balanced literacy approach and their appreciation of the approach as applicable in a multi-lingual context.

In the fourth quarter of the reporting year, the PHARE program staff updated several of the links and video in the online modules. Staff also began discussions with the DNEF regarding the establishment of a larger working group to take on the responsibility of grading and returning assignments for all of the IFM professors. Beginning in quarter one of the next program year, PHARE staff will be able to recruit enrollees into the course from all of the colleges and to work on integrating the online course into the larger framework of the pedagogical platform under development.

II.B.2.1.3. Providing Face-to-Face Training on Balanced Literacy in All Teacher Training Colleges

During the 2010-2011 school year, only a small percentage of the IFM professor population had access to the internet or could participate in the online courses. For this reason, the PHARE program staff also organized two sessions of face-to-face training, one in February and one in March, for educational psychology and French literature professors in the IFM. These face-to-face training sessions had the following objectives:

- Reviewing the techniques from the balanced literacy approach for teaching language mechanics
- Reviewing the techniques for teaching guided reading
- Introducing the classroom observation forms that the PHARE program has developed for the observation of the teaching of reading and writing
- Developing a schedule for using, in regular pedagogical meetings on-site at each IFM, the CD-ROM produced by PHARE and containing the 7 multimedia modules (professors using these modules online were not concerned by this objective)
- Review using Microsoft word and PowerPoint for the preparation of documents and or supporting materials for methodology instruction

The total numbers of professors participating in these training events were as follows:

⁴ One drop-out was the director of the institute, who found that he did not have the time to continue in the course, one was transferred to an IFM without internet and three found that the internet connection in Sevaré was so slow that they could not complete their work on time.

Table 4: IFMs Participating in Face-To-Face Training in 2010-2011

POLE	IFMs CONCERNED	TOTAL NUMBER OF PROFESSORS ATTENDING
GAO	Gao, Aguelhoc	16
TOMBOUCTOU	Tombouctou, Dire	16
KAYES	Kayes, Nara (Nioro)	22
NIONO	Tominian, Ségou, Niono	27
SIKASSO	Bougouni, Sikasso	51
KORO	Koro	12
KANGABA	Bamako, Kangaba	20
	TOTAL	164

The PHARE team’s overall goal during these trainings was to provide the participating professors with experiences that would allow them to observe both the low level of performance of the students in reading and writing tasks and the efforts of some of the teachers who are attempting to use the balanced literacy approach in the classrooms. Key moments of the training therefore included the sessions where the IFM professors were asked to use the simplified EGRA tool developed by the program teams the prior program year to test real 2nd grade students in reading and the sessions where the professors left the IFM and participated in classroom observations in the local primary schools. Comments on these sessions that were included in the final training reports included:

- “the results of the student testing are below those that are required by the standards framework”
- “the children’s reading level is very low ; out of 16 tested, only 1 could read as many as 24 letters of the alphabet”
- “the teachers observed had a tendency to neglect the writing pillar of balanced literacy in their lessons, and the pillar the most frequently touched on was language mechanics”
- “in the one class where the teacher had planned a lesson using balanced literacy, the acquisition of competencies by the children was visible and they were more engaged, even if they were not always able to find the right answer”

Arriving at these conclusions in a first-hand manner enabled the IFM professors to recognize the relevance of participating in using the CD-ROM modules and to begin considering altering the way in which reading and writing pedagogy is addressed in the IFM. Each group of IFM professors from each of the institutes committed to conducting autonomous study and discussion sessions on the use of these modules.

II.B.2.1.4 Incorporating Reading Methodology into the IFM Curriculum

The lack of clear guidelines in the IFM curricula describing how to teach student teachers to teach reading and writing is one of the greatest obstacles to creating positive change⁶. This issue has consistently been raised with PHARE both by graduates of the online course and by other professors in the IFMs. They have repeatedly signaled that it would be helpful to them if the curriculum for the IFM were more explicit on the subject of how to teach reading and writing. PHARE has also consistently flagged this concern to USAID and to the MEALN.

⁶Another is the professors’ own inexperience in ever teaching primary grade children how to read and write, but that is even more difficult to remedy.

From a technical standpoint, the questions are as follows: a) is it worth revising the older IFM curriculum that is incessantly on the verge of being replaced by the new one, or is it worth concentrating efforts on working on the new one? And, b) if PHARE is to concentrate on working on the new curriculum, how can those efforts be made consonant with the efforts of AFD to support revisions to the IFM curriculum?

During quarter four, the PHARE program staff discussed these major stumbling blocks on multiple occasions with colleagues from the DNEF. In mid-September, the DNEF agreed to hold a workshop to develop a complementary document for the IFM that will assist the professors to begin working with their student teachers on teaching reading and writing. This workshop is scheduled to be held at the end of October and represents the program's best opportunity to effect change in the teacher Training Colleges in the long run.

II.B.2.2 Inservice Training

PHARE's inservice training efforts for public and community schools fall into two broad categories of effort. The first involves training teachers for ALL of the public and community schools in the country to use interactive radio instruction and providing them the materials that they can use to implement the IRI programs in their classrooms. The second involves providing professional development support, and accompanying materials, to the grade one and two teachers (and their directors) from the 3,559 schools across the 70 CAPs that have elected to implement balanced literacy instruction. This section details the program's efforts in both these broad categories over the course of this reporting year.

II.B.2.2.1 Training for principals and teachers on the use of the grade two interactive radio instruction programming

PHARE's most far-reaching inservice training efforts are devoted to providing each public and community school in the country with support in using the interactive radio instruction programs produced by the scriptwriting and studio teams in Bamako. Every October and November since the program's inception, the training staff have conducted a cascade training enabling all of the regional and district primary-level trainers in the country to train teachers from specific grade levels to use the programs with their students.

The October-November, 2010 cascade training for IRI focused on the use of the grade two IRI programs. After the training of trainers events held in the academies for academy staff and pedagogical counselors from each CAP, public and community principals, grade two teachers from classic schools and grade three teachers from community schools were invited to training in each district office. The training lasted for one day. As reported in the program documentation for milestone seven, personnel from 6706 schools attended this training, and a total of 12,705 directors **and** teachers were verified as having been present. The breakdown for training attendance by regional and district office is available in the report for milestone seven.

At these training events, the PHARE program staff distributed classroom reading kits to each school. The grade two classroom reading kits included:

- a) A guide for using the IRI programming that offers teachers a selection of activities to pursue using the kit contents after the completion of the radio lessons
- b) Laminated flash cards of all the letters in the French alphabet and of certain key vocabulary words from the level one curriculum
- c) 6 laminated posters with 12 texts, all reproduced in song in the IRI lessons for varied reading exercises
- d) A cassette of the songs and rhymes from the radio programs for use after the completion of the radio programs
- e) For public and community schools newly created in their respective CAP and who therefore had not yet received one, a four-battery radio-cassette player ideal for listening to the IRI broadcasts in real time and/or playing back recordings of the broadcasts for further skills reinforcement.

These materials were intended to assist the teacher to conduct such activities as: a) letter and letter-sound recognition games; b) word and sentence construction games; c) vocabulary enrichment and fluidity exercises, and; d) writing extension exercises.

As the trainings were being conducted in the district offices, joint teams of PHARE and MEALN staff conducted supervisory visits in 49 of the training locations. The objectives of these visits were as follows:

- To ensure correct distribution of any material issued during the trainings
- To ensure that each district office has copies of the forms used for managing and documenting the trainings (attendance sheets, payment sheets, etc.)
- To ensure that each district office receives from its regional office the finances needed for the training
- To ensure that the organizational scheme for the trainings (limiting to trainings to 40 people per room, devoting the first two days to balanced literacy instruction and the third day to interactive radio instruction) is understood and followed
- To ensure that each member of the district office understands and can correctly implement his/her role in the PHARE trainings
- To monitor the pedagogical quality of the trainings
- To complete the supervision form for that training session
- To identify and resolve any problem that arises and that might have a negative impact on the quality of the training.

Each site visit included two phases. First, the team conducting the visit held a meeting with the district office director, his accountant, and the pedagogical counselor named in that district as the point person for PHARE communications and activities. During this meeting, the supervisory team verified that all of the necessary material, finances, and photocopies (including photocopies of the attendance, payment, and distribution forms that teachers would need to sign) were present at the district office. The team also reviewed the procedures from the training management manual for completing these attendance, payment, and distribution sheets. This meeting also provided an opportunity in each CAP for the PHARE program staff to respond to any questions asked on the content of the training manuals provided.

After this meeting, the supervisory team observed training activities in both of the training rooms in each CAP. During these observations, the teams noted the pedagogical counselor's ability to use the training modules and materials provided by PHARE, gauged the participants' degree of involvement in the training, and offered any needed clarifications or additional information on any of the topics covered in the training.

The problems most frequently cited by the supervisory teams in their trip reports were changes in teacher staff between the provisional lists for the trainings and the actual attendance, misunderstandings about how to combine the IRI training with the balanced literacy training (covered in a separate section), misunderstandings regarding the maximum number of people allowed in a single training room (the PHARE program maintains a firm limit of 40 adults in any given training session), and difficulties with materials reception or distribution. (It is worth mentioning relative to that last point that the companies tasked with distributing materials made several mistakes in materials delivery in the early part of October, 2010; some of these were still being resolved when the supervisory teams visited the CAP). Teams worked diligently to resolve these glitches during their time on site in each of the CAP, leading to a higher quality of the training effort overall.

II.B.2.2.2 Inservice Training for the Directors and Teachers of the Balanced Literacy Schools

In the second quarter of the 2009-2010 school year, Mali's regional and district offices had submitted to USAID/PHARE letters from schools requesting to participate in more in depth training in reading instruction. In April 2010, each of these volunteer schools participated in a three-day first training that

focused on the teaching of language mechanisms. The 2011-2012 school year provided PHARE with an opportunity to offer two additional brief (two to three day) trainings to each school, one on guided reading and one on guided writing.

The guided reading trainings took place in November 2011, and were coupled with the IRI trainings. At the outset of the training cycle, representatives from each of the regional offices and all pedagogical counselors from each CAP, (including the counselor charged with supporting the medersas), attended a training of trainers at their academy. This training of trainers focused on the following topics: a) reviewing the aspects of a games-based approach to literacy instruction, b) reviewing the three main domains of literacy instruction in a balanced literacy approach, c) demonstrating the phases of a guided reading approach, and d) reviewing the principles and practices of interactive radio instruction.

The trainings of teachers and directors in the CAP followed this training of trainers at the regional level. A total of 172 sessions were organized, with an attendance of 8998 directors and teachers. In order to ensure that these hundreds of training sessions ran as smoothly as possible, the PHARE program organized supervision visits to forty-one of Mali's seventy CAP. Each supervision team included a member of MEALN staff and a member of the PHARE program personnel. At the conclusion of the supervision rounds, the teams consolidated their findings. The teams reported that points needing improvement included adhering to the program's rule of having only 40 people per training room and, in some cases, ensuring timely arrival of the training materials. **A recurring theme in the supervision report was the need to furnish additional printed reading materials to classrooms for the implementation of the recommended reading activities.** Overall, however, the supervisory reports were very positive, speaking of trainers' mastery of the content and participants' interest in the information and techniques discussed during the trainings.

The PHARE trainings on guided writing took place in February to May 2011, and followed much the same pattern as the November trainings. In preparation for those trainings, PHARE teams conducted an informal survey of teachers using balanced literacy approaches in 31 schools. The teams concluded from those exchanges that the teachers interviewed had *begun* to assimilate the various elements and components of balanced literacy instruction, but had not yet fully integrated them with one another in their daily classroom practice. They further concluded that: the pillar of balanced literacy instruction that was most lacking immediate attention was the writing pillar, the teachers needed to receive lesson plan forms adapted to using balanced literacy that could be approved by their direction, and separate sessions needed to be organized for principals to assist them to know how best to support the balanced literacy approach in their schools.

The spring training of trainers on guided writing aimed to give the AE and CAP representatives attending the trainings a hands-on experience with producing their own texts according to the principles of balanced literacy. Once they had benefitted from this experience of text production, they were much more likely to be able to coach teachers through the process and then assist them in envisioning how the process could be implemented in their respective classroom. A total of 304 regional and district office personnel attended these spring trainings.

One of the PHARE program's innovations during this round of training was to prepare separate training content for principals and for classroom teachers. Although logistically this required the CAPs, in organizing their trainings, to place directors and teachers in separate training rooms, it meant that additional focus could be placed on the principals' role in supporting the teachers in *changing* their approach to reading and writing instruction. The training of trainers' sessions prepared the AE and CAP pedagogical staff to organize the separate trainings for principals and teachers such that both cohorts would more fully understand their specific roles in bringing the writing component of balanced literacy to life in their schools.

A total of 8883 directors and teachers participated in the balanced literacy trainings in April and May. These trainings covered topics such as a) the concept of literacy, b) the relationship between literacy and

the mastery of the nine competency areas in the standards framework, c) the techniques of guided writing, and d) the use of sample lesson plans for implementing balanced literacy in the classroom. In addition, the trainers introduced the principals to a modified version of the principal’s observation tool for providing feedback on balanced literacy instruction and to the audio and self-study kits that the program provided for use in conducting further school-based trainings on balanced literacy.

As usual for all PHARE trainings, the program team organized joint supervision visits in a series of the district offices for the cascade in guided writing held between March and May, 2011. These supervision visits enabled the teams to conclude that, for the most part, the trainings were being held in the 70 CAP as planned. However, in the case of several schools, it was determined that there had been changes in the staff assigned to grades one and two during the course of the school year. In the first quarter of the coming year, PHARE will conduct a detailed analysis of these changes, as they can have a significantly detrimental effect on the continuity of PHARE’s efforts to support the 3559 schools in adopting the balanced literacy approach.

The two training rounds conducted on balanced literacy in 2010-2011 brought to **seven** the total number of days of training that a teacher having participated in all three balanced literacy training sessions would have received. It is obvious that for most teachers, this limited amount of training might not be sufficient to permit them to completely transform their classroom practice. The PHARE program will reflect in the coming school year with the MEALN on the best way to strengthen professional development support for schools and personnel using balanced literacy instruction. These reflections should help increase the sustainability of the PHARE interventions in the longer term.

II.B.2.2.3 Drafting a Companion Document to the Student Standards in Reading and Writing

During the trainings offered in balanced literacy this year, teachers often asked the PHARE staff to clarify for them **which** of the competencies from the six-year standards framework should be mastered during each of the trimesters of the academic year. In order to answer this important query, PHARE staff during 2011-2012 created a draft companion document for the standards framework that would provide the breakdown of this information.

The companion document lists, on the left, all of the competencies retained in the standards framework. Then, for each competency, it indicates, for the first two years of the schooling, during which trimester students should be beginning to develop each competency, during which trimester mastery of that competency should be underway, and during which trimester the student should be demonstrating mastery. A sample of the information included in the companion document to the standards framework is included below:

Table 5: Sample of the By-Trimester Competency Framework

COMPETENCY	First Grade			Second Grade		
	1st trimester	2nd trimester	3rd trimester	1st trimester	2nd trimester	3rd trimester
Identify all of the letters (capitals and small) of the alphabet by name and sound	Beginning	In process	Mastered			
Identify the initial and final sounds of words	Beginning	In process	In process	In process	Mastered	
Use phonetic associations to decode simple words	Beginning	In process	In process	In process	Mastered	
Use knowledge of syllables to decode certain written words		Beginning	In process	In process	In process	Mastered
Replace the first letter of a		Beginning	In process	Mastered		

COMPETENCY	First Grade			Second Grade		
	1st trimester	2nd trimester	3rd trimester	1st trimester	2nd trimester	3rd trimester
word by another letter to form another word						

The drafts of this document that PHARE staff have shared with colleagues at the teacher training division have been greeted with great enthusiasm. PHARE looks forward to sharing this work with the teachers in the balanced literacy schools in the coming year to better assist them to plan and implement instruction that will enable their students to master the competencies included in the competency framework.

II.B.2.2.3 Preparing Reading Material for Distribution to Balanced Literacy Schools in 2011-2012

Throughout quarter four of this school year, the program busily completed the preparations for a large distribution of print material to the balanced literacy schools. Specifically, the program staff completed development of versions of both French and Bamanakan texts for use in the grade one and two classrooms of the balanced literacy schools.

The texts prepared by the PHARE program consist of simple stories (known within the program as ‘livrets’) and of companion ‘reading cards’ that include a short passage using many of the same vocabulary words as the storybook. For example, the first storybook in the grade one series is entitled “Papa’s black goat” and is a short story about the different colored goats belonging to Papa (and where they like to hide). One of the primary purposes of this storybook is to help students master the vocabulary associated with color. The companion reading card, entitled “The little chameleon,” uses all of the same color vocabulary to describe chameleons, rather than goats. Teachers are asked to use the storybook in guided reading (a practice that is designed to teach comprehension strategies) and to use the companion cards to allow the students to practice their own reading, either individually, in pairs, or in groups. The companion cards, which will be laminated, could also be sent home for additional reading exercises or for limited skills testing by a literate member of a student’s family.

The PHARE storybooks and their companion cards are designed to be complementary to the texts used in the IRI lessons. As a result, in a classroom using all of these materials, the students will have multiple opportunities to encounter the same sound-symbol combinations and the same vocabulary, increasing their chances of developing better decoding and comprehension skills at the pace anticipated by the reading and writing standards framework.

During quarters three and four, the program completed the translation of all the texts and reading cards for both grades one and two into the Bambara language. This material will be ready for distribution to the schools implementing balanced literacy instruction during the 2011-2012 school year.

II.B.2.2.4 Briefing Members of the Ministerial Cabinet on the Tenets of Balanced Literacy

In early September 2011, the PHARE program held a retreat in Sikasso with the entire ministry cabinet. During this retreat, the program staff took the opportunity to brief the attendees on the standards framework in reading and writing and on the three pillars of the balanced literacy approach (language mechanics, reading, and writing). Key aspects of the approach that were highlighted during this briefing included:

- The applicability of the balanced literacy approach to instruction in any language (a critical element in selecting it for Mali)
- The focus that balanced literacy places on games in the early primary classroom to facilitate the mastery of language mechanics
- The importance of guided reading activities in fostering the acquisition of comprehension skills
- The differences between writing as it is understood in the balanced literacy approach and writing as it has been traditionally understood in many French-speaking countries

The retreat provided cabinet members with an opportunity to ask multiple questions related to the balanced literacy approach. They wanted to know, for example, what advantages it had over methods such as the syllabic, global, and mixed methods for teaching reading; how young children could be asked and expected to write their own words and thoughts; and why it would even be necessary to use explicit techniques for teaching reading and writing for children studying in their own mother tongue (as presumably most Malian children will soon be). This rich exchange assisted the highest levels of the ministry to understand the pertinence of this approach and gave the PHARE program a welcome opportunity to provide greater detail on the sorts of changes in teacher practice that the USAID-sponsored trainings in balanced literacy are seeking to inspire.

II.B.2.2.5 Supporting the MEALN's Initiative to Update and Generalize the National Curriculum

The MEALN has made a firm decision that the country's bilingual curriculum, according to which all children in public school begin their primary instruction in a Malian national language and subsequently transition to learning French, is to be generalized at the start of the 2011-2012 school year⁷. The PHARE program has no direct mandate under the current contract to work on the design or the implementation of the bilingual curriculum. However, because the team's work with literacy is directly affected by choices related to the language of instruction, and because the PHARE contract is concerned with providing appropriate materials to teachers so that they can implement balanced literacy instruction effectively, the program staff have worked hard over the course of the last two quarters to contribute to the MEALN's curriculum generalization initiative⁸. The PHARE program's efforts in this arena to date have included:

- Participating at the invitation of USAID and the MEALN in a meeting of the technical quality commission to share the findings of the time-on-task study relative to teachers' use of instructional time in single-language and bilingual classroom contexts;
- Participating in donor-organized reflection sessions on how best to support the ministry's initiative;
- Providing to all of the donors the data on the PHARE program's expenses nationwide for a one-day training of teachers to use radio programming; the unit costs in this data, all of which are based on the MEALN's strategic plan for inservice teacher training;
- Advocating for a first-step towards revitalization that would be small enough in size (i.e. between two and three academies) so as to be financially viable and also logistically feasible in the extremely short timeline available to the ministry for conducting a quality roll-out of all the materials production and training related to the revitalization;
- Providing frank, experience-based advice related to the difficulties of ensuring that teachers who participate in trainings in CAPs *do in fact serve in the grade levels for which they have been trained*;
- Participating in and assisting to fund the UNESCO-organized workshop in Ségou devoted to updating the protocol for the generalization of the curriculum;
- Providing to selected members of the donor community (USAID and the Embassy of the Netherlands) a critique of the language and mathematics curricula as they now stand, in an attempt to demonstrate that the substance of the curriculum probably ought to be revisited before it is handed out to teachers, given that many teachers at present have difficulty understanding its content or transforming that content into instruction;
- Providing a list of suggested names to USAID and the Embassy of the Netherlands for the composition of a competent steering committee for the revitalization exercise;

⁷ This has been the MEALN's stated policy for over a decade, but progress toward the implementation of this policy has been slower than desired.

⁸ PHARE is particularly concerned that appropriate pedagogy, informed instruction in reading and writing, and sufficient materials be available in the curriculum classrooms. Otherwise, the mere fact that the instruction is in national language will not be a guarantor of the children learning to read.

- Working with program partner IEP to provide the MEALN with written proof of IEP's renunciation of copyright on the materials prepared for use with level 1 of the Ciwaras Lisent series;
- Translating into Bamanakan all of the texts produced in the summer of 2010 and validated in French by the MEALN in November 2010, for potential production and distribution to Bamanakan-speaking schools, if the generalization moves forward.

In addition, during quarter four of the fiscal year, PHARE program personnel participated in both of the workshops financed by USAID in Ségou and dedicated to updating the national curriculum and accompanying teachers' guide. During these workshops, the MEALN requested that PHARE program personnel lead the working group devoted to Language and Communication (LC). The PHARE program staff guided this group in its revisions of the LC curriculum and the accompanying teachers' guide material. During these revisions, they succeeded in incorporating in the documents a great deal more information about the standards framework in reading and writing, about balanced literacy, and about the techniques and strategies that a teacher can employ to implement balanced literacy instruction. Although PHARE staff were not available to participate in the follow-on workshop at the ANPE in Bamako, which was tasked with developing a training guide to accompany the updated curricular materials, the MEALN has recently requested that the program provide a refresher training for all DNP staff on the use of balanced literacy before the training of trainers is launched in the field during the 1st trimester.

II.B.3. Sub-result 1.3: Teacher Support and Supervision

In the course of this year, the PHARE program assisted the ministry to develop five tools for classroom observation, teacher supervision, and program monitoring. These five tools are as follows:

- 1) an observation grid for public and community school classrooms (also known as the "classic" tool)
- 2) an observation grid for medersa classrooms
- 3) an observation grid specific to one-classroom schools
- 4) an observation grid for observing IFM professors teaching in pre-service Training Colleges,
- 5) a grid for assessing the functionality of the virtual training centers (VTCs) in the IFMs

In quarter two, the program provided a 4-day training to representatives from all regional and district offices and from all IFMs on the use of each of these tools except the tool specific to one-classroom schools. A total of 419 people participated in these training events. The goal of these events was to assist these supervisors and pedagogical support personnel to use the tools to collect and report data on PHARE-supported interventions with an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability.

Throughout quarter three, the participants from that training carried out classroom observations using the tools in selected schools and IFMs and reported data back to the program on the progress professors and teachers were making in integrating the use of balanced literacy principles into their teaching. Overall this year, staff from the AEs observed 65 professors from IFMs, and CAP personnel observed 1765 teachers from public and community schools.

As of this writing, the PHARE program staff is working to analyze and summarize the data returned in this exercise. The results will assist in orienting the training and professional development support unit in its teacher support activities during year four of the program.

II.B.4. Sub-result 1.4: Development of high-quality and innovative classroom materials

Under this domain, PHARE staff primarily work to: a) develop and provide interactive radio instruction programming and accompanying support materials for use in primary school classrooms, and b) conduct other promising pilot programs using applicable technologies in support of improved reading and writing instruction.

II.B.4.1 The Development of Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) Programs to Support the Acquisition of Literacy in French

USAID/PHARE's work to produce interactive radio instruction programming in support of the acquisition of literacy in French proceeded on schedule during the third year of program implementation. The 120 grade two programs developed during program year two were delivered to the ORTM for broadcast; 109 of these were aired during the school year.

Meanwhile, the program scriptwriting and studio staff developed 120 programs for French instruction in grade three classic and grade four curriculum classrooms. The development of these programs followed the usual steps of making a content map for the entire series, writing a master plan for each program, writing a script for each program, recording the script for each program, evaluating each program in a real-life classroom situation, revising the recording based on classroom feedback, and completing final pre-air checks to the programs. During the pre-air checks, the program staff listen fully through each program one final time, to be sure that no incoherencies were created during the final editing process after formative evaluation. At the time this report is being submitted, the team has cleared 60 of the grade three programs for broadcasting. The remaining 60 will be cleared for air by mid-November.

The greatest innovation of the grade three programming is that it is structured around a series of authentic texts. Letters, prescriptions, journal articles, recipes, advertisements, a tourist publication, and other 'real-life' types of writing form the backbone of the comprehension and decoding exercises included in the lessons. As a result, children practicing regularly with the IRI programs will have the opportunity to engage with text that resembles the kinds of actual text they are likely to encounter in their day-to-day adult lives.

This year for the grade three broadcasts, schools will receive an IRI guide and a set of posters containing the authentic texts for use with the broadcasts. As the texts to be used during the radio programs are long when compared with grades 1 and 2, PHARE staff opted to not print the songs on posters, but to increase the font size for the texts and print them on two posters. Also this year, to facilitate monitoring usage of the IRI programs, a small preprinted notebook is being supplied to teachers to record the dates on which they listen to the broadcasts. Preprinted booklets containing a year's supply of the MEALN principal's report form (complete with carbon copies) are also being distributed to the school principals as in the past two years. These forms are completed by the principal and sent each month to the CAP. The information in the IRI listenership section serves as the basis for PHARE's calculation of listenership rates.

II.B.4.2. Dedicated educational radio channel

In our last quarterly report, we noted that several positive advances had been made with respect to the creation of a dedicated educational channel. First, the Ministry of Education had submitted a request for nationwide frequencies for the radio channel to the Ministry of Communications. Second, a draft text for the creation of the radio as a service attached to the DNEF has been forwarded to the Minister for approval and signature. And finally, the 2012 MEALN budget includes a budget line for the radio channel. During the fourth quarter of the year, USAID staff assisted program personnel to hold a meeting with the Malian Prime Minister regarding the radio channel. During the meeting Embassy, USAID, and PHARE representatives explained the reasons the channel was needed, provided the Prime Minister with an update on progress to date, and requested the assistance of the Prime Minister's office in keeping the project moving forward in a timely manner. That request was granted and USAID/PHARE looks forward to the effects of the Prime Minister's greater involvement in the establishment of the channel.

In addition, PHARE program staff participated in the meetings of the ad hoc committee created to support efforts to create the radio channel. This committee includes representatives of the cabinets and directorates of three Ministries (Education, Communications and Territorial Administration) as well as from the Telecommunications Regulatory Committee (CRT), the High Council of Communication charged with ensuring Equal Access to State Media, the Union of Free Radio and Television Stations in Mali (URTEL), UNICEF and USAID/PHARE. All efforts in support of the channel have been coordinated with the Cabinet, and the DNEF of the Ministry.

The draft text envisages the creation, by the Ministry of Education, Literacy and National Languages, of an Educational Radio Service. The primary responsibilities of this service are :

- Conceiving, producing and broadcasting radio programs for the training of teachers and professors and for direct instruction of pupils, students and other learners
- Conceiving, producing and broadcasting radio programs for the non-formal education sector
- Conceiving and producing supporting documentation for the various radio programs
- Ensuring the management, maintenance and use of all of the equipment and installations of the educational radio
- Broadcasting official information and communications from the Department.

II.B.4.3. Introducing Other Innovative Technologies in Support of Learning to Read

One of the primary mandates of the PHARE program as conceived under the contract is to pilot the use of appropriate technologies for supporting reading and writing instruction in the early grades. The PHARE program conducted a highly-successful first activity of this kind in 2009, experimenting in the CAP of Kati in training teachers to use smartphones to download and use lesson plans posted on a blog site on the internet. During program year three, the PHARE staff updated the tools and materials available for this experience. In the fourth quarter of program year three, PHARE trained 136 teachers and principals from the CAP of Djenné on the use of these materials.

The premise of PHARE's smartphone program is simple: two of the main blockages to better instruction in reading and writing in Malian classrooms are teachers' limited experience using appropriate pedagogies and their lack of access to any grade-appropriate text. The program makes the assumption that one comparatively less expensive way to furnish teachers in the interior of Mali with access to both quality lesson plans for primary reading and writing instruction and appropriate text is to place those materials on the internet and then give the teachers the opportunity to download them through mobile telephones.

During program year three, USAID/PHARE program staff updated the text and lesson plan materials developed for this experiment and posted them on the website <http://www.telphare.com>. There are currently 25 lessons available on the site, all written to assist students to explore and read a particular grade one text. The documents are all posted in either html or Microsoft word formats, and contain no images, multimedia elements, or other frills that could render downloading them difficult.

From September 28-30, 2011, a PHARE program team trained grade one and two teachers and directors from public and community schools in the CAP of Djenné, on their respective roles in implementing this smartphone program. It is the teacher's role to download and implement the lessons that are proposed. It is the director's role to send SMS feedback, using a questionnaire that is also posted on the internet, about the execution of the lesson. The feedback questionnaire is designed so that each question has a numerical answer: for example, in response to a question like "how age-appropriate was this lesson?" the director can answer with a 1, indicating that he/she thinks it "definitely is," with a 2, indicating that he/she thinks it "mostly is," or with a 3 indicating that he/she thinks that it "is not age-appropriate."

The 3-day training in Djenné touched on the following topics:

- a review of active pedagogy,
- a review of the tenets of balanced literacy,
- an introduction to the internet,
- an introduction to the USAID-provided smartphones, and
- practice downloading and implementing a reading and writing lesson.

The participants, who demonstrated a good basic grasp of the tenets of balanced literacy, were very engaged in the discussions. For many, this training was their first experience ever seeing or using the internet. Although there were a few technical glitches with the telephones (3 out of 68 refused to

function) and although the participants had vastly different levels of comfort with the exercise, all succeeded by the end of the practice sessions in downloading and preparing the practice lesson. The 3-day exercise concluded with a distribution of the HTC, Nokia, and Samsung smartphones to each of the schools.

The teachers participating in the experience are due to begin using the lessons in the third week of October, and have been asked to complete a minimum of two lessons a week. USAID/PHARE will be conducting intensive follow-up with the directors and teachers of each of the schools concerned, to ensure that the experience gets off to a good start and that the children in the classes in Djenné have the benefit of the texts and lessons posted on the net on their behalf.

II.B.5. Sub-result 1.5: Student Evaluation Systems

The PHARE program's work in the area of student evaluation, carried out by RTI, International, is focused on use of the Early Grade Reading (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics (EGMA) test batteries adapted for use in Mali

II.B.5.1 Completion of the CAP-Level EGRA Capacity Development and Application

The final Ségou EGRA Locale workshop took place in February 2011. PHARE staff provided the Ségou pedagogical counselors who had participated in the data collection with additional support in the interpretation of results and in presenting the findings from the EGRA Locale completed the previous year. The participants then identified the implications of these results and developed draft action plans to improve student performance in reading, with the intention that these could then be finalized and integrated into CAP action plans.

II.B.5.2 Adaptation of the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) Instrument

In November 2010, an EGMA adaptation workshop was held in Koulikoro in collaboration with the DNP and participation of representatives of the DNEB and local ministry staff, where a draft EGMA instrument for Mali was developed. In February 2011, enumerators were trained on the administration of EGMA, and the instrument was piloted in the CAP of Fana. Pilot data was analyzed and, based on pilot results, the instrument was finalized in collaboration with senior DNP staff members.

PHARE collected data using EGMA concomitant with the mid-term analysis data collection using the EGRA tool. Data was collected in 150 schools across fifteen (15) CAPs. The information gained on students' performance in mathematics using the EGMA tool will be useful to the MEALN in making eventual decisions regarding mathematics instruction in the country.

II.B.5.3 EGRA Data Collection for the Evaluation of Program Impact

As a portion of the USAID/PHARE mid-term program evaluation, the program collected EGRA data from the schools retained in the mid-term evaluation sample. This application of EGRA was intended to enable analysis at the mid-point of any significant differences in children's reading abilities stemming from PHARE program interventions.

The sample for the EGRA data-collection in 2011 was not a national-level sample. The sample was designed to include a set of control schools, a set of schools that were receiving only IRI inputs (training, IRI radio broadcasts, and related materials), and a set of schools that were receiving IRI inputs as well as balanced literacy inputs (training and materials). Because such analysis demanded that other school factors were as similar as possible, the sample was restricted to areas where all three school-types existed (schools with no radio reception through to schools receiving all program inputs). Although this sample is not nationally representative, it allowed for data collection in the three main types of school in Mali: classic, curriculum, and medersa. The sample is included in the table below:

Table 6: Sample for 2011 EGRA/EGMA Testing

Type of school and assigned group	No. of schools	No. of pupils by grade	Total no. of students by grade and by type of assessment					TOTAL
			EGRA			EGMA		
			2ème	3ème	4ème	2ème	4ème	
Classic - Control	26	18	468	---	468	468	468	1872
Classic - IRI alone	29	18	522	---	522	522	522	2088
Classic - IRI + AEQ	28	18	504	---	504	504	504	2016
Curriculum - IRI + AEQ	24	20	---	480	---	480	480	1440
Medersa - IRI + AE	30	16	---	---	480	480	480	1440
Other Curriculum	11	20	---	220	---	220	220	660
TOTAL	148		1494	700	1974	2674	2674	9516

Prior to data collection, the PHARE EGRA team and DNP officials conducted extensive technical, organizational, and logistical preparations. In all, nineteen (19) teams of four pedagogical counselors (CP) each were trained and carried out the data collection. The teams administered the EGRA exam to 4168 participating children (all types of schools and grade levels combined) from 148 schools and also completed a variety of companion instruments that allowed for information on factors related to the teachers' and children's behavior and status to be analyzed.

Data entry took place during the month of June and included the use of a new data entry system, which has proven easier to manage and manipulate than the system used during the 2009 EGRA application. Preliminary data cleaning was undertaken upon completion of data entry.

A round of thorough data exploration and preliminary analysis began at the beginning of July. During the course of this period of analysis, a number of challenges became evident, which fall into three main categories: data collection anomalies; data entry errors; and core sampling/analysis issues.

The first category included a limited number of cases where, for example, there was confusion as to the categorization of schools and a class from a non-targeted teacher was accidentally tested – this resulted in missing/lost data that could not be recovered. Although regrettable, the total number of these cases was not so high as to impede the team from drawing meaningful and useful conclusions.

As regards data entry errors, in a number of cases, despite regular quality control checks, some data entry input was left blank by accident (data entry error is to be expected, which is why thorough data cleaning and exploration is always an important step in the process). To resolve these issues, program staff had to take the time-consuming step of referring back to the original test forms. However, once the original forms were consulted, the data could be correctly entered and the problems resolved.

The third category of challenges, relating to core sampling issues, relates directly to the challenge of monitoring a project at this large a scale in the Malian context. The original research design for the mid-term evaluation focused on identifying and grouping *schools* in three categories: control schools (where no inputs were received); IRI-only schools (where teachers were trained in IRI, used IRI radio programs, and had IRI materials); and IRI+AEQ (where teachers received all of the above inputs and also were trained in AEQ and had AEQ materials). The underlying supposition was that the category in which a

school was listed based on the December 2010 on-site check by PHARE program staff (see mid-term evaluation below) would be identical to the category of the class tested and therefore of the students participating in the EGRA exams.

This supposition turned out to be false. By triangulating information collected by the PHARE mid-term evaluation teams, and information found on the teacher and director questionnaires completed by the EGRA teams during their testing day at a given school, the PHARE team discovered a number of anomalies that made it clear that the original analysis design, using simple school-group categories (control/IRI/IRI+AEQ) would not be feasible. High teacher transience and inconsistency in implementation within schools were highly evident. As such, a school that had originally been designated as an IRI school might have a teacher in one classroom who had received the training and materials but was using the radio programs only sporadically and another teacher in a different classroom that had not in fact attended training but that was using the radio programs on a very regular basis. In this scenario, it was impossible to categorize the *school*; the only level of analysis likely to yield accurate information would be that of the individual *classrooms*. This realization resulted in a need to shift the analysis originally planned from a standard control/light treatment/full treatment approach to a model where project inputs are analyzed as a group of independent variables in order to determine their effect on student performance. This new analysis plan has, to some degree, more limitations associated with it than the original design. However, recognizing the challenges faced both in program implementation and in data collection, and given the paucity of readily available and reliable information from schools and the frequency of staff changes remarked during the data collection, we believe there is not another analysis plan that can provide significantly fine-tuned information on the program's impact.

Following the development of the new analysis plan, there remained a significant amount of work to do in order to determine which variables could confidently be used for this analysis. (Some inputs, such as use of radio programs, were examined in multiple ways during data collection for triangulation purposes, and which source would be 'tapped' in running the regressions had to be determined). The complexity of this task was further increased given that data for some classrooms was missing (as in the case of teacher absenteeism on the day of the visits, for example), and that some schools had had changes in teaching staff over the course of the year.

A preliminary data analysis workshop on the EGRA data was held with the MEALN/DNP in August. Because at the scheduled time of the workshop a final analysis plan addressing the difficulties described above had not been agreed, the time was used to engage participating representatives from the DNP, DNEB, CPS, and DEN in resolving data anomalies. The workshop went well overall and provided participants a feeling of ownership regarding the process of data analysis using SPSS. Following this workshop, participants continued to work together to ensure that all anomalies in the EGRA data were addressed.

Because of the challenges described here, and in particular the need to change the EGRA 2011 analysis method, the 2011 EGRA report will be completed during the first quarter of the next program year. Nonetheless, a preliminary summary of the analyses used and the results are included here.

II.B.5.4 EGRA Data Collection Preliminary Results for Classic Schools

The analysis focused on determining the relationship between PHARE program components and students' reading performance. The program components examined included: 1) Rate of exposure to IRI radio programs; 2) Level of teacher's training in the balanced literacy approach (Approche Equilibree / AEQ) (taking into consideration the amount of training received as well as how much time children had had an opportunity to be taught by an AEQ trained teacher); 3) Access to IRI materials; and 4) Access to AEQ materials. While students were tested using the full EGRA instrument in order to test reading performance, preliminary analysis determined that the measures most reliable for analyzing relationships included: 1) the number of correct letter sounds the student could identify in one minute; and 2) whether the student was able to read at least one word in the passage-reading component of the EGRA assessment. These measures proved most sensitive to tests of significance, most likely because they

showed the greatest variability given low scores on some of the more difficult subtests (not surprisingly given the already demonstrated low levels of reading competency among Malian students).

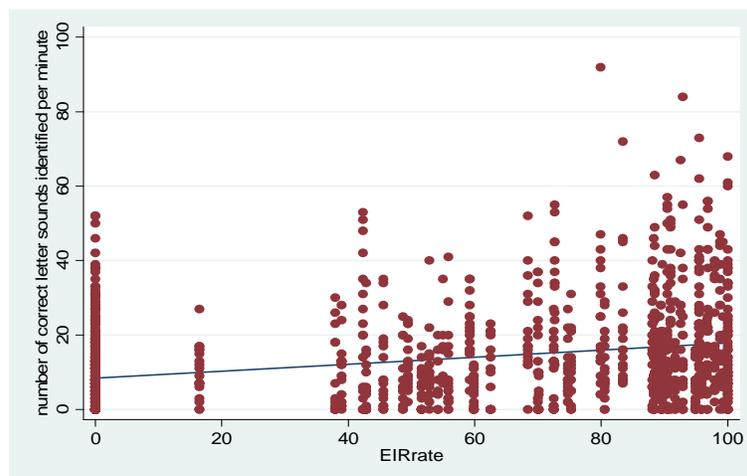
In addition to the program components and students reading performance, analysis also included examining a number of potential control variables – that is, other factors that could contribute to students reading scores. By controlling for such factors, the analysis could isolate and examine the relative impact of the program inputs. The control variables examined included a range of factors that have been shown in the literature to possibly impact learning outcomes, including socio-economic factors, gender, age, whether a child is repeating a grade, pre-school attendance, teacher’s previous training and experience, etc. Preliminary analysis showed that the only such variable that demonstrated an effect among the schools in the sample was whether the student was repeating the grade. This is likely in part due to low variability across such factors within the sample schools. It should be noted that it was not, nor is it ever, possible to collect data on every single possible factor that could potentially contribute to student outcomes. These issues will be discussed further in the limitations section of the full mid-term evaluation report.

Exploratory analysis showed that access to IRI and AEQ materials are highly correlated with IRI broadcasts and AEQ exposure rate ($r= 0.7$ and 0.8 respectively), and it is thus not possible to disentangle the effect of IRI materials from the effect of IRI broadcasts, and the effect of AEQ materials from the effect of AEQ exposure rate. The analyses were therefore focused on IRI broadcasts and the AEQ exposure rate. Because the goal of the analysis was to investigate whether there is a relationship between student’s exposure to the PHARE intervention and student’s reading ability as measured by EGRA, we built two groups of models, regressing each of the outcomes of interest (letters sounds and whether or not the student could read any words) on the two remaining measures of exposure to the PHARE intervention (exposure to IRI and exposure to AEQ), controlling for various student, classroom and school characteristics. In all of these analyses, to account for the clustering of students within classrooms and ensure that standard errors are estimated correctly, multilevel regression models were used.

Our analyses indicate that the percentage of IRI broadcasts a teacher used in the classroom are associated with student’s reading ability as measured by the number of correct letter sounds students can identify per minute; the level of exposure to AEQ, on the other hand, is not associated with this outcome. The percentage of IRI broadcasts a teacher used in the classroom is also associated with the probability that a student is able to read at least one word in a simple text from reading component of the assessment.

Figure one displays the relationship between IRI exposure and letters identified per minute. While there is clearly variability of student performance at every level of IRI exposure, the graph clearly displays that it is only in classrooms with the highest IRI rates that students are found at the higher end of the scale in terms of performance found in the sample.

Figure 1. Relationship between IRI rate and clspm. Actual values and fitted regression line



As mentioned above, the full report will be ready during the first quarter of FY 12. For the final data collection in 2013, the PHARE team will take the necessary steps to plan an approach that takes into account the difficulties encountered with data collection and analysis this year.

II.B.5.5 Building MEALN Capacity to Use EGRA

In response to expressions of interest by the MEALN, and in particular senior staff of the DNP, the next program year will focus on developing the capacity of ministry staff to undertake EGRA independently. This includes both tasks in which they have already been involved, such as instrument adaptation and management of data collection, as well as tasks for which to this point project staff have had primary responsibility, such as sampling design in keeping with identified research questions, quality control, data cleaning, and weighting of data. This series of capacity development activities will revolve around and culminate in EGRA and EGMA data collection at the end of the school-year, as well as subsequent analysis, which will target a performance-related research question to be identified by DNP staff.

II.C. Concerns / Comments

II.C.1 Succeeding in establishing the educational radio channel and delivering the IRI programs to all intended audiences

PHARE encountered a serious glitch this year when the national radio station refused to accord an hour and ½ a day of airtime to the PHARE broadcasts. PHARE has received only one hour of airtime, meaning that only two of the program's three radio series can be broadcast this year.

This highlights the importance of establishing the educational radio channel. PHARE intends in the coming year to remain in contact with the Prime Minister's office, and will pursue all other possible avenues to accomplishing the creation of the channel.

In addition, PHARE is exploring how to provide the radio series that will not be aired to the program's target schools. The main challenge in this undertaking is budgetary; to provide recordings on DVD or USB to the schools, PHARE would have to furnish them with a radio other than the radio cassette player they received at the outset of the program. PHARE will keep USAID posted on our decision-making in this regard, so that the best choices can be made both in light of the targets set under the program's PMP and in light of the budgetary constraints around making an additional large purchase of equipment.

II.C.2 Identifying greater numbers of MEALN staff capable of assuming a supporting role in the implementation of the IFM on-line course

Although the IFM on-line course has the great advantage of incurring less cost for trainings than do face-to-face events, correcting homework and responding to queries from enrollees in the course is a time-intensive prospect. PHARE will need to work closely with the MEALN in the coming year to ensure that sufficient human resources are in place to enable a greater number of professors to benefit from the course.

II.C.3 Validating a complement to the IFM curriculum in a timely manner

After three years, PHARE has received permission from the MEALN to move forward with creating a complement to the IFM curriculum that could provide more guidance to IFM professors on addressing the methodology for the teaching of reading and writing. However, completing this document, validating it, and then training the IFM professors on its use are all somewhat time-consuming propositions. PHARE will have to work particularly efficiently to ensure that this new program deliverable is completed and validated according to a schedule that will allow professors and students to benefit from it during the coming academic year.

II.C.4 Quality of trainings across CAPs

PHARE has received indications throughout the year that the quality of training varies greatly between the CAP. It remains important that we schedule a systematic analysis of training quality by CAP that will enable us to direct human resources to the areas most needing that technical assistance.

II.C.5 Reducing teacher mobility in and out of balanced literacy schools

Changing reading pedagogy at the school level requires a sustained commitment from school leaders and personnel alike. Throughout this year, discrepancies between names on the PHARE provisional and final teacher attendance lists, as well as the challenges in EGRA implementation and analysis, have highlighted the comparatively high degree of mobility of Mali's teaching staff. It will be important that the CAPs assigning teachers to schools and that the communes providing teacher pay assist the PHARE program in maintaining teachers trained by the program *in the classes* for which they have been trained. PHARE intends to redouble its efforts in this regard in the coming school year, possibly collaborating with PRADDE-PC to achieve a positive outcome in teacher stability as often as possible.

II.C.5 Providing balanced literacy schools with sufficient support and follow-up to enable them to put their training into action

Teachers who have **not** shifted from one class or school to another, and who therefore **have** attended all of PHARE's trainings have, in the best case scenario received 7 days of training in implementing balanced literacy from their district office. This year, they will also receive a substantial amount of material intended to assist them to put balanced literacy instruction into practice. However, PHARE will have to pay particular attention to offering each teacher involved appropriate support and advice (either from a pedagogical counsellor or from a PHARE staff member) to create lasting change in the balanced literacy classrooms.

II.C.6 The successful revitalization of the bilingual curriculum

Ensuring that the bilingual curriculum is launched and well-implemented in Kati, Koulikoro, and Ségou is likely to be a challenge. PHARE remains concerned about the technical quality of that effort. Our staff will continue to make ourselves available to assist USAID and the MEALN in introducing the new curriculum to teachers, and we remain interested in hearing from USAID at any time how we may best be of assistance.

III. INTERMEDIATE RESULT 4: Improved Access to Quality Basic Education for Targeted Populations (Results 15-22)

The sub-results under Intermediate Result 4 facilitate increased access to quality education for targeted populations such as children in Mali's medersas, children in isolated rural areas and children with special needs.

III.A. Expected activities

Improved instruction in Mali's medersas (Sub-result 4.1)

- Training for directors and teachers from 1100 medersas in the use of interactive radio instruction and the adapted version of balanced literacy
- Distribution of the USAID/PHARE reading kits to 1100 medersas
- Monitoring and evaluation visits to selected medersas
- Attempting to design a system of SMS feedback for medersa directors enabling them to report on IRI programs used

Improved access to basic education for hard to reach populations (Sub-result 4.2)

- Refresher training for the original 35 one-classroom schools
- Monitoring and evaluation visits to the majority of one-classroom schools (ECUs)
- Identification of 14 additional one-classroom schools in Tombouctou
- Support to the development of 8 new mobile schools

Educational opportunities expanded via distance or non-formal education (Sub-result 4.3)

- Continued development of a model for the inclusion of special needs children

Partnerships developed to expand access to education (Sub-result 4.4)

- Continued negotiations with partners interested in offering support to the program

III.B. Actual Activities and Achievements

III.B.1. Improving Instruction in Mali's Medersas

One of PHARE's major successes in the 2010-2011 school year was completing the 'induction' into the program of medersas from every region in Mali. In both the January-February period and the August-September period, PHARE staff held consultations with ministry and medersa sub-sector authorities to identify additional medersas meeting PHARE's criteria for assistance that could be incorporated into the program. This brought to a total of **1154** the medersas that PHARE supports in delivering improved French instruction. Table 7 provides a breakdown of all of the medersas that PHARE assists by region and district. The date of these medersas' induction into the program is listed at the right.

Table 7: PHARE program medersas by region and district

REGION	DISTRICT	Number of Medersas	Date of Induction into the Program
Bamako Rive Droite	BANANKABOUGOU	10	April, 2010
	FALADIE	39	April, 2010
	KALABANCOURA	26	April, 2010
	TOROKOROBOUGOU	16	April, 2010
Bamako Rive Gauche	BAMAKO COURA	1	April, 2010
	BANCONI	25	April, 2010
	BOZOLA	6	April, 2010
	CENTRE COMMERCIAL	2	April, 2010
	DJELIBOUGOU	14	April, 2010
	HIPPODROME	6	April, 2010
	LAFIABOUGOU	12	April, 2010
	SEBENICORO	12	April, 2010
Bougouni	BOUGOUNI	38	April, 2010
	KOLONDIÉBA	14	April, 2010
	KOUMANTOU	56	April, 2010
	YANFOLILA	87	April, 2010
Kati	BAGUINEDA	22	April, 2010
	DIOÏLA	20	April, 2010
	FANA	38	April, 2010
	KALABANCORO	15	April, 2010

REGION	DISTRICT	Number of Medersas	Date of Induction into the Program
	KANGABA	31	April, 2010
	KATI	27	April, 2010
Koulikoro	BANAMBA	12	April, 2010
	KOLOKANI	13	April, 2010
	KOULIKORO	43	April, 2010
	NARA	13	April, 2010
Ségou	BARAOUELI	1	April, 2010
	MACINA	17	April, 2010
	MARKALA	19	April, 2010
	NIONO	7	April, 2010
	SEGOU	24	April, 2010
Sikasso	KADIOLO	19	April, 2010
	NIENA	59	April, 2010
	SIKASSO I	16	April, 2010
	SIKASSO II	16	April, 2010
Douentza	BANKASS	6	December, 2010
Gao	GAO	28	December, 2010
Kayes	KAYES RD	11	December, 2010
	KAYES RG	48	December, 2010
	KAYES RG***	17	September, 2011***
Kidal	KIDAL	24	December, 2010
Kita	BAFOULABE	27	December, 2010
Koutiala	KOUTIALA	57	April, 2010
	KOUTIALA***	16	September, 2011***
Mopti	MOPTI	29	December, 2010
Nioro	DIEMA	23	December, 2010
	NIORO	22	December, 2010

REGION	DISTRICT	Number of Medersas	Date of Induction into the Program
San	BLA	30	April, 2010
	BLA***	24	September, 2011***
	SAN	16	December, 2010
Tombouctou	DIRE	4	December, 2010
	TOMBOUCTOU	6	December, 2010

***In these CAP, additional medersas were identified and trained during the month of September, 2011.

USAID/PHARE held a refresher training for the “first” group of these medersas in November-December, 2010. This was the second training this group of attendees had ever received from the PHARE program.

This training was intended to accomplish two goals: a) reminding the teachers how to use the IRI radio programming in the medersa classrooms and b) assisting them in taking the broad guidelines of the balanced literacy approach and operationalizing them in their specific classroom context. During these trainings, the pedagogical counselors trained by PHARE demonstrated how to follow a design and implement a lesson plan that takes as a point of departure an authentic communication situation—buying a train ticket, attending a marriage ceremony, etc. Teachers are asked to begin their lesson with an oral activity, often a game, aimed at developing necessary vocabulary for that authentic situation. This activity is then to be followed by an activity centered on a document to read that is related to the authentic situation. This is then followed by a writing activity related to the same theme and the lesson then ends with a game meant to reinforce the learning gains of the session.

USAID/PHARE staff has identified this structure as being an ideal application of balanced literacy to the medersa context. The medersa context has several particularities: a) the language teacher is only with a given classroom or level for 30 to 60 minutes a day, b) the target language, French, is only a minimal portion of the curriculum and all other subjects are taught in another language, c) the teacher may not have sufficient mastery of French to be as flexible as a full-scale application of balanced literacy would require. By providing medersa teachers with a structure that will assist them to bring balanced literacy instruction alive in their classrooms, the PHARE program will help teachers of French in these schools to develop and implement lesson plans that will complement the instruction delivered through the radio programs.

The training of trainers for the academy representatives, the pedagogical counselors in charge of the medersas, and the pedagogical counselors who are the point people for the program in each CAP took place in the first week of January; the CAPs then scheduled the training of their directors and teachers throughout the remaining three weeks of that month. During the trainings, these schools received the reading kit that accompanies the grade two programs (a guide, a set of flash cards, and a tote bag for those materials); they also received, in exchange for an old USB key containing only one year's worth of IRI programming, a new key with the grade one and grade two programs all recorded on it. Also, as usual with all training cascades of this size, the PHARE program organized a series of supervisory visits to the CAP during the course of these trainings. During these visits, program staff ensured that: i) the CAP personnel in charge of the training were following the training guidelines provided during the training of trainers, ii) that funds provided to the CAP for the training were being used in accordance with USAID and program guidelines, and iii) the USB key exchange proceeded as planned. The supervisory teams detected no major problems in training operations during the course of this cascade.

In addition to holding this refresher training, PHARE held two trainings this year for medersas joining the program for the first time. The first of these was held in February, 2011. The second, for a group of 57 medersas requesting admission to the program from the CAPs of Koutiala, Bla, and Kayes Rive Gauche, was held in September. The learning objectives for directors and teachers participating for the first time in PHARE trainings covered: a) the use of the IRI programs, b) an introduction to the standards framework, and c) the preparation of a reading and writing lesson as per the adapted format that the PHARE program is advocating be used in the medersa context. In order to accommodate this amount of content, the PHARE program lengthened the training for the directors and teachers from the new medersas to five days, instead of three. In coming years, refresher training for the teachers from these medersas can be of a shorter length as they will in essence have "caught up with" their peers.

Because these medersas had never before participated in the PHARE program, the amount of material that PHARE distributed to them was considerably greater than that distributed to the medersas that had already worked for one or two years with the program. During this round of training, the "new" medersas received:

- An MP-3 player
- A USB key containing both the grade one and the grade two programs
- The grade one IRI / reading kit (an IRI guide, alphabet boards and letters to accompany them, flashcards, word strips, posters, and cassettes)
- The grade two IRI / reading kit (IRI guide, flash cards, posters, and a cassette)
- Copies of the guide to balanced literacy
- Copies of the standards framework

With this material, these medersas will be able to use the IRI programming and implement lessons inspired by the balanced literacy approach in both their grade three and grade four classrooms, putting them on a par by the end of the year, with those who had been trained the previous year.

Although PHARE organized supervision visits to the trainings in February for the larger group of new medersas, in the September trainings the number of medersas trained was small enough to enable PHARE's training team to themselves train the teachers in the CAPs. This provided PHARE staff with the opportunity to handle all of the details related to the training directly, thereby minimizing the number of difficulties encountered during the training sessions.

III.B.2. Monitoring and Evaluation in the PHARE program's medersas

In addition to the information collected during the mid-term evaluation (see below), PHARE organized two major monitoring activities in the medersas in the course of year three. The first of these consisted of sending program staff out to conduct spot checks on program usage in selected medersas in Baroueli, Dioila, Yanfolila, Koumantou, Bamako Rive Droite and Bamako Rive Gauche. The second consisted of sponsoring the CPs in the CAPs, (as had been the case for the public and community schools), to visit medersa language arts classrooms and to observe the teachers' reading and writing lessons using the observation tool developed by the program for that purpose.

The spot checks conducted by the program reached a total of 74 medersas in the regions and 170 in the town of Bamako. Overall, the data in aggregate showed an acceptable use of the IRI programs across both grades one and two. However, a closer look at the complete data set for the 74 schools revealed two interesting trends. Usage of the IRI programs across all of the medersas remained highly variable, with different medersas opting to use the programming at widely different paces. A second common trend was that the grade one programs was used much more extensively than the grade two programs.

Regarding the follow-up from the pedagogical counselors in the CAP, 45 of the 67 CAP returned observation data to PHARE. According to the analysis presented in the indicator reports, 39% of the medersa teachers observed achieved a score of "acceptable" (equivalent to a level 2) on the observation

grids. PHARE is pleased with this progress, and we look forward to continuing to support the medersa teachers in making qualitative changes to their instructional practice.

III.B.3: Setting up an SMS system for data reporting from the medersas

PHARE's efforts to set up this system over the year have been slowed due to issues with the compatibility of the medersa directors' various telephones and the database management system made available through Frontline SMS. In the coming year, PHARE will be working to get the bugs out of the system and to render this application functional in all the medersas for the 2011-2012 school year.

III.B.2. Sub-Result 4.2: Participation in the MEALN's Planning and Supervision Activities Related to One-Classroom and Mobile Schools

PHARE's work in support of one-classroom schools continued throughout the year. Major activities in this domain were: a) refresher training in the spring of 2010 for the teachers of the first wave of 35 one-classroom schools, b) site visits during the final trimester of the school year to all of the one-classroom schools to offer additional support to the teachers, c) identification of an additional 14 sites for one-classroom schools in the Tombouctou region, d) training for the 14 teachers identified in the various districts of Tombouctou, and e) support to the development of mobile schools in two CAPs in the Mopti region.

III.B.2.1 Refresher Training of ECU teachers

Since 2009, the program PHARE has worked with the MEALN to develop a pedagogical model for instruction in one-classroom schools. According to this model, the one-classroom school teacher must learn to manage four aspects of instruction: a) exploitation of the curriculum for one-classroom schools, b) management of classroom organization, c) management of classroom resources, and d) management of classroom time. The PHARE program's goal is to provide teachers with the necessary tools for managing these four distinct but complementary aspects in the special context of the one-classroom school.

PHARE's very first trainings for one-classroom school teachers occurred in September of 2010, and targeted teachers in the 35 one classroom schools identified by the MEALN during site visits the previous quarter. In March 2011, PHARE conducted a refresher training for these same 35 teachers, along with the supervisors supporting them from 7 academies and 10 CAP. The PHARE training team's main intent was to enable the ECU teachers to return to their classrooms at the end of the training with solid instructional plans in place for the remainder of the school year, and to enable the pedagogical counsellors to be able to collect the necessary information on ECU functioning to support the reporting on PHARE program indicators in the September period. Topics covered during the five days of the refresher training included:

- Managing and organizing the ECU curriculum, organizing instruction in thematic units
- Integrating the use of national languages in ECU instruction
- Using the specially designed lesson preparation form for ECU instruction
- Using games, local knowledge resources, and "found" material to enrich instruction
- Organizing groupwork, with whole class and separate groupwork sessions organized in their one-classroom schools
- Creating maximal autonomy for ECU students
- Using the ECU observation grid for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

PHARE's analysis of the observation grids returned from the CAPs indicates that the two trainings provided to the ECU teachers have given them a solid grounding to enable them to begin implementing the ECU model of instruction. According to that data 71% of ECU teachers observed were successfully

leading their one-classroom schools. In the next training of all ECU teachers, program staff will address some of the weaknesses identified during the observations.

III.B.2.2 Joint MEALN-PHARE monitoring and evaluation visits to the 35 ECU

From May 8-28th, joint teams of PHARE and MEALN staff visited the first 35 ECUs supported by the program. The objectives of these visits were to:

- Observe ECU classes and use the PHARE-developed observation tool to examine the degree to which the thematic approach was in use
- Discuss the progress of the ECU with the teachers
- Discuss the progress of the ECU with the communities
- Generate recommendations for resolving any difficulties the ECU might be encountering

The locations visited are shown in the following table:

Table 8: ECU Monitoring Visits by Team

TEAM	AE visited	CAP visited	ECU visited
Team One	Kati, Ségou, Mopti (3)	Kati, Fana, Ségou, Niono, Tenenkou (5)	Diawanébougou, Missira, Sidiè, Tambabougou, Sondo, Wolokoro, Nintola Binamourouwèrè, AdamaWèrè, Tiémaba et Hérémakono, Sampaye, Kodaga, Toguel Kossam, Daga (15)
Team Two	San, Mopti (2)	San et Mopti (2)	Merou-Daga, Badaga, Saré-Mabo, Sangala, Tounè I, Tounè II, Dorola, Koro-Guélébougou (8)
Team Three	Gao, Kidal, Douentza (3)	Kidal, Gao, Douentza (3)	Tanazrouft, Ighoras, Taghararat et Aghilheck, Akérawat, Sossoro, Farankandia, Hawdomé, Sène, Nani, Hororo, Songoli (12)
TOTAL	6	10	35

Once attendance and enrollment figures had been verified, the team members observed teaching in the school, held a discussion with the teacher, held a discussion with the community leaders, and collected recommendations related to the functioning of the ECU.

Several positive observations were reported from these monitoring visits. Most of the communities had really made exceptional efforts to recruit students for the schools, to welcome the teacher, and to help him/her to store materials and establish a school routine. Several of them had already begun their own constructions of school buildings for the ECU to use. All of the communities confirmed that they had received visits from the pedagogical counselors of their CAP, and all seemed confident that their combined efforts, along with the support of the PHARE program for the teachers, could result in the schools having a successful second year of operations in 2011-2012.

Also encouraging was the fact that teachers were found to be using the condensed, bilingual curriculum developed by the PHARE program and distributed at the trainings in September, 2010. They were observed to be planning thematic units and to be using the IRI material that had been provided to them. They seemed at ease using the USAID-sponsored materials with their students and able to create homogeneous groupings in their classrooms for differentiated work assignments.

However, the monitoring visits also revealed some areas where the teachers still have room for improvement. For example, teachers rarely asked an older or more capable student to help younger students in their learning; use of the national language was not consistent, although by definition the ECUs are bilingual schools; and teachers frequently requested further assistance in using formative

evaluation and local knowledge resource people in their lessons. These aspects can be further reinforced in future trainings for the one-classroom school teachers.

The monitoring visits also provided insights related to more complicated issues in some ECU. In three sites, the number of children attending school in the ECU had already surpassed the limit of 40 students that the ministry has retained in its definition of what makes a one-classroom school. In another, too few students were present to create a viable instructional atmosphere. In almost all sites, the schools requested assistance with building or updating their classroom space. These are topics that PHARE can assist the schools to address with the concerned CAP and communes in order to find durable solutions that are not dependent on project support.

The ECU monitoring teams made several recommendations, as follows:

- That the CAPs include ECU teachers routinely in all trainings organized at the CAP, to broaden their base of pedagogical understanding
- That the MEALN organize a learning gains study in the ECU classrooms to verify the students' mastery of basic language arts and math
- That the ministry committee in charge of ECU conduct additional site assessments to expand the use of ECU as a strategy for education in rural areas in Mali
- That USAID through the PHARE program support the expansion of the ECU to the fullest financial extent possible.

PHARE staff will be following up on these recommendations during the coming year.

III.B.2.3 Identification of 14 new one-classroom school sites and training of the teachers in those 14 schools

Since the fall of 2010, the MEALN and the PHARE program had received repeated requests from several CAPs in the Tombouctou region to assist in launching one-classroom schools in remote localities. In August, in collaboration with the MEALN, the PHARE program sponsored two teams to inspect potential ECU sites in all five of Tombouctou's CAP.

The protocol for ECU site prospection requires the teams conducting the site visits to follow a careful and thorough process. This process includes meeting with the educational authorities at both the regional and district level to identify villages or hamlets that could be appropriate sites for one-classroom schools. From there, the teams visit each site, assessing whether the number of children in that village is appropriate for the creation of an ECU (i.e. not too large); whether the parents and the community are willing to provide in-kind support for the school (i.e. digging a well so there can be fresh water on site; naming a community member to make sure the children arrive at school on time; providing lodging for the teacher, etc.); whether there are any local resource people who could serve as the teacher, etc. Once this step is completed, the team meets with the chiefs of the village and with the mayor and education commissioners of the commune in which the village falls, seeking to determine whether they are prepared to make provisions for a new ECU in their communal development plans for the education sector. Data on each site is collected and returned to Bamako, where the MEALN representatives and PHARE program staff review all of the information to determine whether a given site should receive support for launching a one-classroom school.



*The site prospection exercise in Gourma Rharous:
Meeting with community leaders in Maraki*

Based on this process, which was conducted in August, 2011 the teams identified 14 sites appropriate for the creation of an ECU in the CAP of Tombouctou. The sites identified were as follows:

Table 9: New ECU Sites in Tombouctou

No.	CAP	School
1	Niafunke	Filiki
2	Niafunke	M'Boudouga
3	Dire	Kel-Akir
4	Dire	Ihmid II
5	Dire	Lessodji
6	Dire	Bora
7	Goundam	Tahikimte Kéina Tessadjiné
8	Goundam	Ibrika II
9	Goundam	Kel-Hangwaw
10	Rharous	Maraki
11	Tombouctou	Tiriste
12	Tombouctou	Baoufundou
13	Tombouctou	Inkarane(Tilamedess)
14	Tombouctou	Tinaféwa

Once the committee had met to identify the sites, the MEALN, via the DNEF, wrote to the Tombouctou Academy and to the five CAPs of the region to inform them of the selection of the sites and to request that they designate a teacher for each of the new schools. (PHARE does not control or interfere with the MEALN's teacher assignment procedures for the one-classroom schools). The MEALN assigned a teacher for each of the schools.



Children (and potential ECU students) in Maraki

Once the teachers had been selected, PHARE organized a one-week training for them in Bamako. This training had as a primary objective to provide the 14 new teachers from Tombouctou with an introduction to the model for instruction in one classroom schools, to the condensed program of study and to the other tools that PHARE has developed for use in one-classroom schools. During seven days, the teachers participated in simulations, familiarized themselves with the lesson plan for one-classroom instruction, drafted portions of lessons, and demonstrated for the others in the group the lesson ideas they had prepared. At the conclusion of the training, each of the 14 new teachers from Tombouctou received a kit of material intended to assist him to launch the new school in the village to which he is assigned. The kit provided the same material as that supplied to ECUs last year, including instructional materials for lessons in language arts, math, geography, and science. The new ECU teachers attending the training were highly appreciative of the material.

III.B.2.4 Supporting the development of mobile schools for nomadic populations

The PHARE program, as part of its support to increasing **access** to education, supports the development and functioning mobile schools in the academy of Mopti. The work for this component is carried out by subcontractor Aide et Action International.

During the course of this year, the PHARE program formally launched the eight mobile schools created last year. In order to identify appropriate communities for the schools, last year the first major activity Aide et Action International carried out was a social assessment in 20 nomadic communities in the Djenné and Mopti districts. This diagnostic exercise enabled the team to identify 14 potential communities in the Niger Delta that would be ideal for the creation of a mobile school.

Directly following the identification of the 14 potential communities for the establishment of mobile schools, Aide et Action held a workshop with the ministry of education to develop a strategy and approach for conducting outreach in nomadic communities to raise awareness about the importance of education. A second workshop enabled the team to develop a training module on cross-cultural education in the nomadic context and to lay the groundwork for developing a follow-up model on the same topic.

With these workshops completed, the team, in conjunction with the MEALN, conducted a second set of site visits to validate the choice of 8 communities in which to establish schools. The eight communities finally selected are listed in the following table:

Table 10: Mobile School Sites in Mopti

CAP	Community / School	Village	Commune
Mopti	1 - Windé Theiki	Windé-Theiki	Koubaye
	2 - Nawé-Nawé	Nawé-Nawé	
	3 - Em Nalher	Em-Nalher	Socoura
	4 - Bélinguel	Kari	Salsalbé
Sévaré	5 - Ouro Abidina	Ouro- Abidina/Djimango	Korombana
Djenné	6 - Fatoumata Mossi	Fatoumata Mossi	Fakala
	7 - Tandiana	Tandiana	
	8 - Kassoum Daga	Kassoum Daga	Kewa

The team devoted the January to March quarter to working with the chosen communities to name and put in place a school management committee. Another major task conducted in the same quarter of the year was completing a materials list for each school (based largely on the model of what had been provided to the ECU) and procuring all the school material. And, finally, during the same quarter, Aide et Action International liaised with the AE of Mopti and the CAPs to ensure that teachers were formally assigned to each of the eight schools. Once teachers were assigned, Aide et Action provided each school with a full set of materials. A complete list of the materials provided to the mobile schools was included in the third quarter report.

In April and May, 2011, the team turned its attention to generating sufficient community and institutional support for the mobile schools. The program team provided the three CAPs concerned with a budget for monitoring the mobile schools and with a standard reporting format for providing information on the schools. Aide et Action specialists assisted the DNEF to develop a training module, based on materials from the CADDE, for the training of CGS members in each of the new schools. A shorter module was also developed for local officials of each nomadic group, to encourage them to become full partners in opening the schools. These trainings were successfully delivered, and offered the opportunity to discuss with the new CGS questions related to managing and stocking school materials, maintaining infrastructure and school belongings, and creating positive cultural bonds with the teachers based on better understanding of complementarities and differences between the teachers' backgrounds and those of their communities. In one community (Koubaye), the program facilitators also offered training to the locally elected officials on how best to support the schools. This training was successful and is due to be replicated for the community leaders in the other school sites. Supervision visits to the eight schools during this same trial period by members of the DNEB (now DNEF), the concerned academy and CAPs concluded that the schools were functioning and would be able to open normally with the 2011-2012 school year.

From May 6 - 12th, PHARE provided seven days of training to the eight new mobile school teachers. The topics covered during the training were: the standards framework in reading and writing, the balanced literacy approach, the use of IRI, teaching mathematics in the early grades, and creating material for classroom instruction. Each concept introduced was followed by practical exercises, simulations, and then a question and answer period for the teachers. Every day ended with the creation of materials and games for the mobile school classrooms. Teachers left the seminar with clear and concrete plans for classroom instruction during the two month trial period they would lead.

Given that the new mobile schools were functional from April through June, it was decided, in consultation with the regional education authorities and PHARE program management, to consider these few months of operation a trial period to accustom the teacher and students to the mobile school format. Children enrolled in the mobile schools will begin school in 2011-2012 at the same grade level in which they were enrolled for the three-month trial period.

III.B.3. Sub-Result 4.3: Educational opportunities expanded via distance or non-formal education

The PHARE program's mandate under this sub-result concerns the launching and support of classes for children with special needs that can, in some instances, assist those children to reintegrate the formal education system. PHARE program partner IEP is the technical leader for this aspect of the programming.

With PHARE program support, IEP has been leading classes for children with special needs at their school site in Kati, Mali. Children with a diverse range of needs attend between 2 and 5 hours of instruction a day at the site. PHARE funds support the salary of a full-time instructional specialist and assistant for these children, and several volunteer aides who assist the children in their learning.

The children's learning needs span a daunting range, in both physical and mental terms. A small group of the children are severally physically handicapped; IEP has identified physical therapists that work with each of these children during ½ an hour a day to move their limbs in an effort to improve and/or maintain their muscle tone. Others are able to communicate with basic words and gestures but clearly encounter significant challenges in focusing on a task and in identifying objects and/or communicating their thoughts or feelings with ease. This group of children works for several hours a day on identification and speech exercises. A small number of these children are considered by IEP to have sufficient skills to matriculate with all the other students at the school; these children attend regular classes but are often assisted by an adult who follows along with them.

This experience with the instruction of special needs children at IEP highlights several important themes for the ministry and for PHARE's work in support of the development of policies and pedagogies for supporting children with special needs. Among these themes are:

- *The sheer size of the population of special needs children requiring support and attention from the system:* The demand for services from IEP has far outpaced their capacity to handle all cases. The IEP technicians associated with this experience are convinced that the children, whose families have so far asked for help, represent only a small percentage of those in need.
- *The diversity of types of special needs apparent:* Finding solutions for each type of need will represent a major challenge for the Ministry. It is difficult to imagine how ordinary Malian primary schools at present, with their meager resources, could adequately service the wide range and diversity of special needs children.
- *The human resources required to address the needs of children with special needs:* In IEP's current set-up, there is a teacher with several assistant. How will the Ministry be able to ensure sufficient human resources to successfully sustain an inclusive classroom?
- *The material needed to support learning for those who are learning-different or learning-challenged:* IEP has received donations of material suited for special needs children from other institutions. However, the Ministry will need to address the challenge of providing appropriate materials for special needs children nationwide.

At the program's retreat in Sikasso in September, the ministry cabinet underscored the importance of moving forward on the question of developing a model for inclusion and providing support to children with special needs throughout the school system. PHARE has committed to renewing our collaboration with the ministerial section in charge of special needs education and to examining these important themes and questions in more detail. Planned activities for moving these reflections forward include:

- Writing a summary report on the lessons learned from the implementation of a community-based model for service to children with special needs in Kati
- Reviewing current policies and practices in special education with the CAP of Kati and with the ministry
- Identifying members of a “special education” strategy team at the ministry; orient them to the work already accomplished
- Developing a listing of strategy options for special education for Mali, in concert with the ministry offices concerned , and
- Presenting the strategy options no later than the month of December 2011.

The experiences undertaken by IEP in Kati will assist in enriching these discussions and in continuing to help the MEALN and PHARE find a way forward on these important, but complicated, questions relating to the education of children with special needs.

III.B.3. Sub-Result 4.4: Public / Private Partnerships

PHARE made substantial progress this year on establishing public-private partnerships. A successful potential donors meeting at the National Council for Business Leadership in the 3rd quarter with partners whose profiles had been established in the prior reporting period allowed the program to strengthen relations with several institutions potentially interested in supporting improved education in Mali. PHARE submitted the list of potential partners attending with the quarter three quarterly report.

The partners’ meeting had the following objectives: a) present current challenges in education and the teaching of reading and writing that can affect the success of the business sector, b) present the USAID/PHARE program and its main accomplishments, c) present the principle domains of possible collaboration with the program, and d) answer any questions that arose. For close to 3 hours, participants discussed the need for a greater provision of reading and writing materials to Malian classrooms, and learned more about how a potential partnership could be a “win-win” arrangement, providing additional financial resources to the PHARE program to assist Malian schools, but also benefitting their institution’s reputation and advancing their agenda of expanding their client base.

Certain of the meeting attendees have expressed particular interest in partnering with the PHARE program, and discussions with these potential donors are on-going. They include Graphique Industrie, Bittar Impression, the Bank of Africa Foundation, the Malian Development Bank (BDM), ECOBANK. The program continues to maintain contact with the various potential partners and is hopeful that formal agreements with at least one of these potential donors will be achieved in the coming calendar year. Most indicated that their financial year followed the January to December calendar, and that the earliest possibility of funding for a partnership was in 2012.

III.C Concerns / comments

The results under this portion of the contract—supporting medersas, establishing one-classroom and mobile schools, developing a model for special needs children, and creating public-private partnerships have all seen positive growth in year three of the contract. However, certain concerns must be kept front and center in the PHARE team’s considerations as we work forward through the 2011-2012 school year.

III.C.1 Ensuring consistent support and follow-up for the medersas

As we have reported in the past, there is wide variability in the medersas’ use of PHARE program materials. Now that the population of medersas supported by the program is stable, it will be important to consider how, within current budget constraints, to conduct effective follow-up with struggling medersas. PHARE looks forward to considering this question with the MEALN representatives in charge of the medersa sector.

III.C.2 Arriving at a mutually agreed upon subset of special needs that can be the focus of Mali’s first-ever special needs instructional model

One of the biggest challenges in developing an instructional model for children with special needs is determining which special needs children might be able to benefit from the proposed approach. It is not realistic that all types of special needs might be able to be taken into account in one model that must also remain sustainable for the Malian government and implementable in the near future. PHARE partners and ministry counterparts will need to devote additional efforts in the coming quarter to define what types of beneficiaries might be the first to benefit from a new model, and then design that model as a function of those choices.

IIIC.3. Cementing public-private partnerships

Cultivating successful public-private partnerships is time-consuming and challenging. PHARE has made inroads on cementing public-private partnerships with several local actors. However, bringing these partnerships to the 'signing' stage and actually implementing a partnership has remained a challenge. PHARE will need to redouble its efforts in this regard in the coming year if another successful partnership is to be launched during the life of the project.

IV. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

IV.A. Expected activities

- Finalizing revised program targets and indicators
- Providing input to the technical tools for monitoring program impact (classroom observation forms, student testing protocols, etc.)
- Supporting the data analysis/presentation for multiple research studies
- Contributing data for all of the program milestone reports
- Leading the program mid-term evaluation
- Collecting and analyzing data relative to program indicator reporting
- Establishing the program monitoring database
- Liaising with the DNEF/DEN regarding the teacher training database

IV.B. Actual Activities and Achievements

The USAID/PHARE program monitoring and evaluation team had an intensive year working with the program's research agenda, data collection and analysis for program indicators and the mid-term evaluation.

IV.B.1. Finalizing revised program targets and indicators

In the early part of this fiscal year, the monitoring and evaluation team and PHARE program management worked with USAID to focus and streamline the program's performance monitoring plan (PMP). During this process, a total of 31 indicators were retained for the purposes of gauging the program's progress; 26 of them are "internal" indicators and 5 are USG indicators that the USAID mission reports to Washington.

Also in this process, the program revised some of the targets that it sets out to achieve each year. Notably, as a result of the technical and financial reprogramming of the PHARE contract approved by USAID in May 2011, the target population for PHARE interventions was changed to teachers and students in grades 1 to 4 rather than grades 1 to 6. The targets for the numbers of teachers to be trained and students benefiting from program interventions were reduced accordingly. In addition, data from implementation in year two indicated that changing teacher' practices at the scale at which PHARE operates, might prove more challenging than first assumed. As a result, certain of the targets for outlying years of performance were revised. The revised PMP and accompanying PIRS sheets were approved by USAID in the 3rd quarter of the fiscal year.

IV.B.2. Providing input to the technical tools for program monitoring

The monitoring and evaluation team worked intensely throughout the year to update and refine the program monitoring tools in conjunction with other program technical teams and associated ministry

specialists. All three observation grids (the grid for public and community schools, the grid for conducting observations in medersas, and the grid for observing IFM professors) were updated to allow for greater precision and specificity in indicator monitoring. Likewise, the team contributed significantly to revising the grid used to measure the functionality of a CVF. A goal of the PHARE program remains to validate these instruments this year with the MEALN as a means of rendering more likely their continued use after the close of the PHARE program.

IV.B.3. Supporting data analysis/presentation for multiple research studies

The monitoring and evaluation specialists played a key role this year in assisting with the training, data collection, and analysis for several of the studies undertaken by the program. In addition to the time-on-task study and the sociolinguistic study, PHARE M/E specialists also supported the data analysis for the two studies presented at the Conference of the International Education Society (CIES) in Montreal. The first of these was a presentation of the impact of the use of IRI on teachers' belief schema. The second of these was a presentation of data from a video study of multiple language classrooms. These studies were presented by Mr. Bakary Samaké of the DNEF and Mr. Youssouf Konandji of the DNP at the Montreal CIES conference. The presentations were well received. The two ministry representatives then presented these two studies again to the Education Division of the Africa Bureau at USAID. Again, the response was highly positive. The monitoring and evaluation team's ability to provide clear and concise analysis was a great asset in bringing to conclusion these multiple research efforts.

IV.B.4. Contributing data for all of the program milestone reports

The monitoring and evaluation team was also in charge this year of calculating all of the data required for submission in the four milestone reports:

- Milestones 3 (IRI programs to transition children from local languages to French aired nationally and received in 80% of Mali's level 1 classrooms),
- Milestone 4 (40% of school directors trained to use classroom kits as a means of improving reading methodology),
- Milestone 6 (80% of French teachers in medersas targeted by the program trained to use IRI and balanced literacy techniques to enhance students' literacy in French), and
- Milestone 7 (60% of school directors trained to use classroom kits as a means of improving reading methodology) were submitted this year.

All of the data tables and calculations included in the reports were generated by the monitoring and evaluation team.

IV.B.5. Leading the program mid-term evaluation

One of the monitoring and evaluation team's MAJOR efforts in the course of this year was the organization of the program mid-term evaluation. The goals of this evaluation are to:

- provide the MEALN and USAID with a data set that would demonstrate the degree to which the use of IRI impacts children's learning and teacher practice
- provide all actors with information about the progress of our efforts to operationalize the standards framework through the use of balanced literacy instruction in Mali classrooms
- provide formative information to the PHARE team on the various inputs offered under the program to allow for adjustments in the materials and training package before the program reaches its conclusion in 2013

The PHARE mid-term evaluation is the team's flagship effort to determine whether the inputs provided by the program are producing an impact in the field. In broad terms, the evaluation is looking at PHARE's impact in academies, CAP, IFM, and primary schools. At the primary school level, the evaluation is structured to enable comparison between schools not using any PHARE programming, schools using just the IRI programs, and schools using the IRI programs and the techniques highlighted in the trainings on balanced literacy. The evaluation is also designed to compare whether impact

increases over time, calling for a comparison of data collected at a given point A with data collected at a given point B.

Over the course of the year, the monitoring and evaluation team collaborated with the pedagogical team to carry out the following steps in the evaluation: a) selection of a sample for the evaluation study, b) initial training of data collectors, c) a first round of data collection, d) refresher training for the data collectors, e) a 2nd round of data collection, and f) data cleaning and analysis.

IV.B.5.i: Selecting the Sample for the Mid-Term Evaluation

Establishing the sample for this study so that it will be statistically viable turned out to be a complex undertaking. Identifying public or community schools in the system that in no way had been touched by the PHARE program was extraordinarily difficult. In December, to be sure of the sample selected, the program sent teams to the field to test, in schools supposedly eligible for the control group, whether those schools could hear the radio broadcasts and whether any of their teachers had attended PHARE training. As a result of these field visits, a largely reliable sample was constituted. This sample spanned 10 CAPs and included 34 control schools, 31 IRI schools, and 34 IRI+ balanced literacy schools for a total of 99 public and community schools.

IV.B.5.ii: Initial Training of the Data Collectors

Initial data collector training occurred in February 2011. Ten pedagogical counselors that had proven to be highly successful on the pre- and post- tests in trainings on the PHARE program's monitoring and evaluation instruments were trained for the first phase of data collection. During this training, they reviewed the use of the tools, practicing with each of them multiple times in schools in Bamako and debriefing their observations with program technical staff to ensure inter-rater reliability. The pedagogical counselors also reviewed the methodology for the mid-term evaluation as a whole, and worked in field teams to develop and refine their detailed schedules for their school visits.

IV.B.5.iii: Initial Data Collection

Initial data collection took place in February and March, 2011. The data collectors were able to visit almost all of the schools in the original intended sample of 99. To enhance objectivity, no pedagogical counselor was assigned to collect data in his/her own CAP. Data collectors observed classrooms where no IRI was in use, classrooms using IRI, and classrooms using the balanced literacy approach. Data packets for each school were returned to the PHARE offices in Bamako.

IV.B.5.iv: Refresher Data Collector Training

In preparation for the second round of data collection, PHARE staff provided a refresher training in early May to the same subset of 10 pedagogical counsellors who had been the data collectors in the February/ March data collection exercise. The 7-day refresher training focused on:

- Intensive practice with collection instruments new to this round of data collection (i.e. the functionality grid for the VTC, the questionnaires for the DAE and the DCAP, etc.)
- Review of the use of the observation grids calibrated for observing balanced literacy instruction in Malian classrooms
- Practice in interviewing teachers and principals on their impressions of the program's impact
- Protocols for introducing the mission and organizing the data sheets correctly for return to the program.

IV.B.5.v: Second Round of Data Collection

In the second phase of the mid-term evaluation, the sample was considerably expanded to allow the program to collect data on IFMs, bilingual curriculum schools and medersas, as well as in academies and CAPs. This additional data will complement the data collected on classic schools and, going forward, will provide the basis for the longitudinal study of these same schools in the final two years of the PHARE program.

In late April and throughout the month of May, just after the refresher training, the PHARE team dispatched 12 research teams to the field for a total of six weeks of data collection. As with the February exercise, to enhance objectivity, no pedagogical counsellor was assigned to collect data in his/her own CAP. These data collectors returned to Bamako in the first week of July with enormous amounts of data, all of which is currently under treatment and analysis.

Concomitant with this data collection, the EGRA teams also collected EGRA data in the mid-term evaluation schools. The final mid-term evaluation report will include the analysis of all of the teacher observation and interview data, as well as the analysis of the EGRA results, to triangulate progress made in each school in the sample based on the inputs received from the PHARE program.

IV.B.5.vi: Mid-Term Evaluation Data Analysis

During the fourth quarter of this year, the monitoring and evaluation team has been working on the data analysis from the mid-term evaluation effort. This analysis is proceeding well. However, as regards the EGRA results, as indicated in the section of this report on the use of the EGRA tests, complications arose in completing the analysis. Essentially, although the original design of the mid-term evaluation had presumed that it would be possible to compare **schools**, it became apparent during the preliminary stages of data cleaning and entry that teachers are so mobile that it is necessary to compare **classrooms**. This realization made it necessary to reconsider the organization of the data and also the analysis process. As of this writing, the teams are still involved in producing the first draft of the evaluation report. The major tendencies so far identified are that there is a statistically significant difference in learning gains for children in IRI classrooms and that teacher practice in IRI+AEQ classrooms is beginning to evolve in the right direction. PHARE hopes to deliver the full report by the end of October, 2011.

IV.B.6: Collecting and analyzing data relative to program indicator reporting

One of the major responsibilities of the monitoring and evaluation team is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data required according to the program monitoring and performance plan. This effort intensified in the fourth quarter, with considerable back-and-forth with the AEs and CAPs to collect classroom observation sheets and director reports on school radio listenership.

IV.B.7. Establishing the Program Monitoring Database

The monitoring and evaluation team has also made consistent and considerable efforts this year to automate the generation of all the attendance lists, materials distribution forms, and financial tracking documents for the PHARE program. To enable this to occur, an access database keyed to the CPS database from 2009-2010 has been put in place. In addition to long-distance exchanges, a mission of the management information specialist in September resolved many of the problems that had surfaced during use and was instrumental in moving the database forward. The IRI trainings in the fall of 2011 will be the first time that the database goes 'live' in terms of the applications to facilitate PHARE training activities..

IV.B.8. Establishing the Program Monitoring Database

The DNEF/DEN has a database, also in Access, designed to enable the AE and CAP to register the number of training events a given teacher attends. Data is entered based on attendance or registry sheets distributed at each training at the AE and the CAP level.

The PHARE program has promised to the DNEF/DEN to assist in expanding the use of this database within the bounds of the program's possibilities. However, challenges abound. The database is not synched with the CPS database, and so operates in isolation both from the main tracking tool that the ministry possesses and from PHARE's program database. In addition, there are no specialists in information management at the Division de l'Enseignement Normal to adequately support further training on or modifications to the database. These difficulties have made it complicated for PHARE to support the expansion of the database. The PHARE program hopes to engage the CPS and the DEN in consultations on a consolidated database or at least efforts to ensure that the triangulation of information is possible.

VI. Program Management

VI.A. Expected activities

- Realigning the program budget and scope of work,
- Planning activities with the AE and the CAP
- Producing Communications Documents and Participating in formal program presentations
- Facilitating the meetings of the program technical committee
- Conducting program outreach activities
- Collaborating with the US Peace Corps
- Seeking synergy with PRADDE-PC
- Participating in regular meetings with the US Embassy and USAID

VI.B. Actual Activities and Achievements

VI.B.1. Realigning the program budget and scope of work

The senior program team spent considerable effort in the early part of the fiscal year to revise the program budget and scope of work. Major revisions included revising the program's objectives to focus on primary grade reading in grades one through four, reducing the amounts allocated to all subcontractors for their various roles and responsibilities on the program, and reallocating financial resources to the provision of print materials to primary school classrooms. As part of these changes, Aide et Action's subcontract was limited to 8, rather than 14 mobile schools, the RTI subcontract budget for EGRA testing was reduced, and the scope of work for IEP was refined to focus on supporting training of teachers and materials development for the cohort of balanced literacy bilingual curriculum schools and the implementation of a pilot experiment serving children with special needs. The modification rendering these changes effective was finalized in May of this fiscal year.

VI.B.2. Planning activities with the AE and the CAP

Beginning last year, in order to provide both a framework and training for the use of US government financial resources by the AEs and CAPs, the PHARE program signs an annual financial management protocol with each AE and a memorandum of understanding with the AEs and CAPs. The signing ceremonies for 2010-2011 were combined with a training, planning and budgeting exercise where representatives from each CAP were asked to estimate what the training activities planned by PHARE would cost them. These planning and budgeting exercises allowed CAP representatives to develop a better understanding of the breadth and depth of PHARE-sponsored activities that would be carried out in their various circumscriptions over the course of the year.

VI.B.3. Producing Communications Documents and Participating in Formal Program Presentations

The PHARE program successfully conducted multiple program presentations throughout the reporting year. Notable public presentations included the exposition and demonstrations at the Niger Festival in Ségou, participation of the Minister of Education and his cabinet in a balanced literacy teacher training workshop at the CAP of Sikasso along with a demonstration of Interactive Radio Instruction at the Babemba B Primary School, a presentation of the program's work in Kola (Diolia CAP) to Iris Young from the USAID education department, a presentation on PHARE's work to Aleta Williams of the education section during one of her TDY visits, discussions of the program's work to foster an educational radio channel with Mali's current Prime Minister, presentations of PHARE's work at CIES and at USAID/Washington, presentations of PHARE's work with smartphones at the MedDev4 conference in Washington, the preparation of draft articles for USAID/Frontlines, the preparation and airing of two professional-level videos capturing PHARE's work with balanced literacy instruction and planning, and the preparation and submission of program success stories. Third year Peace Corps volunteer, Jennifer Davis, provided invaluable assistance to the program in implementing all of these communication activities. This level of intensive effort in program communications would not have been possible without the presence of a full-time PCV on staff.

VI.B.4. Facilitating the Meetings of the Program Technical Committee

One of the primary means of communication with the Ministry is the monthly meeting with the program's technical committee composed of members from all the MEALN departments. This committee is an opportunity to share with a broad range of central level ministry actors the activities the program is focusing on and the results that are hoped for at the school level. This regular meeting also gives the ministry personnel the chance to provide regular feedback to PHARE on the program's work and its alignment with current ministry priorities.

VI.B.5. Conducting Program Retreats and Outreach Activities

PHARE worked diligently throughout the year to enable actors from all of the different levels to provide input to the program's work. In September, the program held three major retreats for this purpose: one with the ministry cabinet in Sikasso, one with the directors of all the academies, and one with the PHARE program staff. Major themes discussed in these meetings included the "match" between program activities and ministry priorities, the need for clear communications between all parties, the need to enable the directors of the academies to fully play their oversight role, and the need for program staff to work together in harmony to accomplish the program's goals. These program outreach activities have helped to lay the groundwork for a strong year four for the PHARE program.

VI.B.6. Collaborating with the US Peace Corps

PHARE has two on-site Peace Corps volunteers. According to their job descriptions, one of these volunteers focuses on assisting PHARE with communication tasks while the other assists with training and technology outreach. Via these volunteers, the PHARE program also is able to collect from sites where volunteers are posted information on the use of the PHARE radio programming. Often, these reports are significantly useful, allowing PHARE to identify schools where use of the programming has been interrupted for one reason or another. USAID/PHARE looks forward to submitting a new volunteer request to the US Peace Corps early in the next fiscal year.

VI.B.7. Seeking Synergy with PRADDE-PC

PHARE throughout this year has sought to work in synergy with PRADDE-PC. This is a natural fit given that the PRADDE-PC program works on aspects of school support that can play a critical role in increasing reading skills. Meetings and dialogue with PRADDE-PC staff have included: a) providing input to texts and lessons to be used in adult literacy programming, b) providing copies of student testing instruments to be used by communities to gauge students' reading skills, and c) participating in program coordination meetings. PHARE looks forward to continuing this collaboration in program year four.

VI.B.8. Participating in Regular Meetings with the US Embassy and USAID

Throughout the year, USAID/PHARE staff regularly attended all meetings of the education section of USAID and open country team meetings at the embassy. Attending these meetings has required presenting on the program's work and offering suggestions and input on topics judged of interest at that time by the education sector. The PHARE program has also on occasion contributed to the education sector's regular briefing for the embassy personnel on happenings on education in the country.

VII) Concerns and Recommendations

In this portion of the report, we highlight areas of concern and/or recommendations that we believe would benefit either the education system of Mali or, more specifically, the PHARE program's operations.

Concerns

- A) **Establishing the National Radio Channel:** To render USAID's investments in radio sustainable, this channel is a necessity. USAID/PHARE personnel are interested in pursuing all possible channels to have authorities at the highest levels, including the president's office, offer their support to the proposal in such an unequivocal manner that the two ministries involved will succeed in coming to

consensus. It will be important for the Ministry of Education to assume real leadership and ownership of the process in the coming year if the radio channel is to become a reality. Without an independent means of broadcasting, the PHARE program will have great difficulty in meeting its contractual obligations in the coming year. Already this year, with the refusal of the ORTM to extend beyond one hour of daily broadcasts, the grade 2 programs will be broadcast via a patchwork of regional and local radio stations. Although local radio stations are numerous in Mali, the average range is between 30-40 kilometers. This makes it both difficult and expensive to ensure national coverage.

- B) Achieving program pedagogical targets at scale:** USAID/PHARE has made steady and often laudable progress towards achieving program results. However, it must be underscored that the program is stretched more broadly than any other program in the sector, both in geographic and in technical terms. It remains a programmatic challenge to succeed in meeting all the technical targets of the program given the breadth at which the work is intended to take place.
- C) Creating sustainability for program contributions at the close of program year five:** USAID/PHARE closes in one and a half years. The program has launched several worthy initiatives the full transfer of which to the ministry decision-makers must now begin to take place. This will become a major concern for program leadership in the coming program year. Already the sustainability of program interventions was a subject of discussion with the MEALN at the cabinet retreat and the meeting with the regional education office directors. That the program has consistently used the pedagogical counselors and supervisory personnel at the regional and district levels as the primary trainers for all teacher training activities, contributes to the decentralized level having the knowledge and skills to continue PHARE inputs into the future. However, this year will be critical to ensuring that the innovations being introduced to improved literacy instruction continue into the future.