



**CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND EQUITY
FOUNDATIONS (CLEF) PROGRAM and PROJECT
BENIN, WEST AFRICA**

(PHASE I) : FINAL REPORT



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Preface

This report, while giving an over-all analysis of the Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF) Project, from its inception until the present writing, is specifically focused on its involvement with the Mitchell Group, Incorporated (TMG), as well as, its subcontractor Creative Associates International, Incorporated (CAII), and what has been designated as *Phase I* or *CLEF I*, of the said project, in the contractual period of August 16, 1995 through August 15, 1998.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The last decade of the twentieth century, the 1990s, found the educational system in the Republic of Benin in dire straits. Due to previous failed reform attempts, Beninese schools, many dilapidated to the point of being dangerous, could barely be characterized as schools. These buildings, scattered throughout the country, were better known for their crumbling walls, snake infestations, lack of latrines, polluted water sources, unsafe terrain and leaky roofs. A search inside these crumbling walls would find unmotivated and/or poorly trained teachers who lacked proper curricula, textbooks, desks, blackboards, and even chalk.

The weak management of the education system only served to exacerbate the infrastructure problem. A highly centralized system with poorly distributed responsibilities to equally unmotivated and poorly trained administrators made even the most minor managerial decision an absolute nightmare. However by 1998, toward the end of the decade, a transformation had taken place...specifically in the primary education sector.

New curricula, for all subjects taught, were developed and tested in 30 designated experimental schools. Implementation of these new curricula occurred throughout the country in Grades 1-6 in most schools and Grades 1-4 in others. New teaching methods for the child and his/her environment were introduced as well as new learning evaluation methods emphasizing skills rather than book knowledge. Textbooks, teacher guides and workbooks were locally written, produced and tested for the Grades 1 & 2 as well as programs printed to minimize the problem of insufficient textbooks. Testing instruments, in conformity with the new system, were

also developed and tested. New curricula for the Primary School Leaving Exam (CEP) were developed and tested with a successful passing rate of more than 90%. Over 3,338 contract teachers were trained in the new curricula and given refresher courses. To help augment this much needed professionalism, a re-organization and re-opening of Benin's teacher's training colleges via the revision of its training program and the training of its teachers also occurred. Preparations were also well under way to re-open a former Inspector's training school. In this instance the emphasis was placed on developing a profile of a modern inspector, the revision of the training program in relation to the new curricula, and the development of new training modules. Access, as defined by the gross enrollment rate, increased from a base of 49.7% in 1990 to 75.8% in 1998. Even the management system experienced positive changes.

Decentralization of the management body of Benin's school system, the Ministry of Education (MOE), was given high priority in an attempt to make the management of personnel more effective. The MOE proposed plans, that are well under way, to decentralize to its six Regional Directorates many decisions concerning management of its primary schools.

What constituted such a transition? This transformation occurred as a direct result of the tenacity of the Government of Benin (GOB) in its effort to reform its primary education system. The Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF) Program and Project, was initiated by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with the untiring efforts of its contractor and subcontractor, the Mitchell Group, Inc. (TMG) and Creative Associates International, Inc (CAII) respectively.

The Mitchell Group, Inc.
Children’s Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF)
Project (Benin)
USAID Contract Number 624-0208-C-00-5005-00

Introduction and Background

The Republic of Benin appears to many as a small and obscure country; but, when it does something, it does it in a big way. During its pre-colonial and colonial eras the people of this region established one of the largest slave-trading operations in West Africa as well as one of the most powerful kingdoms...Dahomey. Today, as Benin struggles to rid itself from the vestiges of colonialism, it has again made its mark in world events by becoming, in February 1990, one of the first African nations to make a peaceful transition to democracy after over 17 years of autocratic Marxist – Leninist governance. Presently the country is faced with having to resolve the problem that colonialism and several failed reform movements have left in its educational system.

The Legacy of Colonialism

In the late 1800s, the French gained control of the coast and defeated the kingdom of Dahomey making it a part of French West Africa. During this 70 year colonial period great progress was made in education. Identified as the *Latin Quarter of West Africa*, by the French, Dahomey became famous for its educated elite. These citizens were employed by the French and the Senegalese as principal advisors to government officials throughout West Africa. However, this eventually became a problem, as the educated elite became extremely vocal and began agitating for assimilation and equality. Benin’s independence eventually ensued as a result of negotiations between the French and the nation’s elite in 1960. The new regional leaders structured

education system along the lines of the French model, retained French as the only official language, thus indefinitely postponing efforts to reassert the value of the national languages, adopted the French academic curricula, and established a social and educational context far removed from traditional Dahomean education. Traditional culture, in a word, was considered *uncivilized* and its languages disdainfully referred to as dialects. As a result many graduates were unable to apply the theoretical formulas taught in school to real-life situations. This post-colonial Dahomean education based on a French model, that used academic examinations as its basis for selection, was an alienating one. Its design was imposed from the outside; and, the average African simply was not French. It was not surprising therefore that, by 1975, the number of children in Beninese school dropped to less than 60%.

The New School

A military coup in October 1972 ushered in a revolutionary regime, which demanded a change in the Beninese education system. Under Lt. Col. Kérékou, Dahomey's name would change to Benin, Marxism would become the new ideology, and the New School would be established, based on the theories of an elite that had never suffered imperialist exploitation. It failed miserably! While the New School was organized around principles set up to abandon elitist – influenced education, establish equality of opportunity, and build an education system with ties to everyday life, government created an enormous administrative machine that stifled initiative rather than foster action. The high hopes that the Dahomean intellectuals expected from these schools: to form the intellect, encourage personality development, impart culture and prepare the student for professional life, simply could not be realized. This enormous and ineffective administrative management system, making it an impossibility to

coordinate decisions and actions, doomed the reform to failure. Today, it is this same highly centralized system that is under reform.

Economic and Political Crisis (1989)

By the late 1980s Benin experienced severe economic and political crisis. This served to exacerbate an already difficult situation. The nation, after almost two decades of mismanagement, was facing bankruptcy. From 1985 to 1990 Benin saw no economic growth. Both national banks were forced to close leaving the country in tremendous external and internal debt. By the end of 1989 salaries had gone unpaid for months and government coffers were bare. Corruption was rampant and the impact was devastating on its citizens. The quality of life became desperate. This economic and social crisis led the Marxist regime, against its will, to attempt repair.

In December 1989, the French Ambassador sent a memo to Colonel Kérékou recommending that the government hold a national conference and adopt specific constitutional changes. Kérékou followed that advice and a National Conference (*La conférence nationale des forces vives*) was called for February 19, 1990. Government was in dire straits, and the National Conference stepped in to begin the arbitration that led eventually to the removal of the existing regime.

The Road to Reform

Trade and professional groups, religious congregations, development associations, and newly founded political organizations all sent representatives to the National Conference. Exiled Beninese elite also attended. The outpouring of opinions was unrestrained. At the top of the agenda was a strong desire for educational reform

particularly in the primary education sector. The New School was thoroughly condemned, and all agreed its performance had been unsuccessful.

The spirit of consensus that developed at the National Conference inspired the Etats Généraux for Education (EGE), held in October 1990. This was the only event of its kind recommended by the Conference. The poor performance of the 1975 New School reform attempt and Benin's economic, political and social problems raised the question: What kind of education system for what kind of development? The EGE, held October 2-9, 1990, was convened to address this question. With over 400 people in attendance the EGE created a forum for open deliberations.

Hearing the out-cry of the masses, the newly formed liberal democracy, led by Nicéphore Soglo, embarked upon a publicly-mandated program to reform the educational system of Benin; and, in January 1991, approved an Education Policy Framework Document containing its statement on planned educational reform.

Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF) Project

The United States Government, acting through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), wanted to assist the Government of Benin (GOB) in the reform of its educational system and entered into two agreements with the GOB on September 30, 1991. These agreements (one for the *program* and one for the *project*) culminated into what is now known as the Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF) Project. This project, constituting part of a long-term primary education development program, has as its overall objective to "institute an effective, efficient, and equitable primary education system that is sustainable" by the year 2002.

Early in the Project, many difficulties ensued due to insufficient, late, and irregular financing from the GOB's Ministry of Finance (MOF). Yet, an unofficial midterm evaluation found that impressive achievements had been made, by the CLEF program and project, in spite of these difficulties.

The USAID Mission in Benin, in anticipation of a requirement under the CLEF Project for an increased level of technical involvement in support of the Government of Benin's primary education reforms, entered into contract with The Mitchell Group, Inc. (TMG), and its subcontractor Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII), on August 16, 1995. The initial contract period involved two years, August 16, 1995 – August 15, 1997, and included an option to renew for one additional year, August 16, 1997 – August 15, 1998. Under the contract TMG agreed to provide technical services in support of the Benin CLEF Project and assume responsibility for five program areas. These areas consisted of: Educational Planning; Financial Management; Learning and Instruction (Pedagogy); Management Information System (MIS) and Training.

Project Goal, Objectives and Approach

The overall objective of the CLEF project was to “institute an effective, efficient, and equitable primary education system that is sustainable.” The Mitchell Group's main objective aimed to “assist the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the implementation of its reform-related activities.” These “reform-related activities” were organized, by the GOB and USAID, into fifteen specific action plans. These fifteen action plans, in turn, contributed to five supporting objectives for the CLEF program and project. Each supporting objective coupled with its specific objectives and corresponding action plans are listed below:

Supporting Objective A: Improve Quality – Make primary education more effective in enabling the students to be successful in their post-primary careers.

Specific Objectives:

- Seventy-five percent of Beninese students would be enrolled in schools that meet Fundamental Quality Level (FQL) defined standards.
- New curricula would be developed, tested and introduced nationally for all primary grades.
- All teachers would be given the opportunity to upgrade their skills to the minimum required level for their positions, eliciting the help of teacher support and in-service training programs. Teachers were also be trained in the use of new curriculum materials.
- Students were to have access to textbooks and pedagogical materials according to FQL standards.
- Documentation centers were to be established, equipped and staffed to offer support to the primary school teachers.

Action Plans:

1. Curriculum development
2. Teacher Training
3. Textbooks and Pedagogical Document Network
4. Student Assessment
5. School Canteens

Supporting Objective B: Increase Equity – Make access to primary education more advantageous for girls and children from disadvantaged areas.

Specific Objectives:

- To achieve a 78% gross enrollment rate equitably distributed nationwide through recommendations supported by an adequate information system for school data.
- A decentralization of human resource management permitting a need-based distribution of teaching personnel.

Action Plans:

1. Fundamental Quality Level Schools (FQL)

2. Access
3. School Map
4. Management and Information System (MIS)
5. Human Resources
6. Administrative Training
7. Equipment

Supporting Objective C: Ensure financial resources for the rehabilitation and the sustainability of Benin's primary education system

Specific Objectives:

- To improve financial accountability at all levels.
- To broaden financial support from the private sector, develop a private school system and give more latitude to non-official structures such as NGOs and Parents Associations.

Action Plan:

- Financial Viability and Public Participation

Supporting Objective D: Greater participation and the promotion of participatory decision – making and consensus building in education

Specific Objectives:

- Increase national awareness on educational issues as well as public participation at all levels.
- Broaden education services from the private sector.

Action Plans:

1. Financial Viability and Public Participation
2. Management Information System (MIS)

Supporting Objective E: Strengthen institutional capacity and coordination. Enable the Government of Benin (GOB), particularly the Ministry of Education (MOE) to carry out its national educational objectives.

Specific Objectives:

- Implement a national assessment program.
- Establish an operational information system that could provide information support for FQL program and access related activity.
- Rationalize the human resource management system and provide training.
- Decentralize administrative procedures by focusing on departmental and district-level administrative units.
- Increase financial accountability by standardizing budgetary preparation and an execution of procedures in accordance with specific financial management techniques.
- Provide minimum office and transport equipment to MOE personnel.

Action plans:

1. Management Information System (MIS)
2. Personnel Management
3. Administrative Training
4. Ministry Organization and Institutional Reform
5. Financial Viability
6. Budgetary process
7. Equipment

In order to achieve the desired objectives, TMG was required to provide certain contractual outputs. These contractual outputs correspond to each of the five supporting objectives. At the close of Phase I *all* contractual outputs were realized (cf. Annex).

Within the context of the economic, social and political realities of Benin, TMG formulated a strategic and pragmatic approach to the project. By blending a strong management structure with a solid technical framework they were able to facilitate the management and technical requirements of their contract. To realize the necessary contractual outputs they employed a gradualist approach that was results oriented.

This is particularly noticeable in the area of Pedagogy. By experimenting in smaller “laboratory” settings TMG was able to learn what actually worked and what didn’t. As modifications took place to rectify perceived constraints, “lessons learned” or “best practices” were moved from the experimental phase to pilot activities and finally generalizations. As a result many innovations as well as successes resulted from the project.

Specific Accomplishments

As previously stated, TMG was to assume responsibility for five program areas within the CLEF project. These were: Learning and Instruction (Pedagogy); Financial Management; Educational Planning; Management Information System (MIS) and Training. Overall, training was an important element throughout the entire CLEF project. Within each area of responsibility, the respective program area teams carried out specific training within their domain of expertise; therefore, for our purposes here, focus is placed on the accomplishments of Learning and Instruction (Pedagogy), Financial Management, Educational Planning and Management Information System (MIS)...all of which include training. The specific accomplishments, for each of these areas of responsibility, are listed below:

Learning and Instruction (Pedagogy):

- New curricula for all subjects developed and tested.
- New teaching methods for the child and his/her environment introduced.
- Implementation of the *Réponse active non-verbale* (RANV) or *Language in Action Methodology*.
- Accelerated language training and reading program.
- New learning evaluation methods, emphasizing skills rather than rote knowledge introduced.
- Testing instruments in conformity with the new system developed and tested.
- New curricula for the Primary School Leaving Exam (CEP) developed and tested.

- Validation of a national policy on textbook production.
- Method/Plan for the generalization of the new curricula and in-service training of teachers and education staff developed.
- Reorganization and reopening of the Teacher Training Colleges.
- Over 3, 338 teachers trained (713 at the regional level) in the new curricula, and provided with an in-service refresher course.
- Profile of a modern school inspector developed, as well as a revision of the training program as related to the new curricula and development of training modules.
- Strategies for training at a regional level, in all educational units, instituted.
- Sensitizing at local, regional and other least developed regions of senior education staff on equity in the classroom.

As previously mentioned, TMG employed a gradualist approach that was results oriented. This was particularly noticeable in the area of Pedagogy. For example, implementation of the new programs first began in 30 experimental schools. This method was used as a “laboratory” setting to work out possible constraints. After necessary modifications were made the team began generalizations of the new programs within the remaining schools. New and innovative curriculum development as well as locally developed textbooks were special highlights in this area of responsibility.

Successes in Pedagogy

A. New Curricula developed and tested

Pedagogy is the basis on which the CLEF program revolves. Its teams have performed outstandingly! Time after time they have done, what seemed to be impossible. Inheriting a primary school system that was in total disarray, they had to start from the basic issues. To revise the curriculum they organized a special curriculum committee composed of team members themselves, local primary school inspectors, subject specialist, teachers, and short-term international consultants.

Supervised by local pilots/guides, and emphasizing methodology, the committee developed and tested new curricula for all subject areas, and introduced new and innovative teaching methodologies for the child and his/her environment. Simultaneously a separate student assessment committee, composed of a similar group of specialists, completely revised the evaluation system as well as the format of the Primary School Leaving Exam (CEP). In developing new learning evaluation methods the team employed a *pupil-oriented* approach that emphasized skills rather than rote knowledge. As a result, since its introduction students taking the new CEP examination enjoyed a successful passing rate of more than 90%.

B. Locally textbooks developed.

A significant accomplishment of the Pedagogy team was its ability to conceptualize, produce and test locally developed textbooks, teacher guides and workbooks, for the first time in Beninese history. Again in this activity a committee of local experts and team members were convened. Local editors as consultants and project office facilities and equipment were provided for the work of editing. Subsequently local printers were contracted for printing of textbooks and related instructional materials. As a result of the first year's revenues from the textbook production, these printers were able to expand their businesses and create job opportunities for the local community.

Financial Management:

Budget and financial management improved substantially in Phase I. Due to a new budget nomenclature and fully operational expenditure tracking system the MOE is now capable of producing regular reports on line item expenditures aggregated in a variety of ways. With a new budgetary procedures manual and the training of staff in its usage the financial management team has begun the process of “ensuring financial

resources by promoting assurance of adequate financial resources to rehabilitate and maintain Benin's education system." Listed below are the accomplishments made in Financial Management:

- New budget nomenclature developed for the MOE.
- Fully operational expenditure tracking system developed at both the central and regional levels of the MOE.
- Budgetary procedures manuals developed.
- Regional and central level staff trained in budget and expenditures tracking system.
- Annual evaluations of new budgetary procedures.

Educational Planning and Management Information System (MIS):

In Phase I of the project the planning and MIS teams worked in synergy. Early in the phase, however, the MIS specialist was re-assigned to Girl's Education. The accomplishments of the Educational Planning and MIS teams are as follows:

- Fundamental Quality Level (FQL) indicators, related to fundamental inputs to ensure an adequate primary education system, developed for all aspects of the primary school system.
- Annual FQL implementation plans developed.
- Private school system diagnostic carried out.
- The first Management Information System developed for the MOE.
- Production of statistical data for the school year 1997-98 by the MOE.
- Creation for the first data information centers for the MOE (Porto Novo and Parakou).
- Production of the *Manuel de procedures pour la gestion de ressources humaines (vols. 1 & 2)* providing standardized operational procedures for Human Resource Management.
- Production of a plan for comprehensive decentralization of administrative procedures for the MOE.

- A survey and study on factors affecting enrollment: *Etude sur les facteurs affectant la demande sociale de l'éducation*, (1996).
- Development of an access to education policy document: *Document de politique d'accès et d'égalité*, (1996).
- Establishment of a National Girls' Education Network (*Réseau pour la promotion de la scolarisation de filles*).
- A study on factors affecting Girls' Education: *Etude sur l'impact de l'exonération des filles de zones rurales des frais d'écolage*, (1996).

Successes in the Educational Planning and Management Information System (MIS) Component

A. Fundamental Quality Level norms, criteria, and indicators for Primary School

For the efficient delivery of a more effective primary education system in Benin. Fundamental Quality Level (FQL) standards, norms that insure quality, must be established. The Planning & Management teams were intimately involved with that aspect of the project. An initial FQL strategy and definition was developed as well as plans of implementation. These norms that insure quality were developed for all aspects of the primary school system.

B. Management Information System (MIS)

The MIS team's development of the first Management Information System for the MOE was phenomenal. Since 1995 it allowed the MOE to produce statistical data upon demand. Specifically it allowed the MOE to produce statistical data for school years: 97-98; and 98-99. The use of this statistical data was paramount in the studies on equity and access.

Issues and Lessons Learned

In order to “institute an effective, efficient, and equitable primary education system that is sustainable” in Benin, three of the five supporting objectives must be emphasized at this juncture. The first is *Supporting Objective A*: to improve the

quality of Benin's primary education system by making it more effective in enabling the students to be successful in their post-primary careers. Primary education is the base on which all other education evolves. In the CLEF project this objective is within the domain of Pedagogy. *Supporting Objective C* is the second supporting objective of emphasis: to ensure financial resources for the rehabilitation and the sustainability of Benin's primary education system. This is the domain of Financial Management. Closely related to it is *Supporting Objective E*: to strengthen institutional capacity and coordination which is also within the area of financial management. However, without Supporting Objectives A and C the CLEF project would be a mute endeavor. Together these two supporting objectives form the foundation of the CLEF project. Within this foundation there have been many achievements; however, there have also been challenges as well as lessons learned.

One of the major challenges in Pedagogy involved the financing of activities. Activities programmed on the national budget were always delayed due to funds not being readily available. In other instances some activities simply did not have adequate funds. For example, reproduction of testing instruments and accompanied documents could not be done in Phase I. Not enough monies were budgeted for it. However, despite such difficulties, pilot managers made the necessary efforts to justify their estimated activity expenditures on time since without the justification payment would be delayed.

Another problem experienced by the Pedagogy team was the frequent changing of teachers. Teachers trained in the new curricula were often replaced by non-trained teachers. An Administrative Note from the MOE instructing that these new hires be taken to the experimental programs for training were left unheeded.

Up until 1997, progress on the curriculum action plans was far ahead of the other action plans within the project; however, in September of 1997, the Pedagogy pilot managers as well as the planning action plan managers began to meet regularly in order to harmonize actions and create a synergy throughout the project.

Other concerns which did not directly involve the reform process itself were also experienced by Pedagogy such as: lack of teachers, documents, learning materials, infrastructure, and transportation for visits to schools. The FQL action plan team sought to find solutions locally to address these problems (e.g., contacting local NGOs); but, they could not be resolved at the time. All in all, however, the team learned that one of the keys to innovation success is regular follow-up in the field. Yet, they purport that any education planning involving reform should take in consideration certain risks in the field.

Progress was made in Financial Management, under CLEF I, as illustrated by the steady increase of the GOB's budget share allocated to non-salary expenditures in the education sector in general and to the primary education sector in particular. To illustrate this point, the ratio of the primary education budget increased from 46% in 1992 to 53% in 1996. However, despite these gains, some constraints continue to hobble the implementation of the reform program. They may be summarized as follows:

- Resources were not available on time and in sufficient quantity to implement the agreed upon activities because of weaknesses inherent to the national budget implementation process;
- The GOB and its line Ministries still operate under an entrenched and highly centralized financial management system;

- Qualified financial management staff are not available in sufficient numbers within MOE technical departments and its departmental directorates (DDE's);
- Formal and standardized financial controls and uniform reporting on the use of funds have not been adopted and/or implemented;
- An effective and integrated financial management system has not been implemented by the MOF in order to provide timely financial information for planning and monitoring purposes;
- Adequate accountability and transparency are not maintained over the use of resources generated internally by the education system (school fees, contributions from local communities, etc.);
- Procurement of and contracting for goods and services are highly centralized and controlled by the MOF or the central departments of the MOE;
- The GOB's capacity to account for and report primary education expenditures is still nascent.

In spite of these constraints, budget and financial management were improved during the Phase I of the CLEF project. Expenditure monitoring at the central level was computerized and the MOE's financial body, the Directorate of Financial Resources (DRF), is now capable of producing regular reports on line item expenditures aggregated in a wide variety of ways. The local offices of the DRF, the Regional Directorates of Education (DDEs), are able to produce regular reports on spending by budget line and category. But capacity to manage and maintain the overall system, as well as individual aspects of it, is nascent. In order to prevent current wastage of scarce economic resources the system needs to be decentralized to enhance sustainability and adaptability and promote coordination between the DRF and MOE's managers. Better coordination could assure regular availability of financing to operations managers and the dialogue between the DRF and the DDEs could improve the latter's capacity to monitor and report on the use of funds allocated to decentralized structures.

Lessons learned from other programs in similar environments show that only with substantial and sustained efforts and full participation of all concerned can the issues of area weaknesses in Benin's financial management be addressed. For example, without full commitment by the GOB towards primary education reforms (e.g., decentralization and financial management) no meaningful reforms can be successfully implemented. Without active participation and consensus building among stakeholders at the regional, local or communal levels, decentralization cannot be realized. Even at the MOE level, the professionals who must learn and accept new ways of doing business and relinquish authority must be convinced of the potential benefits of the financial and budgeting reforms planned under this project. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) must be convinced of the MOE's ability to assume greater financial management autonomy before it delegates this responsibility. Experience and examples from other programs also demonstrate that changes that are imposed will not work. Persons must not only be held accountable for their actions; but, they must also be adequately trained to assume new responsibilities and functions in order to effect reform and introduce change to any existing system.

Best Practices

To those implementing similar projects in education the CLEF team can share the following general advice:

- Be collaborative from the onset when implementing activities within your project.
- Request funding for your activity well ahead of time so that the funding is readily available when needed.
- Plan your activities carefully and always follow them through.
- Avoid too many “*out of the hat*” activities.
- The contractor must see to it that the Milestones and the concomitant activities be stated as clearly and correctly as possible in the contract, and be feasible.
- Since the final approval of the completed Milestones is the responsibility of the USAID Mission/CTO, it is imperative for the contractor/COP to clarify the

interpretation of the Milestones and the accompanying activities with the CTO as the activities are being executed.

- If there is a change of USAID Mission/CTO, it is important that the replacement be quickly familiarized with the Milestones and the accompanying activities, especially the interpretations agreed upon.
- The contractor should insist that the End-of-Project/Final Report be submitted by the COP immediately and not put off until later.

Specific to Pedagogy are best practices and observations that come direct from the field. Listed below are a few important ones:

- The periodic presence of an international consultant working consistently with the curriculum design team as well as experimentation in the classrooms enhanced the exchange of skills in benefit of Benin (the host country) which could then boast of curriculum experts.
- With 2,625 contract teachers trained, and an additional training of 713 done at the decentralized level, for the first time, the participants were elated! Teachers were extremely appreciative of this mode of training because they were trained not far away from their homes, thus contracted less transportation and lodging expenses while improving the image of the local senior teaching staff. And, for those contract teachers who had not previously received any training, the training was appreciated even more. It allowed those teachers to improve their teaching skills enormously.
- With the designing of experimental prototype textbooks, teacher guides and workbooks in Benin (locally) it made the authors proud.
- Periodic visits to experimental schools where teachers were observed, model lessons were produced, and their questions answered by specialists provided to encourage and empower.
- The setting up of a procedure for the generalization of new curricula and the preparation of the in-service training proved challenging.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Prior to the CLEF project, the educational system of Benin maintained its colonial inheritance. It did not provide students with the kind of education most of them required to succeed economically. Historically noted for having a large number of intellectuals, Benin still had one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world. Its school system was simply a bastion for university seekers. Basic literacy could not be provided and over 40% of its children never enrolled in school. Yet, of the remaining that did enroll, less than 23% were girls. With high dropout, repetition and failure rates, coupled with demoralized and under-qualified teachers, the system was in disarray. Since the introduction of the CLEF project, however, the primary education sector, in particular, has made an “about-face.” Hope is on the horizon. Nevertheless, while there have been many accomplishments there remains much to be done. Therefore to continue the success of this project and to facilitate the realization of the overall goal, of instituting an effective, efficient, and equitable primary education system that is sustainable, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Early in the Program only a portion of the USAID financing was made available to the MOE for support of program activities and only a small percentage of that actually reached the classrooms. This was due primarily to activities being programmed on the national budget, of the Government of Benin, which often experienced delays due to the funds not being readily available. Therefore, it is recommended that general budgetary support, for the Government of Benin, not be commingled with program support funding. This would fray unnecessary delays and keep the project on schedule.
2. It is also suggested that the present reforms have not gone far enough and therefore it is recommended that teachers and classroom activities take precedence over investment of program and project resources for the remaining years of support for the educational reforms. It is also recommended that there be a move in favor of the provision of a wider range of high quality instruction that is both affordable and sustainable.

3. It is also recommended that project assistance be substantially increased and coordinated under the direction of one contractor who has experience in education and home office support. It is further recommended that USAID divest itself entirely of the project technical assistance support and retain only a monitoring function provided by its own staff.
4. In the remaining years of the project it is recommended the program should focus closely on the integration of inputs inside the classrooms, support of pedagogy, and the development of a sustainable curriculum.
5. Lastly, it is recommended that support of teachers and their work in the classroom take precedence over every other activity.

Glossary

CAII	Creative Associates International, Inc.
CEP	Primary School Leaving Exam
DDE	Regional Directorate of Education
DRF	Directorate of Financial Resources
EGE	Etats Généraux
FQL	Fundamental Quality Level
GOB	Government of Benin
MIS	Management Information System
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TMG	The Mitchell Group, Inc.
USAID	United States Agency for International development

ANNEX

**CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND EQUITY FOUNDATIONS (CLEF) PROJECT
 BENIN, WEST AFRICA
 PHASE I: THE THOMAS MITCHELL GROUP, INC. CONTRACTUAL OUTPUTS AND STATUS
 August 16, 1995-August 15, 1998**

SUPPORTING OBJECTIVE	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	CONTRACT OUTPUT	STATUS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	NOTES...
A. Improve quality – Make primary education more effective in enabling the students to be successful in their postprimary careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of Beninese students would be enrolled in schools that meet Fundamental Quality Level (FQL) defined standards. • New curriculum would be developed, tested and introduced nationally for all primary grades. • All teachers would be given the opportunity to upgrade their skills to the minimum required level for their positions, eliciting the help of a teacher 	<p>A1. New curricula for grades 3,4,5,6 developed</p> <p>A2. New curriculum testing plan developed</p> <p>A3. Nationwide implementation plan developed</p> <p>A4. Annual curriculum action plan progress report produced</p> <p>A5. Skills upgrading training program and plan developed</p> <p>A6. New curriculum training and plan developed in relation to new curriculum implementation plan</p>	<p>A1. Completed</p> <p>A2. Completed</p> <p>A3. Completed</p> <p>A4. Completed</p> <p>A5. Completed</p> <p>A6. Completed</p>	<p>A1. Prototypes : 1-4 TMG library ; 5&6 Porto Novo</p> <p>A2. Testing reports : Laroche '94, '95, '99 ; Chabot '94, '95, '96, '97, '98 (TMG library)</p> <p>A3. Report : <i>Formation des formateurs et des enseignants a l'application des nouveau programmes (October 1996)</i></p> <p>A4. Annual reports</p> <p>A5. Report : <i>Planification de la formation in Formation a l'application de nouveaux programmes</i></p> <p>A6 & A7. Same as A3 & A5 in addition to reports : <i>Elaboration d'un cadre de gestion pour les activites de formation continue ;</i></p>	<p>A1. Grades 1&2 prior to July '98 ; 3&4 Dec. '97 ; 5&6 March '98 - Grades 1-6 experimented in 30 schools ; 1-3 in 120 schools ; 1 or 2 in the remaining 106 schools</p> <p>A2. A plan was developed in 1994 ; tests administered in 1997 ; results produced Feb. 1997 by Random Testing</p> <p>A3. Discusses implementation plan for Teachers, Trainers, Advisors, School Principals and Inspectors</p> <p>A4. Reports for 1996, 1997 & 1988</p> <p>A5. October 1996</p> <p>A3 –A6. Copies of documents in TMG library</p>

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	<p>support and in-service training program. Teachers would also be trained in the use of new materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students would have access to textbooks and pedagogical materials according to FQL standards. Documentation centers would be established, equipped and staffed to offer support to the primary school teachers* 	<p>A7. New in-service training program developed</p> <p>A8. Annual in-service action plan progress report produced</p> <p>A9. Procurement plan updated</p> <p>A10. Textbook procurement bid documentation finalized</p> <p>A11. Annual textbook action plan progress report produced</p> <p>A12. New document network system planned</p> <p>A13. Annual documentation action plan progress report produced</p> <p>A14. National and regional FQL programs (strategy, acquisition, monitoring) developed</p>	<p>A7. Completed</p> <p>A8. Completed for 1996, 1997, 1998</p> <p>A9. NA</p> <p>A10. NA</p> <p>A11. Completed 1996-98</p> <p>A12. Aabandoned</p> <p>A13. Completed 1996-98 *Renovated 2 documentation centers (1 in Porto Novo and 1 in Parakou)</p> <p>A14. Completed '95-96 ; '96-97 ; '97-98</p>	<p><i>Politique de la formation continue des enseignants de l'école primaire en republique du benin</i></p> <p>A8, Reports</p> <p>A9. NA</p> <p>A10. NA</p> <p>A11. Reports</p> <p>A12. NA</p> <p>A13. Reports</p> <p>A14. MOE Implementation reports : <i>Bilan annuel</i> MIS TA report</p>	<p>A7. Copies in TMG library</p> <p>A8. David Cross did the '96 & '97 reports and Daniele the '98 report</p> <p>A9. Activity financed by World Bank...MOE controlled variable</p> <p>A10. Same as A9</p> <p>A11. A short term consultant did the 2 reports but recommendations never implemented</p> <p>A12. Funding provided by World Bank...MOE controlled variable – concept abandoned</p> <p>A13. David Cross did the '96 & '97 reports...'98 done by Daniele</p> <p>A14 & A15. FQL strategy developed in April '96 ; first definition – March '95 ; information plan at regional and</p>

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		A15. Annual FQL implementation report produced	A15. Completed '96 ; '97 ; 1998-2000	A15. Reports (TMG library)	central levels – April '96 ; acquisition, monitoring and implementation plan – August '96 ; FQL implementation reports for '96, '97 and 1998-2000
B. Increase equity – Make access to primary education more advantageous for girls and children in disadvantaged regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To achieve a 78% gross enrollment rate equitably distributed nationwide through recommendations supported by an adequate information system on school data A decentralization of human resource management permitting a need based distribution of teaching personnel 	<p>B1. Survey and study on factors affecting enrollment carried out</p> <p>B2. Practical measures to increase access to education proposed</p> <p>B3. Implementation monitoring report produced</p>	<p>B1. Completed Reports : Dec. '94 ; Nov. '95</p> <p>B2. Completed June 1996</p> <p>B3. Completed August 1996</p>	<p>B1. Study : <i>Etude sur les facteurs affectant la demande sociale de l'éducation</i></p> <p>B2. Access to education policy document : <i>Document de politique d'accès et d'équité & Etude sur l'impact de l'exonération des filles des zones rurales des frais d'école (Jan. '96)</i></p> <p>B3. Monitoring report : <i>Bilan annuel plan d'action équité</i></p>	B1-3. Reports in TMG library

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C. Ensure financial resources – Promote assurance of adequate financial resources to rehabilitate and maintain Benin’s education system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve financial accountability at all levels : central, regional and local Enhance private sector financial support and services by facilitating development of the private school system and by giving more latitude to non-official structures such as NGO’s and Parents Associations 	<p>C1. New budget nonmenclature finalized C2. Budget procedures manuel finalized C3. Regional and central level staff trained in new budgeting procedures</p> <p>C4. Annual evaluation</p>	<p>C1. Completed April 12, 1996 C2. Completed May 1996 C3. Completed March 11-12, 1997 ; May 13 & 24, 1996 C4. Completed</p>	<p>C1. Nomenclature available C2. Manual available C3. Training report</p> <p>C4. Evaluation reports</p>	<p>C1. TMG library C2. TMG library C3. TMG library</p> <p>C4. See (R4) 1996 ; 1997 ; 1998 TMG library</p>

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D. Greater participation – Promote participatory decision- making and consensus – building on education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase national awareness of education issues and public participation at the decision-making, monitoring and service-provider level Enhance education services from the private sector 	<p>D1. Plan produced to enhance public participation in decision-making, management, resource procurement and service-providing</p> <p>D2. Private school system diagnostic carried out</p> <p>D3. Parent’s Association system developed</p> <p>D4. Annual public participation action plan progress report produced</p>	<p>D1. NA</p> <p>D2. Completed March 1999</p> <p>D3. NA</p> <p>D4. NA</p>	<p>D1. NA</p> <p>D2. <i>Etude diagnostique sur l’enseignement prive au benin</i> (report)</p> <p>D3. NA</p> <p>D4. Na</p>	<p>D1. TMG/CLEF provides assistance to this component but cannot be held responsible for attainment of this objective. Implementation for this activity is conducted directly by USAID /CLEF</p> <p>D2. TMG library</p> <p>D3. Same as D1</p> <p>D4. managed by USAID until November 1997</p>

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<p>E. Strengthen institutional capacity and coordination. Enable GOB, particularly the Ministry of Education, to coordinate setting and carrying out of national objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a national student assessment program • Establish an operational information system that will provide adequate and timely information support for decision-making and management and monitoring for FQL program, and access related material • Rationalize human resource management system, providing adequate training 	<p>E1. Statistical yearbook produced for 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, the latter two within six months of the end of the school year</p> <p>E2. Conceptual framework for information system fully developed</p> <p>E3. Implementation plans for information system project developed</p> <p>E4. Annual MIS action plan progress report produced</p> <p>E5. Comprehensive personnel database established</p> <p>E6. Human Resource Management procedures defined</p> <p>E7. Annual Human Resource action plan progress report produced</p> <p>E8. Comprehensive personnel training plan developed</p> <p>E9. Annual progress of training plan assessed</p>	<p>E1. Completed '93-'94 ; '94-'95 ; '95-'96 ; '97-'97 ; '97-'98 ; '98-'99 (in progress)</p> <p>E2. Completed August 1996</p> <p>E3. Completed March 21-22, 1997</p> <p>E4. Completed 1996 ; 1997 ; 1998-2000</p> <p>E5. Completed</p> <p>E6. Completed December 1997</p> <p>E7. Completed 1996 ; 1997 ; 1998-2000</p> <p>E8. Completed December 1996</p> <p>E9. NA</p>	<p>E1. Statistical Yearbooks</p> <p>E2. Report : <i>Bilan des plans d'action</i></p> <p>E3. Report : <i>Plan de mise en œuvre du system d'information</i></p> <p>E4. Reports : (Same as A15)</p> <p>E5. Reports</p> <p>E6. Manuals (2 vols.)</p> <p>E7. Reports : (Same as A15)</p> <p>E8. Report : <i>Formation du personnel administratif du ministere de l'education nationale...</i></p> <p>E9. NA</p>	<p>E1. 1993-94 (Aug. '97) ; 1994-95 (Feb. '98) ; 1995-96 (feb. '98) ; 1996-97 & 1997-98 to be put in book form by MOE ; 1998-99 in progress at this writing</p> <p>E2. Conceptual framework and validation March 14-16, 1995</p> <p>E3. TMG library</p> <p>E4. TMG library</p> <p>E5. Database structure designed August '96 ; installed Nov.'96</p> <p>E6. TMG library</p> <p>E7. TMG library</p> <p>E8. Developed with USAID TMG library</p> <p>E9. Same as E8</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="488 331 741 699">Increase financial accountability through standardization of budgetary preparation and execution procedures in accordance with pertinent financial management techniques <li data-bbox="488 975 741 1214">Decentralize administrative procedures, focusing on departmental and district-level administrative units 	<p data-bbox="772 331 1061 507">E10. New budget nomenclature finalized E11. Fully operational expenditure tracking system established at central and regional levels</p> <p data-bbox="772 639 1061 687">E12. Budget procedures manual finalized</p> <p data-bbox="772 730 1061 810">E13. Regional and central level staff trained in new budgeting procedures</p> <p data-bbox="772 853 1061 933">E14. Annual evaluation of use of new budgeting procedures produced</p> <p data-bbox="772 976 1061 1120">E15. Plan for comprehensive decentralization of administrative procedures produced</p> <p data-bbox="772 1163 1061 1211">E16. Each phase of decentralization evaluated</p>	<p data-bbox="1093 331 1308 635">E10. Completed April 12, 1996 E11. Completed Report : <i>Budget Procedures and Financial Tracking Systems for MOE (July 1994)</i> ; Quarterly Report (12/95)</p> <p data-bbox="1093 639 1308 687">E12. Completed May 1996</p> <p data-bbox="1093 730 1308 842">E13. Completed March 11-12, 1997 ; May 13 & 24, 1996</p> <p data-bbox="1093 853 1308 869">E14. Completed</p> <p data-bbox="1093 976 1308 1024">E15. Completed December 1997</p> <p data-bbox="1093 1163 1308 1243">E16. Official decentralization not yet begun</p>	<p data-bbox="1339 331 1644 443">E10. Nonmenclature available (Same as C1) E11. Financial statement at the regional level</p> <p data-bbox="1339 639 1644 687">E12. Manual available (Same as C3)</p> <p data-bbox="1339 730 1644 778">E13. Training reports (same as C3)</p> <p data-bbox="1339 853 1644 869">E14. Evaluation reports</p> <p data-bbox="1339 976 1644 1088">E15. <i>Manuel de procedures pour la gestion des ressources humaines (vol 1 & 2)</i></p> <p data-bbox="1339 1163 1644 1179">E16. NA</p>	<p data-bbox="1675 331 2040 475">E10. TMG library E11. See Quarterly Report (Feb. 16, 1996 – May 15, 1996) of FM Expert – TMG library</p> <p data-bbox="1675 639 2040 655">E12. TMG library</p> <p data-bbox="1675 730 2040 746">E13. TMG library</p> <p data-bbox="1675 853 2040 901">E14. See (R4) 1996-98 TMG</p> <p data-bbox="1675 976 2040 992">E15. (Same as E6)</p> <p data-bbox="1675 1163 2040 1243">E16. MOE responsible for output ; outside TMG's manageable interest</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide minimum office and transportation equipment to Ministry personnel 	E17. NA	E17. NA	E17. NA	E17. This specific objective is no longer applicable ; however, documentation exists that shows that the CLEF project gave the MOE \$132,000 USD in office equipment and supplies.