

Project EQUIPE Benin

Equity and Quality in Primary
Education

Annual Report
January 1 – December 31, 2004

Submitted by:
Creative Associates International, Inc.

Under:
Projet EQUIPE Bénin

Cost-Plus-Fixed-Fee Contract No.:
680-C-00-03-00045-00

Funded by:
United States Agency for International
Development (USAID)

May 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND FRENCH TERMINOLOGY	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
1. BACKGROUND	5
2. OBJECTIVES	5
3. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS ACHIEVED.....	7
4. EXPLANATION FOR TARGETS NOT ACHIEVED, SURPASSED, DELAYED OR NOT CARRIED OUT.....	36
5. SUCCESS STORIES	39
6. PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS	43
7. ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2005 – Year 3.....	49

ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND FRENCH TERMINOLOGY

ABPF	Beninese Association for the Promotion of the Family
CAII	Creative Associates International, Inc.
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CCGNPE	La Cellule de Coordination de la Généralisation du Nouveau Programme d'Etude
CS	Circonscription Scolaire (School district)
C/CS	Head of school district
CI	First grade of primary education
CP	Second grade of primary education
CE1	Third grade of primary education
CE2	Fourth grade of primary education
CM1	Fifth grade of primary education
CM2	Sixth grade of primary education
CLEF	Children's Learning & Equity Foundations project
CLIN	Cost Line Item Number
CP	Conseillers Pédagogiques (Pedagogical Advisors)
CVC	Compétences de vie courantes (Life Skills)
DEP	Direction (and Director) of Primary Education
DPP	Direction (and Director) of Planning and Projection
DPU	Desktop Publishing Unit
DRF	Directorate of Financial Resources
EEC	Equity at School and in the Community
EFA	Education for All
EMI	EMI Systems (CAII subcontractor for EQUIPE)
EPT	Education Pour Tous
EQUIPE	Equity and Quality in Primary Education project

FENAPEB	National Federation of Parents Association
FQL	Fundamental Quality Level
GAD	Groupe d'Appui à la Décentralisation
IFESH	International Foundation for Education and Self-Help
INFRE	National Institute of Training and Research in Education
IR	Intermediate Result
MEPS	Ministry of Education (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education)
NNPGE	National Network for the Promotion of Girls' Education
NPE	Nouveaux Programmes d'Etudes (New Study Program, forming the basis of the curriculum and Textbooks for Benin's educational reform)
PAN/EPT	National Action Plan for Education for All
PDC	Communal Development Plan
Pilotes	MEPS specialists in each domain, charged with executing the Action Plans
PNLS	Programme National de Lutte contre le Sida
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RAP	Réseau d'Animation Pédagogique (Pedagogical Support Network)
ROBS	Benin Health NGO Network
RUP	Réseau d'Unités Pédagogiques
R/UP	Responsable d'Unité Pédagogique
SO	Strategic Objective
UFLS	Unité Focale de Lutte contre le SIDA
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United National Children's Education Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Enrollment
WHO	World Health Organization
WUSC	World University Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To support the education reform efforts of Benin's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MEPS), EQUIPE has achieved 89% of the results agreed-upon with the funding agency, USAID, in the project's first two years of implementation. To improve the access of more children to equitable, quality primary education, EQUIPE activities aim to achieve results in five areas: Improved Pedagogy System; Increased Girls' Education; Strengthened Stakeholder Environment; Improved Management and Planning in the context of Decentralization; and Support to MEPS for various activities related to HIV/AIDS in the sector of Education.

Two features of the EQUIPE approach promise continued success and synergy between the different EQUIPE components for sustainability and greater, more cost-effective impact: consultation and participation. The consultative approach to planning and problem-solving has strengthened teamwork and enables the project team to model for partners and local-level Working Groups a process that will serve the Government of Benin's objectives of decentralization in planning, management and accountability through increased interactions with direct beneficiaries of education services. The participatory approach has tapped into Beninese talents to create materials adapted to Benin and allow Beninese-led initiatives. Both have resulted in innovations and progress in achieving a set of 26 out of 30 deliverables (87%) in Year 2.

Three specific examples illustrate the synergy that has continued between the different EQUIPE components and strengthened project impact. The Pedagogy team collaborated with the Girls' Education and Life Skills teams at several workshops to finalize the design of 6th Grade (CM2) Teacher Guides and Textbooks for the 2004-5 school year. This collaboration resulted in the integration of Life Skills, Health and HIV/AIDS, as well as *Equity in the Classroom and Community* principles, in the national curriculum textbooks and Teacher Guides for all seven 6th Grade subjects. Benin's New Study Program (NPE), a competency-based curriculum, contains most of the internationally-recognized Life Skills, particularly in Health and Hygiene; Reproductive Health; Nutrition; Psycho-social Skills; Personal Management; and Child Rights and Responsibilities.

In addition, the EQUIPE Life Skills team collaborated with the Girls' Education and Pedagogy teams to identify Life Skills in the NPE curriculum, drawing attention to areas where teachers can reinforce these competencies in daily teaching activities. EQUIPE held an Equity/Life Skills Workshop that trained together 270 trainers, teachers, inspectors, Parent Association and community members from the 19 'red zone' communes with the lowest girls' enrolment rates. This Workshop demonstrated how to apply the Equity/Life Skills concepts in the NPE and helped teachers and inspectors more clearly understand competency-based teaching, particularly for inter-disciplinary Life Skills. In this regard, EQUIPE reinforced teachers' classroom skills to implement Benin's New Study Program effectively and produced materials that will serve as teacher training modules in Benin's teacher training institutes, which the government plans to reopen in the coming academic year.

Finally, the two EQUIPE teams tasked with advancing decentralization pooled their experience and created cross-task synergy. Working at the grassroots, EQUIPE's Community Mobilization team consulted with the Education Management team about mutually-reinforcing strategies to achieve the national Education for All (EFA) goals. Charged with *Improving the Stakeholder Environment*, the Community Mobilization team has supported twenty (20) Working Groups to devise educational development plans and increase civil society and private sector participation in education. Their practical experience informed the proposals of the Education Management team to extend the use of planning tools to community levels. The Education System Management team adapted MapDecision software and trained 30 high-level Ministry officials in its use. With partner EMI Systems, the Education Management team designed budgeting tools for District Education Officers (*chefs de circonscription scolaire, C/CS*) and planned ways to use MapDecision to help each Working Group commune refine the educational development planning process.

EQUIPE continues to search for the most appropriate and effective ways to support the Ministry. Benin's ongoing education crisis and teacher strikes have delayed the New Studies Program implementation. Weak Ministry ownership and follow-through with EQUIPE activities and high Ministry staff turnover undermine the sustainability of capacity-building efforts. Low motivation and weak capacity in the Ministry's Desktop Publication Unit (DPU) persist. Because the EQUIPE contract with USAID requires submitting several documents defined as *Policies*, the extent to which a donor-funded project can support policy-making while respecting national sovereignty, Ministry prerogatives and funding implications arose as an issue. In this regard, *Policy Recommendations* may be the appropriate focus for technical assistance.

1. BACKGROUND

Benin remains a poor country with an illiteracy rate between 70% and 80%. A key challenge to Benin's economic and social development is ensuring that the entire school-age population completes six years of primary education. Despite progress in gross enrollment rates in the past decade, serious differences remain between enrollment rates for boys and girls, urban and rural children. Addressing these differences is essential if Benin is to achieve Universal Primary Enrollment (UPE) by 2015 and advance as a nation with improved economic and social prosperity. The lack of qualified teachers is a significant weakness in the primary education system. Reliable data for rational and effective management of the teaching force, in particular, and of the education system, in general, are not always available. Teacher strikes have reduced the school year since Benin's Ministry of Education began introducing the New Study Program (NPE) in 1999. As a result of these ongoing teacher strikes, public school children, or over 90% of the student population, have fallen behind in learning the new curriculum. The resulting delays have weakened the extent to which the Ministry has been able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the NPE and make a difference in improving the basic education attainment of Beninese children, particularly girls, and has tarnished the public view of the Ministry's commitment to UPE, equity, more transparent, accountable policies and positive change.

To support the Government of Benin in addressing these challenges, USAID/Benin's Strategic Objective for education seeks to ensure that *"More Children Receive a Quality Basic Education on an Equitable Basis."* To achieve this objective, USAID/Benin awarded Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII) a 3-year contract to implement and manage the Equity and Quality in Primary Education (EQUIPE) project on February 4, 2003. Creative Associates International, in partnership with CARE International and EMI Systems, aims to improve equity and quality by increasing decentralization and community participation in Benin's primary education system with an integrated strategy that revolves around capacity-building for context-appropriate, sustainable reform. Specific EQUIPE components include strengthened pedagogy, more effective curricula and Textbooks, improved environments for girls' and HIV/AIDS education, as well as more effective, decentralized education management.

2. OBJECTIVES

Through the EQUIPE contract, Creative Associates International, in partnership with CARE/Benin and EMI Systems, supports the achievement of USAID/Benin's Strategic Objective in education, to ensure that *"More Children Receive a Quality Basic Education on an Equitable Basis."* Four (4) sets of results are expected to ensure achievement of this Objective to strengthen the Government of Benin's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education capacities and partnerships with decentralized entities to manage better quality, more equitable education. Each of these four (4) result areas corresponds to a Project EQUIPE Component:

- Improved Pedagogical System;

- Increased Girls' Enrollment in target areas;
- Improved Environment for Stakeholders;
- Improved Education System Management in Decentralization Context.

In addition to these four result areas is the fifth component of Project EQUIPE intervention: HIV/AIDS and the Education Sector.

3. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS ACHIEVED

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
CLIN 1 IMPROVED PEDAGOGICAL SYSTEM <i>IR 1: Improved Pedagogical System</i>		
Sub – IR 1.1 Appropriate curriculum developed and in use (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.1.1-1 and C.5.1.2-1)		
7.	Progress report on implementation of the recommendations of the first pedagogical evaluation submitted to USAID CTO.	6/30/04
9.	CCGNPE communications strategy submitted to USAID CTO.	12/31/04
<p>The first pedagogical evaluation was a pivotal document for MEPS and donor community. The plan to implement recommendations, formulated by MEPS directors, is one of the main documents donors use (e.g., World Bank and USAID) to determine which activities to support financially. The plan's recommendations have provided strong guidelines used by the MEPS, specifically the CGNPE, to redress the current reform's shortcomings. Activities in line with these guidelines have been undertaken since 2003. The progress report on recommendation implementation was submitted to USAID at the end of June 2004.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since 2003 EQUIPE has been encouraging MEPS to focus more attention on media communications, particularly for the educational reform. Following the activities of 2003 (EQUIPE internal study day on October 23, informal meetings with the DEP and the DPP on November 10-11, an informational conference for journalists on December 8), a national meeting was held at INFOSEC from March 30 – April 2. One of the goals was to propose communication strategies for the MEPS. ▪ Following this meeting, EQUIPE worked closely with the CGNPE's newly-formed communication sub-committee, formed on April 21, to define the vision of the MEPS with regard to communication. A consultant helped this sub-committee orient their work along the lines that a professional communication specialist would require and submitted a baseline study and recommendations for a communication strategy in June. ▪ This report was transmitted to the CGNPE, which had recruited a well-known Beninese to formulate its communications strategy, Jerome Carlos, who was satisfied with the consultant's report as a strong basis for his ongoing work with the MEPS during the USAID Partners' Meeting on June 25. ▪ In August and September, a group of communication "missionaries" spread out across all the departments in Benin worked with local radio stations, local opinion leaders and others to move public opinion towards a better understanding of the NPE and the challenges facing the educational system in general. ▪ In addition to these local actors, several television and radio programs invited the EQUIPE Pedagogy Team Leader to participate in debates related to the status of education in Benin. Several other strategies were proposed (toll-free number, website) to make information on the reform available. ▪ On December 9, a meeting was held to bring together potential sponsors of

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			communication events, CGNPE, MEPS press attaché, Jerome Carlos (communication consultant), USAID and EQUIPE. The Communication Strategy submitted at the end of December went beyond the proposal of a communication strategy, proposing a framework for a communication <i>policy</i> that the Ministry sorely lacks.
12.	Actions implemented to strengthen the Document Network (<i>Réseau Documentaire</i>). Status report submitted to USAID CTO.	09/30/04 (submitted 11/17/2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ From May 25-27 2004, EQUIPE helped the Ministry (DEP and CGNPE) organize a workshop for capacity-building with regard to the National Document Network. Baseline data on the existing Network was collected and some improvements proposed to strengthen this network. The Pedagogy team realized that expectations regarding the Document Network Action Plan were not being met. ▪ Following the May workshop, a document providing the history and summarizing the activities that had been undertaken to strengthen this network was submitted to USAID in November 2004. This report provides a reference point for studying the efforts made by this Action Plan to improve the access that various primary school actors have to the information and documentary resources throughout the country.
Sub – IR 1.2 Appropriate Textbooks developed and in use (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.1.1-2 and C.5.1.2-2)			
14.	90,000 French Textbooks and 90,000 math Textbooks reproduced for CM2 and delivered to MEPS. Confirmation of delivery submitted to USAID CTO.	08/31/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work on CM2 (grade 6) French and Math Textbooks had begun in December 2003, when the major Textbook development actors met to harmonize their views on the content and planning of the sixth grade Textbooks, focusing on the very practical aspects of thematic breakdown, structure of the Textbooks and teachers' guides as well as the planning of the process. One of the main strategies for French and Math is to complete the Textbooks first and then use the Textbooks as the basis for teachers' guides. ▪ In the first quarter of 2004, preparation of Textbook drafts progressed satisfactorily to the point where these drafts were judged to be about 50% complete. One reason for this good progress was the improved contribution of INFRE's Desktop Publishing Unit (DPU) following the training provided by EQUIPE's DPU specialists from November 2003 through February 2004 and the parallel clarification of their status and expectations by the Textbook <i>pilote</i>. Each INFRE DPU agent was assigned a specific area (Math, Artistic Education, etc.) and participated actively in the workshops where Textbooks and teachers' guides were elaborated. The process of entering the Textbook and Teachers' Guide information concurrently with its production by the elaboration/editorial teams has resulted in considerable time-saving. ▪ From April-June, Textbook drafts passed through several essential phases, including experimentation in 4 urban and rural schools and the subsequent revision; finalization of the Textbook texts and their data entry into Word; ordering of final illustrations and photographs for Textbooks; revision and correction of the Math and French Textbooks by two international consultants who had worked on previous Textbooks; analysis and integration of their recommendations by the editorial team; and the preparation of

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>Textbooks for the review or ‘re-reading’ teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With the deadline of sending Textbooks to the printers by July 26, 2004, July was a race against the clock to complete the re-reading, revising, integrating revisions, and finalizing the Textbooks. Unfortunately, several of the consultants charged with revising the Textbooks, as well as the DPU team (see below), did not perform their work with quality or in the time required. This meant extra work for the EQUIPE Pedagogy team, which was able to hold closely to its deadline date and send the final versions of the Textbooks to the printers on August 6, 2004. ▪ In June, the documents outlining the rules for the Textbook open bidding process (<i>dossier d’appel d’offres</i>) were finalized, incorporating lessons learned from the previous year. The announcement inviting interested parties to collect their bidding instructions at the EQUIPE office appeared in the newspapers on June 14, 2004. Bids submitted to the EQUIPE office were opened on June 30, and a commission composed of Ministry, EQUIPE and USAID representatives met 4 times and selected 2 printing companies following an in-depth process. EQUIPE signed contracts with the 2 companies and submitted the complete, formatted texts to the printers on August 6. Initial Textbook delivery to the CGNPE took place on August 23 and final delivery of all 180,000 Textbooks by mid-September. The timeliness of Textbook delivery to the Ministry allowed for a well-publicized public ceremony on August 27, 2004 when the USAID Mission Director presented the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education with the Grade 6 Math and French Textbooks. ▪ In July, 2004, Textbook Management Committees were put in place by the MEPS at the National and Departmental levels. Communal- and School-level Committees were to be launched at the beginning of the academic year, with the implication that CM2 textbooks could not be delivered to schools before this time. Teachers’ strikes, which delayed the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, also delayed the Textbook Management Committees’ start-up.
16.	50,000 teachers’ guides reproduced for CM2 and delivered to MEPS. Confirmation of delivery submitted to USAID CTO	07/31/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The first draft of Teachers’ Guides for 4 of the 6 subject areas (Science and Technology Education, Social Education, Artistic Education, Physical and Sports Education in addition to Evaluation) of the Grade 6 (CM2) curriculum were completed during a series of workshops held during the first quarter of 2004. The drafts were read and corrected by various committees and individuals in the second quarter to ensure internal coherence and harmony with the existing teachers’ guides. ▪ The format for teachers’ guides in 4 of the 6 subject areas (Science and Technology Education, Social Education, Artistic Education, Physical and Sports Education in

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>addition to Evaluation) of the Grade 6/CM2 curriculum was standardized in April and May, thus ensuring quality control. For the Textbooks, June and July were devoted to revising, testing, re-reading and finalizing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>consultation restreinte</i> process for selecting Teacher Guide printers took place in mid-July, 2004. All printing companies registered with Projet EQUIPE (over 20 were on the list) received notice that they could compete in the selection of printers to undertake printing of 7,500 copies of each of the seven (7) Teachers' Guides. Bids were reviewed, printers selected, and contracts signed with five of the seven printers on July 30. These Teacher Guides were to be delivered within 7-14 days. Contracts for the other two Teacher Guides (Math and French, which could be completed only after the Textbooks were finalized), were signed on August 12, with delivery the following week. All these Guides were delivered to the EQUIPE office, since EQUIPE was charged with ensuring that they were delivered to the teacher training sites in time for the training sessions that began on August 30, 2004.
17.	Draft Textbook policy submitted to USAID CTO.	03/31/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since 2003, a revised Textbook policy has been the subject of several MEPS-sponsored meetings. The basis of this work is a Textbook policy that was proposed in 1996 by a Canadian consultant working with MEPS. Since then, the policy has been reoriented to suit the current context. To ensure that the Textbook policy is integrated into the global national book policy, collaboration with the Ministry of Culture was undertaken. Through a series of workshops organized by MEPS during previous quarters, and in collaboration with the Ministry technicians assigned to the task, EQUIPE participated in the proposal of a draft Textbook policy. This complex activity involved many <i>Directions</i> of the Ministry (Secondary as well as Primary Education, INFRE, the Cellule, as well as the DPP). EQUIPE submitted the deliverable "Draft Textbook policy" on March 30, 2004.
18.	Plan to implement Textbook policy submitted to USAID CTO.	09/30/04 (submitted 10/15/04)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A draft version of a National Textbook Policy had been submitted by EQUIPE at the end of March 2004. In August and September, in collaboration with the Textbook <i>pilote</i>, the EQUIPE Pedagogy Team studied several more documents and analyzed the effect of the newly-created Textbook Management Committees on Textbook Policy implementation. The resulting plan to implement the Textbook policy was submitted in October, 2004.
21.	Second report on DPU capacity submitted to USAID CTO.	6/30/05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the second report is not due until mid-2005, work with and monitoring of the INFRE Desktop Publishing Unit (DPU) continued throughout 2004. As described above, the DPU seemed to make an effort to improve their services following the training provided by EQUIPE's DPU specialists from November 2003 through February 2004 and the parallel clarification of their status and expectations by the Textbook <i>pilote</i>.

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
		<p>Each INFRE DPU agent was assigned a specific area (Math, Artistic Education, etc.) in which to work and participated actively in the workshops where Textbooks and teachers' guides are elaborated. Initially, this seemed a strategy that provided for time savings and efficiency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On May 12, 2004, EQUIPE met with the Director of INFRE, his deputy director, and the textbook <i>pilote</i>, to discuss the lack of motivation, which has proven to be the greatest barrier preventing the INFRE's DPU from being able to take over their role at the forefront of Ministry publication services. The INFRE Director promised to take steps (improved monitoring of staff, provision of a scanner to enable the team to do its work) to improve the situation. But neither of these steps has yet been taken. A new Director at INFRE was named on October 6, 2004. ▪ In June, when the EQUIPE Pedagogy Team monitored the work done by the INFRE Desktop Publishing Unit (DPU) agents assigned to work with EQUIPE to integrate the revisions into the final versions of the Guides and Textbooks, they immediately noticed that the poor work habits and lack of attention to detail noted during the May 12 meeting had not essentially changed. The result was delays and very poor quality, including many errors and omissions that had previously been corrected. The EQUIPE team had to use its own consultants and team members to do the work of the DPU agents. ▪ The Director of INFRE had requested an evaluation of the INFRE Desktop Publishing Unit (DPU) agents at the May 12 meeting referred to previously. In addition to working with them on a daily basis at the INFRE office and involving them in all activities related to publishing the Textbook and Teachers' Guides for Grades 5 and 6, EQUIPE had designed a training program based on their diagnosed needs, and then trained DPU staff from November 2003 through April 2004. An initial assessment of INFRE staff capacities and performance conducted in August, 2004 provided a partial basis against which the team could assess gains in specific skills and help account for the impact of the 18-month training efforts supported by EQUIPE project funds. Following this initial evaluation, the EQUIPE team put together a practical problem-solving exercise that would test the strength of specific skills used during the Textbook editing process. But when the EQUIPE team attempted to administer this exercise, the DPU agents refused to participate. EQUIPE informed the Textbook <i>pilote</i> of this refusal, and he submitted the problem to the INFRE Director. Because the DPU staff refused to participate in the exercise, the only information EQUIPE has of progress is the initial assessment conducted in August, 2004. ▪ By the end of 2004, EQUIPE noted that the DPU was practically non-functional, with

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			very few of its computers in working order and its agents habitually absent.
Sub – IR 1.3 Appropriate teacher training system developed and in use. (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.1.1-3 and C.5.1.2-3)			
23.	CM2 teachers and other staff trained and report submitted to USAID CTO.	12/20/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Starting in June with consultation amongst the <i>chefs de circonscription scolaire</i> (C/CS), preparations got underway for the 2004 Teacher Training sessions. The dates of August 30-September 24, 2004 were maintained because the Minister requested that all training sessions be completed by the beginning of the school year on October 4, 2004. In July, EQUIPE worked closely with the Action Plan <i>pilote</i> for Teacher Training and the Ministry's Division of Financial Resources to work out a budget, in a context of tight budget constraints. EQUIPE worked with Ministry partners to negotiate formal agreements that would allow training sessions to move forward. ▪ Assisting the Ministry's Action Plan <i>pilote</i> for Training, several resource persons and the EQUIPE Pedagogy team proposed in early July a conceptual framework for the 2004 Teacher Training Sessions. Continuing with the efforts begun in June, a second phase of consultation amongst the <i>chefs de circonscription scolaire</i> (C/CS) continued in July, while the EQUIPE Pedagogy Team developed and adopted this conceptual framework, collected statistics for the targeted teachers and identified training centers. Training participants had much appreciated the practical focus of the 2003 Teacher Training sessions, and this practical orientation, as well as clearer instructions regarding the responsibilities of trainers and teachers to conduct various activities, made the actual training effective for teachers of all levels (well-trained and experienced teachers as well as unqualified community teachers) and better prepared teachers to implement the New Study Programs in class. Noteworthy was the work of those preparing the teacher training who put a great deal of effort into producing quality training modules. This positive aspect of the Teacher Training deserves credit that is sometimes obscured by public attention on issues of per diem or the unqualified trainees. ▪ From July 19-August 6, the extended Training team from MEPS and EQUIPE as well as resource people produced 5 Training Modules for: CM1 Teachers (6,500 copies), CM2 Teachers (6,500 copies), New Directors (1,000 copies), Teacher Trainers (1,000), Supervisors. Once developed, these modules were edited and four were sent to the printers (the Supervisors' module was simply photocopied since it consisted of a few pages and a small number of copies were required). The printers were selected through the same process of <i>consultation restreinte</i> that had been used for the Textbook printing. All Guides were delivered by August 16, 2004. ▪ Consultation amongst supervisors to prepare the teacher training began on August 9 and the training of teacher trainers several days later, concluding on August 20. During the week of August 23, distribution of Grade 6 Teacher Guides for the 7 subject areas as well as the 5 Training Modules described above began. Close collaboration with the <i>Cellule</i>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>enabled EQUIPE to combine the distribution of the two sets of documents that it had produced (Teacher Guides and Training Modules) with the documents (Curricular Program) and supplies (e.g., notebooks, pens) for which the <i>Cellule</i> had primary responsibility. This collaboration allowed both groups to economize on shipping costs: the combined loads for the north were sent in the <i>Cellule's</i> truck and EQUIPE rented a truck for the combined loads for the south. Although some training centers did not receive their documents and supplies on time (ironically, these were mostly in the Cotonou area, where distances are the smallest but where goodwill and effort may be in the shortest supply), the efforts of the combined team enabled the 2004 Teacher Training sessions to start on August 30, as planned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During the first two weeks of the Teacher Training sessions (August 30-September 10), groups of EQUIPE, <i>Cellule</i> and DEP representatives visited most of the training centers in Benin to ensure that materials had been received and that trainers and trainees had all arrived to participate in the training sessions. This follow-up was a great incentive for people to do the work, as the rumor that these follow-up teams were in the field had already circulated. One of the by-products of this activity was that the field teams were able to collect attendance sheets from the various centers visited. This enabled the verification team hired to audit the teacher training activity to check these lists against the payment provided to participants, thus protecting in some measure against the fraud that is purported to be widespread with regard to payment of teacher training per diem and transportation costs. ▪ All components of the major teacher training sessions planned for the 2004 vacation period (CM1, CM2 and new Directors) were completed by September 24, 2004, one week before the planned startup of the school year on October 4. Starting in October, a series of activities related to the evaluation of the teacher training sessions was conducted. The various documents (evaluation reports, attendance lists, payment sheets) were collected and analyzed in December, so that by the end of the month, EQUIPE submitted a report on the training sessions for Deliverable 23 to USAID.
25.	Annual orientation for secondary school teachers conducted and report submitted to USAID CTO.	09/30/04 (not yet submitted)	Annual orientations for secondary school teachers are supposed to be conducted every year in order to familiarize the teachers in secondary schools receiving students from experimental primary schools with the pedagogy used in the New Study Program (NPE). The Annual orientation for secondary school teachers for the 2003-2004 academic year never took place, constituting the only deliverable EQUIPE was unable to submit in 2003. This orientation for the 2004-2005 academic year has not yet been held due to financial problems at the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MEPS). The activity has been extensively planned by the Action Plan <i>pilotes</i> involved, and financial approval was given by mid-September. But when it came time for the actual provision of funds, the MEPS stated that the funds were not available, and the training sessions were postponed. This activity should take place during

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			the first quarter of 2005. EQUIPE maintains close contact with the <i>pilote</i> in charge of organizing this activity.
27.	In-service materials developed for RUP system. Copies submitted to USAID CTO.	10/31/04 (not yet submitted: change of date requested)	These materials are very important to the long-term viability of decentralized in-service teacher training. Classroom experience using the Teachers' Guides and Student Textbooks is a pre-requisite for developing materials that can respond to the needs of teachers and students with regard to the practical use of these Guides and textbooks in implementing the overall curricular program in classrooms. The delay in implementing the overall curricular program made it impossible to produce a set of materials that cover Grade 5 (CM1), let alone grade 6 (CM2) before the end of October 200 . By the end of the 2003-2004 academic year, only one-third of the Grade 5 (CM1) syllabus had been taught in the public schools, in the best of cases. The ongoing teachers' strike and the uncertainty of when public schools will begin the 2004-2005 academic year do not augur well for the timely production of in-service materials based on classroom experience testing the New Study Program. EQUIPE has explained the delay and requested additional time to prepare this important material.
29.	Teaching force policy and implementation plan prepared and submitted to USAID CTO	03/31/05 (not yet due)	The teachers' strikes that disrupted the first three months of the 2004-2005 academic year are strongly linked to current MEPS policies and practices with regard to the teaching force. This is therefore a very politicized topic. Various proposals have been made by teachers' unions and others. The compromise measures on the negotiating table at the end of 2004 will likely be integrated into these proposals, to be submitted to USAID in March 2005.

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
CLIN 2 INCREASED GIRLS' ENROLLMENT IN TARGET AREAS <i>IR 2: Increased Girls' Enrollment In Target Areas</i>		
Sub – IR 2.1 Equity in the classroom improved <i>(Refer to Contract Sections C.5.2.1-1 and C.5.2.2-1)</i>		
35. Policy to recruit and retain more female teachers submitted to USAID CTO.	06/30/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The main activity underway in this domain during the first quarter of 2004 focused on meetings with various actors of policy-making organizations as well as civil society to consult on the elaboration of a policy to recruit and retain more female teachers, particularly in rural areas. A meeting with the Girls' Education Service of the DPP (in the MEPS) took place on February 2, 2004 in order to present the idea of this policy and to plan how to go about it. Starting in mid-February, meetings took place in all 12 departments as well as at the national level, reaching 1,750 people by the end of the quarter. Individuals involved include regional Chiefs and their Courts, Imams, Bishops, Mayors, Parent Associations, School Directors and Teachers, Departmental and Circumscription Education Directors, Directors from Ministry divisions, and NGO field workers. The goal of these meetings was to inform and discuss with local decision-makers the importance of such a policy and request their suggestions. ▪ Continuing the process that had started in January 2004, meetings were held throughout the country with more than 375 local leaders from the realms of politics and civil society, as well as with female high school students, female teachers and School Directors, and opinion leaders from other social spheres. EQUIPE contacted a total of 2,125 people in all 12 departments. ▪ Using the information collected during the field visits and discussion with Ministry officials (especially the MEPS Director of Human Resources), a workshop bringing together representatives from the MEPS, the National Girls Network (NNPGE), and various Parent Associations was held May 24-28 to formulate a policy document. ▪ The policy recommendations document was shared with the Minister's Cabinet and at a seminar with representatives from a large spectrum of civil society. MEPS officials from national and communal levels, officials from other Ministries, representatives of teachers' unions, religious leaders, parent associations, as well as female teachers from all over the country participated in this seminar on June 22-23, 2004. Although it contains some recommendations that the Ministry found somewhat daunting (e.g., housing for teachers in rural areas, benefits for teachers serving in rural areas), the policy document was validated at the end of the seminar. ▪ The validated policy document was submitted to USAID on June 30, 2004.

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
Sub – IR 2.2 Socio-cultural environment for girls' education improved (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.2.1-2 and C.5.2.2-2)		
38.	NNPGE plan implemented and report submitted to USAID CTO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The end of 2003 and beginning of 2004 was a rocky period for the Girls' Network. Communication between EQUIPE, CARE, the Network's General Secretary and its Administrative Council was strained by misunderstandings of the various actors' roles, especially with regard to previously existing relationships between the Network, USAID and CARE. During this period, institutional reform activities did not advance efficiently, and the situation was aggravated in March when both the accountant, recently hired by the Network, and the Institutional Advisor, provided by CARE to assist the Network with institutional development and reform, resigned. Following the intensive round of discussions between USAID, EQUIPE and CARE about the means for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Network's activities, EQUIPE submitted and amended on May 7, 2004 a Memorandum outlining an integrated strategy to ensure progress. One element of this strategy was a <i>Protocol d'Accord</i> outlining the basis of collaboration, specifically between the Network and CARE. Another element of the memorandum explained that the milestone "<i>NNPGE plan implemented and report submitted to USAID CTO</i>" would not be ready by its June 30, 2004 deadline, and proposed that the Network would submit a revised activity plan taking into consideration not only the activities that had not yet been accomplished, but also those that were omitted in the original plan. ▪ In order to consolidate the improved communication and relationship that had been painstakingly built over the previous months, a meeting between CARE, EQUIPE and the Network was held at the EQUIPE office on June 9, 2004. CARE's Regional Education Advisor based in Lomé attended this meeting in addition to EQUIPE's CARE/Benin team member, the Network's Permanent Secretary and Program Coordinator, as well as the entire EQUIPE Girls Education/Life Skills team including the EQUIPE Chief of Party. The Network reported progress in institutional reform as well as in its report assessing best practices in girls' education, and presented a draft version of the revised NNPGE Action Plan. This revised plan, which uses as a basis the original plan submitted in June 2003, demonstrates how the activities which have not been accomplished will be spread over the coming six months in order to be completed by December 31, 2004 (see previous paragraph). Participants agreed at this meeting that, even though execution of the Network's Action Plan would not be completed by June 30, 2004, a report would be submitted to USAID on June 30, 2004, detailing progress made and describing the constraints impeding accomplishment of the Action Plan's remaining parts. This was done. ▪ Most of the activities proposed for the revised Action Plan took place by the end of 2004, with the notable exception of the Network's General Assembly. The organization of this General Assembly, whose goals include changing the status of the

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			Network from being officially under the control of the Ministry to being an independent organization (eligible for funding from international, national and local organizations.) This change requires active participation from the Ministry, which has not yet been forthcoming.
39.	Assessment of CARE, World Learning and other relevant programs completed and report submitted to USAID CTO.	06/30/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Starting in April, the Girls' Network set out to formally assess activities of other actors in the field, such as CARE, World Learning, <i>Aide et Action</i> and Børnefonden in support of girls' education. These organizations provided documentation of their activities, and the Network team made site visits to areas where these organizations had conducted activities. Several successful strategies emerged from this research, including the formation of Mothers' Associations to attend to the particular questions surrounding girls' education as well as tutor/mentor systems by which girls receive academic and moral support from older girls and women. ▪ A report describing the assessment of the various programs studied was submitted to USAID on June 30, 2004. Though not exhaustive, this report may serve as the basis for a catalogue of best practices for Benin. The need for such a catalogue was raised during the UNICEF-sponsored national partners' workshop for the acceleration of girls' education held from June 15-17 2004. ▪ Having identified several best practices for improving girls' education in Benin, the Girls' Network embarked on the activity related to this assessment – providing grants to local organizations who could organize Mothers' Associations and tutor/mentor systems in the 'red zone' communities. Several drafts of the proposal for managing these grants were submitted and revised, along with proposals for the contracts that will be written for the local organizations receiving the grants. This grants program will begin in 2005 if the 2004-2005 academic year begins.
40.	Girls' education policy updated and submitted to USAID CTO.	06/30/05 (not yet due)	Discussions were held at the end of 2004 with the MEPS <i>Direction de la Promotion de la Scolarisation (DPS)</i> regarding collaboration on the activities to update the Girls' Education Policy. The Girls' Network, having worked on the original document, is well-placed to assist the Ministry in this effort, and documentary research has already begun.

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
CLIN 3 IMPROVED ENVIRONMENT FOR STAKEHOLDERS <i>IR 3: Improved Environment for Stakeholders</i>		
Sub – IR 3.2 Increased involvement of decentralized collectives in school financing and management <i>(Refer to Contract Sections C.5.3.1 and C.5.3. 2)</i>		
42.	Education plans and budgets prepared in at least 15 communes. Status report submitted to USAID CTO.	<div style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">05/30/04</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guidelines for developing education plans were proposed to the 20 Working Groups during the meetings in November and December 2003. ▪ Baseline data for these plans were collected, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Statistical information on the educational situation; · Statistical information on the functioning of different education structures; · Identify the problems linked to education; · List education needs; · Formulate vision of the commune with regard to education; · Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for education. <p>The quality of data provided by the communes varied and was insufficient in some cases, despite assistance provided during the previous quarter to enable the communes to collect and prepare this information. In general, the problems were similar for most communes: lack of qualified teachers, not enough classrooms and furniture, and a low rate of participation in schooling. The Team formulated a worksheet in order to assist the communities to better analyze their problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Departmental Workshops. Four (4) departmental workshops were organized bringing together five members of each Working Group. These workshops took place on January 27, 2004 in Parakou, January 29 in Kandi, February 12 in Lokossa, and February 13 in Aplahoué. The goal of these workshops was to summarize the work undertaken by the communes in preparing their baseline reports. The enthusiastic participation and substantive discussions motivated those Working Groups who had been unable to provide sufficient information to return to their communities and complete the reports. The participants also began reflecting on the strategy that would enable them to prepare their communal education plans and budgets. The EQUIPE Team members presented Working Group representatives with a Guide to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Identify and analyze problems; · Formulate objectives and results; · Identify and plan activities in a timely manner; · Budget for the activities to be undertaken; · Research resources and funding sources.

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communal Education Plans and Budgets. Following these workshops, each Working Group was charged with preparing its communal education plan. This document was to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Introduction; · Brief presentation of the commune; · List of education problems in the commune; · List of priority problems; · Commune vision for the education sector; · Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; · Goals; · Expected results; · Chart containing these elements; · Conclusion. ▪ Finalizing Education Plans and Budgets. Once they had collected the proposed education plans and budgets from all the Working Groups at the end of the previous quarter, the CLIN 3 team studied and analyzed them individually before returning for two-day workshops with each of the Working Groups. <p>Borgou/Alibori: March 28 through April 4 and April 12 through April 17, 2004.</p> <p>Mono/Couffo: April 26 through May 12, 2004.</p> <p>During these workshops, the Working Groups deliberated on different points of the proposed plans, including the vision, the problems of education, strengths and weaknesses, objectives, expected results, and finally proposed activities and their costs. The EQUIPE CLIN 3 technical team assisted the Working Groups to better formulate their vision and objectives, to identify results and realistic activities, and to estimate the cost of these activities. At the end of this series of workshops, all twenty Working Groups were able to propose Education Plans and Budgets. Five (5) strategic objectives emerged in each of the Education Plans and Budgets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase enrollment rate ; ▪ Improve the working conditions for teachers and students; ▪ Improve the quality of teaching through recruiting and training a larger number of teachers; ▪ Increase the resources available to education;

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrate HIV/AIDS into the promotion of education. <p>EQUIPE found that the status of Communal Development Plans (PDC), a prerequisite for financing many of the decentralized activities envisioned by the government, differed across communes. On the one hand, many communes already had a Community Development Plan (PDC), in which case the Working Groups had a structure from which they could work in formulating their Education Plans and Budgets. On the other hand, some communes were still in the process of formulating their PDC while the EQUIPE CLIN 3 technical team assisted the Working Groups to put together the Education Plans and Budgets. In this latter case, some of the activities in the Education Plans and Budgets could be transferred to the PDC, thus assisting communes to make a PDC that takes into account education needs.</p> <p>EQUIPE submitted the report detailing the process and including the plans and budgets of all 20 Working Groups to USAID on May 28, 2004.</p>
Sub – IR 3.4 Improved policy environment for civil participation in education (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.3.1 and C.5.3.2)			
43.	Plan to encourage increased private sector & civil society participation in providing education services prepared and submitted to USAID CTO.	06/30/04	<p>Background: The transfer of responsibility for providing education services from the government to local civil society is a huge paradigm change for a country with a history not only of a centralized, colonial French administration but also of Marxist central control. Benin has put into place an administrative structure for this change through decentralization laws transferring various competencies to the communal level, but the transferral of financing, which will enable the communes to execute activities related to their new education competencies, has not yet taken place in a meaningful way. In order for communes to have real control over their Communal Development Plans (PDC) in the long term, they need to ensure true participation of civil society, especially the private sector. This is the goal that EQUIPE’s CLIN 3 Team has been striving to instil in the Working Groups.</p> <p>In striving to achieve this goal, the CLIN 3 technical team requested that each Working Group collect information on their commune’s civil society and private sector structures that have the capacity to invest in school financing and management. In addition, discussions were held to better understand the lack of participation in education funding, as well as to encourage various groups to become more involved in the execution of the commune’s plan and budget for education.</p> <p>By the deadline for this activity, only 12 of the 20 Working Groups submitted a document on the information requested. The remaining 8 were busy working on the first draft of the Education Plans and Budgets, which had taken longer than expected to</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>complete. Analyzing the twelve documents submitted, the CLIN 3 team noted a significant lack of Working Group commitment to execute the Education Plans and Budgets as well as weak proposals for improving private sector and civil society involvement. For the most part, the Groups called on the government to support activities which, if it had the means to do so, it would have already done, thus bypassing the communities.</p> <p>Based on the EQUIPE Team's assessment of the Working Group needs, they decided to put together a simple guide that would help the Working Groups reflect more productively on the issues in order to find realistic means of encouraging their communities to participate more in financing education activities.</p> <p>During the series of 2-day workshops in March-May (see previous section), 17 Working Groups used this guide to deepen their understanding of the task at hand and to describe several problems that prevent the various structures from participating in school financing and management. The 3 main problems raised were: the poor circulation of information, the lack of involvement of these groups in the decision-making process, and the lack of transparency in local resource management by local leaders.</p> <p>The actions that the Working Groups proposed can be grouped into 7 categories :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inform civil society and private sector structures of the content of the Education Plan and Budget and the means by which they can participate; ▪ Ensure transparent funds management; ▪ Conduct periodic check-ups of activities; ▪ Provide preferential fiscal conditions (tax exemptions or credits) at the local level; ▪ Mediate between civil society and private enterprises, where conflict exists; ▪ Recognize and compensate individual and collective efforts in education; ▪ Promote structures of civil society and private enterprise that can assist education partners and collaborate on decentralization efforts. <p>EQUIPE submitted the report describing strategies for encouraging civil society and private sector participation in providing education services to USAID on June 30, 2004.</p>
44.	Incentives implemented and assessed. Report submitted to USAID CTO.	6/30/05 (not yet due)	<p>Following the establishment of an overall plan for increasing private sector and civil society participation in providing education services (see above), each commune will work on developing and putting into practice the proposed incentives over the coming four (4) years, while the Education Plans and Budgets are in place.</p> <p>Effective Departmental-level Incentives. On August 24 and 26 as well as September 2 and 3, EQUIPE organized departmental-level Workshops that brought together 5</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
		<p>members of each Working Group (100 invited participants in all, of which 94 attended, including 28 women). One of the main issues studied at this Workshop was the manner in which each commune could put together its incentive plan. The EQUIPE Team shared the overall plan with its 20 commune-level Working Groups and suggested some strategies for the communities to choose the most appropriate activities.</p> <p>In order to finalize these plans, 4 departmental-level workshops were organized from October 25-29 in the Borgou and Alibori departments, and from November 9-12 in the Mono and Couffo departments. There were 81 participants at these workshops, including 31 women, representing 18 of the 20 Working Groups. During these workshops, the representatives of each Working Group analyzed their plans and took into consideration suggestions from the EQUIPE CLIN 3 Team during the plan finalization process, which was undertaken by the representatives during the workshop. Eighteen (18) Working Groups who participated in these workshops now have their communal plan as a result of this activity. The remaining 2 communes, Lalo and Grand Popo, did not send representatives to the workshops. A letter was sent to the mayor of Grand Popo, whose participation in EQUIPE activities has been somewhat weak overall, expressing EQUIPE's hope that they would participate in future activities.</p> <p>The EQUIPE team took advantage of these workshops to review the actions undertaken by the Working Groups for the newly-finalized incentive plans. These actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copying the communal Education Plans and Budgets; ▪ Distribution of copies of the Education Plan to all communal structures; ▪ Production of a list of communal private sector and civil society structures; ▪ Communal decrees taken to formalize the Working Groups; ▪ Production and adoption of annual Education Plans; ▪ Production and submission of micro-finance projects to funding organizations; ▪ Analysis of conditions for payment of local taxes and dues in collaboration with private sector structures. <p>Before tackling the incentive plans, Working Groups reviewed activities in the Education Plans and Budgets, produced in May 2004, which had been undertaken. Several activities had already taken place, financed either by the commune itself (mayor or other communal structure) or by partners.</p> <p>Matching Grants. To date, technical assistance has been the primary means of support</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
		<p>EQUIPE has provided to commune-level Working Groups to implement their Education Plans and Budgets as well as their plans for increasing private sector and civil society participation in providing education services. Through the EQUIPE contract modification of December 2003, funds were made available to CLIN 3 through grants for <i>“Working Groups, school improvements and capacity-building to strengthen decentralized institutions.”</i></p> <p>On completing the two major planning activities in May and June, EQUIPE proposed the criteria for accessing matching grants, which CARE had reviewed and EQUIPE had discussed with the Working Groups at the departmental-level Workshops of August 24-26 and September 2-3, 2004. EQUIPE drafted several documents for the communities to explain the process and outline a Grant Agreement specifying the conditions, required information and procedures for fund provision, management and justification. While awaiting final USAID approval for this activity to take place, EQUIPE continued through the end of 2004 to fine-tune these documents and the process for allocating funds. Several partners have shared their small grants experience, and EQUIPE has had the opportunity to develop positive and fruitful relationships in the process. For example, the USAID-funded Decentralization Project managed by Research Triangle Institute (RTI) has remained EQUIPE’s primary collaborator in collecting information on the legal and practical constraints of matching grant management. UNDP-funded ADECOI and European-Union PRODECOM projects have also provided EQUIPE with advice based on their experience.</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
CLIN 4 IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF DECENTRALIZATION <i>IR 4: Improved Management of The Education System in the Context of Decentralization</i>		
Sub – IR 4.1 Appropriate planning and monitoring tools developed and used <i>(Refer to Contract Sections C.5.4.1-1 and C.5.4.2-1)</i>		
46.	Sector policies, plans and budgets prepared at departmental level. Copy of Education for All Departmental Plan submitted to USAID CTO	07/31/04
Defining this deliverable activity took place at the beginning of 2004, following the submission and validation of Benin’s National Action Plan for Education for All (PAN/EPT) in December 2003. Departmental-level plans of the same type as the national plan are not mandated by the international EFA guidelines, and no other countries are currently undertaking decentralized national plans at departmental levels. After consulting with colleagues responsible for Education for All at the Ministry as well as with subcontractor EMI Systems, EQUIPE found that it would not only be impractical to propose Departmental plans for each of the twelve (12) Departments in Benin, but that such derivations from the National EFA Action Plan would not be beneficial for the communities the plans were meant to serve. To engage local actors in Education for All, in keeping with Benin’s mandate to decentralize education activities, a more decentralized process is necessary. Based on these observations, one of the EMI Systems consultants proposed a draft plan for communal-level EFA planning and discussed with colleagues from CLIN 3, RTI and the Education for All technical committee. A national Education for All specialist also contributed to this document, which is intended to provide a structure for commune-level and Department-level Education for All plans. The report was submitted in July 2004.		
50.	Annual report of education statistics produced at national and department levels. Copies of reports submitted to USAID CTO.	12/31/04
Working with the Ministry’s Statistical Service (SSGI) to produce the Annual School Statistics for 2003-2004 continued to be challenging, despite great advances on the technical side through the development by subcontractor EMI Systems of an automated system for generating the Annual Statistical Report. There seemed to be some resistance by the SSGI to making statistics available outside of the Ministry, as evidenced by the SSGI request that EQUIPE delay printing of the Annual Statistical Report for the 2002-2003 academic year until they were able to finalize certain elements. By the end of 2004, EQUIPE had not yet received authorization to print the previous year’s Annual Statistical Report. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2003-2004 Statistics. For the 2003-2004 statistics, data entry at the departmental level was completed during visits made to each department by a combined EQUIPE-DPP team in July and August, 2004. The following step, visiting each department again to “purge” the data so that it can be assembled altogether into the 2003-2004 Statistical Report, was ostensibly blocked by a lack of financing. This activity was undertaken piecemeal until several final activities were financed by the Ministry in December, 2004. Once the final purging of the statistics was complete, the SSGI compiled the departmental data into a central 		

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
		<p>computer database. At this point, the innovation requested by the SSGI and made possible by EMI Systems took place: instead of manually collating the various levels of reports, EMI Systems provided a program (part of the MapDecision software) that automatically generates the Annual Statistical Report from the existing database. In less than two hours, the program does the work that previously took the SSGI team three-four weeks to do manually. EQUIPE hopes that the SSGI will want to take advantage of the efficiencies offered by this automated system to produce its Annual Statistical Report in the coming years, though the reception given to this new tool by the SSGI has been lukewarm to date. Using this new program, EQUIPE was able to submit to USAID the 2003-2004 Annual Statistical Report at the end of December 2004, even though the SSGI produced a parallel, manually-produced report in January 2005.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Future Statistical Reports and Collection. From September 28 – October 1, 2004, a Workshop brought together actors from all levels of the MEPS data collection chain: DPP (SSGI), Department (<i>directeurs départementaux de l'enseignement primaire</i>), Commune (<i>chefs de circonscription scolaire</i>), Pedagogical Unit (<i>responsables d'unité pédagogique</i>) and School (<i>directeurs d'école</i>) as well as colleagues from the French Cooperation's Project PAGE. In fact, the entire integrated system of statistical data collection had been reviewed in terms of how to apply the <i>Procedures Manual for the Collection and Use of Statistics</i>, produced by EQUIPE and validated on May 19, 2004. Participants at this Workshop studied two documents: the MEPS data collection sheet for primary schools, which included improvements suggested by an EQUIPE consultant in early September; and the Procedures Manual, which had been transformed according to the suggestions of participants in the May 2004 validation Workshop, into a series of step-by-step activities to be undertaken by each team member in the data collection chain during the cycle of statistical collection, diffusion and use. <p>Working from the principle agreed-upon at the May 2004 validation seminar, the DPP survey data, the basis for the MapDecision software, will be the one data collection conducted each academic year. The beginning of the school year data collection report will become much more of an administrative formality than a data collection survey. With this in mind, EQUIPE proposed to the Workshop the idea of conducting the data collection survey in November instead of March-April, as has been customary. The numbers of students should have stabilized by that point, and in order to use current statistics, it is important that the Annual Statistical Reports be made available during the year for which they are reported. The central organizing principle of this new data collection survey method is that instead of data collection tools being distributed to school directors to complete over a one-month period, all directors would gather together at sub-regional centers (two or three pedagogical units would work together so that approximately 15-20 school directors meet in one place) on a specified</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			day, bringing with them all of their administrative records. The school directors would each complete the data collection sheet, using the documents they had brought with them, submit the sheets to the Pedagogical Unit Supervisor in charge and return home. The proposed methodology was popular with Workshop participants. EQUIPE will continue to work with all MEPS divisions in 2005 to help make this methodology a reality.
52.	Pilot School map of one school district with FQL data prepared and submitted to USAID CTO	12/31/04	Most of the work to create the pilot school map was undertaken in 2003 and early 2004, during EMI Systems' first 3 field visits (see previous Annual Report). In 2004, EMI Systems' experts integrated the most recent full set of school statistics (2002-2003) into the digital maps of Benin that had been created in September 2003. The resulting charts and maps for the district of Natitingou are integrated into the MapDecision software, which was demonstrated at a training session of MEPS statistical workers in October 2004. The finalized pilot school map was submitted to USAID in December 2004.
Sub – IR 4.2 Improved Financial Management (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.4.1-2 & C.5.4.2-2)			
54.	Improved procedures proposed to increase utilization of investment budget. Report submitted to USAID CTO.	6/30/04	<p>In 2003, a preliminary evaluation of the DRF budgetary process and an assessment of the infrastructure and personnel needs of the DRF had been conducted and a work plan to improve expenditure cycle developed in May 2003. A working committee (composed of EQUIPE, DRF, DPP, and MF) met in December 2003 to study procedures and propose remedial steps, following which an assessment report was produced in December 2003, including a work plan to improve processes, human resources and infrastructure.</p> <p>The creation, through decree no. 2004-095 of February 24, 2004 of Ministerial divisions with specific responsibility for infrastructure, equipment and maintenance will help the MEPS, enabling it to improve the execution of its budget.</p> <p>Based on an evaluation of the existing situation, undertaken in late 2003, the EMI Systems consultants worked with the Director of Financial Resources (DRF) and the Director of Human Resources (DRH) during their April 2004 mission to gather information useful in proposing improved procedures for financial management that will enable the MEPS to increase utilization of its investment budget.</p> <p>A report on this topic was submitted to USAID on June 30, 2004.</p>
55.	Capacity improved to implement plans and budgets at central and department levels. Report submitted to USAID CTO	12/31/04	<p>During the April 2004 EMI Mission, discussions with Ministry colleagues about the development of planning and management tools for departmental and commune-level MEPS offices took place. The procedures and the planning tools need to be standardized by using national indicators and the objective fixed for each level.</p> <p>To make this activity more practical and field-based, it was proposed that EMI put together a simple computer program for helping district supervisors (C/CS) devise budgets for their</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			schools. This was done, and during their October 2004 mission, EMI Systems organized a working session with a group of 15 commune-level education administrators from the Ouèmé department to share the program with them and collect their feedback on the utility of the program and how they could envision using it. The feedback collected was integrated into the finalized version of this program, submitted as part of the Deliverable 55 report
Sub – IR 4.3 Improved Administration (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.4.1-3 and C.5.4.2-3)			
57.	MEPS institutional analysis conducted. Report submitted to USAID CTO.	03/31/04	<p>Most of the work for this institutional analysis was undertaken in 2003, including an assessment of current allocations of main functions, roles and responsibilities among MEPS technical departments and levels of the educational system, identifying the new/enhanced and lost/reduced functions, roles and responsibilities within a decentralized system. Preliminary recommendations were made May 2003, and a report inventorying the existing structures, functions, expertise and resources was undertaken in August. A series of policy recommendations taking into account the new roles and responsibilities of MEPS, which had been established in the official decentralization regulations, were submitted to a Ministry working group in December 2003.</p> <p>The institutional analysis report on these activities was submitted in March 2004.</p> <p>During EMI’s April 2004 mission, examination of MEPS decisions on the resolution of institutional problems continued. Progress continues, but there is still a lack of clear distinction between strategic and operational functions in the MEPS.</p>
58.	MEPS decentralization policy and plan submitted to USAID CTO.	12/ 31/04	<p>Analysis of official documents on Benin’s decentralization process as well as the activities carried out at the MEPS and decentralized levels on the decentralization process had been conducted since 2003, and several reports as well as a questionnaire were submitted to MEPS staff in 2004. Unfortunately, little feedback came from MEPS counterparts throughout the process. On July 6, 2004, the CLIN 4 team was able to meet with the DRF, and the meeting covered 2 topics: 1) the proposals and recommendations found in EMI Systems reports, for which the DRF had promised to provide feedback, but no feedback had yet been provided; and 2) the decentralization of budget management towards Departmental levels (DDEPS and C/CS) and legislative measures required before decentralization could take place.</p> <p>On the basis of document analysis, interviews with education system actors at various levels of the system, feedback on initial reports sent to the field, and limited questionnaire data, a proposed decentralization policy and plan for the MEPS was submitted in December 2004. The EMI Systems consultant charged with this activity was unable to take part in EMI’s October 2004 mission due to a very severe car accident several months previous to the trip, which limited his ability to undertake final validation activities for this report. The policy and plan submitted in December 2004 will be validated during the next EMI Systems mission in February 2005.</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
CLIN 5 HIV/AIDS AND THE EDUCATION SECTOR		
Emphasis Area 1: Building MEPS Capacity: (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.5.1-1 and C.5.5.2-1)		
59. Study of HIV/AIDS and the education sector. Report submitted to USAID CTO.	06/30/04	<p>Two complementary studies were undertaken in fulfillment of this deliverable to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education sector (students, teachers and other education actors); and 2. Lay the groundwork for Life Skills activities, identify the most appropriate pedagogical methods, language and messages for community mobilization activities. <p>Study 1. Planning the first study, organized by EQUIPE subcontractor CARE, took place October-December, 2003. Technical and financial proposals were submitted in January 2004. On March 2, the study was officially launched with 20 Ministry and other partners in a workshop for improvement of the research tools proposed by the consultant. Feedback from other CARE sources was also sought, and substantive improvements were made in the proposed questionnaires and methods. The research team started its work in mid-March and had to complete data collection in the schools by March 31, the start of the Easter vacation. Several meetings with the research team were held during the period of report preparation. The first of these sessions, on May 11, 2004, revealed several serious problems with the use of statistical data collected from national sources and unfounded generalizations of results from the small sample of the study to the larger national context. Several significant recommendations were provided to improve the report and integrate these changes. On June 8, 2004, in the presence of CARE's Education Officer for Africa, who had flown from Atlanta specifically to ensure the quality of this study, the research team presented their revised report to representatives of CARE/Benin, CARE/Togo, CARE/Atlanta and EQUIPE. These representatives still found many weaknesses in the report and decided that instead of proceeding with the validation workshop that had been planned for later in the week, CARE and EQUIPE would work together with the research team to strengthen the report. The team was instructed to reinforce, among other areas, the sections dealing with national statistical data, and a specialist from EQUIPE's CLIN 4 was delegated to assist them. On June 11- 12, 2004, the combined team worked intensively to revise this report.</p> <p>Study 2. The second study was not originally envisioned in the EQUIPE contract, but the need to better define the kinds of activities that would be most useful in the field, in both schools and communities, within the context of Life Skills became evident at the outset of the project. The majority of the field work for this study was undertaken at the end of 2003, and the final version of the report, "<i>Behaviors and Practices of Communities with regard to Sexuality and HIV/AIDS and the most Appropriate Pedagogical Terminology,</i>" was submitted in January 2004. Various elements of this study were used by the Life Skills team</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>to design its curricular program, teacher training guide and community mobilization activities.</p> <p>On June 21, 2004, the report was validated at a gathering of 40 MEPS and HIV/AIDS specialists as well as representatives from teachers' unions, NGOs and other partners. During the validation seminar, both studies were presented. These two studies were complementary in their goals, and the joint presentation provided a forum for very informative discussions.</p>
61.	Policy dialogue established. Report submitted to USAID CTO.	06/30/04	<p>In the first quarter of 2004, the terms of reference for planning the activities that will achieve policy dialogue were prepared and submitted to CARE and EQUIPE staff. The goal of activities to prepare the report <i>Policy Dialogue Established</i>, was to ensure that the stakeholders at various national and decentralized levels of the education system were engaged in the process of discussing general and particular HIV/AIDS issues in the various educational communities throughout the country. The long-term goal of policy dialogue is to ensure that all these stakeholders support the policy that will be put into place, so initiating the dialogue and framework for ongoing discussion was an important first step. In preparation for the departmental and national workshops planned for May 2004, a facilitator's guide was created in collaboration with the <i>unité focale</i>. Seven one-day workshops took place in the six departments and at the national level from May 2 - 25, 2004. These workshops brought together school teachers and directors, Parent Association representatives, and departmental as well as communal education officials to discuss areas of the educational system affected or risk being affected by HIV/AIDS. A report describing the process as well as analyzing the results of the policy dialogue activity was submitted in June 2004.</p>
62.	Strategic plan and work plans prepared and submitted to USAID CTO.	12/31/04	<p>Throughout most of 2004 (until December 6, 2004) EQUIPE and subcontractor CARE faced a major challenge in all aspects of its collaboration with the MEPS Focal Unit for the Fight Against AIDS (<i>Unité Focale de Lutte contre les IST/VIH/SIDA - UFLS</i>): lack of personnel assigned to the Unit. The previous UFLS was dissolved in November 2003 and a new structure created on April 5, 2004. Collaboration with the UFLS improved significantly following the designation of the new coordinator, but the other UFLS positions were not filled until December 2004, which meant that the coordinator and the accountant worked alone for most of the year. USAID assisted EQUIPE in lobbying the MEPS to name the remaining 10-12 members of the <i>Unité Focale</i>. EQUIPE sent a letter to the Minister on September 14, 2004 explaining that EQUIPE would be unable to meet the goals set by the Ministry and USAID if the UFLS was not functional. Despite the fact that the UFLS was not truly functional, EQUIPE worked with the UFLS Coordinator to put together its strategic plans and work plans. The EQUIPE Team analyzed various documents on the UFLS and developed several tools to facilitate the various Workshop sessions planned to make strategic plans and work plans for the Ministry's UFLS.</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>A series of workshops followed by a validation seminar took place in October through December 2004 to elaborate the UFLS strategic plans (2005-2009 Plan, 2005 Plan and First Quarter 2005 Plan). These workshops built on the experience of the Policy Dialogue process undertaken in May 2004 to ensure that stakeholders at various national and decentralized levels of the education system were engaged in the process of discussing general and particular HIV/AIDS issues in diverse educational communities throughout Benin. The major difficulty was the fact that the UFLS members, who would normally be charged with this task, had still not been named by the Ministry. The EQUIPE COP discussed this problem with the DPS, who assured the COP that since the Ministry was officially sending participants to the elaboration workshops, the document formulated by the workshops would be acceptable, even if those named to the UFLS were not those who participated in the workshops.</p> <p>From October 20-21, a group of MEPS technicians met to agree upon the organization of activities for elaborating the strategic plan and to determine the vision, mission and objectives of the UFLS. On November 2-5 a larger group, including UFLS, departmental antennas of the UFLS and members of the departmental structure of Parent Associations (FEDAPE) worked to amend the documents of the previous workshop, to formulate the results anticipated from the six (6) objectives proposed, to identify activities for attaining the results and objectives, and to plan the activities identified over a five-year period. A smaller group of MEPS technicians gathered on November 18-19 to improve and harmonize the documents proposed during the second workshop. Given the large amount of work involved, this group was not able to complete these tasks during the two days. They continued to work independently and in small groups to complete the task before the final validation seminar. The national validation seminar was held in Cotonou on December 14-15, 2004 with participants from EQUIPE, the USAID Basic Education Team, UFLS/MEPS, PNLs, PPLs, CNLS and NGOs working in HIV/AIDS. Fortunately, the remaining members of the UFLS were named the week before the validation seminar, and all the new members were able to participate.</p> <p>The report describing the process and including the strategic plans was submitted to USAID in December 2004.</p>
Emphasis Area 2: Life Skills Education (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.5.1-2 and C.5.5.2-2)			
63.	Life skills curriculum prepared and tested. Report submitted to USAID CTO.	06/30/04	<p>In 2003, a great amount of background work had been undertaken, including: review of materials collected from various actors using Life Skills methods throughout Africa; identification of entry points within Benin's primary curriculum for introducing Life Skills activities; a <i>Journée de Réflexion</i> on Life Skills led by an international consultant, during which the term <i>compétences de vie courante (CVC)</i> to refer to Life Skills was adopted and an overall understanding of the term acquired; collaboration with the Girls' Education Team as</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>well as with the Pedagogy Team. This work supported both Deliverables 63 and 65, which are linked pedagogically as well as practically.</p> <p>The EQUIPE Life Skills consultant, engaged from October, 2003 through January, 2004, laid the foundation of a curriculum planning tool that was studied with 30 participants during the second Life Skills Workshop held on January 14, 2004. This “Working Day” followed the introductory “Study Day” that had been held on November 19, 2003, involving many of the same Ministry, NGO and civil society partners involved in HIV/AIDS activities. The participants at this workshop were very pleased with the proposed document and made suggestions for improving it. These suggestions were integrated into the document by the Life Skills team via informal working sessions with pedagogy and other specialists.</p> <p>Following the workshop, a 15- member working group (10 from MEPS, 5 from EQUIPE) was established to continue working on the curricular and training materials. The most significant element of this curricular strategy is the understanding that Benin’s New Study Program (NPE) already contains most of the Life Skills competencies in the form of transdisciplinary competencies (<i>compétences transdisciplinaires</i>). What EQUIPE therefore proposed is not to re-create a parallel curriculum, which would most likely not be implemented in the long run, but rather to bring added-value to existing program areas by highlighting them and providing support materials to reinforce the teaching of these competencies.</p> <p>The Life Skills curriculum that had been taking shape over the previous eight months was reinforced and refined through contact with pedagogy experts and MEPS technicians in April and May 2004. The strategy also seeks to involve communities in reinforcing life skills at school and in communities. During the May 9-15 field trip, the curricular materials were tested in four schools.</p> <p>The Life Skills Curriculum Framework submitted on June 30, 2004.</p>
64.	Teacher training materials prepared and tested. Report submitted to USAID CTO.	07/31/04	<p>In discussion with the Girls’ Education and Pedagogy components, EQUIPE initially decided that the Life Skills Team should follow the model successfully put forward by the Girls’ Education Team and produce a training module and guide based on the Life Skills content of the curricular materials mentioned above. Since the end goal is the training of teachers, the group decided that it would be best to integrate this training module into the existing set of 5 training modules and guides for Equity in the Classroom and Community (EEC). The strategy would be to provide Life Skills training to the National Pedagogical Training Network (<i>Reseau d’animation pédagogique - RAP</i>) that had received EEC training in 2003, and in this way, provide a unified, integrated overall training program at the school level during the 2004-2005 school year.</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
		<p>The initial concept of producing a Life Skills training module and guide similar to what had been produced by the Girls' Education Team made sense, especially because the Girls' Education and Life Skills Teams planned to conduct joint training sessions for the "red zone" communes in December 2004. But in practice, the 'training module accompanied by trainer guide' model did not reflect the fact that the Life Skills that EQUIPE wants to emphasize already exist in the New Study Program (NPE) as <i>compétences transdisciplinaires</i> (see explanation in the previous section). Experience demonstrates that producing materials in addition to what teachers are already required to use can be a burden. Consequently, teachers tend to ignore additional materials if they view the tasks of integrating these materials into existing curricula as additional work. The Equity at School and in the Community (EEC) modules and guides can be used to create a learning environment that enables <i>all</i> students (especially marginalized and female students) to participate fully in schooling. But the Life Skills materials must assist the teacher to more effectively use and develop the competencies already built into the NPE curriculum, textbooks and teachers' guides. As a complement to the Life Skills curriculum (developed by the same team that worked on the teacher training materials), the training materials identify places in the NPE curriculum where Life Skills appear and provide suggestions for enriching teaching and learning activities in these areas as well as supplementary materials pictures, skits and fables. One fundamental principle at work already in the formulation of the Life Skills Curriculum is the need for teachers to understand that the competencies (the French term for Life Skills is <i>compétences de vie courante, CVC</i>) that are being highlighted and developed in both the curricular and training materials already exist in Benin's New Study Program (NPE) curriculum.</p> <p>Following elaboration of the teacher training materials by the joint EQUIPE-MEPS working group, a validation Workshop bringing together national, departmental-, communal- and school-level actors was held on July 20-21, 2004 to examine and propose changes to the <i>Guide de l'Enseignante/Enseignant pour le développement et le renforcement des Compétences de Vie Courante à l'école</i> (Teachers' Guide to develop and reinforce Life Skills at school). This Guide was validated by the Workshop and EQUIPE sent a copy incorporating the recommended changes to USAID/Benin on July 30, 2004.</p> <p>Following suggestions from USAID for improvement, EQUIPE finalized and printed these materials for the Equity/Life Skills Training in early December, 2004.</p> <p>To complete Deliverable 64, which requires that the teacher training materials be tested, EQUIPE submitted the revised version of the Life Skills Teachers' Guide along with a report of the Gender Equity and Life Skills Training session, which included a classroom session</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>during which the materials had been tested, in December 2004.</p> <p>The impact of the process of producing the Life Skills curriculum and teacher training materials went far beyond the original vision for this activity. In addition to the specialized training that took place with the <i>RAP</i> in the 19 “red zone” communes in December 2004, Equity and Life Skills concepts were integrated into the overall Grade 6 training programs for the 2004-2005 academic year, although in a much less intensive form, through the integration of Life Skills and Equity concepts in the Grade 6 Teachers’ Guides and Student Textbooks.</p>
65.	Strategy and policy for teachers prepared and submitted to USAID CTO.	12/31/04	<p>The title of Deliverable 65 provides limited explanation of the type of strategy and policy sought, but clarification from USAID (and study of the EQUIPE contract) demonstrated that the goal of this Deliverable was to ensure that teachers were aware of the ethical and health dimensions of the practice of having sexual relations with their students. During the field missions undertaken from June - November 2004, the Girls’ Education/Life Skills Teams did a series of informal surveys of Parent Association members, departmental and district MEPS officials, school directors and teachers to find out the main topics of concern on this subject.</p> <p>Immediately following the Equity/Life Skills training session in December 2004, EQUIPE gathered a group of school Directors and teachers in a focus group to discuss this issue. Although the problem of sexual relations between teachers and students is often put forward as one of the reasons that parents (especially in rural areas) hesitate to send their girls to school past a certain age, frank discussions on the topic were difficult to facilitate. School Directors and teachers were especially reluctant to describe this as one of the attributes of an “indelicate teacher”, preferring to talk about alcoholism and indebtedness. Based on the research undertaken, the Life Skills work already underway, and the training sessions envisioned for various actors in the education system, EQUIPE submitted a document with a proposed strategy to USAID in December 2004.</p>
66.	Mechanisms for community participation prepared and tested. Report submitted to USAID CTO.	05/31/04	<p>As a relatively new concept oriented towards attitude and behavior changes, Life Skills cannot stop at the classroom door. Involvement of the entire community – teachers, parents, family members, and members from the wider stakeholder community – is crucial to positively reinforce the Life Skills topics and begin to modify the environment in classroom and community life. From March 8-12, 2004, the Life Skills Team visited two communities in the Atacora/Donga and the Borgou/Alibori departments, Copargo and Kandi, to identify what types of strategies could be considered for increased community participation in the development of Life Skills, and, more generally, for improved participation in the life of the school. Approximately 30 actors, <i>Chefs de circonscription scolaires (CCS)</i>, Pedagogical Counselors, Pedagogical Unit Leaders, Parent Associations, Mothers, and Local Leaders participated in these meetings held in each communal capital. Prior to and following these meetings, the team met with the Departmental heads of Primary Education to lay the</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>		<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
			<p>groundwork and describe the results of the sessions. The EQUIPE Team visited other communities in order to gather information on community participation in Life Skills, but not with this level of formal activity. Although not available for a visit to Benin, the Life Skills consultant kept in touch with the EQUIPE Team and sent materials for use in proposing community mobilization strategies.</p> <p>Following document analysis and the field work described above, the Girls' Education/Life Skills Team organized a workshop from April 26-28, 2004 to propose strategies and mechanisms for community mobilization and involvement with Life Skills activities. Seventeen (17) participants from the MEPS, the Girls' Network (NNPGE), Parent Associations, USAID and other EQUIPE teams, as well as two teachers who had been involved in previous Life Skills workshops, actively participated in this workshop. A basic set of strategies, including use of video (<i>Scenarios from Africa</i> and UNICEF's "Sara" series) and community theater as well as training and awareness-raising, emerged from this workshop. From May 9-15, 2004, a return field visit was organized to Copargo and Kandi, one of the goals of this visit was to test these strategies.</p> <p>On May 18, a workshop was held to validate the proposed strategies, bringing together 46 people from the 19 "red zone" communes, the MEPS, and EQUIPE. A report describing the process and strategies was submitted to USAID on May 28, 2004.</p>
67.	Follow-up on implementation of strategies for community participation submitted to USAID CTO.	05/31/05	<p>The concept of Life Skills is new to the francophone world. Project EQUIPE has firmly established itself as a leader in promoting Life Skills concepts in Benin. The integrative nature of Life Skills activities, crossing traditional lines of academic disciplines and involving community as well as school-based partners, does not fit automatically into a classical framework of community mobilization or teacher training. Based in Ghana, the consultant, Dr. Leslie Casely-Hayford, who had helped the EQUIPE Life Skills Team and Ministry counterparts clarify their shared vision of Life Skills during a Workshop in November 2003, was able to return to EQUIPE from September 19-26, 2004 to assist the team with the formulation of a realistic and comprehensive strategy for executing Life Skills activities during the remainder of the coming academic year and beyond. One of the methods of working with communities found in EQUIPE's Community Mobilization Strategies (submitted in May 2004) is that of interactive theater. From September 23-24, a Workshop brought together 20 key Life Skills partners in Porto Novo. The techniques of interactive theatre were explained, practiced and recorded on videotape. The Life Skills Team was pleased to report that they had already included several aspects of interactive theater in their workshops with the communal commissions (see CLIN 2), but recognized the value of a stronger conceptual framework and more cohesive understanding of how to include interactive theater with other strategies of community mobilization, such as posters and</p>

<i>Activities and Results Planned</i>	<i>Completion Dates</i>	<i>Activities and Results Achieved</i>
		songs. In 2005, these strategies will be tested in selected communities in EQUIPE's 19 'red zone' communes.

4. EXPLANATION FOR TARGETS NOT ACHIEVED, SURPASSED, DELAYED OR NOT CARRIED OUT

Of the 28 deliverables due in 2004, 24 were submitted to and accepted by USAID. Twenty (20) were submitted on or before the completion date and four (4) at a later date. This is a success rate of 85.7%. Combined with the submission of 13/14 deliverables in 2003, EQUIPE has submitted 88% of its deliverables to date in Years 1 and 2.

Explanations for Deliverables not yet completed, surpassed, delayed or not carried out, are listed by each project component, or CLIN category.

CLIN 1

IR 1: Improved Pedagogical System

Sub IR 1.1 Appropriate curriculum developed and in use

Deliverable 12. *Actions implemented to strengthen the Document Network (Réseau Documentaire). Status report submitted to USAID CTO. (9/30/04)*

Delayed (submitted 11/17/04).

Activities surrounding this Deliverable were carried out over a period of time dating back to the beginning of the project. The delay in submitting this status report was due to the priority given to other activities, such as Teacher Training and Textbook production, as well as to Pedagogy Team illnesses.

Sub IR 1.2 Appropriate Textbooks developed and in use

Deliverable 14. *90,000 French Textbooks and 90,000 math Textbooks reproduced for CM2 and delivered to MEPS. (8/31/04)*

Surpassed.

Initial delivery of the French and Math Textbooks took place on August 23, 2004, allowing for a well-publicized public ceremony on August 27, 2004 when the USAID Mission Director presented the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education with the Grade 6 Math and French Textbooks. (see photo in **Appendix 1**) The early delivery of these books, and the media attention given the public ceremony, were helpful in combating the negative publicity that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has been experiencing. But the distribution of the books became mired in a conflict between Ministry divisions. Consequently, the books were not available in the schools until weeks after the beginning of the academic year.

Deliverable 18. *Plan to implement Textbook policy submitted to USAID CTO. (9/30/04)*

Delayed (submitted 10/15/04).

As described for Deliverable 12, the delay in submitting this plan was due to the priority given to other activities, such as Teacher Training and Textbook production, as well as to Pedagogy team illnesses.

Sub IR 1.3 Appropriate teacher training program developed and in use

Deliverable 25. *Annual orientation for secondary school teachers conducted and report submitted to USAID CTO. (9/30/04)*

Delayed (not yet submitted).

Annual orientations for secondary school teachers are supposed to be conducted every year in order to familiarize the teachers in secondary schools receiving students from experimental primary schools with the pedagogy used in the New Study Program (NPE). The same activity planned for the previous year (2003) did not take place, due to the general chaos at the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year. The Annual orientation for secondary school teachers for the 2004-2005 academic year had not yet been held by the end of 2004 due to financial problems at the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MEPS). This activity had been extensively planned by the Action Plan *pilotes* involved, and financial approval had been given by mid-September. But when it came time for the actual provision of funds, the MEPS stated that the funds were not available, and the training sessions were postponed. Funds will need to be made available in early 2005 to conduct this activity. During meetings of the Comité d'Appui (USAID, EQUIPE and Ministry actors including the *Cellule* CGNPE Coordinator and Action Plan *pilotes*, DEP, DES, DINFRE, DPP, DRF) on November 24 and December 8, 2004, this situation was described in detail by the Action Plan *pilote* charged with this activity.

Deliverable 27 *In-service materials developed for RUP system. Copies submitted to USAID CTO. (10/31/04)*

Delayed (not yet submitted).

These materials are very important to the long-term viability of decentralized in-service teacher training. Classroom experience using the Teachers' Guides and student Textbooks is a prerequisite for developing materials that can respond to the needs of teachers and students with regard to the practical use of these Guides and Textbooks in implementing the overall curricular program in classrooms. The delay in implementing the overall curricular program has made it impossible to produce and test a set of materials that covers Grade 5 (CM1), let alone Grade 6 (CM2). By the end of the 2003-2004 academic year, only one-third of the Grade 5 (CM1) syllabus had been taught in the public schools, in the best of cases. The ongoing teachers' strike and the uncertainty of when public schools will begin the 2004-2005 academic year do not augur well for the timely production of in-service materials based on classroom experience testing the New Study Program. Discussions and email correspondence submitted to the EQUIPE CTO on November 9, 2004 explained the delay and requested additional time to prepare this important material.

IR 2: Increased Girls' Enrollment In Target Areas

Sub – IR 2.2 Socio-cultural environment for girls' education improved

Deliverable 38 *NNPGE plan implemented and report submitted to USAID CTO. (6/30/04)*

Delayed (not yet submitted).

Activities with the National Network for the Promotion of Girls' Education (NNPGE) began 2004 in a bit of confusion between the roles played by USAID, EQUIPE, CARE, the NNPGE's Advisory Board and its Secretary General, but by May, several meetings had been held and clarifications made that permitted more efficiency in operation. However, activities proposed in the NNPGE plan that had been submitted in June 2003 were not fully completed, in part due to the aforementioned delays and in part, due to the difficulty of working with the Ministry's Girls' Education service. In lieu of a final report on execution of the 2003-2004 NNPGE plan, reports describing the activities that had been undertaken with regard to the Action Plan were submitted

on June 30 and December 31, 2004. By the end of the year, most activities had been completed, including the holding of a National Girls' Education Forum in December. The most notable activity that had not taken place is the holding of a General Assembly, necessary for changing the statutes of Girls' Network, transforming it from a government-created structure to a Non-Governmental Organization. The Minister's participation is necessary for this to take place, but this participation has not yet been forthcoming.

IR 4: Improved Management of the Education System in the Context of Decentralization

Sub – IR 4.1 Appropriate planning and monitoring tools developed and used

Deliverable 47. *Sector policies, plans and budgets implemented at national and department levels (7/31/04)*

Delayed (not yet submitted).

The wording and dates of Deliverable 47 proved to be quite awkward, especially with regard to its sister Deliverable 46, which was submitted in July, 2004. Given the evolving nature of the situation of decentralization in the country and the activities conducted by CLINs 3 and 4 in this environment, USAID signaled its willingness to consider replacing this deliverable with another activity. The concept proposed for this replacement activity is based on using MapDecision and the C/CS budget program (created by EQUIPE subcontractor EMI Systems for CLIN 4 activities) to help the CLIN 3 Working Groups refine their Education Plans (in keeping with the ideas of Deliverable 46). This proposal will be formalized in January 2005.

Building MEPS capacity for long term strategic planning and management of HIV/AIDS impact on teachers, administrators and pupils

Emphasis Area 2: Life Skills Education

Deliverable 63 *Life skills curriculum prepared and tested. Report submitted to USAID CTO. (6/30/04)*

Acceptance Delayed (12/30/04) but Impact Exceeded Expectations.

When the curriculum documents were initially submitted in June 2004, improvements were requested by USAID for both the curriculum and the associated teaching materials. With the goal of providing the most useful tools possible to the MEPS, additional work was consecrated to the improvements and a revised curriculum submitted at the end of 2004. Despite the delay in acceptance of these materials, the more significant story is the integration of the concepts of Life Skills into the Teachers Guides for the seven subjects of Grade 6. Through collaboration with the EQUIPE Pedagogy Team during several workshops during which the Grade 6 Teacher Guides and Textbooks were being designed, Life Skills content, activities and priorities were integrated into the Grade 6 Teacher Guides and Textbooks prepared for the 2004-05 academic year.

Deliverable 64 *Teacher training materials prepared and tested. Report submitted to USAID CTO. (7/31/04)*

Acceptance Delayed (12/30/04) but Impact Exceeded Expectations.

As with the previous Deliverable, USAID requested that the teacher training materials submitted in July be improved. During the process of improving the training materials, the Life Skills team was able to share ideas with the Pedagogy team, which was at the time finalizing Teacher Guides and Textbooks. Several subjects relevant to Life Skills were included in the Teacher Guides and

Textbooks, which would probably not have been the case if the Life Skills Team had not had the opportunity of working with the Pedagogy Team.

The Life Skills Team had been unable to test the materials during the 2003-2004 academic year. The Equity/Life Skills training session that took place in December 2004 enabled the Life Skills Team to test the materials with the trainees in a local private school.

5. SUCCESS STORIES

The work undertaken since the beginning of the EQUIPE project has begun to bear significant fruit. The integration and synergy of project activities across the five (5) main EQUIPE project components has been a contributing factor of success.

Integration of Life Skills and Gender Equity into CM2 Textbooks and Teachers' Guides

Benin's New Study Program (NPE) is founded on the pedagogical principle of competency-based learning. The courageous decision to pursue this innovative pedagogical orientation is a direct response to address the lack of relevance of school subjects and teaching methods to everyday African life. Irrelevant curriculum has persisted since colonial times and threatens to undermine Africa's human resource development in the 21st century. The EQUIPE Pedagogy team has been instrumental in coordinating Ministry and private textbook production experts to maintain the pedagogical integrity and Beninese identity of the 5th and 6th grade (CM1 and CM2) textbooks and Teacher Guides. When the EQUIPE project began, 5th grade textbook and Teacher Guide production was already behind schedule. Consequently, EQUIPE prioritized completing the first set of textbooks and Teacher Guides with as high a standard of quality as possible. In 2003, this goal was largely attained: CM1 teachers' guides and textbooks were made available to the Ministry (MEPS) in October 2003, in time for use in the teacher training sessions and classrooms. In 2004, because the EQUIPE team had more time to prepare the CM2 Teacher Guides and textbooks, the goals were more ambitious.

In effect, one of the goals of EQUIPE's Life Skills activities (CLIN 5) is to integrate Life Skills, particularly HIV/AIDS awareness, into Benin's primary curriculum. Equity, the major focus of CLIN 2, goes hand-in-hand with Life Skills. The first element of the process of bringing Life Skills into the Beninese schools began in November 2003, when EQUIPE started working with Ministry partners to define the concept of Life Skills (*compétences de vie courante – CVC* in French) in the context of Benin's New Study Program (NPE) curriculum (the domain of CLIN 1 expertise). This process was aided by the fact that the NPE is already a competency-based program that contains almost all of the internationally-recognized Life Skills theme areas within its transversal and cross-disciplinary set of competencies. Six (6) Life Skills areas were identified:

- Health and Hygiene;
- Reproductive Health;
- Nutrition;
- Psychosocial;
- Personal Management; and
- Child Rights and Responsibilities.

Over the following nine (9) months, the EQUIPE Life Skills and Girls' Education Teams worked together, in consultation with the EQUIPE Pedagogy team, to produce a Life Skills curriculum for each primary grade level. This essentially consisted of identifying Life Skills already in the NPE curriculum and drawing attention to where they are found and how they can be better developed and used by teachers in their daily teaching activities, without going beyond existing curricular guidelines. Complementary teacher training materials and community mobilization strategies were also developed. Training of trainers, teachers and community members in Life Skills and Equity took place from December 6-10, 2004 for 270 participants from the 19 'red zone' communes identified as having the lowest female schooling rates in the country (see photos in **Appendix 2**). This was a very dynamic training session that included a classroom demonstration of the many uses the Equity/Life Skills materials and opened the eyes of many teachers and Parent Association representatives for material use. The strong participation of the EQUIPE Pedagogy Team Leader throughout this training session was an invaluable asset. He provided a theoretical framework and demonstrated in a practical way how Equity/Life Skills concepts were already in the NPE. This training session and the materials provided were intended to support and enhance teachers' work, not add extra content to their workload. The materials will also serve as modules for teacher training in Benin's teacher training institutes, which the government plans to reopen in the coming academic year.

School teachers and inspectors who participated in the December 2004 training reported that this training session enabled them to better grasp the concept of competency-based teaching, particularly for the inter-disciplinary competencies that are often related to Life Skills. By providing training in Equity and Life Skills, EQUIPE has been able to reinforce teachers' classroom skills to implement of the New Study Program effectively.

The second stage of the process was more ambitious and long term: integrating Life Skills into Grade 6 (CM2) student textbooks (French and Math) as well as Teachers' Guides. The Grade 6 curriculum had already been finalized in July 2003, but as noted earlier, the concept of Life Skills already exists in the competency-based curriculum. What was required was additional attention to particular topics. These topics also needed to be included in the French and Math textbooks. During the early part of the textbook/Teachers' Guide development process in January 2004, Life Skills and Girls Education team members from EQUIPE had participated in working sessions of the textbook/Teachers' Guide experts, explaining to them the growing consensus on how Life Skills could be defined within the Beninese NPE framework and guiding them towards integrating Life Skills topics into the books and Guides.

The EQUIPE Pedagogy team maintained this focus in the following months. As a result, all the Teachers' Guides (52,500 Teachers' Guides for CM2 were distributed and used in training sessions in September 2004). The Guides include in their introductions a description of Life Skills, and several (French, Social Education, Science and Technology Education, and Physical and Sports Education) contain activities related to specific Life Skills. Topics include: AIDS: A New Threat; Paths of HIV/AIDS Contamination; Solidarity with those Who Have HIV/AIDS; People and Health; Vaccination: A Great Scientific Discovery; Personal Hygiene; Blood and Circulation; Nature and Environmental Problems; Children's Rights and Responsibilities; Learning about Democracy; Fair Play in Sports. In addition to the Teachers' Guides, Life Skills themes appear in the CM2 student textbooks used by all CM2 students in Benin (approximately 160,000 in 2004-2005). Chapters and titles include: AIDS – Let's talk about it; Paths and

Prevention of HIV/AIDS Contamination; Fati's Personal Journal (about female excision); Nature and Environmental Problems; Rights and Responsibilities of Children and Women.

Synergy: Community Mobilization and Education System Management Teams

In 2004, the two EQUIPE teams charged with tasks to advance decentralization were able to pool their experiences, exchange expertise and create cross-task synergy to reinforce project impact. The EQUIPE community mobilization team charged with *Improving the Stakeholder Environment* (CLIN 3) and the EQUIPE education management team charged with *Improving Education System Management in the Context of Decentralization* (CLIN 4) began to consult about mutually-reinforcing strategies to advance towards meeting the national Education for All (EFA) goals and the Ten-Year Plan. Working at the grassroots, EQUIPE's Community Mobilization team was focusing on strengthening the capacities of the twenty (20) Working Groups of civil society and private sector actors that had been formed in 2003. Throughout 2004, EQUIPE supported these Working Groups to devise educational development plans as well as plans to encourage increased civil society and private sector participation in education.

By contrast, the EQUIPE Education System Management team (CLIN 4), was working primarily with the Ministry. With the technical assistance of EQUIPE partner EMI Systems, the Education Management Team adapted and finalized the EMI MapDecision software and trained 30 high-level MEPS officials in its use in October 2004. EQUIPE's Community Mobilization team (CLIN 3) had practical experience with the Working Groups, which enabled them to be a helpful sounding board for the proposals of EMI Systems consultants to design tools for District Education Officers (*chefs de circonscription scolaire*, or C/CS) and envision ways to use MapDecision software in the field. The EQUIPE community mobilization team (CLIN 3) explored how the MapDecision and C/CS budgeting tools could improve educational development planning for each of the twenty (20) communes based on the data they had collected. The shared experiences of the two EQUIPE teams resulted in a proposed collaborative effort to use MapDecision and the C/CS budget program to help several CLIN 3 Working Groups refine their education plans. The details of this collaborative effort will be finalized and put into practice during 2005, EQUIPE's third and final year.

Textbook Delivery and Teacher Training

EQUIPE provided highly visible service to the Ministry this year by facilitating Grade 6 French and Math textbook delivery to the Ministry in late August, 2004, more than a month before the scheduled beginning of the school year. Detractors of the New Study Program had been openly skeptical about the availability of these textbooks. In a televised ceremony on August 27, 2004, the USAID Mission Director presented copies of these textbooks to the Minister. A picture of this ceremony is in **Appendix 1**. Unfortunately, the early delivery of the textbooks made little difference in the availability of the books in classrooms for two reasons. First, because teacher strikes delayed the start of the 2004-5 school year for three (3) months. Secondly, the new system of private textbook distribution foundered in the same type of inefficiency and confusion that had characterized the system of distribution through Ministry channels.

One of the most large-scale but least publicized activities of the year, the 2004 Teacher Training sessions, brought together 9,500 trainers, Grade 6 teachers, new school Directors and Grade 5 Teachers. EQUIPE led the process of preparing this annual, decentralized teacher training, which became much more practical, based on lessons learned from previous years, and involved

collaboration with the Ministry as well as district education officers, the *chefs de circonscription scolaire* (C/CS). The EQUIPE Pedagogy team proposed a conceptual framework, collected statistics for the targeted teachers, identified training centers and consulted *chefs de circonscription scolaire* (C/CS). Noteworthy was the quality of the teacher training modules and the high levels of participant satisfaction. The practical training that brought together teachers of all levels, including well-trained, experienced teachers as well as unqualified community teachers, better prepared them to implement the New Study Programs in their classrooms.

These teacher training sessions took place at a particularly sensitive time, from August 30--September 24, 2004, when teacher unions and the threat of strikes were very visible. One of the teacher union demands to which the Minister had agreed was that these training sessions be held during the vacation to give teachers enough time to finish the training and prepare for the coming year.

6. PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Second Pedagogical Evaluation

Planning for the Second Pedagogical Evaluation (Deliverable 5, with related Deliverables 6 and 8) was intense during 2004, at the beginning of the year, before the Deliverable dates were changed, and then again at the end of the year, before the Evaluation activity was cancelled. The Second Pedagogical Evaluation had to be cancelled owing to several other problems in the overall environment in which the EQUIPE project supports the MEPS' primary Reform program. Consequently, a great deal of time and effort were invested in preparing for this activity, which, in the end, was unfruitful.

Because of the extended teacher strike in the Fall of 2004, while the planning process went forward to prepare for timely execution of this contract requirement, serious doubts arose about the advisability of conducting the Pedagogical Evaluation during the period proposed: January-February 2005. Following discussions with the EQUIPE CTO in November, the COP sent USAID a Memorandum on December 1, 2004 explaining EQUIPE's reservations about going ahead with the Evaluation (see **Appendix 3**).

On December 14, 2004, EQUIPE, USAID and the *Cellule* (CGNPE) had a brainstorming session to decide viable options for conducting the Pedagogical Evaluation. Given the uncertainty of whether students would even be in school in January 2004, all agreed that the Evaluation could not be conducted according to the original schedule and deliberated on whether to delay or cancel the Evaluation. The combined uncertainties about whether the school year would begin or how long the school year would be lengthened if students did go back to school, and the ending date of the EQUIPE contract, February 3, 2006 suggested that the Pedagogical Evaluation should be delayed until after EQUIPE ended. USAID decided that in order for an Evaluation to provide reliable and valid results, students had to attend school regularly for at least a full academic year. The effect of this decision would be to remove this activity from the EQUIPE contract. Correspondence to this effect was exchanged between USAID and Creative Associates in December 2004. This delay in providing the education system with a follow-up evaluation to the Louis Berger/DevTech report published in April 2003 means that there will be less objective information available on the effectiveness of the New Study Program (NPE), in particular, and progress implementing the Reform, in general.

Benin's Ongoing Education Crisis

Benin has had very promising economic growth over the past decade. But in the education sector, several persistent challenges are undermining progress in developing the nation's human resources, in general, and have undermined progress implementing the reform and the New Study Program, in particular: no functioning teacher training institutes, an unclear teacher recruitment policy, unqualified teachers and a decentralization process that has yet to actually devolve financial management to the districts now called upon to provide education funding. Implementing an educational reform program in this context requires the full force of the government's political will to address the fundamental problems afflicting the Beninese educational system, particularly with teachers.

The 2003-2004 academic year was the only year since the beginning of the New Study Program (NPE) generalization that was not disrupted by teachers' strikes. Unfortunately, the political

capital expended and the promises that the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education made in order to keep the teachers in class last year could not be sustained in the face of the strength and number of teachers' union demands. Consequently, the 2004-2005 academic year began with a strike that continued through the end of December 2005. The whole academic year narrowly missed being annulled (*année blanche*); the striking teachers returned to their classrooms in January 2005, but the children had missed three months.

The 2004-2005 school year will be crucial for the Reform Program, since the first cohort of students will reach the end of the primary cycle and will take the primary school-leaving exam. There is always a great amount of attention given to CM2 students. Because of the accumulated class time lost to teacher strikes over the years that the CM2 students have been in school, these students (the 90% of Beninese students who attend public schools) have been working since last academic year to make up the time through a 'special program.' This program will continue this year, but students will not have completed the full CM2 curriculum by the end of the year and the CEP will have to take into consideration this reality. Scheduling the CEP exam as late as possible in the school year would provide teachers with the maximum amount of class time, and this later exam date could be maintained in future to compensate for the late start of Benin's academic year. In fact, some international organizations concerned about Benin's accreditation have raised the issue of whether other countries can continue to accredit Benin's academic certification because of the large amounts of time lost to strikes and poor planning in the system.

Also discouraging is the fact that, due to the national budget deficit, budgets were cut across the board for all ministries in 2004. The MEPS was able to retain some of the 43% (approximately US \$5,254,000) that was originally cut, though negotiation delayed budget execution until nearly the end of 2004. But this is a far cry from the budget increases for education that are sought as part of EQUIPE efforts.

Instability of MEPS Personnel

The changing of MEPS civil servants from post to post disrupts the functioning of MEPS and EQUIPE activities. A very telling demonstration of this point is the situation whereby five of the six people responsible for department-level statistical operations (the CSOSP) were removed from their posts on the second day of MapDecision training that took place in October, 2004. In this manner, the very field agents on whom departmental statistics collection depends and whom EQUIPE was in the process of training will now be unavailable to continue with these responsibilities. This results in a waste of time and energy because EQUIPE will have to re-train the new CSOSP and will be unable to start monitoring the departmental use of MapDecision until the new agents are in place and are trained. This example is not unusual, and even the higher level Directors are subject to periodic change.

INFRE

Since the beginning of its support to the Ministry, EQUIPE has faced the challenges of the INFRE Desktop Publishing Unit's (DPU) lack of capacity and low motivation to take advantage of the opportunities for strengthened capacity that EQUIPE consultants and activities have afforded. The goal at the end of the EQUIPE project is to have the DPU capable of serving as the MEPS textbook publishing unit. But given the lassitude and reluctance of the DPU to accept EQUIPE technical assistance, this goal is not likely to be attained.

EQUIPE met with INFRE on May 12, 2004 (see **Appendix 4**) in an attempt to remove some barriers to progress and understand what could be expected from EQUIPE-INFRE collaboration. At that meeting, the Director of INFRE agreed to take certain measures to correct the deficiencies of his team. But these measures, including making available a new scanner for CM2 textbook illustrations, were not undertaken as promised. In addition, DPU staff continued to display poor work habits (e.g. not working the hours prescribed, working carelessly requiring others to correct their errors) during the workshops for producing CM2 textbooks. In mid-August, when the textbooks were being completed and EQUIPE's DPU consultants were completing their contracts, the INFRE DPU agents refused to participate in a practical exercise that was to test their skills. This evaluation was also designed to help account for the impact of the 18-month training efforts supported by EQUIPE project funds. Since EQUIPE could not compel them to participate and without INFRE directives for them to take part in the exercise, the EQUIPE DPU consultants had to proceed to qualitatively assess strengths and weaknesses of the DPU staff with whom they had worked for eighteen (18) months, based on personal observations and first-hand experience. This persistent lack of cooperation from the INFRE DPU has hampered progress in the specific types of capacity-building that the Ministry DPU and Desktop Publishing Unit staff need. By the end of the year, and even with a new and more dynamic INFRE Director, the situation had not yet improved and the hardware of the DPU had fallen progressively into disrepair.

Ministry-EQUIPE Expectations and MEPS Ownership of EQUIPE-supported Activities.

Since the beginning of the project, there has been a problem achieving Ministry ownership of activities that were jointly decided by the Ministry and USAID. EQUIPE supports the Ministry in its activities; this support was requested by the Ministry when it elaborated the terms of EQUIPE's project contract with USAID. Nevertheless, Ministry counterparts are frequently not interested in participating in events organized by EQUIPE despite the fact that these events are organized to help the Ministry move forward.

The most blatant manifestation of this lack of collaborative will pertains to the question of per diem. Several Ministry counterparts, particularly in the Statistical and Girls' Education Services, refuse to accompany EQUIPE teams on missions where they will be spending the night away. They state that EQUIPE's USAID-authorized per diem rate is not what they should receive (the USAID rate is 18,000 fcfa per person per day while the Ministry pays its high-echelon civil servants 32,000 fcfa), and that frequently EQUIPE's rate will not allow them to stay at a hotel and eat without having to spend their own money. It is true that the USAID rate will not meet the cost of some hotels, since the 18,000 fcfa rate was set some years ago. Rate adjustment at this point might warrant consideration. At the same time, the Ministry's official position on this topic is that the civil servants should accompany project staff on their missions. This issue has already caused problems in terms of the participation of key Ministry players in some EQUIPE activities, and there seems to be no solution in sight.

Another problem is the lack of Ministry feedback and follow-up on reports and activities conducted according to EQUIPE's contract terms. For example, during 2004, EQUIPE subcontractor EMI Systems, whose role is to strengthen the finance functions of the Direction of Financial Resources (DRF) and the administrative and statistical functions of the Direction of Planning and Prospective (DPP) received no feedback from the DRF and the DPP on the reports that proposed methods for improving the financial and administrative management of these

Ministry departments (*Directions*). In fact, none of the reports that EQUIPE has submitted to MEPS staff since January 2004 received any written feedback, despite verbal promises made by the Directors during meetings that they would review the reports and respond later. This lack of feedback undermines EQUIPE's ability to meaningfully fulfil one of CLIN 4's last Deliverables: *Implementation of improved procedures in the domain of financial management*. EQUIPE continues to seek strategies for communication with the Ministry staff to overcome this lack of feedback.

As for managing statistics in the DPP, a significant problem with the Statistics and Management Information Service (SSGI) persists: the head of this service, despite extensive technical training abroad, is either unwilling or unable to effectively produce the statistics required by the Ministry. The Assistant DPP, who is also an able statistician, does not delegate responsibility effectively. This often causes bottlenecks in the release of critical statistical information. The lack of reliable statistics has become an increasingly visible problem at the Ministry, but the considerable assistance provided by EQUIPE to the SSGI, recognized by most Ministry actors, risks being consumed by the over-riding inefficiency of the DPP as a whole.

Policy-related Deliverables

Activities in 2004 accentuated the need to clarify the nature and purpose of several EQUIPE project Deliverables that call for the submission of a "policy." Because the Government of Benin through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MEPS) has sovereignty over its own policies, what can and should be the role of a development assistance project like EQUIPE, funded by the U.S. Government, in proposing policies? Till now, EQUIPE has worked on the principle that the project *assists* the MEPS with tasks that the Ministry and USAID agreed upon and formalized in the EQUIPE contract for technical assistance with USAID. EQUIPE has a positive relationship with its MEPS partners and has been able to enlist them as partners to work toward the goals underlying the results-based Deliverables in the EQUIPE contract. Policy recommendations, rather than policy formulation, would be a more appropriate type of development assistance activity. EQUIPE support and contributions could be clearly defined and implemented as recommendations.

This issue emerged during the seminar organized to validate the policy for recruiting and maintaining more female teachers (PRAM). A large delegation from the Ministry arrived near the end of the seminar and questioned the role of EQUIPE or USAID in helping the MEPS to keep the "promises" that are tacitly made in a policy document that proposes material incentives to keep female teachers in deprived rural area schools. The MEPS delegation hesitated to commit to a policy which, in their view, through a formal validation, teachers' unions could use against them. This fear is well-founded.

The EQUIPE COP clarified to this delegation that EQUIPE's role was to execute technical assistance tasks, which in this case called for a policy document, in the contract that had been defined by USAID and the MEPS in support of the Ministry's education reforms. Such a policy document with recommendations would serve the long term, but EQUIPE and USAID had no responsibility to financially support the proposals found in the document. The COP explained to the MEPS delegation that donors can only support existing government initiatives, so it behoves the Ministry to be somewhat ambitious in its goals for improving girls' education, which is an important item on the international aid agenda. Following this discussion, the DPP proceeded to

close the seminar, thanking the participants for their hard work and indicating that the document emerging from the seminar would be studied and adapted at the Cabinet level. As such, the validation of the policy document constitutes a sort of “pre-validation.” This was evidently a compromise measure. The MEPS remains uncomfortable with this policy and it is unclear what they will do with it. But the larger question remains: What should be the role of EQUIPE in proposing policy in a variety of areas to the MEPS?

Expectations for Long-term MapDecision Use

The MapDecision software devised by EMI Systems has been greatly appreciated by those MEPS officials and others who have been introduced to it. However, there is a fundamental issue that may impede the maximum use of MapDecision in Benin: the culture of the MEPS, in particular, and Benin, in general, does not appear favorable to the widespread adoption and use of computer-assisted management tools. One of the assumptions underlying the proposed use of MapDecision software by the MEPS is that easier access to better statistical information will enable decision-makers to orient their decisions toward more efficient management of the educational system. However, two major barriers to the widespread use of MapDecision persist. First of all, most MEPS officials are not accustomed to using information tools or computers for research and planning activities. They may have computers in their offices, but rarely use these computers for activities other than word-processing or occasional internet access. Expecting these officials to actually use statistical software, however user-friendly, may not be realistic at this time.

The second barrier to the long-term use of MapDecision is that decision-making at the Ministry level is generally based on political considerations rather than on programmatic needs analysis. For example, a school is more likely to be built in the district of a powerful person than in a neighboring district that has a greater need for the school but no powerful person to lobby for the school. Transparency in management decision-making, of the type that MapDecision enables, is therefore not necessarily desirable for the Ministry. These two types of ‘cultural’ barriers may hamper the effective use of the MapDecision software over the long-term.

The National Network for the Promotion of Girls’ Education (NNPGE)

The NNPGE is an important actor in Girls’ Education in Benin. Collaboration between EQUIPE, subcontractor CARE and the Girls’ Network was rocky at the beginning of 2004, but since June has moved forward considerably towards achieving the type of cooperation envisioned in the Project EQUIPE/CARE Benin subcontract. Compromises on all sides have enabled Network activities to start up again after they were stalled for several months. CARE has been able to provide a more flexible financing mechanism, and the NNPGE has accepted some of the principles from which the sub-contractor cannot deviate (such as per diem rate). The understanding reached by the parties was formalized in a *Protocol d’Accord* signed in June 2004.

Problems still remain with the NNPGE, not least being the lack of a shared vision between the Network and the MEPS regarding the roles of the Network and the Ministry’s Girls Education Service in leading activities to support girls’ education in the country. EQUIPE is concerned about the sustainability of the NNPGE after the end of project support. One of the fundamental recommendations for enabling the Network to exist independently at the end of the support offered by EQUIPE and CARE was that NNPGE’s status be changed from an arm (though somewhat autonomous) of the Ministry to an independent NGO. EQUIPE and CARE have been supporting the Network to move towards this goal, but a General Assembly has to be called in

order to change the status of the organization. The Minister herself, since she is formally and legally the President of the NNPGE, must call this General Assembly. Correspondence was addressed to the Minister in November 2004 in an attempt to move this process along, but the prospects do not seem promising. Without a change in its status, the Girls' Network risks becoming non-operational once the financial support of USAID is removed.

Effects of Declining Dollar Exchange Rate on Resources Available for Project Activities

The Project EQUIPE technical and financial proposals were put together almost three years ago, in 2002, when the average exchange rate hovered around 700 fcfa: US \$1. Project costs were based on a conservative estimate at the time: 600 fcfa: US \$1. During EQUIPE's second year, the dollar sank as low as 448 fcfa. As a result, 25% fewer funds would be available for project activities. Based on the average exchange rate of 530 fcfa in 2004, this shortfall amounted to \$344,583 (182,629,120 fcfa) on top of the 41,583,031 fcfa lost in 2003.

7. ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2005 – Year 3

Results	Activities	Period											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
<i>IR 1. Improved Pedagogical System</i>													
Sub-IR 1.1 Appropriate curriculum developed and in use (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.1.1-1 and C.5.1.2-1)													
Consistency and coherence of the different documents and methods developed and utilized to implement the NPE verified. (6/30/05) Deliverable #1	Conduct discussions with the <i>pilotes</i> and MEPS officials to assist in defining the Terms of Reference for the international consultant assigned to this task	x	x										
	Finalize Terms of Reference and selection of consultant			x									
	Consultancy in Benin and submission of first draft of consultant report					x							
MEPS is able to perform the key functions related to implementing, managing and sustaining the NPE (9/30/05) Deliverable #2	Conduct discussions with the <i>pilotes</i> and MEPS officials to help define the areas where MEPS capacities need to be supported; identify priority areas								x				
	Summarize discussions									x			
Progress report concerning implementation of communications strategy (9/30/05) Deliverable #10	Conduct discussions with cellule members and communication specialists , e.g., the press attaché to Ministry								x				
Draft concept of “Basic Education” and implementation policy (6/30/05) Deliverable #11	Review Basic Education documents		x										
	Conduct discussions with pilotes and MEPS officials to help define the Terms of Reference for national consultant assigned to this task			x									
	Finalize terms of reference and select consultant			x									
	Consultancy in Benin and submission of first draft of consultant report				x								
	Validation workshop					x							
	Document completion					x							
Sub – IR 1.2 Appropriate Textbooks developed and in use (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.1.1-2 and C.5.1.2-2)													
Progress report on implementation of textbook policy (6/30/05) Deliverable #19	Meet with INFRE and CGNPE Summarize committee activities Follow up on textbook sales Follow up implementing recommendations for the textbook policy					x	x						
Report on DPU capacity (6/30/05) Deliverable #20	Summarize activities conducted by PAO Evaluation of personnel skills State of computer equipment					x	x						

Results	Activities	Period											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	Write report												
Sub – IR 1.3 Appropriate teacher training system developed and in use. (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.1.1-3 and C.5.1.2-3)													
Annual orientation for secondary school teachers (9/30/04) Deliverable # 25	Prepare and implement activity	x											
	Collect training documents and prepare final report							x					
Complete set of training materials and procedures prepared for new teachers, all grades (6/30/05) Deliverable #26	Organize dialogue focus groups with new teachers to identify their needs (theory and practical)				x								
	Synthesize findings and organize 3 day workshop to write detailed document outline				x								
	Write training modules in a closed 3 week workshop						x						
In-service materials developed for RUP system (10/31/04) Deliverable #27	Assess work already accomplished in collaboration with IFESH			x									
	Organize teacher focus groups to assess practical needs				x								
	Summarize findings and organize a 3 day working session to formulate document outlines					x	x						
	Write training modules during a 3 week closed workshop								X				
Pre-service materials prepared and tested by teacher training centers (7/30/05) Deliverable #28	Situational assessment in collaboration with INFRE			x									
	Synthesize existing materials and organize a 3-day working session to formulate document outlines				x								
	Write training modules during 2-week closed working session						x	x					
Teaching force policy and plan prepared and submitted (3/31/05) Deliverable #29	Review documents	x	x										
	Elaborate work plan		x										
	Make recommendations			x									
Sub-IR 4. Appropriate learning assessment of students developed and in use (Refer to Sections C.5.1.1-4 and C.5.1.2-4)													
Appropriate MEPS personnel trained concerning learning assessment system (6/30/05) Deliverable #31	Organize an international consultancy on learning assessments using a competency-based approach -training core group of national trainers -teacher training Write final report				x	x	x						
Policy and plan to reduce grade repetition and dropout prepared and submitted	Conduct meetings with DEP, the DPS, the EQF pilote, the C/CGNPE, the DIP, resource			x	x	x	x						

Results	Activities	Period											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
(6/30/05) Deliverable #32	persons and the SCOFI/CVC team Diagnostic study of present situation Data collection and analysis Field site visits Write and validate document												
Learning assessment instruments and procedures finalized for all grades (8/31/05) Deliverable #30	Conduct workshop to conceive assessment materials by course and training method Creation and refinement of instruments Creation of test banks Prepare copy for CTO								X	X			
IR2 : Increased Girls enrollments in target areas													
Sub- IR 2.1 Equity in the classroom improved (Refer to sections C.5.2.1-1 and C.5.2.2-1)													
Policy and plan to reduce repetition rates CE2 to CM2 submitted (6/30/05) Deliverable #36	Support organization of data collection to inform the policy recommendation process	X	X										
	Conduct workshop to write policy recommendations and plan				X								
	Validate and submit policy					X							
	Submit deliverable						X						
Sub- IR 2.2 Socio-cultural environment for girls' education improved (Refer to Sections C.5.2.1-2 and C.5.2.2-2)													
NNPGE plan implemented and report submitted (6/30/04) Deliverable #38	NNPGE General Assembly conducted and principal texts adopted												
	Negotiate with MEPS to obtain permission to change status	X	X										
	Prepare Terms of Reference and budget for organization of the General Assembly	X	X										
	Write and submit report on institutional reform for USAID			X									
	Finalize the Network's Five-Year Plan												
	Finalize and share with partners the Network's Five-Year Plan				X								
	Write and submit Five-Year Plan					X							
Update the list of actors working in the domain of girls' education in Benin		X											

Results	Activities	Period											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	Working from information collected during the National Forum for Girls' Education, update list of NGOs working in Girls' Education to share with partners.		x										
	Write and submit Report					x							
Girls' Education Policy updated and submitted (6/30/05) Deliverable #40	Conduct baseline study on the Girls' Education Policy in Benin and the sub-region and define methods to follow up	x	x										
	Undertake discussions and analysis of girls education policy elements		x										
	Draft the updated girls' education policy		x	x									
	Hold validation seminar for the proposed girls' education policy				x								
	Write and submit Report					x							
Assessment of CARE, World Learning and other relevant programs completed and report submitted to USAID CTO (30 June 2004) - Deliverable submitted, and activities building from the assessment ongoing. Deliverable #39	<i>Provide grants to enable communities to execute activities demonstrated to be 'best practices' in the assessment of relevant girls' education programs in Benin.</i>												
	Ensure that all signatures for Grant Agreement have been collected		x										
	Monitor grants management		x	x		x		x		x		x	
	Evaluate effects of the financed activities in the field.							x					
Other Activities	Organize follow-up missions in schools and communities in Girls Ed/Life Skills/NNPGE zones										x	x	x
	Submit Follow-up report												x
<i>IR 3: Improved Environment for Stakeholders</i>													
Sub – IR 3.4 Improved policy environment for civil participation in education (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.3.1 and C.5.3.2)													
Incentives implemented and assessed (6.30/05) Deliverable #44	Finalize data collection and evaluation tools	x	x										
	Finalize policy and procedures for grants		x										
	Hold 4 departmental meetings with Mayors to discuss implementation of education plans and incentives		x										
	Hold 3 grant review sessions		x	x	x								
	Hold 4 departmental workshops to discuss evaluation tools and collect first round of proposals			x									
	Hold 4 departmental workshops								x				

Results	Activities	Period											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	to follow implementation of local work plans and collect second round of grant proposals												
	Grant implementation at commune level	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Write and submit report									x			
Follow-up evaluation and documentation of results	Finalize evaluation plan	x											
	Finalize and print summary of texts on public participation in the finance and management of education	x	x										
	Finalize and print synthesis on commune education plans and budgets			x	x								
	Produce grant Success Stories document										x		

IR 4: Improved Management of The Education System in the Context of Decentralization													
Sub – IR 4.1 Appropriate planning and monitoring tools developed and used (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.4.1-1 and C.5.4.2-1)													
Improvements in implementation of education development plans in two communes (9/30/05) Replaces Deliverable #47	Improve the development, execution and evaluation of development plan in 2 communes							x	x	x	x		
Annual Report of Education Statistics produced at national and department levels (12/31/05) Deliverable # 51	Inform and educate those involved in production and use of statistics about these procedures			x	x	x							
	Revise and update computer program for data entry and editing of primary statistics		x	x									
	Train MEPS partners at central, departmental levels to use these computer programs for data entry and editing			x	x	x							
	Assist MEPS in producing its Annual Statistical Report			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sub – IR 4.2 Improved Financial Management (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.4.1-2 & C.5.4.2-2)													
Implementation of improved financial procedures (12/31/05) Deliverable #56	Support MEPS in use of decentralization plan and policy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Other: Administrative personnel performance improved													
Advancements obtained in actions taken to improve management of decentralization	Support “Comité d’Appui” in the use of policy document	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Other: Simplify planning and financial management tools													
Training and performance of participants	Training session in use of MapDecision and its use for budgets			x			x			x			

Results	Activities	Period											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Consolidation activities and their impact	Consolidate trainings in MapDecision and CS budgets				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
IR 5: HIV/AIDS and the Education Sector													
Emphasis Area 1: Building MEPS Capacity (Refer to Contract Sections C.5.5.1-1 and C.5.5.2-1)													
Vulgarization of documents	Re-read documents: -Report impact of HIV/AIDS on Primary Education - UFLS (Unité Focale de Lutte contre les IST/VIH/SIDA) Strategic Plan -HIV/AIDS policy elements	x	x										
	Create informative document on CLIN 5 activities		x	x									
	Edit documents			x	x								
MEPS HIV/AIDS management unit established (UFLS –Unité Focale de Lutte contre les IST/VIH/SIDA)	Organize orientation for new members: -review strengths and weaknesses -review policy recommendations implemented		x										
	Create advisory plan of support			x									
	Implement plan				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Create evaluation tools for UFLS activities		x										
	Validation workshop for evaluation tools			x									
	Organize evaluation meetings				x			x			x		
Emphasis Area 2 Life Skills													
Document on the implementation of strategy to implicate communities in the development and support of life skills (5/30/05)	Support implementation of strategies in SCOFI/CVC/RNPSF zones: -Design and print posters -Compose and record songs -Radio programs -Interactive theater			x	x								
	Complete and submit milestone						x						
Other Activities	Organize follow-up missions in schools and communities in SCOFI/CVC/RNPSF zones										x	x	x
	Submit Follow-up report												x

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1** *Photo, Presentation of sixth grade Math and French textbooks, USAID Mission Director and Minister of Education*
- Appendix 2** *Photos, Life Skills and Equity Training, December 2004*
- Appendix 3** *Memorandum, Teacher Strike Implications for Pedagogical Evaluation*
- Appendix 4** *Meeting Notes, Meeting with INFRE, May 12, 2004*

Appendix 1

*Photo, Presentation of sixth grade Math and French textbooks, USAID Mission Director
and Minister of Education*



Appendix 2

Photos, Life Skills and Equity Training, December 2004





Appendix 3

Memorandum, Teacher Strike Implications for Pedagogical Evaluation

TO: Bahereh SMITH, USAID CTO EQUIPE
FROM: C.N'TCHOUGAN-SONOU, EQUIPE COP; M. RAMBAUD, EQUIPE Senior Advisor
DATE: December 1, 2004
RE: Teacher Strike Implications for Pedagogical Evaluation

As discussed, the ongoing teacher strike has serious implications for the upcoming Second Pedagogical Evaluation. International recruitment for the team leader and consultants is on track. EQUIPE is currently refining the Terms of Reference for the national Beninese team to conduct the student evaluation portion of the Pedagogical Evaluation. The entire exercise is planned for January-February 2005.

But the ongoing teacher strike in Benin's public primary schools threatens the viability and reliability of the proposed Pedagogical Evaluation. Classroom observations and student assessments cannot be carried out when schools are closed. Public school students have not yet started the 2004-2005 school year. The CE1 and CE2 students have effectively been out of class for seven (7) months. On top of the current strike, the 2003-4 school year strike caused cumulative delays in progress implementing the New Study Program (NPE). Without adequate time for teachers and students to use the new curriculum it will be impossible to accurately measure the effectiveness of the NPE in improving student achievement. Evaluation results could find teaching and learning deficiencies not directly correlated with curriculum effectiveness. Such negative results would do a disservice to MEPS, undermine MEPS credibility and discourage all partners involved in the reform. If the Evaluation timing is not adjusted to take into account these constraints, US taxpayer funds would be wasted on a costly exercise that would not produce reliable information on student gains and NPE progress.

When the strike will end is uncertain. The documentary research portions of the Pedagogical Evaluation not affected by the strike could be conducted in January, 2005. If teachers' strikes continue to disrupt the school year and public schools do not open by January 2005, we recommend postponing the fieldwork portion of the Evaluation. The student evaluation portion would need to be conducted several months after the 2004-5 school year actually begins, to allow adequate time for teachers and students to use the curriculum and catch up. This portion of the Evaluation, which nationally-recruited Beninese consultants will conduct, could later be integrated into the larger Evaluation.

This Pedagogical Evaluation at the end of the (NPE) generalization will be an important reference document for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MEPS) and the education reform. In the best interests of the MEPS, which USAID supports, we request a meeting to discuss the most appropriate actions to take to time and conduct the most effective Pedagogical Evaluation that will best serve the purposes intended in the contract.

Appendix 4

Meeting Notes, Meeting with INFRE, May 12, 2004

COMPTE RENDU

Le Mercredi 12 Mai 2004 a eu lieu au bureau de la COP la réunion au sujet des problèmes se posant à l'unité PAO.

Heure de démarrage : 15 H 55

I. Point des présences :

Etaient présents :

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Christina N'TCHOUGAN-SONOU, EQUIPE | 5. Toussaint TCHITCHI, INFRE |
| 2. Magloire COSSOU, EQUIPE | 6. Marie-Louise ZEVOUNOU, INFRE |
| 3. Alima BOUKARI MARCOS, EQUIPE | 7. Eugène GNIMASSOU, INFRE |
| 4. Gisèle ENIANLOKO MARTIN, EQUIPE | 8. Tatiana AHOUANHOUN, EQUIPE |

II. Ordre du jour :

L'ordre du jour comportait les points suivants :

- A. Problèmes au niveau de l'unité PAO,
- B. Equipements,
- C. Divers.

Pour démarrer cette séance, la COP a remercié d'une part la délégation de l'INFRE pour sa disponibilité et d'autre part d'avoir accepté se déplacer jusque dans les bureaux du projet EQUIPE.

Le Directeur de l'INFRE a remercié à son tour le personnel de EQUIPE pour avoir accepté que la réunion se tienne dans les locaux du projet. Il a ensuite présenté à l'assistance la Secrétaire Générale et le Pilote du Plan d'Action Manuels Scolaires de l'INFRE.

La COP ayant repris la parole, a souligné que EQUIPE et l'INFRE/MEPS travaillent pour la bonne mise en oeuvre de la Réforme et qu'une partie intégrante de cette réforme est la production des manuels scolaires.

L'INFRE étant la base fondamentale sur laquelle repose la production des manuels scolaires, il est nécessaire que tous ceux qui participent à l'élaboration d'une telle oeuvre fassent de leur possible afin que le processus fonctionne.

Le travail en collaboration avec EQUIPE qui est la suite de l'ancien projet CLEF, la disponibilité de la PAO et l'effort fourni par le volet Pédagogie, devraient nous permettre de produire une bonne qualité de manuels scolaires.

Le projet EQUIPE a ainsi pensé à la remise à niveau du personnel de l'unité PAO. C'est après cela, que chaque agent est responsabilisé dans un champ de formation.

Ainsi, EQUIPE a eu le souci de développer l'unité PAO mais nous remarquons quelques insuffisances qui, à la longue, risquent de retarder les activités surtout que la Généralisation a atteint la classe de CM2.

EQUIPE et INFRE espèrent produire à temps avec l'idée que EQUIPE finance les activités ; l'enjeu est de satisfaire les parents pour l'achat des manuels scolaires.

La parole a été ainsi passée au Responsable du volet pédagogie afin qu'il nous parle des problèmes en cour.

III. Point des travaux :

A. Problèmes au niveau de l'unité de la PAO :

EQUIPE a à renforcer la capacité de la PAO à travers les ressources humaines et produire dans les délais requis les manuels scolaires.

L'année passée, pour les manuels scolaires de la classe de CM1, certaines contraintes nous ont obligé à prendre messieurs FAGNON et LIMA afin qu'ils deviennent des moniteurs pour l'unité PAO. Ils étaient repartis à l'INFRE avec les consultants de EQUIPE (Damien et Grâce) avec l'idée de renforcer leurs collègues à travers leur connaissance ; mais à notre grande surprise, les figures géométriques se trouvant dans le manuel de mathématique présentaient beaucoup d'imperfections.

Or, avec les nouveaux logiciels qui sont à leur portée, ils devraient pouvoir s'en sortir.

Par ailleurs, du retour du personnel de la PAO à l'INFRE, certaines questions leur ont été posées :

1. qu'avez-vous retenu de votre stage à EQUIPE ?
2. que voulez-vous savoir ?

Ces questions ont permis au volet pédagogie de rédiger un plan de travail ou de formation à suivre.

Il s'en suit la rédaction des manuels de CM2 par les concepteurs et la répartition a été procédée de la façon suivante :

- FAGNON : manuel et guide de mathématique ;
- LIMA : manuel et guide de mathématique ;
- Autres : EST, ES,

En réalité, chacun se trouve dans un champ de formation et sous la supervision des consultants de EQUIPE, Damien et Grâce.

Les saisies étant faites et encodées, les observations des rédacteurs ont été prises en compte et la 2ème version est remise au personnel de l'unité de la PAO.

Au lieu d'intégrer les amendements faits par les rédacteurs dans la 2ème version qui leur est remise, le personnel de la PAO se trompait et utilisait la 1ère version ; ce qui posait assez de problèmes dans le suivi.

Dans le but de mettre fin à d'éventuelles erreurs, le Responsable du volet pédagogie leur a donné un support magnétique pour graver les données ; ainsi, chacun d'eux a reçu une diskette.

Il a été constaté avec amertume que le dossier de mathématique dont Monsieur AKELE est l'auteur est perdu après correction faite par ce dernier.

A cet effet, le personnel de la PAO était obligée d'avouer au responsable de la Pédagogie que les supports magnétiques qui leur ont été remis étaient perdus aussi.

Or, le volet pédagogie a eu avec eux cinq séances de travail afin que les clauses dans le travail soient respectées.

Le constat qui y découle est que les grognes proviennent plus du non respect du délai de livraison que l'USAID à son tour ne tolère pas.

Néanmoins, il a été remarqué que Messieurs APOVO, LADIPO et GOGO HUNGA sont très sérieux et fréquents au service.

Par contre, l'absence répétée de monsieur FAGNON est notée depuis quelques jours. Nous estimons alors qu'il n'a plus rien à apprendre des consultants de EQUIPE.

Un autre exemple est que monsieur LIMA avait affirmé qu'il maîtrisait le logiciel de mathématique mais grande fut la surprise de tous de constater que les proportions des figures géométriques se trouvant dans ce manuel ne sont pas respectées.

A cet effet, il a été demandé à Grâce de lui montrer avec le logiciel de mathématique la manière par laquelle il devrait procéder ; à ce niveau encore, le dossier reste introuvable pour que Grâce lui apprenne comment il va désormais procéder. Il a enfin avoué qu'il n'avait pas eu le temps pour cela et ne s'est où se trouve le dossier.

Etant donné que EQUIPE a des dates butoires pour le dépôt de ses milestones, nous voulons que le travail se prenne au sérieux.

B. Equipements :

- Scanner : Il a été porté à notre connaissance que l'INFRE a acquis du matériel dont un scanner et nous vous prions de faire diligence pour que cela nous parvienne.
- Onduleur : il a été remarqué qu'un régulateur de tension est en panne et vu que nous sommes à la saison pluvieuse où les coupures d'électricité sont régulières, nous aimerions que diligence soit faite de ce côté là.
- Rallonge : celui qui est utilisé actuellement ne tient plus bien.

Enfin, les consultants de EQUIPE (Damien et Grâce) sont à la fin de leur contrat et nous ne sommes pas sûrs que le personnel de l'unité de la PAO puisse prendre la relève. Ainsi s'achève le récit du responsable du volet pédagogie.

Ce fut alors le tour du Directeur de l'INFRE de remercier EQUIPE pour avoir fait un exposé clair et explicite de la situation qui prévaut actuellement au sein de l'équipe PAO de l'INFRE. Il a ainsi passé la parole respectivement à Monsieur GNIMASSOU Eugène et Madame ZEVOUNOU Marie-Louise pour qu'ils donnent leur appréciation de la situation décrite par EQUIPE.

- Les propos de Monsieur GNIMASSOU Eugène :

Mes observations s'articulent sur 2 points focaux :

1. Compétence du personnel de l'unité de la PAO

Personnellement, j'ai été informé régulièrement de l'absence répétée de certains agents de la PAO et je me suis rapproché d'eux pour savoir s'ils ont d'éventuels problèmes ou encore s'ils sentent le besoin de mutation dans un autre service, qu'ils peuvent se prononcer. Mais force est de constater avec regret que sur l'effectif du personnel de la PAO, il n'y a que 3 qui répondent à nos aspirations. Tout comme vous, je suis aussi surpris d'apprendre que Monsieur FAGNON s'absente à son aise alors que je suis censé être au courant.

2. Problème d'équipements

- . Scanner : nous attendons que le scanner soit installé officiellement pour qu'on le mette à la disposition de la PAO.
- . Onduleur ou régulateur de tension : il est connecté en réseau et devrait tenir en principe en cas de coupure d'électricité ; étant donné que nous sommes dans une zone de turbulence, le problème se pose.
- . Suggestion : je suggère que les 3 agents sur qui l'INFRE peut compter au sein du personnel de la PAO poursuivent le travail afin qu'on sache quelle disposition prendre pour les autres.

- Ceux de Madame ZEVOUNOU Marie-Louise :

- . Je suis navrée du récit fait par EQUIPE et suis heureuse de la présence du Directeur de l'INFRE qui doit pouvoir prendre les décisions qui s'imposent.

- Les propos du Directeur de l'INFRE :

1- Compétence du personnel de l'unité de la PAO

Nous avons recruté des enseignants au sein de l'unité PAO qui ne savaient pas les contraintes auxquelles ils sont confrontés.

Il a été clair qu'ils ont reçu des contrats de 5 ans et devraient fournir en retour un travail satisfaisant ; le contraire nous obligerait à les retourner à leurs administrations scolaires.

Je suggérerais qu'une évaluation soit faite afin qu'on ait la preuve sur leur volonté de travailler.

Le compte rendu de vos préoccupations sera également fait à Madame le Ministre des Enseignements Primaire et Secondaire afin qu'elle soit imprégnée de la situation.

En tant que nouveaux apprenants, ils sont à leur premier contact avec l'outil informatique ; nous n'avons pas pris la précaution d'envisager avec l'USAID au moment des négociations, qu'un responsable spécialisé est nécessaire pour le contrôle et la surveillance rigoureuse du personnel. C'est vrai que cette solution nécessite une nouvelle connexion du matériel informatique mais ne reste pas impossible.

2- Problème d'équipements

Nous avons acquis du matériel actuellement stocké au sein de l'INFRE mais nous vous promettons que le scanner sera installé après que les techniciens aient fait leur test.

En résumé, mes suggestions s'articulent autour de 3 points focaux :

- 1- Affectation du personnel de l'unité de la PAO après son évaluation ;
- 2- Mise en place d'une unité de surveillance qui prendra en compte non seulement la régularité de l'agent au service, sa disponibilité à faire le travail mais aussi le contrôle du travail exécuté sur les appareils ;
- 3- L'installation du matériel scanner à la PAO.

La COP remercie le Directeur de l'INFRE des suggestions faites et espère qu'elles vont atteindre le but recherché qu'est la livraison à temps des manuels scolaires.

Elle a renchéri que le projet EQUIPE espère toujours soutenir la direction de l'INFRE en vue d'avoir une équipe plus performante et a précisé que l'idée de mise en place d'une unité de surveillance renforcera à long terme le travail.

Par ailleurs, la COP remercie le Directeur de l'INFRE pour ses initiatives au sujet des 3 engagements pris mais insiste sur le fait que la question est à court terme.

Le Responsable du volet pédagogie a ensuite précisé qu'il est encore temps au personnel de l'unité de la PAO de prendre conscience et récupérer ce qui est encore possible avant l'évaluation puisque l'imminent est que les consultants de EQUIPE sont à la fin de leur contrat.

C. Divers

Il a été suggéré que dans la mesure du possible, que l'évaluation réservée au personnel de l'unité de la PAO soit complète, c'est-à-dire que les instruments d'évaluation soient organisés par le volet pédagogie et le Pilote du Plan d'Action Manuel Scolaire.

Par ailleurs, que les trois agents réguliers et assidus au travail soient félicités de façon publique en vue d'une reconnaissance à leurs égards.

Contrairement aux assidus, les paresseux doivent savoir ce qui est attendu d'eux.

Il s'en suivra une note de service qui va définir les nouveaux règlements à suivre au sein de l'INFRE.

Il serait souhaitable de pratiquer l'interchangement au sujet de la relecture des saisies, c'est-à-dire trouver une formule pour faire lire les saisies d'un agent « X » par un autre « Y ».

Etant donné que EQUIPE ne veut pas faillir à son devoir de renforcer l'unité de la PAO et vu qu'il y a des dates butoires pour le dépôt des milestones, le volet pédagogie se verra dans l'obligation de prendre des mesures extrêmes pour atteindre son objectif.

Enfin, la Secrétaire Générale de l'INFRE a suggéré qu'un système soit mis en place pour :

- . surveiller les heures d'arrivée et de départ du service,
- . que les coups de fil téléphonique empêchant la concentration soient supprimés au cours des heures de travail.

La COP a conclu en demandant au Directeur de l'INFRE de mettre en oeuvre les conclusions auxquelles nous sommes parvenus.

La réunion a pris fin à 17 H 10

La Secrétaire de séance

Tatiana AHOUANHOUN