

**Evaluation of the African Girls' Education Initiative
Country Case Study: Burkina Faso**

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Overview of Key Observations

With regard to developing education policy and planning

UNICEF Burkina Faso has played a strong role in advocating for girls' education and technically assisting Burkina Faso in developing the ESs (Satellite Schools), CEBNFs (Centres for Non-formal Basic Education), and BI-SONGOs (Early Childhood Care Centres) within the framework of EFA per Jomtien and later Dakar, and the country's education reforms, including the PDDEB, the sector wide 10-Year Basic Education Development Plan and Programme, which accounts for 3000 ESs and 1000 CEBNFs to be established between 2000 and 2009.

Implementation of the PDDEB began in 2002, two years after its planned start date. Not only is the time lag affecting the rate of implementation, but also planning, procedural and communication processes within MEBA and among partners are slowing it down. For MEBA, there exists the challenge to decentralise, which is not easy given how centralised the education system has been over time, and the related challenge to establish leadership, which would permit clear coordination of the various objectives and activities of several Departments within MEBA, and among partners. For the Financial and Technical Partners (PTF), the complex administrative and financial procedures of some members of the PTF negatively affect the rate of PDDEB implementation. Communications within the PTF group generates tension, which relate to different perspectives on what should be the roles, methods and procedures of the different PTF members vis-a-vis the MEBA and PDDEB.

At the regional/provincial level where only minimal training has been undertaken, and initial Plans of Actions have been made in respect to the PDDEB, little attention has been given to capacity strengthening, and developing and communicating standard operating procedures. In order to achieve the systemic change desired in the education system, the interlinkages between the national and regional, and regional and district/local levels need to be systematised. UNICEF Burkina Faso has concentrated its planning, organisational and capacity building efforts at national and targeted community levels. Given the pressing need to make this sector-wide plan and programme work, UNICEF Burkina Faso should not miss the opportunity to actively support the government in strengthening the middle level of the education system.

To fully achieve the goals of the PDDEB, a strong partnership among all stakeholders is a necessary ingredient. This especially means that within government, MEBA (Education Ministry) and MASSN (Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity) need to resolve their differences and more strongly integrate their policy development and programming efforts.

The financial and technical partners (PTF), multi and bi-lateral agencies, and international NGOs also need to tend to their relations with each other in order to significantly support Burkina Faso in working towards its national educational goals. In particular, the relations between UNICEF Burkina Faso and the "Noyau Dur" partners (World Bank, the Netherlands,

and Canada)¹ could be much more than cordial if communications and dialogue were fully open and transparent.

Addressing the coordination, procedural and communication bottlenecks and needs among international partners and within the government have become critical, especially given the fact that millions of dollars are waiting to be spent on educational reform through the World Bank sponsored “Fast Track Initiative”, and thousands more in support of girls’ education via UNICEF’s “Accelerated Girls’ Education Initiative”.

UNICEF Burkina Faso sees its support of girls’ education and basic education using AGEI project support as part of its broader basic education programme, and fitting within the government’s national education programme and system. However, the government counterpart, particularly at middle and local levels, does not always understand UNICEF support as being an integral part of its overall programme. For example, in Seno province, MEBA staff clearly articulated that the “UNICEF (AGEI) project” was not included in the PDDEB Plan of Action because it was considered to be separate and already financially accounted for so the rationale was that it did not have to be put in the overall Plan of Action. Given the tendency of external aid agencies over time to focus on certain aspects and geographic areas of the education system in an uncoordinated and project oriented fashion, this was not surprising. This “standard operating modality” has not yet changed in spite of the PDDEB “programme” oriented vision.

UNICEF Burkina Faso has been acknowledged as a strong advocate of girls’ education and an influential player throughout the 1990s to today in terms of policy and programming promoting and supporting girls’ education. The PDDEB has set forth objectives in support of girls’ education, which include innovations supported by UNICEF and other partners, such as the Association of Mother Educators (AMEs) and girl-to-girl tutoring. Furthermore, Burkina Faso was selected in 2002 to be the sub-regional leader for girls’ education on behalf of the CEDEAO, which underlines the importance and effects of advocacy for and sensitisation on girls’ education by UNICEF Burkina Faso and other national and international partners.

UNICEF Burkina Faso’s support of early childhood development through the BI-SONGO has given it another niche in the development picture in addition to primary level girls’ education within the EFA framework. In effect, the “Noyau Dur” partners make a case for UNICEF to use its strengths in further developing innovative approaches in this policy/programmatic area.

Notably, early childhood development does not appear in the PDDEB. UNICEF is working with MASSN to rectify this in addition to getting an ECD policy adopted. This could potentially result in taking the BI-SONGO “formula” to scale, and more efficiently and effectively linking it to the primary school system.

¹ The Noyau Dur refers to the “Hard Core” agencies (the Netherlands, the World Bank, and Canada) which have signed a partnership agreement with the government to provide their financial support for the government PDDEB through a common fund or basket managed by the MEBA (Ministry of Basic Education) that has common accountability procedures.

With regard to increasing access

Both ESs and CEBNFs have increased children's access to basic education. However, the issue of transfer between schools in both instances is significant, and needs to be systematically and systemically resolved.

In spite of UNICEF Burkina Faso support and partners' efforts to close the gender gap in education, it has persisted and continues to indicate significant disadvantaging of girls in accessing and completing basic education. Along with a sense of the AGEI project insufficiently focusing on particular needs of girls in visited areas, the statistics and anecdotal accounts point to the fact that there continues to be much to do to eliminate barriers to girls' education in the Burkinabe learning environment.

External assistance to basic education, including that provided by UNICEF Burkina Faso, has contributed to substantial growth in the basic education system, mainly in the primary school system. As a result, the focus on primary school has limited dialogue and reflection on the longer term aims of what comes after primary schooling and in terms of the challenges being met by young people in Burkina Faso today.

With regard to improving quality

The ESs, CEBNFs and BI-SONGOs have been important innovations in the education system of Burkina Faso, adding quality to the education system and responding to real needs in children's learning environments. However, four significant challenges are affecting their chances for further development, and replicability and sustainability: *i*) the insufficient base of revenue at community level that would allow for expected financial contributions to the local education system; *ii*) the lack of teacher status in the ESs and CEBNFs; *iii*) the inadequate vocational training and equipment supply in CEBNFs; and *iv*) the absence of ESs and CEBNFs in some provincial Plans of Action, and the complete exclusion of preschool education in the PDDEB.

Efforts made to introduce a human rights-based approach to programming (HRBAP) are in process and the Country Office has been working on how to best develop and apply it. It has developed a schema that shows how it has progressed from working at community level through *parallel* sectoral interventions to *converging* sectoral interventions (which is the phase in which the AGEI has been implemented most recently) and envisions *integrating* all interventions, including communications, HIV/AIDS, child protection, monitoring & evaluation. It would appear that the AGEI has provided concrete ways and means for the Country Programme to test the waters in terms of developing and initiating implementation of the HRBAP in the Burkinabe context.

With regard to enhancing students' performance

The earlier studies of ES student performance as compared to classic school student performance gave ES students the edge, particularly in mathematics. Their success was attributed in part to the use of the bilingual teaching/learning approach. According to the latest study on student performance, ES students' performance was found to be slipping due to various challenging issues presently affecting ESs (e.g. lack of official teacher status, therefore, affecting morale and motivation). Issues affecting the ESs need to be addressed head on and innovations that promote and support student performance need to be maintained, enhanced and expanded. Some classic schools have benefited from learning from and adapting ES

innovations due to ES teachers becoming classic school teachers and bringing with them their knowledge and skills acquired from the ES training and experience, or from teacher exchange during teacher training. There exist opportunities to further explore in regard to systematising the exchange and merging the adaptation of experiences in the two types of schools. This could also help to lead to equalising the status of ES teachers with that of EC teachers within the national education system.

With regard to expanding gender sensitisation

Due to social mobilisation and incentives in favour of girls' education, gender parity is often evident in ES classrooms, although it begins to change as children progress to the upper grades and girls start to drop out. This is a sign that it is not enough to advocate for gender equity but gender equality needs as much if not more attention. In the case of UNICEF Burkina Faso, adding a gender technical expert to the Education Team would help to assure that adequate time and attention are given to this critical dimension of girls' education and EFA in close collaboration with all partners.

List of Acronyms

AGEI:	African Girls' Education Initiative
AME:	Association of Mother Educators
APE:	Parents of Students Association
BI-SONGO	Child care and preschool centre
CEBNF:	Non-formal Basic Education Centre
COGES:	Management Committees
DEP:	Directorate of Studies and Planning
DGAENF:	General Directorate of Literacy and Non-formal Education
DEPE:	Directorate of Early Childhood Development
DPEF:	Directorate of the Promotion of Girls' Education
ES:	Satellite Schools
GER:	Gross Enrolment Rate
IEFA:	AGEI
IRD:	Institute of Research for Development
MEBA:	Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy
MASSN:	Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity
NER:	Net Enrolment Rate
PDDEB:	Ten-Year Basic Education Development Plan
UNICEF:	United Nations Agency for Children
TINTUA:	NGO name signifies "let's develop ourselves"

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Introduction

The AGEI in Burkina Faso has focused on increasing access and quality of basic education within the framework of Education for All, and has placed emphasis on increasing girls' participation in education and achieving gender equity in schools. This case study concentrates on the three main components of the AGEI in Burkina Faso, the Satellite Schools (ES), the Centres for Non-formal Basic Education (CEBNF), and the early childhood care and development centres, the BI-SONGOs, particularly in face of the recent Ten-Year Plan for Basic Education Development (PDDEB), and the evolving early childhood development policy.

Context

It is estimated that 61% of the population live on less than US\$1.00 per day, with women and children being most affected. About 83% of the total population of an estimated 12.6 million (as of 2002 with over ½ under 18 years of age) live in rural areas and many survive on subsistence agricultural activities. The major cash crop is cotton, and cereal grains, such as sorghum, millet, rice and corn, are also grown for commercial and personal consumption. About ½ of the population comprise the labour force, of whom about 92% work in agricultural activities. Due to widespread unemployment and under-employment, many Burkinabe have over time sought work elsewhere, particularly in Cote d'Ivoire. However, due to the conflict situation that afflicted Cote d'Ivoire in 2002, many Burkinabe returned to Burkina Faso, which, along with the expanding prevalence of HIV/AIDS and its effects, has contributed to an increasing climate of insecurity in both towns and rural zones. These pressures added to ongoing national budget deficits, deep-rooted conditions of poverty, and cultural attitudes and practices affect everyday life, including the education of children.

In the education sector today there is a net primary school enrolment rate (NER) of 42% boys and 29% girls. This makes it one of the countries in the world with low rates of schooling for all children, and a sizeable gender gap of 13 points disadvantaging girls. The gross enrolment rate (GER), which is 52% for boys and 37% for girls, presents a slightly greater gender gap of 15 points. In the adult population 34% of men and 14% of women are literate, indicating a gender gap of 20 points disadvantaging women.² The wide gender gap for both girls and women are indicative of inequalities at play in the environment that affect their access and treatment within the education system.

Approximately 17% of the national budget is allocated to education. Aid from external agencies, including UNICEF, provide further support for the development of the education system through the financing of school construction, teacher training, educational supplies and materials, etc., especially through a "project" approach. Efforts are being made through the sector-wide 10-Year

² Source: UNICEF, State of the World's Children, 2004

Plan for Basic Education Development (PDDEB) to construct and implement a more systematic “programme” approach.

Burkina Faso has a very high under-5 mortality rate of 207 per 1000 live births, placing it in 9th place among all countries of the world. The BI-SONGO is a pilot effort to provide an integrated approach to early childhood development for 3-6 year olds. In general, preschool education has not received high priority. Early childhood care and development for 0-3 year olds receives attention through the health sector, mainly during the mother’s peri- and post-natal time periods.

Throughout the 1990s to the present, UNICEF Burkina Faso has worked closely with the government and partners on formulating and implementing education reform strategies supportive of girls’ education, which have been framed by the Education for All (EFA) Declarations (Jomtien, 1990 and Dakar, 2000) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989). UNICEF’s Basic Education Programme supports the same three components as the AGEI (ESs, CEBNFs, and BI-SONGOs) in 17 targeted provinces, including the five provinces targeted by the AGEI. Some partners in Burkina Faso state that UNICEF Burkina Faso carries the banner for girls’ education.

In sum, during the past couple of years, several developments affecting the education sector and UNICEF Burkina Faso’s education programme, including the 10-Year Plan for Basic Education Development (PDDEB), Burkina Faso qualifying to receive support from the Fast Track Initiative (World Bank) and the Accelerated Girls’ Education Initiative (UNICEF), and the elaboration of a National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development, hold promise to support the advancement of girls’ education and basic education for all children.

Summary of AGEI in Burkina Faso

The AGEI in Burkina Faso (called the Support to Girls’ Basic Education Programme) is part of the Strengthening Basic Education Programme within the UNICEF Burkina Faso Programme of Cooperation. As indicated above, it has focused on improving access, retention and performance, and quality of basic education, especially for girls, through support of the Satellite Schools (ES) (formal primary schools), the Centres for Non-formal Basic Education (CEBNF) and the BI-SONGOs (ECD centres).

The ESs and CEBNFs were initiated in 1995, and considered key entry points for facilitating education reform. By 1998 the BI-SONGO early childhood centre was initiated for a number of different child development reasons, including freeing girls from child care so they could attend school, and helping mothers with child care and development. Today, there are 249 ESs, 50 CEBNFs and 26 BI-SONGOs. Along with support to policy and planning, they constitute the three main components of the Girls’ Basic Education Programme and the broader Strengthening Basic Education Programme.

The Girls’ Basic Education Programme (AGEI) started in 10 provinces in 1995, which by 1998 increased to 11 provinces. The provinces receiving financial support from Norway included four of the 11 in Phase I and five in Phase II — Gnagna, Komandjari, Seno, Yagha, and Namentenga, the latter being the province added in Phase II. All targeted provinces are located in the northern and eastern provinces of Burkina Faso, which are the zones with the highest levels of poverty and weak educational demand, especially for girls’ education.

The management of the three educational structures and processes have depended on interlinkages among government, civil society (NGOs), communities and schools, with

community groups (e.g. PTAs (APEs), Mother Educators' Associations (AMEs), and Management Committees (COGES) becoming the front line civic and community organisations for school and community constituents and interfacing with district/provincial educational authorities.

At the end of Phase I and beginning of Phase II, it was indicated that the management of ESs and CEBNFs had produced certain shared characteristics: community participation, synergy among interventions, strengthening of partnerships, integration of useful competencies/lifeskills, and use of a rights-based approach and a gender approach.

The AGEI goal and objectives have remained basically consistent, although progressively enhanced, throughout the two phases of the project, Phase I: 1998-2000 and Phase II: 2001-2003, which were built upon those formulated in the preliminary phase that took place between 1995 and 1997³. In particular, the **main goal** of the AGEI in Burkina Faso has remained constant throughout the years - "to contribute to increasing the primary enrolment rate of girls to 40% by 2004 while reducing gender disparities". The project currently targets about 35,000 children between the ages of 3 and 15 years old as part of the life cycle approach within the evolving Country Programme's (CP) human rights-based approach to programming (HRBAP).

The **specific AGEI objectives** relate to developing education policy and planning; increasing children's, especially girls', access to education; improving the quality of education; enhancing students' academic performance, and expanding gender sensitisation.

With regard to developing education policy and planning, the current specific objective expanded upon the earlier one:

"to assure a planning and management system at all levels" to

"to assure better performance of MEBA's central and decentralised structures in terms of data collection, analysis, programme and management".

With regard to increasing access, the Phase II objective was somewhat modified from the Phase I objective

"to improve access to basic education in 4 provinces in the North and East (Gnagna, Komandjari, Seno, Yagha) and in Garzougou by putting in place 100 new schools"

to the Phase II objective

"to increase the enrolment rate for girls in the zone of intervention (the same 4 provinces plus Namentenga), which will increase from an average of about 12 % in 2000 to an average of about 14% by 2003".

With regard to improving quality, the earlier Phase I objective focused on teacher capacity and pedagogy

"to improve the relevance and effectiveness/efficiency of basic education through assuring that teachers receive adequate initial and permanent training (integration of disciplines and sectors) and understand/internalise the bilingual teaching approach, and providing accompanying pedagogical guides"

and shifted focus in the Phase II objective

³ For the purposes of this case study, Phase I covers the period between 1998-2000. In some documentation reviewed, reference was made to Phase I beginning in 1995, whereas in this case study, it is being referred to as the Preliminary Phase. Phase II in earlier documentation was said to begin in 1998, and in later reports is stated as beginning in 2001. For this case study, Phase II takes place between 2000-2003.

“to increase the rate of retention of girls in the zone of intervention and to facilitate their success by reducing the repetition rate from an average of 17% in 2000 to 15% by 2003/2004; reducing the dropout rate from about 7% in 1998 to 5% by 2003; and increasing the completion rate resulting in the Certificate of Primary Elementary Study from 50% in 1998 to 60% by 2003.

With regard to enhancing students’ academic performance, the objective remained unchanged from Phase I to Phase II, “to improve learning results and scholastic achievement, particularly among girls”.

With regard to expanding gender sensitisation, the objective in Phase I was “to increase the motivation of families for girls’ education” and was broadened to include the whole community in Phase II “to inform and mobilise communities to encourage the promotion of girls’ education through their local participative initiatives”.

The current objectives are in line with those in the government’s 10-Year Basic Education Development Plan (PDDEB) 2000-2009. Their formulation was based on an analysis of the situation in the zones of intervention, lessons learned from the preliminary and first phases, and with a view towards removing major and persistent constraints to girls’ education.

Each **AGEI programme component**, BI-SONGO early childhood (preschool) centre, formal ES, and non-formal CEBNF, has a packaged set of **strategies** that are implemented in accordance with each school/centre situation, involving:

- social mobilisation (e.g. communications and sensitisation on girls’ education and EFA)
- advocacy promoting children’s education, with a special emphasis on girls’ education
- capacity strengthening within the school, community and government
- service delivery (materials and equipment for infrastructure (e.g. school building, storage room, well, latrines) and school / student materials and supplies, which includes working with NGOs and other partners (e.g. World Food Programme and Cathwell with regard to establishing canteens for noon meal preparation)
- community participation in support of children’s education, especially girls’ education (e.g. creation and strengthening of PTAs (APEs), Mothers Educators’ Associations (AMEs), Management Committees, women’s organisations, and youth groups).

In developing the minimum integrated package of strategies and related activities, the programme has aimed at facilitating the convergence of sectoral programming supported by UNICEF Burkina Faso Country Programme, particularly in the areas of basic education, nutrition, water, environment and sanitation (WES – use of the FRESH approach), and primary health care and education. Some of this convergence was plainly obvious during site visits in the form of infrastructure – standardised classrooms and BI-SONGO construction, latrines, well, and playground.

More recent support of micro-planning processes within a human rights framework, encompassing community-based planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation, is regarded by the Country Office as an important step towards achieving an integrated human rights-based approach to programming that geographically converges and integrates all aspects of the UNICEF Burkina Faso Country Programme of Cooperation.

Support from other levels of UNICEF

There was no tangible evidence that the AGEI Technical Assistance Team (TAT – the M&E TAT and Communications TAT) was called upon to provide technical support during Phase I and II in Burkina Faso. However, there has been exchange of information throughout AGEI Phases I and II at the regional level during Education Programme Officer (EPO) annual meetings in which time has been set aside to give sole attention to the AGEI. Additionally, Education Programme staff from Burkina Faso have also participated in various training activities on girls' education, lifeskills education, etc. with other programme staff working in the region and beyond, which has allowed for sharing/transferring information on best practices and lessons learned in implementing the AGEI programme. Appreciably, the Executive Director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists in the Burkina Faso Chapter, an ex-Minister of Education, was a participant in the AGEI Global Steering Committee, and continues to be a key UNICEF Burkina Faso partner in advocating for Burkinabe girls' education.

Annual reporting via WCARO to Headquarters on the AGEI in Burkina Faso, and occasional contacts through global meetings and other fora have promoted communications among the different levels of UNICEF on the AGEI in Burkina Faso. As a result, Burkina Faso's experiences, particularly with Mother Educators, and Satellite Schools and BI-SONGOs, have been widely disseminated by Headquarters' Education Section.

AGEI Implementation Strategies and Issues

The implementation of AGEI strategies has resulted in extending the country's reach of education services to rural populations, which is in support of Burkina Faso's 10-Year Basic Education Development Plan/Programme. The following examines the implementation of the mix of strategies and related issues per the three main components of the AGEI project.

Satellite School/Ecole Satellite (ES)

Overview

The satellite school or école satellite (ES) is a village-based and managed primary school for children ages 7-9 years old who have never been to school before. The ES typically provides for grades 1 through 3 (classes CP1, CP2, and CE1) and is located in zones where access to education is difficult, and the "classic" or "mother" school is located too far away. Some of the 229 satellite schools now support multigrade classrooms that provide instruction up to 5th grade, which potentially allows for a greater number of children to increase or complete their primary education. The two principal objectives of the ES are to increase access to primary school, especially for girls, and to link children's education to their cultural context. They are part of the formal primary education system, and were established with the expectation that children at the end of Grade 3 would be old enough to walk the distance to the "classic" school.

While adhering to a formal primary school curriculum, there are particular characteristics associated with the ES that set it apart from the mainstream "classic" school, including:

- being located closer to children's homes and at minimum 3-4 kilometres from the classic primary school
- placing emphasis on achieving gender parity
- using a bilingual teaching/learning approach
- assessing pupils' learning achievement through an integration of subjective and objective assessment methods

- keeping the number of students in a classroom at a manageable number (e.g. 30 students)
- providing training for recruited teachers that enables them to help children with the development of their socialisation skills / lifeskills
- supporting innovations in the curriculum to make it more contextually and culturally relevant, including giving attention to nutrition, health, hygiene, household economy, and civic rights
- improving infrastructure and provision of material resources, including school supplies as incentives for children to attend school
- interlinking with other sectoral activities to get latrines built, safe drinking water at the school, and canteens established for providing school lunch
- empowering the community (e.g. the APEs, AMEs, and Management Committees) to get involved in children's education and school management aimed at instilling a sense of community ownership, and advocacy on girls' education

During the 2002-2003 school year, a total of 14,794 students, of whom 6171 (41.7%) were girls, were registered in the 229 ESs as compared to 1,060 students who were enrolled in the first year in 1995. The numbers significantly increased in the school year 1998-1999 when they reached 8000, and rapid growth ensued through 2001 with enrolment reaching 12,000 in 1999-2000 and 14,000 in 2000-2001. During 2001-2002 it dipped to 12,200, and bounced back in 2002-2003 to reach nearly 15,000.

The 10-Year Plan on Basic Education Development (PDDEB) includes 3000 ESs to be constructed by 2009, with a projected estimate of 300 being built per year, which has many resource implications. With regard to the two provinces visited, Seno and Gnagna, only PDDEB plans in Gnagna included the construction of ESs, totalling 3. Seno might have plans to increase the number of ESs, but indicated that since it was a "UNICEF project" it had not accounted for the construction of ESs in their PDDEB Plan of Action.

Positive aspects:

Overall, the ESs have been considered successful with regard to improving children's access to primary education, promoting girls' education, increasing community participation in school management, using a bilingual education approach, and generally contributing to improving the quality of elementary education in Burkina Faso.

Improving children's access to primary education in the five targeted provinces

The evolution of gross and net enrolment rates (GER/NER) in the five targeted provinces provide some indication of growth in educational demand and supply (See Table 1), which the ESs have contributed to throughout the AGEI timeframe. Notably, the sensitisation and participation of parents and communities, and building the primary school closer to children's homes have been key factors in improving the level of access to primary education.

Table 1: Evolution of GER/NER in the 5 provinces with AGEI support

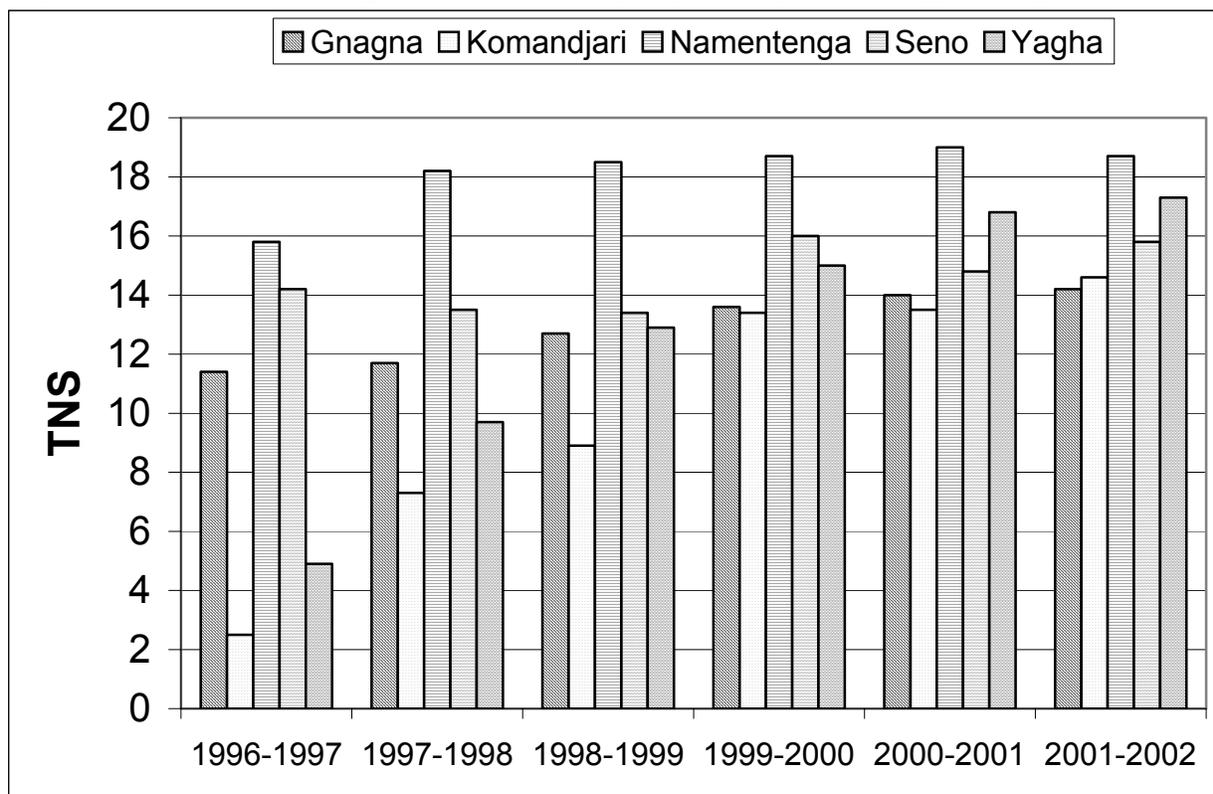
Provinces	1996-1997		1997-1998		1998-1999		1999-2000		2000-2001		2001-2002	
	GER	NER										
Gnagna	13,0	11,4	13,5	11,7	14,9	12,7	15,8	13,6	17,4	14,0	18,6	14,2
Komandjari	3,2	2,5	7,6	7,3	11,9	8,9	15,2	13,4	17,3	13,5	16,9	14,6
Namentenga	18,5	15,8	20,5	18,2	21,6	18,5	21,9	18,7	22,8	19,0	24,9	18,7
Seno	16,5	14,2	15,3	13,5	16,1	13,4	18,9	16,0	19,0	14,8	21,1	15,8
Yagha	6,0	4,9	10,6	9,7	14,3	12,9	18,0	15,0	19,5	16,8	21,4	17,3

Source : DEP MEBA

GER = Gross Enrolment Rate ; NER = Net Enrolment Rate

The following graph provides another view of net enrolment (NER) levels in the five provinces. The increase in NER in Komandjari and Yagha show particularly strong growth spurts from 2.5% in 1996-1997 to 14% in 2001-2002, and 4.9% to 17.3% in the same timeframe, respectively.

Graph 1: Evolution of the Primary Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in the 5 provinces supported by the AGEI



Promotion of girls' education

In all five provinces, girls' enrolment levels have increased, in some quite noticeably, although overall they are still very low. The increase is particularly attributed to advocacy and social mobilisation efforts promoting girls' education at community and provincial levels, placing emphasis on gender parity in student recruitment and enrolment, providing take home food rations to girls based on their attendance and level in school, providing school supplies (e.g. notebooks, bic pens, water bottles, etc.) as incentives to students, and supporting income generating activities, particularly with members of the Mother Educators' Associations (AMEs).

The sensitisation campaigns have on the one hand been carried forth by the APEs, AMEs, and the Management Committees (COGES), and, on the other, through different media, including radio, community theatre, discussion/debate sessions, and monthly meetings. Some themes regularly touched upon have included: the importance of girls' education; forced marriage and its consequences; the need to allow girls to finish their schooling even if they get married; the need to reduce the school fees for girls; the division of tasks between girls and boys; and respect of school schedules.

The food ration for girls and provision of school supplies are considered to be particularly strong incentives that help to retain girls and children in school, as are the income generating activities with the AME members. The provisions help to defray school costs and the revenue from income generating activities make it easier for mothers to release girls from domestic chores to go to school, as well as meet additional school costs throughout the school year.

Table 2 and Graphs 2 through 6 provide a disaggregated data view of girls' and boys' enrolment in the five targeted AGEI supported provinces.

Table 2: Disaggregated GER/NER 1996-2002 for the 5 provinces with AGEI support

Provinces		1996-1997		1997-1998		1998-1999		1999-2000		2000-2001		2001-2002	
		GER	NER										
Gnagna	M	18,0	15,7	17,8	15,3	19,2	16,4	19,8	17,1	21,4	17,3	22,3	17,2
	F	7,8	6,8	8,9	7,8	10,4	9,0	11,6	10,0	13,1	10,6	14,7	11,0
	T	13,0	11,4	13,5	11,7	14,9	12,7	15,8	13,6	17,4	14,0	18,6	14,2
Komandjari	M	4,5	3,8	9,2	8,9	14,4	10,9	17,6	15,5	20,0	15,5	18,6	16,4
	F	1,7	1,1	5,7	5,5	9,2	6,7	12,5	11,0	14,3	11,2	14,9	12,6
	T	3,2	2,5	7,6	7,3	11,9	8,9	15,2	13,4	17,3	13,5	16,9	14,6
Namentenga	M	25,0	21,4	27,3	24,3	28,2	24,3	28,4	24,4	29,1	24,5	30,6	23,1
	F	11,7	9,7	13,4	11,8	14,7	12,3	15,0	12,6	16,2	13,1	18,8	14,1
	T	18,5	15,8	20,5	18,2	21,6	18,5	21,9	18,7	22,8	19,0	24,9	18,7
Seno	M	19,2	16,5	17,7	15,6	18,2	15,1	21,7	18,5	21,7	16,9	23,6	17,9
	F	13,6	11,7	12,6	11,2	13,8	11,5	15,7	13,3	16,0	12,6	18,3	13,6
	T	16,5	14,2	15,3	13,5	16,1	13,4	18,9	16,0	19,0	14,8	21,1	15,8
Yagha	M	7,9	6,4	12,7	11,6	17,0	15,5	21,3	17,8	22,5	19,6	24,3	19,7
	F	4,1	3,4	8,2	7,7	11,6	10,1	14,5	12,0	16,5	13,9	18,4	14,7
	T	6,0	4,9	10,6	9,7	14,3	12,9	18,0	15,0	19,5	16,8	21,4	17,3

Source : DEP MEBA

GER : Gross Enrolment Rate ; NER : Net Enrolment Rate ; M = male ; F= female, T = total

Family and community participation and involvement in school management

In general, testimony and observations indicate that the stronger the family and community participation and involvement in school management and affairs through the APEs, Management Committees (COGES) and AMEs, the better the ES functions. The ES is basically a community owned and managed school, and where this sentiment takes root, the greater the chance of sustainability and increase in the level of quality of education being provided.

The Management Committee oversees the construction of the school and assures the participation of the community in supplying local materials and manual labour to assist with the construction. They are also responsible for assuring the payment of part of the teachers' salary, school maintenance, and promoting children's education, especially girls' education.

The AMEs are composed of mothers in the community and receive support in becoming organised and trained by DBEB/DPEF's provincial representative. The mothers become front line allies in assuring that their daughters and girls in their community go to school. They are often the ones along with the female representatives in the COGES and APEs who take on the role of confronting negative attitudes and practices working against girls' education.

Bilingual education that is associated with success in school

Each ES uses the local language spoken in the community/zone of intervention and gradually introduces the French language throughout the three years of schooling. The first year is primarily taught in the local language, while in the second year French is used more verbally and gradually in written form as the school year progresses, and by the third year purportedly more French is used over the local language.

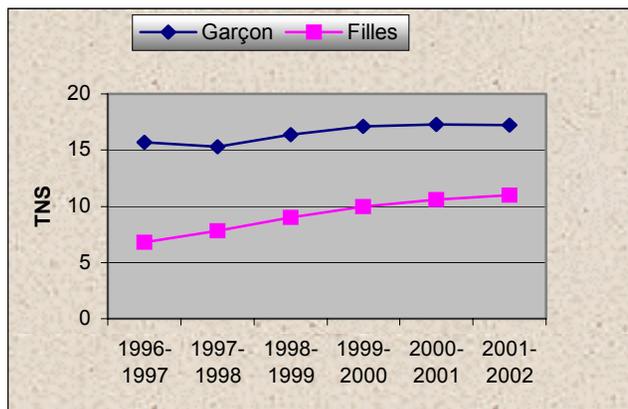
Evaluations of student performance in ESs, such as a joint World Bank and Burkina Faso one in 1998 and another one by the Institute on Research for Development and the University of Ouagadougou in 1999, indicated that students in ESs performed better than students in "mother" or classic schools, especially in mathematics. The latter study in particular looked at possible determinants for this outcome, and found that the bilingual approach was considered very important in facilitating children's learning, along with monitoring of teachers by supervisors, regular teacher training activities, and higher levels of student attendance, which were attributed to parent and community involvement in the school, smaller class size, and more teacher attention. Community and province-based testimony indicated that ES students who continue their studies at the classic school are usually better prepared than their classic school counterparts. However, a recent study commissioned by MEBA and UNICEF Burkina Faso in 2002 found that the performance of students in ESs had slipped, which was attributed to several evolving issues (e.g. low teacher morale, especially due to their lack of status in the education system, weak supervision, etc.), some of which are elaborated upon below.

Contributing to the improvement of the quality of education in elementary school education in Burkina Faso

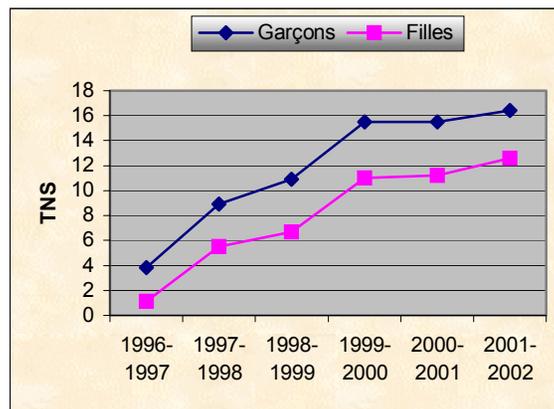
Studies and testimony indicate that the ES experience has directly contributed to affecting the quality of education of primary age school children in Burkina Faso. The several determinants raised in studies, such as the bilingual approach, community and parental involvement, focus on attendance, smaller class size, individualised teacher attention, supervisor attention, etc., which constitute the "ES package" have become part of the education dialogue. The fact that the level of performance of the ES student has consistently been above the classic school student points to the quality of the ES education. ES teachers who transfer to classic schools are known to take their ES teaching/learning strategies with them, which get observed, communicated and shared among teachers within the classic school setting. MEBA and PDDEB support of the ES is indicative of the government's interest in increasing the quantity and quality of education for primary school age children throughout the country.

Graphs 2-6: Evolution of disaggregated NER in each of the five provinces receiving AGEI support

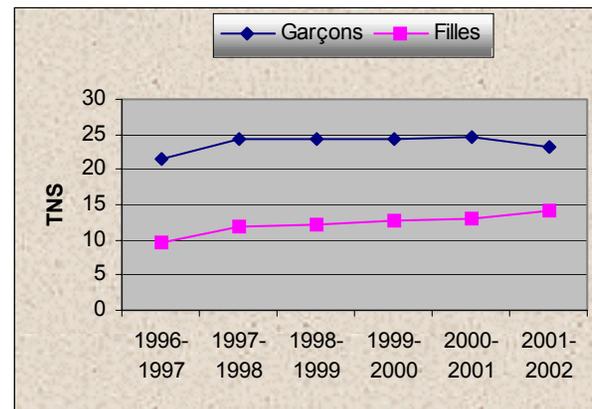
Graph N°2:
Evolution of M/F NER in Gnagna Province



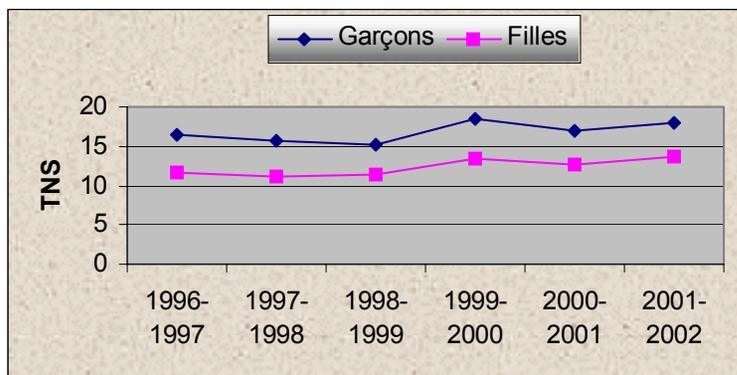
Graph N°3:
Evolution of M/F NER in Komandjari



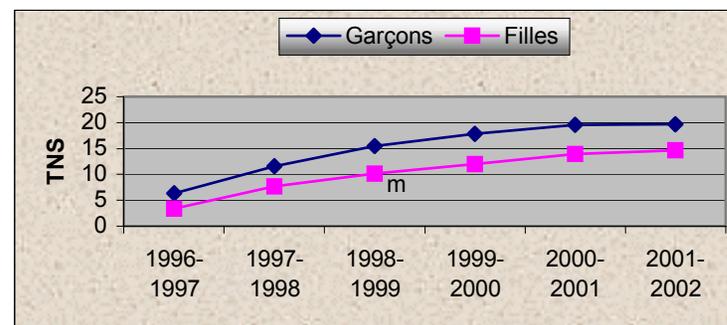
Graph N°4:
Evolution of M/F NER in Namentenga



Graph N°5:
Evolution of M/F NER in Séno Province



Graph N°6:
Evolution of M/F NER in Yagha Province



NER (TNS): Net Enrolment Rate; Garçon=Male; Fille=Female

Main Issues surrounding the ESs

ES teacher status affecting morale and retention and leading to continuous recruitment and training of new ES teachers

Although the ES teachers have the same level of education as their colleagues in the classic schools, the Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (BEPC), and training in the national training institutes for primary teachers, the ES teachers do not have any official status with the State. They are contracted by the host community, and have a portion of their salary paid by the government and the remainder by the community. They receive a salary lower than their colleagues in classic schools. Communities have difficulty in paying their portion. There is no text on ES teacher status nor career potential, which essentially positions them as temporary community employees even though ESs are considered to be within the education system per the PDDEB.

The lack of status and low salary create low morale, which leads to a high attrition rate, especially over the last couple of years. To illustrate this trend, in the school year 2002-2003, Seno province had 11 out of 42 ES teachers leave their ES. In Gnagna, 20 out of 87 ES teachers quit their positions in the same time period. This situation has managerial and financial, and capacity building implications for the State and community as well as funders like UNICEF Burkina Faso, and repercussions on children's learning and educational experiences. It was acknowledged by both UNICEF and government staff, especially at the provincial level, that the ES teachers are lured away by classic schools, making it necessary for continuous recruitment and training of new ES teachers.

For those teachers remaining in the ESs, low morale is considered a critical factor in eroding the inroads that have been made by ESs. The situation of these teachers needs urgent attention and manageable solutions need to be found in order to assure the viability and utility of the ES in village communities and within the education system.

Persistent gender gap in classrooms – both students and teachers

The disaggregated data in Table #2 and Graphs 2-6 point out that in spite of enrolment rate increases in targeted provinces, there remains a primary school gender gap disfavours girls, which is primarily due to persistent socio-cultural traditions and practices (e.g. domestic work, early marriage) that poverty conditions reinforce.

The gender gap in teachers translates into insufficient numbers of female teachers who can become role models for students, both girls and boys, which points to the need for reflection on this disparity when determining how to improve teacher morale and status.

Limitations on community participation/involvement

In accordance with the agreement protocol between the State and the community on the ES, the community assumes responsibilities with regard to school construction, maintenance and management. Once the school construction is finished, several communities do not adequately follow through with maintenance and management responsibilities. The reasons given for this include conditions of poverty making it difficult for parents and community members to contribute to school budget needs and insufficiently developed levels of organisational and managerial capacities. This indicates a need for regular capacity building activities at community level, which could help lead the way to communities developing revenue streams to deal with school related and other public costs.

Challenge of keeping students, especially girls, in school

Not only is there a gender gap in enrolment, but there is also one in terms of retention and completion. While the incentives help, it is a perennial concern that girls are not staying in school, which is particularly attributed, once again, to traditional practices and attitudes, e.g. early marriage (e.g. as young as 10-12 years old in Seno province) and domestic work, which relates to the low value given to girls' education.

Difficulties in making the transfer to the classic school

Another reason fewer girls are in the education system as they enter the higher grades is the transfer from the ES to the classic school, which parents often feel is still too far away for their children even once they reach the end of Grade 3. This holds especially true for the daughter due to parents wanting to keep her safe and protected from being sexually harassed or abused on the way to, from or in a school, and also to keep her from losing traditional village values that might eventually cause her to completely leave village life when she grows up.

In general, the transfer from the ES to the classic school is problematic for many children on a number of fronts, including:

- distance, which can sometimes be 9 kilometres or more making it impossible for a child to walk to school
- costs, such as books, supplies, etc. Some parents in communities visited indicated that they would be more inclined to send their children to the classic school if UNICEF incentives were provided.
- no space for ES students in already overcrowded classic schools

Teachers and many stakeholders at all levels who are supportive of the ES wish that the ESs could be "normalised" within the education system so they could offer a complete primary school programme in 5 or 6 years. Teachers have indicated in evaluations/studies that they would much prefer to keep their students with them to the end of primary school to get them to the CEP level (completion of primary school). It was expressed in terms of how they would like to see the "fruits of their labour"⁴.

Centres of Non-formal Basic Education (CEBNF)

Overview

The Centre for Non-formal Basic Education (CEBNF), which was initiated in 1995, evolved out of reform efforts in the early half of the 1990s in response to the Jomtien Declaration, etc. to address the basic educational needs of children who had never been to school or had dropped out of school. The CEBNF programme was and continues to be viewed as a "second chance education" for this population group comprised of mainly 9/10-15 year olds, who would otherwise have to wait until they were older to participate in adult literacy training. The programme was formulated through the planning and organisation of an interdisciplinary team at the national level, in which UNICEF played a key role in collaboration with the government and other partners, such as Save the Children and TinTua. The CEBNF curriculum covering a four-year training programme (with 4 hour days during a six-month school year) focuses on indigenous language literacy, numeracy, and lifeskills, including trade skills, such as sewing, agriculture, animal husbandry, masonry, etc. It aims at making the learning process culturally

⁴ This sentiment of ES teachers to keep their students with them to the end of primary school was elaborated in the "Rapport de l'Etude sur la Consolidation des Ecoles Satellites pour l'Amelioration de l'Enseignement de Base au Burkina Faso" an evaluation that was undertaken by UNICEF Burkina Faso and the MEBA/SG jointly with the World Bank by the evaluation team, Mme BARRY TRAORE Micheline, M.A. BADINI, M.O. SANOU, and M.P. KABORE, and was also discussed with teachers during field visits undertaken for this case study.

relevant so that students will be more likely to remain in their home village and pursue productive activities based on their CEBNF experience.

There are currently 50 operational CEBNFs in the country, located in rural and peri-urban areas, which provide educational services to a total of 2176 student of whom 956 are girls (44%). There was consistent growth up to 1999 when enrolment peaked at 1954 students. It dipped in the following two years to around 1500 students and then rebounded in 2002 with a total of 2062 students (of whom 58% were girls), and then slightly increased again in the 2002/2003 school year.⁵ The AGEI supported project intervention zone currently supports 5 CEBNFs in Namentenga province and 5 in Seno province, with a total of 681 students of whom 42% are girls. (See Table 3)

Even in face of rising student enrolment, the CEBNF project has not moved beyond the small pilot phase and is fraught with many problems. In spite of a dysfunctional reputation, it is incorporated within the PDDEB, and can be found in Provincial Plans of Action (e.g. Gnagna). This indicates an ongoing interest in the CEBNF due to the need to find workable solutions to address the educational needs of the targeted population of children.

Table 3: CEBNF students during school year 2002/2003

		Gnagna	Yagha	Komandjari	Namentenga		Séno		Total
					#	%	#	%	
Number of CEBNFs		0	0	0	5		5		10
1st year	Male				59	55,7	90	53,3	149
	Female				47	44,3	79	46,7	126
	Total				106		169		275
2nd year	Male				13	50	34	60,7	47
	Female				13	50	22	39,3	35
	Total				26		56		82
3rd year	Male				26	51	51	52,6	77
	Female				25	49	46	47,4	71
	Total				51		97		148
4th year	Male				43	70,5	79	68,1	122
	Female				18	29,5	37	31,9	55
	Total				61		116		177
TOTAL	Male				140	57,6	254	58	394
	Female				103	42,4	184	42	287
	Total				243		438		681

Positive Aspects

Providing an opportunity for a “second chance” education

The CEBNF type pedagogy provides children who would otherwise be out of school with an opportunity to learn how to read and write and do calculations as well as acquire practical lifeskills. These are children who are unable to enter Grade 1 of the formal school because of being over-aged, nor can they participate in the Permanent Literacy and Training Centres (CPAFs) because of being under-aged. In other words, the CEBNFs help to fill an educational gap for a significant group of out-of-school children. The demand for this type of education was expressed in Dori province by MEBA government staff who stated strong interest in mobilising

⁵ Source of data / information is from the Programme Décennal de Développement de l'Éducation de Base, 2003

resources that would allow them to establish a large urban/peri-urban CEBNF in Dori in order to address the right to education for the many out-of-school children in this area

Cultural and functional/vocational education

The ten CEBNFs supported by the AGEI project are located in rural communities close to children's homes and, as all CEBNFs, they use the local language as the medium of instruction to facilitate the learner's acquisition of reading/writing/calculation skills, and to root the child in his/her cultural learning environment and promote his/her involvement in its development. In general, the CEBNFs were designed to place emphasis on functional literacy training that is taught in conjunction with learning a trade, thus, dividing the students' time between traditional academic/theoretical and practical / vocational learning approaches.

Promotion of girls' education - efforts to recruit and integrate girls

Although promotion of girls' education is a major objective of the CEBNFs, with the strategy being gender parity in the classroom, the reality is that more boys than girls are enrolled in the CEBNFs. In both AGEI supported provinces there are about 58% boys enrolled in the CEBNF programme as compared to 42% girls. Even so, the fact that over 40% are girls is considered of importance and attributed in large part to the sensitisation campaigns simultaneously aimed at both ESs and CEBNFs. See Table 3.

Community participation

Like the ESs, the Management Committee oversees the construction of the Centre, and its maintenance and management. The more challenging managerial responsibilities include contractually hiring the teachers, who are usually from the local area, collecting money from the community to pay a portion of the teacher salary and cover school maintenance and equipment needs, and identifying and recruiting local community members who are masons, mechanics, carpenters, blacksmiths, seamstresses, etc. to support students' vocational training activities. The presence of the community-based vocational instructors in the school programme is considered important in terms of further rooting the CEBNF students in their village community.

Main issues surrounding CEBNFs

Lack of transfer to the formal system or professional training centres

While some younger students succeed in entering the formal school after attending the CEBNF, the majority of students come up against a dead end in their pursuit of other educational opportunities. This is due to the fact that there is no official transfer policy between the non-formal CEBNF and the formal school, nor are there any formal links with more advanced vocational training supported through professional training centres of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth. Non-formal programmes such as those offered by TinTua and Save the Children provide models for how the CEBNF could be adapted to develop official transfer linkages between non-formal and formal and vocational education

Teacher status

Like the ESs, the teachers in the CEBNFs receive a minimal salary, which is paid in part by the community. In several cases, the community delays or does not make the salary payment due to the low income or subsistence level of the community residents. Also, like ES teachers, the CEBNF teachers do not have any status in the education system even though their training can be the same as teachers in classic schools. As a result, the CEBNF teachers often consider their position as temporary, while they look for better paid and more stable employment. As is the case with the ES teachers, this affects teacher retention and capacity, and the quality of the learning/teaching processes in the CEBNF training programme.

The community vocational instructors of artisan/trade skills and the ministry technicians with expertise in cattle raising, agriculture and the environment, do not have formal pedagogical training, which can affect the quality and level of transfer of the instructor's/tradesperson's skill to the children. This is not to say that good instructors do not exist, but it is acknowledged by those involved in CEBNFs that this is an area of capacity weakness that affects students' level of motivation and inspiration to fully benefit and learn from vocational training activities.

Structure and processes — conceptually good, but practically problematic and dysfunctional

It has been noted that the CEBNF is too much structured like the formal school, causing it to be inadequately matched to the particular learning needs of the population group being served. Organisation, pedagogy, methodology and curriculum content and capacities should all be carefully reviewed, especially in terms of assessing the educational programme's relevancy, effectiveness and efficiency, which have bearing on replicability and sustainability.

Some stakeholders indicate that particular CEBNF processes need to be carefully scrutinised and adjusted, including the way entry into the community to initiate a CEBNF takes place, and how ongoing social mobilisation and community participation are supported. These are considered extremely important elements in terms of establishing the community's sense of responsibility and ownership of the CEBNF and its future development.

Gender aspects

Gender parity is an objective in striving for gender equity in the education system. In the non-formal setting of the CEBNF this is not the norm. It requires taking a close look at each CEBNF and finding innovative ways to deal with issues inside and outside the CEBNF that either cause girls to not be attracted to the CEBNF training activities or prevent girls from fully accessing this educational opportunity. At the CEBNF of Mounassiol in Dori, the issue of girls' safety and being placed at risk of getting pregnant were expressed as key concerns of parents, which keep girls from attending the CEBNF training programme.

While gender equity is an objective, gender equality is not high on stakeholders' agendas. In the case of the CEBNF, it is unclear how much gender stereotyping takes place in the students' participation in vocational activities let alone in the literacy training curriculum content and materials. The fact that mostly men are teachers, it is also unclear how gender sensitive teaching methodologies are implemented in the classroom and during vocational training activities. For that matter, messages being communicated during social mobilisation and sensitisation activities need a close look to ensure gender equity and equality are given full and equal attention.

Insufficient involvement of other Ministries

The CEBNF was designed to involve and gain the commitment of other ministries to provide technicians to assist in conducting the vocational training activities. This aspect of the CEBNF does not function as foreseen due to planning and incentive difficulties. It points to the need for better collaboration, commitment and clear agreements between MEBA and the other ministries (e.g. Rural Development, Environment, etc.).

Insufficient equipment and minimal job opportunities upon completion of the programme

Although the CEBNF programme is designed to offer vocational training, the reality is that most students who finish or leave the CEBNF programme have not acquired the expected vocational skills they had anticipated learning upon entering. The choice of job training and the quality and availability of vocational instructors are extremely limited, and the equipment needed to conduct

the vocational training is practically non-existent for training activities or for students' start up kits. Furthermore, with minimal job opportunities available upon completion of the programme, and no equipment and insufficient expertise to start up one's own business, students become disillusioned, causing some to drop out of the programme.

BI-SONGOs – Early childhood care and development village-based centres

Overview

BI-SONGO (in the Moore language) also known as the BI-TUA (in the Lyele language) – a name that refers to a genuine effort to integrate into local culture – is an early childhood care and development centre and programme for young children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old. It was initiated in 1998 through the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity (MASSN) in close collaboration with UNICEF Burkina Faso in response to supporting development needs of young children, and building parental knowledge in early childhood development (ECD) skills.

The BI-SONGO offers an integrated packet of early childhood care and development services including health care, nutrition, hygiene, cognitive and psycho-motor development that are aimed at increasing young children's survival, growth and development. The programme is child-centred, and focuses on children's rights, including identity (e.g. birth registration), protection, and basic needs.

The BI-SONGOs are generally located next to existing formal or non-formal education facilities (e.g. classic schools, ESs, and CEBNFs) and are viewed as instrumental in contributing to the implementation of the life cycle approach, supporting a progressive education continuum and placing emphasis on gender parity. The childcare givers are called "Petites Mamans" who are from the village and take on the responsibility to implement the BI-SONGO programme. In general, each BI-SONGO has an enrolment of approximately 24 children, with girls often slightly outnumbering the boys.

According to the Directorate/Office of Pre-school education (DEPE) there were 25 operational BI-SONGOs in 2003 in six provinces of which 10 are located in the AGEI project zone in two provinces, including five in Namentenga Province and five in Gnagna Province. (See Table 4)

Table 4: Number/Proportion of children in the BI-SONGOs en 2003

Provinces	# of BI-SONGOs	Female		Male		Total
		Number	%	Number	%	
Bazèga	3	164	59.6	111	40.4	275
Ganzourgou	5	225	55.4	181	54.6	406
Gnagna	5	221	56.7	169	43.3	390
Kadiogo	4	110	56.4	85	43.6	195
Namentenga	5	206	50.2	204	49.8	410
Sanguié	3	152	53.7	131	46.3	283
TOTAL	25	1 078	55.1	878	44.9	1 956

Positive Aspects

Viewed as a good intersectoral initiative responding to local realities

The BI-SONGO “formula” constitutes an interesting integrated, intersectoral ECD initiative that is mostly rural-based, which is the case for the 10 BI-SONGOs supported by the AGEI. There is substantial interest in the multi-faceted potential of the BI-SONGO, particularly by the government and funding partners, with regard to giving attention to improving early childhood development, sensitising the population to child rights and their responsibilities to protect the rights of their children, supporting early childhood cognitive and language skills, and psychomotor stimulation and development that leads to increasing school readiness. Furthermore, the parent education component provides the basis upon which to improve and develop parenting knowledge and skills, and facilitate links to other services parents may need for their children (e.g. health care).

A strong link in support of girls’ education

Emphasis is placed on gender parity in the BI-SONGOs, and as Table 5 indicates there is a strong representation of girls. This can bode well for sustaining gender parity in the primary school, particularly as children are better prepared for school after participating in the BI-SONGO programme and automatically registered at the age of 7 years old in the first grade.

A notable benefit for girls’ education is that the girl of primary school age can drop off her younger siblings and go to school next door, freeing her from child care responsibilities during school hours. In addition, it enables the mother to carry out her activities without worrying about the welfare and safety of her young children.

Community participation – Management Committee and “Petites-Mamans”

As is the case with the ESs and CEBNFs, the participation and involvement of the community is paramount in making the BI-SONGO effectively function. Two key players are the Management Committee members and the Petites Mamans.

The Management Committee oversees the community’s input of local materials and manual labour in constructing the BI-SONGO building, which is done in collaboration with the government’s engineer. As with the ESs and CEBNFs, it is also responsible for collecting money from community members for the salary of the Petites Mamans, building maintenance, and equipment purchases.

The Petites Mamans (three per BI-SONGO), with minimal training, take on their responsibilities with a high level of commitment. Even when the BI-SONGO caregivers do not receive their monthly pay from the community, it is frequently stated that they continue to carry on with their work at the BI-SONGO. The training and recognition of their role by fellow community members have resulted in the unanticipated outcome of empowering these women and giving them a sense of mission. At both national and provincial levels, it was remarked that these women gain self confidence and “look more beautiful” after their participation in the training activity and assumption of BI-SONGO activities.

Main issues surrounding the BI-SONGOs

Early Childhood Development/preschool is not included in the PDDEB

The PDDEB does not account for preschool education and therefore misses the opportunity to include the BI-SONGO type intervention that is proving to be useful in terms of supporting girls’ education, parents’ education and sensitisation on child care and development, and getting

young children better prepared to enter primary school. UNICEF Burkina Faso is supporting MASSN in its efforts to have an official early childhood development policy adopted and the BI-SONGO integrated into the PDDEB. The fact that this is happening after the PDDEB was elaborated and adopted indicates that an integrated approach to ECD that includes preschool education has not been high on the list of stakeholder priorities. There are a few indications, however, within UNICEF Burkina Faso, among international partners and MASSN government counterparts, and through community actions of a budding dynamic and momentum that is beginning to focus more attention on the importance of early childhood development and education.

Infrastructure style questioned in regard to local realities

There is a standard BI-SONGO building that consists of a stucco structure with an enclosed storage room and an open-air room with sidewalls and roof for the children. A complete infrastructure package also includes the playground equipment, water source and latrines. While it provides a clean environment and is located conveniently next to the school where older siblings may go making it easier for them to drop off their younger brothers and sisters, it is removed from the young children's home setting, which may make it seem less welcoming and child friendly. The cost, and educational and social benefits of such a child care and learning environment need to be weighed against other options that might make use of more traditional village architecture, location, etc.

Level of community commitment

Apart from the Management Committee members and the Petite Mamans, and the families of the children attending the BI-SONGO, the broader community has limited or no participation in the child care centre aside from being asked to make a contribution for construction, infrastructure maintenance, and payment of the Petite Mamans' salaries. These monetary contributions are not easy to come by due to poverty related conditions and limited awareness of long-term benefits of and experience with an integrated early childhood care and development programme. In general, early childhood care and development is not attributed a high value by communities, which indicates the need for placing much more emphasis on social mobilisation and communications in favour of early childhood development.

Key Observations (in light of AGEI Objectives)

With regard to developing education policy and planning

UNICEF role as advocate, catalyst and technician

UNICEF Burkina Faso has played a strong role in advocating for girls' education and technically assisting Burkina Faso in developing the ESs, CEBNFs, and BI-SONGOs within the framework of EFA per Jomtien and later Dakar, and the country's education reforms, including the PDDEB, the sector-wide education plan and programme, which accounts for 3000 ESs and 1000 CEBNFs in its plans covering the 2000 to 2009 time period.

Systemic and systematic challenges to the PDDEB, with special attention needed at the regional/provincial level

Implementation of the PDDEB began in 2002, two years after its planned start date. Not only is the time lag affecting the rate of implementation, but also planning, procedural and communication processes within MEBA and among partners are slowing it down. For MEBA, there exists the challenge to decentralise, which is not easy given how centralised the education system has been over time and the related challenge to establish leadership, which would permit clear coordination of the various objectives and activities of several Departments within

MEBA and among partners. For the Financial and Technical Partners (PTF), the complex administrative and financial procedures of some members of the PTF negatively affect the rate of PDDEB implementation. Communications within the PTF group generates tension, which relate to different perspectives on what should be the roles, methods and procedures of the different PTF members vis-a-vis the MEBA and PDDEB.

While some actions have been taken at the central level to put in place a coordination mechanism that brings together MEBA Directorates and partners, it remains a work in process in terms of addressing a generally fragmented and uncoordinated mode of operation.

At the regional/provincial level where only minimal training has been undertaken, and initial Plans of Actions have been made in respect to the PDDEB, little attention has been given to capacity strengthening and developing or communicating standard operating procedures. In order to achieve the systemic change desired in the education system, the interlinkages between the national and regional, and regional and district/local levels need to be systematised. UNICEF Burkina Faso has concentrated its planning, organisational and capacity building efforts at national and targeted community levels. Given the pressing need to make this sector-wide plan and programme work, UNICEF Burkina Faso should not miss the opportunity to actively support the government in strengthening the middle level of the education system and ensuring close links needed between and within the other levels.

Partnerships, particularly between government ministries and within the international community need smoothing out

To fully achieve the PDDEB, a strong partnership among all stakeholders is a necessary ingredient. This especially means that within the government, MEBA and MASSN need to resolve their differences in order to more effectively integrate their policy development and programming efforts. Currently, there is an underlying tension that is spoken about by both MEBA and MASSN separately, but not when they are together, which results in keeping the pre-school sector initiatives divided from those of the primary school sector.

The financial and technical partners (PTF), multi and bi-lateral agencies, and international NGOs, also need to tend to their relations among each other in order to find the best ways and means to support Burkina Faso in working towards the achievement of national educational goals and objectives.

In particular, the relations between UNICEF Burkina Faso and the “Noyau Dur” partners (World Bank, the Netherlands, and Canada) could be much more than cordial if communications and dialogue were fully open and transparent. There is a perception among some international stakeholders that UNICEF Burkina Faso does not want to be an active player in conforming to standards being devised for international partners involved in Burkina Faso’s education reform, and prefers to “go it alone” supporting “NGO project type” initiatives in zones of choice, and using traditional funding mechanisms (as opposed to the common basket mechanism). Whereas UNICEF Burkina Faso, as a humanitarian agency, defends its support of local level activities in terms of how it helps to inform national policy and plans, and directly addresses the rights of members of the population living in conditions of extreme poverty. A strong desire was also expressed by UNICEF Burkina Faso to expand partnerships to ensure that ESs, CEBNFs, and BI-SONGOs are replicated throughout the education system.

Addressing procedural, coordination and communication bottlenecks and needs among these international partners and within the government have become critical, particularly given the fact that millions of dollars are waiting to be spent on educational reform through the World Bank

sponsored “Fast Track Initiative”, and thousands more in support of girls’ education through the UNICEF “Accelerated Girls’ Education Initiative”.

Project vs. Programme

UNICEF Burkina Faso views its support to girls’ education and basic education using AGEI project support as part of its broader basic education programme, and fitting within the government’s national education programme and system. For accounting and programming purposes, it maintains projects within the programmes supported through the Programme of Cooperation. While UNICEF Burkina staff may conceptually understand that the AGEI “project” should fit into the government’s education “programme”, this is not always the case with the government counterpart. As previously mentioned, Seno province clearly articulated that the “UNICEF (AGEI) project” was not included in its PDDEB Plan of Action because it was considered as separate and already financially accounted for so the rationale was that it did not have to be put in the overall Plan of Action. Given the tendency of external aid agencies over time to focus on certain aspects and geographic areas of the education system in an uncoordinated and discreet project oriented fashion, this was not surprising. This “standard operating modality” has not yet changed in spite of a PDDEB “coordinated programme” vision.

It is clear that this further reinforces the need for clear communications, information sharing and capacity building at the regional level, which interconnects with all other levels. This translates into the need for UNICEF Burkina Faso to be working closely with counterparts and partners to ensure its education programme, including the “AGEI project”, is considered as part of and incorporated into the government’s wider education “programme” – not only on the conceptual level by UNICEF Burkina Faso staff, but also on the practical level by counterparts and partners.

Support to girls’ education policy, planning and programming

UNICEF has been acknowledged as being a strong advocate of girls’ education and influential player throughout the 1990s to today in terms of policy, planning and programming promoting and supporting girls’ education. The PDDEB has set forth objectives in support of girls’ education, which include innovations supported by UNICEF and other partners, such as the Association of Mother Educators (AMEs) and girl-to-girl tutoring. Furthermore, Burkina Faso was selected in 2002 to be the sub-regional leader for girls’ education on behalf of the CEDEAO, which underlines the importance and effects of advocacy for and sensitisation on girls’ education supported by UNICEF and national and international partners.

Early childhood development

UNICEF Burkina Faso’s support of the BI-SONGO has given it another niche in the development picture in addition to primary school level girls’ education within the EFA framework. In effect, the “Noyau Dur” partners make a case for UNICEF Burkina Faso to use its strengths in further developing innovative approaches in this policy/programmatic area.

Notably, early childhood development does not appear in the PDDEB. UNICEF is working with MASSN to rectify this in addition to getting an ECD policy adopted. This could potentially result in taking the BI-SONGO “formula” to scale, and more efficiently and effectively linking it to the primary school system.

With regard to increasing access

Transfer challenges

Both ESs and CEBNFs have increased children’s access to basic education. However, the issue of transfer to other schools in both instances is significant, and needs to be systematically and systemically resolved.

As previously stated, the ES students go only to the 3rd grade and often face difficulties in continuing their education in the mother or classic school due to distance, safety and cost factors. Many teachers would prefer to keep the children to the end of primary school. In some instances, there is experimentation going on in this regard. This is an area in which communities need the government's attention with UNICEF Burkina Faso's support to arrive at decisions on how best to adapt the ES to current demands and needs of the students, whether in terms of making the ES a full primary school, or providing transportation to and adequate space in the classic school, etc.

Since the CEBNF students have no formalised transfer possibilities after completing the training programme, a close look should be given to other models, such as the TIN TUA and Save the Children models, to explore possibilities to create transfer options.

More focus on girls' education to overcome persistent barriers

In spite of UNICEF and partners' efforts to close the gender gap in education, it has persisted and continues to indicate significant disadvantaging of girls in accessing and completing basic education. Along with a sense of the AGEI project insufficiently focusing on the particular needs of girls in visited areas, the statistics and anecdotal accounts point to the fact that there continues to be much to do to eliminate barriers to girls' education in the Burkinabe learning environment.

Beyond primary education...

External assistance to basic education, including UNICEF, has contributed to substantial growth in the basic education system, mainly in the primary school system. As a result, the focus on primary school has limited dialogue and reflection on the longer term aims of what comes after primary schooling and in terms of the challenges being met by young people in Burkina Faso today.

With regard to improving quality

The ESs, CEBNFs and BI-SONGO have been important innovations in the education system of Burkina Faso, adding quality to the education system and responding to real needs in children's learning environments. With the above analysis of the positive aspects and challenging issues of these key AGEI supported components, four significant challenges are affecting their chances for further development, and replicability and sustainability: *i*) the insufficient base of revenue of communities that would allow for expected financial contributions to the education system; *ii*) the lack of teacher status in the ESs and CEBNFs; *iii*) the inadequate vocational training and equipment supply in the CEBNFs; and *iv*) the absence of the ESs and CEBNFs in some provincial Plans of Action, and the complete exclusion of preschool education in the PDDEB.

Efforts made to introduce a human rights-based approach to programming (HRBAP) are in process and the Country Office has been working on how to best develop and apply it. It has developed a schema that shows how it has progressed from working at community level through *parallel* sectoral interventions to *converging* sectoral interventions (which is the phase in which the AGEI has been implemented most recently) and envisions *integrating* all interventions, including communications, HIV/AIDS, child protection, monitoring & evaluation. It would appear that the AGEI has been a good setting for the Country Programme to test the waters in terms of developing and initiating implementation of a HRBAP.

With regard to enhancing students' performance

The earlier studies of ES student performance as compared to classic school student performance gave ES students the edge, particularly in mathematics. Their success was attributed in part to the use of the bilingual teaching/learning approach. According to the latest study, ES students' performance was found to be slipping due to various challenging issues affecting ESs (e.g. lack of official teacher status, therefore affecting morale and motivation). Issues affecting the ESs need to be addressed head on, and innovations that promote and support student performance need to be maintained, enhanced and expanded. Some classic schools have benefited from learning from and adapting ES innovations due to ES teachers becoming classic school teachers and bringing with them their knowledge and skills acquired from the ES training and experience, or from teacher exchange during teacher training. There exist opportunities to further explore in regard to systematising the exchange and merging the adaptation of experiences in the two types of schools. This could also help to lead to equalising the status of ES teachers with that of the classic school teachers within the national education system.

With regard to expanding gender sensitisation

Due to social mobilisation and incentives in favour of girls' education, gender parity is often evident in ES classrooms, although it begins to change as the children progress to the upper grades and girls start to drop out. This is a sign that it is not enough to advocate for gender equity but gender equality needs as much if not more attention. In the case of UNICEF Burkina Faso, adding a gender technical expert to the Education Team would help to assure that adequate time and attention are given to this critical dimension of girls' education and EFA in close collaboration with all partners.

Cross Cutting Implications

There are many cross-cutting implications that have been gleaned from implementing the AGEI in Burkina Faso. In particular, there are four that should be highlighted:

- 1) Gender equity is important in terms of increasing access, but gender equality is important in terms of changing knowledge, attitudes, practices, and behaviour that would lead to girls and boys being equally treated and able to pursue opportunities on equal footing.
- 2) A systematic and systemic approach supported through sector wide plans/programmes require the commitment, collaboration and coordination of all partners, which means avenues of communication must remain open and transparent at all levels and between all partners. Within the Government, strong institutional leadership is critical to ensure the development of a well coordinated, integrated and smoothly operational educational system encompassing all stakeholders.
- 3) Communities need to be fully involved in provincial planning through a participatory process to insure their voices are heard and demands registered, which will support and develop decentralisation and democratisation processes.
- 4) Supporting early childhood development within the realm of girls' education programming is important, especially with regard to sensitisation of parents and communities on the benefits associated with girls' education for both girls and boys, which lead to long-term benefits for all children in terms of enhancing their academic potential, health and well-being.

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Annex 2: List of Contacts

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**Restitution Meeting
October 10,2003**

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Annex 3: Field Visit Itinerary

02 October,	Meeting with the Representative Meeting with the UNICEF/Education Section Meeting with national consultant Meeting with the World Bank
03 October	Meetings throughout the day were held with Directorates of the Ministry of Basic Education (MEBA) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meeting with Monsieur OUEDRAOGO Honoré, Counsel of MEBA- Meeting with DGEB (General Directorate for Basic Education)- Meeting with DPEF (Directorate for the Promotion of Girls' Education)- Meeting with DGAENF (General Directorate for Literacy and Non-formal Education) (time wise did not work out)- Meeting with DEP (Directorate of Studies and Planning)- Meeting with EPT (Education for All) <p>Meeting with the Permanent Secretary of PDDEB – the Office of the 10-Year Programme for the Development of Basic Education</p> <p>Ministry of Social Action... Meeting with DEPE (Directorate for Early Childhood Education)</p>
04 October	Meetings with NGOs
06 October	Meeting with the Netherlands Embassy
07 October	Meeting with NGOs: Field visit to Seno Province
08 October	Field visit to Gnagna Province
09 October	Field visit to Gourma Province
10 October	Restitution Meeting Meeting with the Representative