1. Country and Sector Background
(a) Low enrollments in basic education including gender and regional imbalances: Gross schooling rates in Mali, at about 50% at primary level in 1998 are among the lowest in the world. This rate is much lower in rural areas (30% on average) and for girls (25% in average in rural areas). In Bamako, the GER is estimated at 138% due to early and late enrollments. In order to increase enrollment rates in rural areas, especially for girls, it is necessary to reduce the opportunity cost, in particular by lowering the repetition and dropout rates, building schools closer to communities and by adjusting the curriculum and introducing literacy education for parents. The community schools experience shows that this goal can be achieved in Mali.

(b) Poor learning results in primary schools: Student learning achievement at end of primary and lower secondary schooling have been declining over the years (from 64% to 56%) in both urban and rural areas. The quality of teaching and learning is poor as is demonstrated by both input and output indicators: apart from the "Pedagogie Convergente" schools few resources are allocated for improving the quality of learning; the pupil/textbook ratio is very low in both French and national languages; the national curriculum is not very well adapted to the linguistic, social and economic context of children; teaching methods and classroom practices are inadequate or outdated; repeater and drop-out rates in primary school are high and completion rates are low.

(c) Poor accessibility of education for all children: Overall, there is inadequate coverage of primary schools for the rural and peri-urban population. The admission rate is about 52%; 60% for boys and 43% for girls. In some areas, this rate is as low as 25% for boys and 19% for girls. The recent growth in community schools, mainly supported by NGOs (via USAID, CIDA and FED) has improved access for rural children and girls as schools have been built closer to the community and with significant community participation in both financing and managing schools. Approximately 1,500 community schools have been established in the regions of Koulikoro, Sikasso and Kayes and are being introduced in Mopti, Segou and Gao. This experience is very positive, indicating that attendance, learning outcomes in the early grades of SAVE schools and the World Education schools are better when compared to traditional schools. (The evaluations prepared by IPN, USAID and World Education are in the project files).
(d) Low efficiency of public education: The development of public primary education is constrained by low internal efficiency resulting in high unit costs. Intra-sectoral budget allocations need adjusting: about 20% of the current education budget finances scholarships for secondary and university students leaving few resources for other non-wage quality enhancing inputs. Another issue is the relatively high wage levels for teachers when compared to per capita income. Even if the average wage levels remain modest compared to other civil servants, they are creating an obstacle to the expansion of the system and the improvement of quality. Relying on the expansion of a community financed system, essentially supported by parents, risks creating more inequity in Mali as poor and marginalized families cannot afford to run schools. Equally, the quality of education is not systematically addressed in these schools.

(e) Central management of the education system: Except for community level initiatives (currently, USAID and UNICEF have extensive projects working at this level of service delivery) and the existing "Pedagogie Convergente" public and community schools there has been little regional involvement in managing and planning the system, and little interministerial coordination. While the Ministry of Education has some good technical departments, particularly in evaluation (IPN), statistics, (CPS) and bilingual education (DNAFLA), the overall management capacity remains quite weak due to very little management training, poor working conditions, high turnover of management staff, and, little use of decision making tools and weak accountability to parents and students for budget decisions. In order to improve the quality of teaching outside Bamako, it would be necessary to strengthen the deconcentrated management, primarily the DRE and IEF which are responsible for in-service training, supervision and inspection, payment of teachers and working with communities. Moreover, teacher recruitment policies would benefit from a flexible and decentralized system that would put more emphasis on management at the local level thereby increasing accountability.

Government’s policy on decentralization is outlined in Laws No 95-034 and 98-010 article 14. It gives the municipality responsibility for the establishment and management of pre-primary, the first level of basic education (grades 1 to 6) and literacy training. There are currently 19 municipalities in Mali, and after the June 1999 elections, 682 new municipalities will be formed. The decentralization law does not define the specific responsibilities that will be transferred nor the financing that will go with these responsibilities. Rather, it is up to each Ministry to define what responsibilities and services and the time-frame will be transferred to the municipalities.

Government strategy:
In 1998, the Government presented to donors a ten-year education sector program (PRODEC), focusing on reaching universal primary education with a primary enrollment rate target up to 70% and improving the quality and outcomes of education. A key strategy to reach this goal is to provide bilingual schooling, using mother tongue instruction in the early grades concomitant with French as of the second grade. This bilingual education model, or "Pedagogie Convergente places the child and its socio-linguistic environment at the center of teaching and learning. This pedagogy is in line with proven practices aiming at quality and equity goals in primary education, as well as cost-effectiveness in producing a primary education graduates (see Guatemala Bilingual Education 1995). For instance, evaluation
carried out by IPN and USAID in Mali have demonstrated that children’s learning achievements in mathematics and French are better than for those children who are taught the traditional French medium of instruction curriculum. Schooling rates are also higher for girls in the bilingual schools as compared to the French medium of instruction schools. Based on the relative performance of students in the bilingual schools in Mali so far, one may safely assume that they will perform well or better at the end of primary school, if an adequate learning environment is provided. This includes necessarily pedagogic materials in national languages, trained teachers in the "Pedagogie Convergente" approach and adequate teacher supervision and in-service training. One would expect these inputs in any school, apart from the bilingual materials and pedagogy, to improve teaching and learning.

At present, there are four types of primary schools in Mali, two of which provide bilingual education: 309 public schools and 777 community schools (Save the Children). The public schools have introduced the "Pedagogie Convergente" approach and national language instruction progressively since 1994 as of first grade. At present, only half of these schools have reached 5th grade in Bamanankan, Fulfulde and Soray. The "Save the Children" schools teach in the mother tongues without applying the "Pedagogie Convergente", although they are expected to do so as of next school year with DNAFLA/government support. The "Pedagogie Convergente" approach, in addition to using mother tongue instruction, is based on an age/grade organization of schooling and integrates practical and like skills with basic skills (3Rs) instruction through individual, group learning and/or peer tutoring lessons. This approach to learning makes multigrade classroom teaching possible, although most "Pedagogie Convergente" schools are not multigrade. Teachers in these schools benefit from additional in-service training in both the national languages and the "Pedagogie Convergente". Moreover, the "Pedagogie Convergente" experience is to provide the basis for the development of the new national curriculum for basic education (8 grades) in the context of PRODEC goals. Indeed, over the past 10 years the government has been committed to innovating the national curriculum, first by introducing the "Pedagogie Convergente" in public schools and by learning how to collaborate with community schools and NGOs in the promotion of cost-effective primary schooling. Under the project, in support of PRODEC, the Government intends to further develop its national basic education curriculum concomitant with the expansion of the "Pedagogie Convergente". Other donor support will be provided by USAID and bilateral partners (Canada, Holland notably Germany). Indeed, over the past 10 years the Government has been committed to innovating and learning how to collaborate with public "Pedagogie Convergente" schools, communities and NGOs in order to replicate the cost-effectiveness aspects of bilingual public and community run schools and apply them to the whole public school system. For instance, evaluations carried out by IPN and USAID have demonstrated that children’s learning achievements in math and French are better than for those children who are taught the traditional curriculum. (These evaluations are included in the project files.)

As regards decentralization, each Ministry is to define what responsibilities and services under what time-frame will be transferred to the municipalities. The PRODEC has defined the specific responsibilities which are (i) the construction, equipment and management of schools; (ii) the recruitment and payment of teachers; (iii) the preparation of municipal school development
programs; and (iv) participating in the definition of school mapping, curriculum and the school calendar. The Ministry of Education will transfer both responsibilities and the financial means to municipalities while improving both equity in the access of the population to public resources for education and the quality of service delivery. An implementation plan for the decentralization of primary school services will be developed and will include: (i) an evaluation of the human resources to be transferred; (ii) an estimation of the costs and an agreement on the financial management mechanisms to be put in place; (iii) harmonizing of recruitment and pay policy for teachers; (iv) organizational responsibilities at the municipal level for schools and their relationship with the deconcentrated entities (IEF and DRE); (v) how financial resources will be equitably allocated between municipalities; and (vi) the adhesion of municipalities to national education goals and priorities.

While the project will focus on developing and expanding bilingual primary schooling in Mali as an integral part of the new basic education curriculum (8 grades), other donors, such as USAID, will focus their support on curricular revisions, related professional training and teacher education. The formulation and integration of life skills instruction into the curriculum (hygiene, nutrition, sex education and reproductive health), as well as incorporation of goal-friendly pedagogy and classroom practices and female teacher support, are part of the USAID Youth Strategy in Mali. Government intends to strengthen its institutional capacity and coordination mechanisms for implementing PRODEC over a ten-year period. Donor coordination will be vital to guarantee (ensure) educational sustainability and equity in particular as regards the development of a national basic education curriculum reflecting the various types of education offered. Without such an inclusive strategy the goal of universal primary education will be at risk.

2. Objectives
The project’s objective is to further develop and assess the merits of bilingual education in Mali, in terms of its financial and educational sustainability. To date, bilingual education known as the "Pedagogie Convergente", has been provided in about 300 public schools in Mali since 1994, reaching a full sixth grade cycle next year (in 2000). This child-centered pedagogy uses mother tongue (national language) instruction, concomitant with French, the official language of instruction in Mali public schools. The "Pedagogie Convergente" approach is in line with evidence from Mali and other countries linking bilingual teaching methods most closely to improved school performance in terms of greater learning outcomes for all students. Gains from bilingual schooling have included lower repetition and dropout rates, higher attendance and promotion rates, and higher scores on all subject matters, including mastery of French, especially for girls and disadvantaged (or minority language) children. It is expected that these efficiency gains will gradually increase total educational levels at a lower cost after allowing for the initial higher cost of bilingual schooling, due to supplementary national language learning materials, teacher training and supervision. Over time, the project (AAA) will thus support Government’s development objective in the education sector, which is to improve the performance of the Malian education system in terms of quality, equity and access to learning.

The project will allow the Government to go to scale with bilingual education
in different types of schools and to determine under what conditions this is applicable and affordable. In particular, the Ministry of Basic Education will learn: (i) how to revise and experiment the new curriculum in line with the "Pedagogie Convergente" and to implement and assess, in a participatory manner, bilingual schooling including in-service teacher training and supervision; (ii) how to revise, produce, and distribute improved textbooks in national languages through private publishers; (iii) assess the applicability of family/school/community partnerships in making schools more effective; (iv) and develop a results-oriented decentralized financial and personnel management system designed and tested in selected municipalities.

3. Rationale for Bank’s Involvement
Not to be included in a LIL PAD. However, the project will allow the MEB to start to learn how to work in a constructive and collaborative way with NGOs and communities. While other donors are involved in the education sector in Mali, none are working in this interface. As well, the project will permit the Government to gain knowledge on how to implement the pedagogic reforms that are necessary to improve the quality of education in Mali. While the Government’s strategy calls for this reform, it does indicate how it will be carried out. This software aspect of sector reform has been overlooked by other donors, but once tested it will allow for a much more rapid expansion and improvement of the system thereby allowing the Government to reach UPE earlier and making investments of all financiers more effective.

4. Description

1. Language of instruction reform using national languages and French. This component will finance the production and distribution of textbooks and learning materials, training of teachers, school directors, inspectors and pedagogic advisors and evaluation of student learning, teacher quality.

2. Family/Community/School partnerships. The component will finance training of school management committees, adult literacy and community awareness as well as school improvement projects.

3. Decentralization of the education system. The component will finance consultancies, workshops to develop, test and decentralize financial and management procedures in 5 municipalities.

4. Other project management. The project will finance technical assistance at the training, logistics and equipment costs for the project coordination level and at the level of the DAF for the financial management.

5. Financing

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6. Implementation

Implementation period: 3 years
Executing agencies: Ministry of Basic Education (MEB), Executing agency for the Partnerships component.
Project coordination: MEB.
Project oversight (policy guidance, etc.): Project Steering Committee.

The project’s Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary General of MEB will be composed of the MEB Management Committee as well as the Director of the PRODEC technical unit (cellule technique) and representatives of the Ministries of Finance and Decentralization. The Steering Committee will be responsible for project oversight, which will include approving the communication strategies for the Community Partnerships components and for the decentralized financial and personnel management systems; ensuring the appointment of the National Steering Committee for Decentralization of Education; reviewing annual performance indicators and annual implementation plan; formally transmitting the project audits to IDA; and approving policy documents prepared under the project that will be needed for going to the next phase. These latter include; (i) the policy statements, laws and regulations that will see the adoption of the "Pedagogie Convergente" model by the National Assembly; (ii) the best practice document summarizing the testing of the decentralized financial and personnel management system.

The project management will be ensured by a full-time project coordinator who will report to the Secretary General of the MBB and Component Leaders (the "Pedagogie Convergente" component, the community partnerships component, the decentralization component and the DAF) who are appointed to the relevant divisions within the MEB. The project team will be responsible for preparing and implementing the annual activity program, preparing documents for the Steering Committee’s annual review meeting; processing and managing contracts and ensure the financial management of the project.

Currently, there exists a National Committee for the development of education in national languages which is mainly composed of DNAFLA and IPN specialists. The terms of reference of this committee will be revised to reflect the new stage of responsibility which requires much greater coordination between DNAFLA, DNEF, CPS, the DRE, the IEF and IPN. Special attention will need to be given to the changing role of DNAFLA and the DNEF as the "Pedagogie Convergente" model will be taken to scale. Coordination with external partners (donors) will be essential. The DRE will become the focal point for the implementation of the "Pedagogie Convergente" model as it will be responsible for carrying out and up-dating the national language information base, organizing in-service training, supervising teachers, distributing of textbooks, collecting and validating evaluation information. The curriculum committee will be strengthened, including the DNEF, IPN, DNAFLA and teachers, to review and update curriculum. DNAFLA will be responsible for the revision and development of teaching materials and the organization of teacher training. IPN and a multi-disciplinary team will be responsible for student achievement testing and the comparative evaluation of schools. DNEF will be responsible for coordination of information and evaluation results.

For the decentralization component, which is piloting and testing the development of new financial and personnel decentralized procedures, a National Steering Committee for Decentralization of Education will be established, composed of representatives of the MDIR, MBB, Ministry of Finance. This committee will be responsible for reviewing the terms of reference for the studies to be carried out, establishing the Municipal Steering Committees which will oversee the carrying out of the studies, and
developing a communication/dissemination strategy

The Government will contract out the management for the Community Partnerships component and will be responsible for: (i) making the project known to communities and NGOs some of which will submit proposals for funding for literacy, management training for school management committees and other capacity building assistance; (ii) reviewing the sub-project proposals to ensure that they satisfy the selection criteria for NGOs (have statutes, demonstrated experience, bank account for project) and communities (project is for building capacity to manage schools, build awareness of education, there is an appropriate organizational structure); (iii) convening the Technical Committee to review and select the best sub-projects according to the selection criteria established in the manual of procedures and select the best proposals; (iv) ensure contracts are signed, funds disbursed and sub-project implementation is supervised in collaboration with the DRE/IEF and the Cellule technique of PRODEC.

Accounting, financial reporting and auditing arrangements: The DAF of MEB will be responsible for accounting and financing reporting. Accounting records will be kept for all project-related expenditures and financing, following generally accepted accounting principles. The computerized project financial management system, TOMPRO, will be used and will be LACI compatible. Project accounts will be audited annually by internationally accredited and independent auditors acceptable to IDA. Disbursements under SOEs will be audited semi-annually.

A contracted accountant will be hired to ensure the project’s accounting as well as a local accounting firm will be contracted to provide short-term technical assistance. The management of the community involvement component will be contracted out to an experienced entity with acceptable financial management system.

Monitoring and evaluation activities: The mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation will be clearly different. Monitoring will be done at various levels by the respective managers by processes ranging from day-to-day, to regular review meetings and IDA supervision. Monitoring will depend on information gathered by the project and evaluation will use in addition to routine data, studies/surveys and evaluations done with some external support and reviewed by IDA. The project will help developed and test monitoring and evaluation tools at the classroom and system levels. This will involve (a) curriculum-based diagnostic tests, grades 1 to 6, for teachers’ use in the classroom; (b) standardized tests for grades 4, 5 and 6 for learning assessment in different school settings. For system evaluation, the tools developed and tested will include school and community questionnaires, school data banks and a sample survey which will be carried out in 2001.

Regular monitoring of project activities will be done through the creation of the following tools and which are indicated in the logical framework; school records, DRE and IEF supervision reports, formative evaluation reports, school data bank (using school surveys and questionnaires), student tests, NGO training reports, community activity reports (beneficiary focus groups). The appraisal mission will agree on a detailed time-table and responsibilities for monitoring activities.
Overall, the process of establishing baseline information will contribute to strengthening testing capacity and putting in place national learning standards. In addition, the Monitoring and Evaluation process will allow monitoring the impact of pedagogic reforms and community partnerships on the cost-effectiveness of the system. Focus groups will be used to complement the implementation monitoring of reforms at the community level in order to assess perceptions of parents and communities. The project will reinforce the capacity of the IPN, the PRODEC "Cellule Technique" and the DRE to carry out evaluations. (A detailed technical note is included in the project files.) To assist in the monitoring and the various evaluation aspects of the project, the Government will select and hire international technical expertise on a permanent offer basis, on which it can draw expertise on a needs basis. The TORs for this technical assistance will be agreed upon during appraisal. The technical assistance will among other things assist in developing the methodologies for the comparative evaluation of learning outcomes for grades 4, 5 and 6 using standardized tests and school level data to be collected under the project. The school sample will include the four different schools settings (traditional, Pedagogie Convergente, Centre d’Education pour le Developpement (CED) and community/NGO financed schools). As schools using "Pedagogie Convergente" are doing so on a voluntary basis, focus group analysis will minimize the potential bias as a result of selecting the schools.

7. Sustainability
The project will help set in place a sustainable framework for pedagogic reform in primary education. The project's overall approach is based on the premise that quality education contributes to sustainability, particularly when all stakeholders are involved in the delivery of services. The proposed management and evaluation strategy will monitor costs and effectiveness and disseminate best practices helping with the nationwide implementation of the LIL. The monitoring and evaluation strategy should help ensure that the LIL becomes a national policy and be successfully implemented to avoid supporting a parallel system for poor children. Ultimately, the Government will need to formalize the "Pedagogie Convergente" as a national policy if the Bank is to provide financing for scaling up.

Long term sustainability, however, may be an issue. If education is not sustained in an equitable and educationally responsible way and if a financially sustainable framework is not put in place. If the project is successful and merits scaling up, long term sustainability will depend on sufficient financing, and sufficient interest by the non-governmental sector to support the development of "Pedagogie Convergente" in community financed and private schools, to provide literacy programs and to integrate the LIL objectives into their development activities.

8. Lessons learned from past operations in the country/sector
This section is not to be included in a LIL PAD. However, the project is incorporating lessons learned from the IDA PAIB project working with communities as well as the experiences on NGO involvement in education service delivery and community capacity building in Mali in the projects run by SAVE, World Education, CECI and Paul Gerrin Lajoie which all demonstrate the importance of responding to the demands of communities, involving communities fully in the design and implementation of sub-projects, the importance of transparent and efficient contract management and the
effectiveness of NGOs in mobilizing and working with communities. The experience on contracting out project implementation from the Senegal Literacy Project is being incorporated in the project design.

9. Program of Targeted Intervention (PTI) Yes

10. Environment Aspects (including any public consultation)

   Issues: There are no environmental issues in the project. However, the science curriculum developed for grade 1 to 6 will include local environmental issues.

11. Contact Point:

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Note: This is information on an evolving project. Certain components may not be necessarily included in the final project.