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de Alimentos

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PROJECT BENIN 5208

School canteens and assistance to the education sector

Total food cost	7 692 880 dollars
Total cost to WFP	9 792 050 dollars
Date approved by the CFA	4 June 1993
Date plan of operations signed	4 March 1994
Date notification of readiness accepted	1 March 1994
Date of first distribution	1 April 1994
Duration of WFP assistance	Four years
Duration of project as at 30 June 1997	Thirty-nine months

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

The WFP focal points for this document are:

Chief, OSA/4: J.-P. Cebron tel.: 6513-2380

Programme Coordinator: B. Yermenos tel.: 6513-2248

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 6513-2641).



PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND OF WFP ASSISTANCE

1. The project's immediate objectives are to:
 - a) help encourage school attendance by a total of 232,350 pupils, broken down as follows: 189,850 primary school children (81.7 percent); 18,500 secondary school students (7.9 percent); 16,000 students in technical and professional training centres (6.8 percent); 4,000 nursery schoolchildren and 4,000 orphans (3.4 percent). These figures are equivalent to an average of 58,087 beneficiaries a year;
 - b) help increase schoolchildren's learning capacity by providing them with a nutritional supplement to combat food deficiency, the prime cause of absenteeism and low attention in primary and secondary schools as well as in nursery schools and orphanages; and
 - c) contribute to the development and rehabilitation of school infrastructures (classrooms, storage rooms and kitchens). Some 532,000 rations are earmarked for this component, while 450,000 rations will go for the creation of 750 hectares of school gardens (one percent).
2. WFP assistance represents:
 - a) a budgetary support to enable the Government to guarantee the functioning of school canteens in primary and secondary schools, orphanages, and professional training centres;
 - b) an incentive for children to enrol in and attend school; and
 - c) a nutritional input contributing to improved nutritional status in all beneficiaries and representing an income transfer for labourers working on the construction of school infrastructure.

IMPLEMENTATION

3. The Ministry of Planning has overall responsibility for the project through its National Directorate for WFP Projects. The Directorate manages the project through the Ministry's specialist services, the provincial branches of the Ministry of Education and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
4. To help it carry out its task, the Directorate has four services which are in turn supported by six WFP offices deployed at the regional level. They are staffed by a team of 67, including 41 officials and 26 temporary staff. Logistics needs are met by eight warehouses with a total capacity of 4,650 tons, and six 7.5-ton trucks.
5. The number of schools and beneficiaries covered by the project are as follows: in 1994, when the project began, 499 educational establishments received WFP aid for a total of 48,910 beneficiaries (13,696 girls), as compared with 641 establishments and 57,990 beneficiaries (18,856 girls) in 1997, i.e., an overall increase of 19 percent and a 38 percent increase in the number of girls. The schools are spread over the country's six departments. The large number of delivery points, the considerable distances involved and the poor state of rural tracks represent major constraints responsible for late deliveries. Out of 750 hectares of school gardens planned, only 38 hectares (or five percent of the target) have



been laid down, and of the 450,000 rations targeted, only 21,800 (five percent) have been distributed. This low rate of achievement is due partly to parents' lack of interest, but stems mainly from a government decision (1994 Ministerial decree) calling on schools and institutes to devote any free time to educational activities.

FOOD MANAGEMENT

6. As at 30 June 1997, the project had utilized 11,262 tons of food (of which 910 tons was borrowed from project No. 5215), representing 78 percent of the pro-rated target. Of this total, 2,896 tons (25.71 percent) was monetized and 7,925 tons (70.37 percent) was used in the school canteens programme. Losses amounted to 3.92 percent of the quantities received.
7. Regarding the sale of wheat, as specified under the plan of operations, some 2,896 tons (or 74 percent of the target) received at end-March 1995 was sold in the absence of any real competition. The WFP office in Cotonou and the Government of Benin ran into a number of difficulties stemming from the fact that there is an effective monopoly on wheat processing. A total of 186,792,000 CFA francs (361,300 dollars) was generated by monetization, of which 55,882,294 CFA francs (109,184 dollars) was used for internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH) costs, while 28,940,970 CFA francs went for buying building materials for the project's school infrastructures component. A residue of 101,968,736 CFA francs is yet to be utilized.
8. The remaining 7,925 tons of wheat was used as follows: 66 percent went to nursery and primary schools, 11 percent to secondary schools, 16 percent to professional institutes and seven percent to orphanages.

GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION

9. The Government's contribution to project costs amounted to 832,123,047 CFA francs, or 1.7 million dollars. Proportionately, this contribution far exceeds the sum pledged by the Government, which was to have been 1.1 million dollars over the project's 39-month duration. The project's technical support requirements have been covered in conformity with the plan of operations.

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

10. Benin has given priority to primary education and accordingly benefits from major financial assistance from certain donors, including USAID, which has committed 32 million dollars over five years. The education sector has also received generous funding from other donors such as World Education, Borne Fonden, Africare, The United Nations Equipment Fund (UNEF), the World Bank, Gesellschaft Für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Netherlands Volunteers Service (NVS).



EVALUATION

11. According to a number of NGOs (World Education, for example) and to United Nations volunteers, schools lacking a canteen tend to close down as compared with those offering canteen meals. It can therefore be concluded that without canteens many children would stop going to school. Moreover, attendance by girls has increased as a result of a decision by the Government to make primary education completely free for girls.
12. WFP assistance plays a nutritional role and encourages school attendance in food-deficit areas. It is of vital importance in getting girls to attend school. In poor rural areas, guaranteeing that pupils get breakfast and a mid-day meal represents an investment with an immediate payoff. Without such an incentive, parents would keep their children, especially girls, at home to carry out domestic chores. School meals not only increase the overall number of pupils, but reduce absenteeism and raise the attendance level. The recent opening of boarding-schools for girls in all of the departments' chief towns has considerably increased attendance rates among girls. The annex shows the number of beneficiaries assisted in each of the different education levels.
13. WFP assistance includes other activities such as the construction of classrooms and of latrines, which is aimed at improving the school environment. Parents' associations have played an important part in these works.
14. A number of negative factors have emerged, foremost among these the targeting, which was less than accurate and was not always carried out in conformity with the priorities and objectives set out in the plan of operations. For example, the selection of urban schools and the excessively large number of assisted schools and institutes resulted in a dispersal of food aid. Corrections were made in 1996 and 1997, when the number of assisted primary schools was reduced from 427 to 405. Again, funds generated by monetization were not made available immediately for bureaucratic reasons. Efforts undertaken since the end of 1996 and in 1997 to improve the monitoring and evaluation system have begun to produce results. The data gathered are more reliable and reports are filed more regularly.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

15. Without WFP assistance, the number of children attending schools in Benin would have dropped sharply, specially in impoverished areas where parents keep their children at home to look after domestic tasks or to work in the fields. According to the conclusions of a technical review mission in May 1996, schools remain open mornings and afternoons and often serve a number of villages and hamlets located more than three kilometers away. The distribution of a bowl of milk and of a mid-day meal can only help increase children's concentration and contribute to reducing absenteeism in the afternoon. The project has assisted 11 percent of the public primary schools in the country.
16. WFP assistance and aid provided by other donors and NGOs clearly complement each other, specially as regards the construction/rehabilitation of infrastructures and support to parents' associations.
17. Delays in food deliveries, particularly cereals, which represent between 60 and 65 percent of the rations, were a problem for the canteens. Late deliveries also involved



delays in completing infrastructure works in schools equipped with canteens. The delivery problems stem from difficulties in finding donors for Benin. They are compounded by the large area covered by the project and the many different kinds of educational establishments receiving assistance, as well as by the poor state of the country's roads and tracks, which also complicated project monitoring. Major shortcomings were identified in the collection, transmission and analysis of data during the first two years of the project. In order to solve the problem, a seminar was held in December 1996 to design and produce new monitoring forms for the WFP offices. This resulted in a marked improvement in monitoring during the first semester of 1997.

18. The school infrastructure construction programme got off to a late start after the signature of a standard agreement with the NGO Africare, Atacora Department's village development fund assisted by GTZ, and two parents' associations in Zou and Mono Departments. Three more agreements were signed at the end of July 1997 between WFP and three parents' associations in Mono for four classrooms and in Atacora for three classrooms plus a boarding-school for 110 girls and 140 boys.

Recommendations

19. In conformity with the directives of the Government of Benin approved in June 1993 regarding assistance to the education sector, the project should assist only nursery and primary schools and examine measures needed to increase girls' enrolment. In this connection, WFP assistance could be used to encourage the creation and opening of girls' boarding-schools and to supply non-boarding girls with dry rations at the end of the week, on condition they attend regularly.
20. Similarly, the retargeting of activities should be continued and reinforced to focus on regions where food insecurity is highest and where girls' school attendance falls below the national average.
21. Continued training programmes for personnel responsible for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should enable the M&E and data processing staff to improve their analysis and interpretation of field data, thus enhancing the project's overall performance.
22. The school infrastructure construction programme should be retargeted to areas where, for one reason or another, school attendance suffers from structural constraints. Targeting should be based on data supplied to the Round Table on Education held in Cotonou on 12 and 13 May 1997.
23. Regarding the future of the project, discussions are under way with the Government concerning its possible expansion so as to continue to supply food aid to the education sector in Benin. The expansion could be submitted to the Executive Board in May 1998. In that case, the current phase would need to be extended up to the end of the school year (30 June 1998) without any additional resources committed.



ANNEX

NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS AND BENEFICIARIES AS AT 30 JUNE 1997

			Nursery schools	Primary school	Secondary schools	Professional training centres	Orphanages	Total
Plan of operations (Number of beneficiaries)			1	47 460	4 625	4 000	1000	58 085
Years	Number of schools assisted		23	361	30	70	15	499
Achievements								
Total beneficiaries			1 000	40 487	3 225	3 441	757	48 910
1993/94	Total enrolled	Boys	595	31 552	2 724	1 027	316	36 214
		percentage	60	76	84	30	42	
	Girls	percentage	40	24	16	70	58	
		Number of schools assisted	23	378	50	104	27	582
	Total beneficiaries	1 000	41 284	4 057	3 926	1 068	51 435	
1994/95	Total enrolled	Boys	595	30 678	3 321	1 050	382	36 026
		percentage	60	74	82	27	36	
	Girls	percentage	40	26	18	73	64	
		Number of schools assisted	23	427	59	100	32	641
	Total beneficiaries	1 000	46 118	4 258	4 153	1 204	56 733	
1995/96	Total enrolled	Boys	635	32 678	3 548	1 158	464	38 483
		percentage	63	71	83	28	39	
	Girls	percentage	37	29	17	72	61	
		Number of schools assisted	23	405	62	122	29	641
	Total beneficiaries	1 000	46 536	4 795	4 495	1 164	57 990	
1996/97	Total enrolled	Boys	641	33 098	3 667	1 307	421	39 134
		percentage	64	71	76	29	36	
	Girls	percentage	36	29	24	71	64	
		Number of schools assisted	23	405	62	122	29	641

