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# MORE THAN EDUCATING GIRLS: BRINGING TO LIFE THE CONCEPT OF A DYNAMIC SCHOOL SYSTEM



## A CASE STUDY OF THE MOROCCO EDUCATION FOR GIRLS (MEG) PROJECT

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Creative Associates International, Inc.

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The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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Basic Education and Policy Support Activity  
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### **DISCLAIMER**

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# I. BRINGING TO LIFE THE CONCEPT OF A DYNAMIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: AN INTRODUCTION

*The new national Moroccan school is working to become a school pulsating with life, thanks to a pedagogy that stresses active learning, not passive absorption of information; a school where cooperation, discussion, and collective efforts, not only individual work, are part of the everyday experience... (Translated text)*

*Charte nationale d'éducation et de formation, (National Charter for Education and Training), Octobre 1999*



Participation. Collaboration. Experimentation.

These three elements were key to the success of the Morocco Education for Girls (MEG) project, a six-year effort (1997-2003) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support Morocco's Ministry of National Education (MNE). The project, which touched the lives of nearly one million children during its years of operation, was a response to the specific educational problems of Morocco, in which rural children, particularly rural girls, had limited educational opportunities. Finding solutions to these problems was spurred by the growing international attention on basic education following the World Conference on Education for All in 1990, and by Morocco's 1999 National Charter for Education and Training, which acknowledged the need to transform the country's education system.

The transformation was multi-faceted. There was a transformation of methodologies for improving classroom instruction. To achieve USAID's strategic objective, "increased attainment of basic education among girls in selected rural provinces," MEG involved increasing community support for

girls' education through three lines of action: improved teaching, improved school environment, and improved educational management at provincial/local levels. Thus, MEG encouraged more participatory, student-centered instruction, gender-sensitive materials and activities to supplement existing textbooks, a greater consideration of the local language, more relevant curriculum, decentralized management, and an environment that supported learning for boys and girls.

Second, there was a transformation in the communication and transfer of the new methodologies to educators and other stakeholders. MEG adopted a product-based approach to training, where training was not an end in itself but also a means for developing training materials for future use by the Ministry of Education (MNE). A total of 16 training modules were developed, tested, revised, and produced (see Figure 1). In addition, a decision was made to move the project's teacher training activities from participating pilot schools into the teacher training institutes (TTIs), and modules were adopted as part of the pre-service curriculum. MEG modules now make up six of the nine teacher training modules at all 34

**FIGURE I.  
MEG MODULES**

**Training of Trainers Modules to Improve Educational Quality (all in Arabic)**

1. Student-centered teaching methodologies with applications to Arabic and mathematics
2. Equity in the school environment
3. School management from a partnership perspective
4. Manual for integration of new teachers into rural areas
5. Methodological guide for the implementation of activities under regional and local curricula

**Computer-assisted Teacher Training (CATT-PILOTE)**

1. Initiation to ICTs in education
2. Virtual knowledge networks
3. Educational multimedia evaluation
4. Web Quests
5. Project-based learning and technology

**Education Management Modules**

1. Developing results frameworks
2. Identifying performance indicators
3. Building effective teams
4. Forming public-private partnerships

**Pilot Schools and Their Communities Modules**

1. APTE (School Management Committee) Training
2. Social Mobilization

Moroccan TTIs. Copies are available on the worldwide web via the CATT-PILOTE program, which opens multimedia centers to teachers and the community.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, MEG guided Morocco in transforming the process for achieving reform, combining and sometimes introducing participation, collaboration, and experimentation in exciting and different ways. These processes made for a dynamic school system — a living, learning entity, with new and/or revitalized relationships between partners at all

levels of the existing education system. The MEG experience demonstrated that a dynamic school is possible and has the capacity to reflect, learn, and transform itself.

The three elements — participation, collaboration, and experimentation — helped to make the MEG approach unique and successful. An introduction to each element will help place them within the context of the Moroccan education reform and within MEG's contribution to that reform.



## ELEMENTS OF THE DYNAMIC PROCESS

### PARTICIPATION

*For participation in broader partnerships to take hold and be sustained, the beneficiaries [of education services] have to participate.*

*Ministry Official*

MEG promoted the use of active, ongoing participation, with the contractor involving the funder (USAID), the MNE, and other stakeholders at the national, provincial, and local levels. Stakeholders shared in identifying issues and then planning, implementing, and monitoring interventions.

At the onset, Moroccan education consultants were hired to examine the curriculum and design supplementary materials that reflected student-centered approach to learning. Ministry central office staff and Provincial Education Officers (PEOs) worked to develop, test, and refine teaching/learning documents. Community leaders, school directors, teachers, parents, and students identified issues, organized and revised PTAs, and designed and coordinated community-based micro-projects to improve local school services. While maintaining respect for Morocco's traditional culture and practices, the MEG team and MNE partners in the provinces encouraged women to express their views, contribute their ideas, and volunteer their time. Activities were characterized by open, honest communication, regular dialogue and

debate of the issues, brainstorming for new solutions, and accountability by the parties involved. These interactions slowly established strong relationships, built on mutual trust and respect.

The success of MEG training sessions and modules supports the premise that participation is essential for successful program planning and implementation. Mutual trust improves school partnerships and participation, and thus school environments.

### COLLABORATION

*MEG broke with the past. Before the MEG project, there was little to no collaboration between levels...*

*Ministry Official*

MEG promoted not only participation but also collaboration across national, provincial, and local levels — between the MNE and USAID, between the MNE and the nation's teacher training institutes, between school directors and teachers, between school directors and community members, and between school directors and inspectors. Within these exchanges, representatives worked together in project planning, training, implementation, monitoring, and modification.

MEG's emphasis on collaboration helped transform participatory relationships into dynamic partnerships and make more effective use of human resources as partners who learned to communicate and work together. Bureaucratic and hierarchical divides gave way to more equitable par-

ticipation, consultation, and learning from experience.

MEG showed that partnerships and collaboration can lead to ownership and quality, and that collaboration across and among established institutions achieves wider project impact and sustainability. To increase effectiveness in collaborative relationships, however, project goals set by outside funders should reinforce ministry vision and policies, and trusting, personal relationships are essential. In addition, joint training promotes collaboration for education quality management and helps ensure success.

## EXPERIMENTATION

*One of the main advantages of a project is the ability to experiment...*

*Ministry Official*

Across all project activities, MEG systematically put into practice the principle of learning from experience and provided opportunities for experimentation, which is crucial for innovation.

Stated simply, if something didn't work, MEG worked to change or improve it. Sometimes this required brainstorming and consensus building with the MNE, school directors, and/or the community. At other times, this required working with USAID, the funder, to see how things could be changed within the framework of contract requirements. With these tests, partners at the Ministry level observed that the experimental and scientific nature of the process gave MEG a capacity to be responsive to the demands of the MNE and partners at provincial and local school levels and adapt to evolving conditions and needs. In addi-

tion, practice with experimentation helped to change attitudes about working through and with the established bureaucracy. One PEO noted that people were reassured because they could afford to make mistakes; thus, they did not feel the weight of bureaucracy when they implemented activities, and this helped them evolve.

MEG also provided proof that experimentation leads to innovation. To increase effectiveness, programs need decentralized leadership and innovations that address the context-specific needs of rural communities. For example, through modifications to the original plan, the MEG experience showed that equity involves more than merely girls' education.

## RESULTS

Implementing its plan using participation, collaboration, and experimentation, Morocco made substantial gains towards achieving Education for All between 1996/97 and 2001/02. Rural enrollments increased from 55 percent to 84 percent of the total number of primary school-aged children. Rural girl enrollments surged from 37 percent to 79 percent. MEG pilot schools, in particular, sustained project gains: rural girls accounted for 46 percent of first-grade enrollments in 2002-3 and for the 2003-4 school year after MEG ended. Girls' grade 6 enrollments rose 24 percent, indicating a trend towards increased girls' attainment of basic education; girls accounted for over 40 percent of the total grade 6 enrollments in MEG pilot schools after six years.

This case study explains how it all happened.

## II. MOROCCO'S CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION

### ACHIEVING EDUCATION FOR ALL IN MOROCCO: NATIONAL CHALLENGES

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand launched a worldwide effort, Education for All (EFA), to ensure that all children received a basic education. United Nations and international aid agencies, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and other sponsors sought to advance EFA through a variety of approaches that paid particular attention to girls. They cautioned that simply expanding education systems that left girls and women behind would not achieve social and economic advancement towards prosperity for all.

Morocco was a case in point. The following statistics indicate the situation that Morocco faced in the 1990s:

- Morocco's education system was not able to attract and retain half of its children long enough for them to attain a basic education.
- Morocco's overall net enrollment rate for all children, 58 percent, lagged behind the average rate (81 percent) in the Arab world.
- Nearly 50 percent of the adult population was still illiterate. This included 45 percent of the women and 24 percent of the men aged 15-24.<sup>1</sup>
- Rural areas had low school enrollment and completion rates, particularly for



girls. In 1998/99, only 12 percent rural youth and 4 percent rural girls continued their studies beyond primary levels (Ministry of Education Statistical Report).

These glaring rural/urban and gender divides highlighted a situation where Morocco could not tap into all its human resources to advance social and economic development. The MNE decided to address the needs of rural children, particularly girls, by launching a nationwide strategy to improve school quality. Five rural provinces with extremely low girls' enrollment were selected as "laboratories" for the new strategy, and MEG was asked to work in these provinces. In one of these regions, Essaouira, only 13 percent of rural girls were enrolled in primary school. In two other target regions, Al Hoceima and Sidi Kacem, respectively, only 21 percent and 26 percent of rural school-aged girls were in school.

<sup>1</sup> Agence Canadienne de développement international, op. cit, p. 17. The statistic derives from data collected in 1998 and has certainly been reduced somewhat in the intervening six years. Still, it gives a measure of the huge challenge facing the country.

In September 1996, the Kingdom of Morocco and the United States signed a grant agreement to increase girls' attainment of basic education in selected rural provinces. To support this goal with technical assistance, USAID/Morocco awarded a contract for the MEG Project in September 1997 to Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII), in partnership with Management Systems International (MSI) and Save the Children (SC). The project ended six years later, in September 2003.

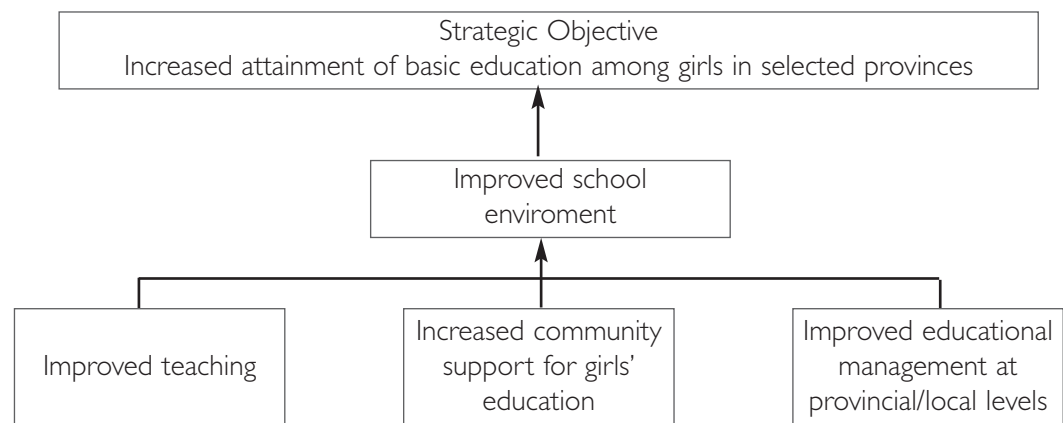
During the implementation period, the Ministry recognized that expansion alone would not move Morocco closer to achieving EFA, unless education quality improved. To offer an acceptable level of quality, Morocco's 1999 National Charter for Education and Training recognized that reforms needed to transform the education system and place the child as learner at the center of a "process of reflection and

action." Following the publication of the Charter, USAID re-aligned the MEG project to support the ongoing education reform. Given the budgetary constraints that Morocco faced, such transformation had to make more effective use of existing resources. From 1997-2003, the MEG project supported the Ministry in making more effective use of resources, particularly human resources, and improving quality through a dynamic approach that encouraged experimentation and learning in order to transform the education system.

## MEG OBJECTIVES

As previously mentioned, to support Morocco's MNE, USAID/Morocco had set a strategic objective: increased attainment of basic education among girls in selected provinces. The overall MEG project objec-

**FIGURE 2.**  
**USAID STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE AND LINES OF ACTION RELATED TO MEG**



tive was to achieve improved school environments along three specific lines of action: training-of-trainer activities to improve teaching skills; increase community support for girls' education in pilot schools; and improve education management at provincial and local levels (see Figure 2).

The MEG team sought to ensure that these three components were complementary and mutually reinforcing. Improved management could only be effective with improved teaching and learning environments and increased community support. Without effective management practices, these improvements could not be generalized throughout the education system.

Across these components, the MEG Team used an active, participatory approach to identify issues, plan interventions, monitor progress, and make adjustments based on

preliminary outcomes. MEG promoted synergy and learning from experience in order to operationalize the process of reflection and action that Morocco's National Charter had envisioned. MEG transformed the dynamics of relationships among key players in the Moroccan education system and the clients, beneficiaries, and school communities they served.

This study provides summaries of activities in three lines of action: improving teaching; increasing community participation; and improving education management. Major issues and the related challenges, approaches, and results are presented. These summaries are followed by a review of how participation, collaboration, and experimentation were integrated throughout these activities, creating the dynamic, successful process for which MEG is known.





### III. IMPROVING TEACHING

*Modules and trainers brought very revolutionary training methods that had not existed previously. They got the directors to participate more, using competencies that they did not know they had. This training enriched the way directors manage schools.*

**Hoummad**  
**Ministry Inspector**

To support the MNE and attract and retain more students, particularly rural girls, USAID/Morocco funded technical support to improve school environments to achieve improved quality. And MEG did enroll more girls. Rural girls accounted for 46 percent of first grade enrollments by the 2002-3 school year, MEG's fifth year, and in 2003-4, after MEG ended. How did MEG pilot schools achieve and sustain these gains? How did MEG help the Ministry and education system sustain this momentum to overcome some of the challenges that Morocco's education system faces? The MEG team focused on improved teaching skills and, at the same time, strengthening the institutional capacities of Morocco's 34 primary teacher training institutions and the training modules being used. Increased community support for girls' education and decentralized education management helped reinforce these results.

MEG and its MNE partners faced one overarching challenge: How do you improve education quality in the face of a rural/urban divide in the education system? The MEG team also faced seven particular challenges:



- how to agree with the Ministry on problem definition with a view towards improving quality;
- how to target the most effective point of intervention in the education system to produce greatest impact;
- how to shift from traditional, teacher-centered learning methods to more engaging, student-centered learning;
- how to, in collaboration with the MNE, put in place a mechanism to create more relevant teacher training modules while respecting traditional values and language;
- how to improve equity;
- how to help teachers, particularly females, adapt to rural communities; and
- how to increase access to information and technology.

The MEG team, in close collaboration with the MNE and USAID/Morocco, addressed these challenges in ways that illustrate the elements of the MEG project strategy that hold promise for EFA in other contexts.

## **AGREEING ON PROBLEM DEFINITION TO IMPROVE QUALITY: DONOR VS MINISTRY**

**Challenge:** The MNE faced overall low enrollment and retention rates, with gaping inequities between different social and economic groups, a lack of instructional materials, and inadequate teacher training to address diverse learning needs. To the MNE, the solutions defined in the MEG contract for improving educational quality, however, seemed insufficient. Promoting girls' education and ensuring a girl-friendly environment by assessing instructional materials and textbooks and identifying deficiencies in the presentations of girls and women was not enough.

**Approach:** The project team was able to move beyond the contract terms and build consensus around the need to improve quality and student learning, in general. USAID, the MNE, and MEG fully agreed that improved quality was critical but that the national curriculum would not be altered. Instead, MEG negotiated a plan for how to best use existing materials to inspire more effective, student-centered interventions at the school level, where the greatest impact on access and retention of rural girls could be seen. Eventually, it was agreed that MEG would review the national

textbooks for grades one and two, with a clear focus on identifying ways to make not just more "girl-friendly" learning but more active, student-centered learning in general, and ways to make content/curriculum relevant to the skill and information needs and economic opportunities of rural communities.

**Results:** MEG completed its technical task of textbook review, not revision, of the Arabic and mathematics textbooks, teaching-learning materials, and classroom practices for all primary grades, grades 1-6. Two main recommendations evolved from this review: make the student the focus of all teaching and learning activities; and have learning materials portray women conducting a wide variety of modern as well as traditional roles in society. These activities resulted in a module, "Student-centered Teaching Methods with Applications to Arabic and Mathematics." By the final year of the MEG project, the MNE had printed and distributed 18,000 copies of this module and introduced it into TTIs for training all future teachers in Morocco.

## **ADDRESSING TRADITIONAL, TEACHER-CENTERED LEARNING METHODS AND LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION**

**Challenge:** Morocco has a long tradition of unilateral, teacher-centered and rote learning, or *la pédagogie frontale*. The instruction given in the traditional religious schools or *m'sid*,<sup>2</sup> which predated the pub-

<sup>2</sup> In Moroccan Arabic, *Derija*, the term *m'sid* is more commonly used than *kutab*, the usual term in Modern Standard Arabic.



*The reform of education and training must place the learner, the child in particular, at the very center of educational reflection and action. Only in this perspective can it offer the children of Morocco the conditions necessary for their enlightenment and enrichment.*

*National Charter for Education and Training, 1999, p 10.*

lic schools, was usually based on learning to recite the Holy Quran by heart. Circumstances in the public education system reinforced this approach, which used mainly memorization. Even if teachers wished to use active or interactive methods, they had to contend with large class sizes and a severe shortage of teaching and learning materials. Students were expected to sit passively and listen respectfully or suffer the consequences.

In addition, the language of instruction posed a particular challenge to applying more student-centered approaches. Teaching Arabic poses particular problems for Moroccan schools and children. In Morocco the spoken language, Derija, is significantly different from the written language, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Consequently, learning to read for a Moroccan does not simply involve decoding the symbols of written language into the sounds and syllables of the spoken language, but poses the far more daunting challenge of mastering a new and unfamiliar language. Skillful teachers, applying student-centered learning strategies, can facilitate this learning process by beginning with words and expressions common to both Derija and MSA. A still greater problem is posed by teaching Arabic to Berber<sup>3</sup> speakers because the syntax and lexicons of these two languages differ greatly.

**Approach:** MEG promoted a shift to more active, student-centered learning. The first MEG module,<sup>4</sup> “Student-centered Learning and Teaching Methods,” pioneered the approach that the project would use to develop all its training materials. This approach dovetailed with Morocco’s

National Charter mandate to center reflection and action on the learner, particularly the child.

The learner-centered method consisted of a multi-step process that analyzed the problem, explored different approaches, developed and tested materials, then repeated the process to refine and re-test. All of these steps were carried out in close cooperation with the PEOs and staff, usually through workshops. The workshop activities themselves modeled active, student-centered learning methods. Participants became aware that active, participatory workshop methods were as important as the module content.

Moroccan trainers and consultants facilitated workshops where participants could collaborate to create, test, and refine modules that addressed the evolving needs of teachers, particularly females, in rural settings. Other modules included student-centered learning methods, equity in the school environment, the creation of local curricula, social integration into rural teaching settings, and school management. The MEG training approach used active and participatory methods to create products that would continue to serve the MNE’s reform agenda long after the project had ended.

To create viable and effective teacher training modules, MEG drew upon the experience and knowledge of its local partners in the field. Before finalizing and disseminating training materials, the project experimented with their effectiveness through interactive training workshops. These training methods incorporated the principles of adult learning to draw upon and apply learners’ own

<sup>3</sup>The current politically correct term for Berber is Amazigh.

<sup>4</sup>What are referred as “modules” are integrated packages of learning materials. The module on student-centered learning, for example, consisted of five documents: 1) Learner-centered instruction: principles and applications; 2) Support document for improved learning of Arabic in primary school; 3) Support document for the improved learning of mathematics in primary school; 4) Manual on the conduct of reading and writing workshops; and 5) Learner-centered instruction: training manual.

knowledge and experience to new contexts. The MEG training teams invited participants to evaluate the workshops, and then adjusted the training accordingly. By modeling the principles and methods of active learning, the MEG team reinforced and exemplified the effectiveness of the cycle of experimentation, reflection on results, adjustment, and learning from mistakes as well as successes.

In this regard, MEG training provided opportunities for broader capacity-building in a process that allowed participants to experiment with hands-on, learner-centered methods. They assessed and consulted on the results of their experimentation with concepts and processes discussed at workshops. Workshops and the follow-up process were a test track to experiment with and revise modules that the Ministry could adopt and use.

Likewise, for language of instruction, the MEG team and colleagues took a student-centered approach that started with the students' language, Derija or Berber, then using MSA for classroom instruction, and progressively introducing written Arabic, always following the MNE curriculum. Berber was the mother tongue of the majority of children in six of the eight provinces where MEG worked.

**Results:** The MEG team produced a series of modules, or integrated packages of learning and training materials, focused on improving education quality (see Textbox, Training of Trainers Modules to Improve Educational Quality). The first in this series was "Student-centered Teaching Methodologies with Application to Arabic and Mathematics."

The new modules were tested with teachers in the pilot schools, and TTIs began to use these modules for pre-service training to assist incoming teachers in moving from traditional pedagogy to more active, student-centered approaches. MEG carefully monitored the module introduction into the TTIs. In the 2002/2003 school year, for example, more than 600 instructors in the TTIs used the above modules to instruct over 3,700 future teachers and 600 in-service teachers. Evaluations showed that the teachers appreciated student-centered teaching methodologies and the other educational quality modules as easy-to-use, effective, and enjoyable.

Only after the module had been used with success on a large scale in a variety of different settings, was it considered ready for publication and wider dissemination. In this case, the MNE, not MEG, published and distributed 20,000 copies of the student-centered module throughout Morocco.

## TARGETING MOST EFFECTIVE ENTRY POINTS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM TO IMPROVE QUALITY

**Challenge:** MEG's initial design focused training efforts on pilot school teachers. The training activities were to be conducted only in rural pilot communities. But this approach proved ineffective for several reasons: the number of teachers reached was too small; the costs were too high; and the teacher turnover was too rapid to ensure that the training had a real impact on student learning. Although it was appropriate for MEG staff to go to the grassroots level

to find out what was happening, the local level was not a suitable focal point for teacher training efforts for improving education quality. The impact that such an approach could achieve over time was inherently limited. In addition, the high turnover rate of school directors and teachers made the progress achieved both fragile and difficult to assess.

The MEG team and their partners' challenge of improving education quality also faced a divide in the education system between the key quality control agents: TTI instructors and primary school inspectors. Customarily, the system trained these two professional groups separately. This separation also reflected the rural/urban divide. Although the TTI instructors were experts in their subject matters, most had no experience in primary schools and little awareness of the realities in remote rural schools. Most TT instructors were recruited from among professors of the lycées (high schools), which are nearly all located in urban or semi-urban areas. By contrast, the inspectors had extensive knowledge of the realities of rural education, but their academic training was more limited and often outdated. Yet their job was to visit the schools and evaluate teacher performance. Although both groups engaged in training teachers, the instructors and inspectors did not work together and often hardly knew one another.

At the start of the MEG Project, inspectors were assumed to be the key partner and points of entry to the education system at the start of the MEG Project. But a general consensus began to emerge within MNE that many inspectors had relatively little

impact on the system or on education quality. The inspector's role was to regularly visit his or her assigned schools, which were often located far from towns, up dirt roads, or even on tracks inaccessible to motor vehicles. Many inspectors, especially in extremely remote and poor regions, lived far from their assigned provinces. Because no transportation was provided and reimbursement of transportation costs was delayed and uncertain, many inspectors rarely made their rounds. Indeed, MEG encountered some situations in which the inspectors assigned to particular schools were unable to even find them. Consequently, inspectors' impact on improving education quality in rural schools was in fact much less than assumed.

In addition, planners also were reminded that school directors are key to improving education quality. An effective director can have a direct effect on quality by influencing teacher behaviors and encouraging teachers' professional growth and commitment to the school as well as increasing community involvement.

**Approach:** MEG adopted a strategy that, in effect, integrated pre-service and in-service teacher training. After two years of struggling to get the best results out of a fundamentally defective approach, MEG moved training efforts into the TTIs, thus extending the project's influence and ensuring nationwide impact. MEG designed teacher training modules to ensure that project initiatives were institutionalized and achieved a maximum multiplier effect. In addition, to improve education quality, MEG promoted teamwork and mutual learning

by collaborating on the experience of the two groups of professionals — TTC instructors responsible for pre-service training, and the inspectors, who conduct in-service training — and providing opportunities for them to work together. MEG also included school directors into some of its training activities.

MEG insisted on training the inspectors and the TTC instructors in the same workshops and drew upon their complementary knowledge and experience. These two professional groups became more sharply aware that they could potentially complement one another and work in synergy. MEG workshops provided a setting where they began to practice direct, person-to-person collaboration. Primary TTI professors, who train all future primary teachers, received particular attention. Inspectors were charged with overseeing and monitoring the introduction of MEG materials into the TTIs.

**Results:** Through the 16 training modules and corresponding training at the TTIs, MEG trained thousands of educators. Trainings were integrated, cross-fertilization sessions that brought various groups together: faculty, master teachers, inspectors, and student-teachers; school directors and trainers; faculty, inspectors, and school directors; and/or provincial and regional education teams. Synergy and collaboration grew.

## ADAPTING CURRICULUM TO MAKE IT MORE RELEVANT

**Challenge:** In consulting with target school communities, the MEG team and local partners learned that many parents perceived that schools did not offer relevant skills or information, and believed, moreover, that education alienated their children and youth from the traditions, values, and realities of rural life. The National Charter provision that 30 percent of school time be devoted to regional and local curricula provided MEG with an opportunity to introduce needed methods of adapting and innovating curriculum to make content more relevant. While 70 percent of curriculum content was to remain national in scope, common to all students, the new emphasis on regional and local curricula provided a means to anchor teaching and learning in the realities, information needs, and local economic opportunities of rural Moroccan communities.

This innovation signaled an official recognition of Morocco's vast diversity and allowed the curriculum to adapt to regional and local specificities of Morocco. But in practice, the development of regional and local curricula posed a major challenge to the Ministry's Directorate of Curriculum. Diffusing the adapted curricula from one institution to another also challenged the central Ministry's usual mode of operation. The Ministry invited both MEG and UNICEF<sup>5</sup> to collaborate in developing and testing methods and prepare suitable regional and local content.

<sup>5</sup> As explained in this section, MEG elected to develop a methods Guide to enable teachers to explore the rural milieu and identify local and regional needs and resources for use to develop teaching and learning activities and materials. UNICEF opted to create a sample curriculum by applying the methods used at the national level to the regional and local levels.

**Approach:** MEG took an appealing but abstract notion and translated it into a practical approach that empowered teachers and communities. MEG developed the “Guide to Adapting Regional and Local Curricula (RLC),” a methods guide to enable teachers to explore the rural milieu and identify local and regional needs and resources that they themselves could incorporate into teaching and learning activities and materials. The easy-to-use methods provided teachers with the capacity to develop their own teaching and learning materials.

To develop the guide, MEG involved the faculty and students of the TTIs in all phases of the work being carried out on regional and local curricula. Teams composed jointly of teacher training professors and education inspectors familiar with the pilot communities studied the rural milieu to test and apply the methods. A wide range of areas and activities were examined: local institutions, health and environmental issues, and economic and cultural activities at the school, village (douar), and provincial levels. Case studies, many of them based on pilot school experiences, were developed to illustrate how the information collected could be converted into learning activities and materials. Most of the activities illustrated and discussed in the Guide are relatively simple and could be used in almost any rural school: field trips, art exhibits, visits by resource people such as local artists or artisans to the school, group discussions or reports on subjects of interest. Such activities represented a significant departure from prevailing practices that restricted “education” to the official curriculum and textbooks.

**Results:** At the request of the Ministry, MEG published its Methods and Training Guide, which was widely distributed at central, regional, and provincial levels. For the Ministry, RLC is still a work in progress. MEG’s experience found that short-term training and encouragement equipped rural Moroccan teachers with the skills they needed. In follow-up sessions, new teachers who had been trained in the RLC methods prior to graduating from the TTIs demonstrated that the training had equipped them to take a more innovative approach to teaching and make greater use of local resources.

Finally, legitimizing regional and local curricula provided another opportunity to involve local people in the life of the school. Craftsmen and craftswomen, for example, were invited to share their specialized skills with teachers and students. These opportunities provided an additional opportunity to strengthen school/community partnerships and links to increased economic opportunities to earn a livelihood. Rural parents appreciated having their traditional skills valued and recognized for a national education project.

## **MAKING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT MORE EQUITABLE**

**Challenge:** Promoting gender equity was at the very heart of MEG’s mission. Initially, when introducing the project and project leadership to the Ministry, USAID officials presented MEG as the MEG Project, with a focus on girls. But project activities perceived to favor girls at the expense of boys

did not come across as equitable or reasonable. The MEG team soon became aware that imposing foreign concepts such as “gender equity” to address socio-economic, ethnic, or racial inequities to improve the condition of women would not be effective. Using the concept of gender, particularly in the case of a foreign donor-funded project, was tainted with controversy.

**Approach:** MEG assembled a diverse team of women and men from a variety of backgrounds, including individuals with a deep knowledge of the practices and beliefs of Islam. Reflection on the implications of a God-given principle of justice and equity engaged MEG partners more effectively than the gender concept. The module, which was simply named Equity, not Gender, acknowledged that the principle of equity was grounded in strong religious values and beliefs. Islam holds all believers to be equal before God and condones the pursuit of equity.

**Results:** The MEG Equity module placed the issue of gender in the wider framework of Islam’s teachings on equity. Originally designed for use in the TTIs, the Equity module has been used in a wide variety of other settings as well. At the initiative of a MEG inspector coordinator, for example, the Equity module was used successfully to train PTA members in different provinces. In this regard, MEG, a girls’ education project, introduced a broader focus on equity issues beyond the educational environment to examine conditions and practices in communities and families that exclude the full and equal participation of girls, women, and other marginalized groups in public affairs.

The Ministry decided to introduce the Equity module at all 34 primary TTIs in Morocco, where it has been used to train all professors and student teacher supervisors. Over 5,000 future teachers, 3,000 of whom are women, were trained using this module by the end of the MEG project in September 2003. School directors in particular found it very useful to be trained, for the first time, in this area.

## HELPING NEW TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY FEMALE TEACHERS, ADAPT TO RURAL AREAS

**Challenge:** One problem with serious implications for effective teaching and learning was helping new teachers adapt to their assignments in rural areas and develop professionally. Because most new primary teachers come from urban backgrounds but are assigned to remote rural schools, adaptation issues are critical. In addition, with females accounting for well over 60 percent of new teachers in Morocco, it became especially critical to address the particular issues that new female teachers face.

Although most new teachers in Morocco are assigned to rural areas, practice teaching is normally done in urban or semi-urban areas to avoid transportation difficulties. Once at their employment sites, many teachers later have enormous problems adjusting to their assignments. Depression and illnesses are common. At a minimum, new teachers experience serious culture shock. Arabic-speaking teachers assigned to Berber-speaking regions often discover that



they cannot even communicate with community members. Many new teachers, far from their homes for the first time, become gravely homesick.

Moreover, teachers reported that they were unprepared to manage multi-grade classrooms. Some reported difficulties in even finding their way to the schools. School directors usually did not plan any systematic efforts to welcome or orient them to their new communities and responsibilities.

**Approach:** At the suggestion of the MNE Secretary General, the Ministry unit charged with staff training<sup>6</sup> invited MEG to explore training programs and materials that could identify and anticipate the types of problems that new teachers face and prepare them to be resourceful. MEG and partners accepted this challenge and began organizing focus groups of teachers who had just completed their first year of service in rural areas. These focus groups fully confirmed new teachers' lack of preparation and the painful problems and challenges they encounter. In addition to the difficulties of adapting to a new environment and finding a safe place to live, which nearly all teachers noted, a range of other problems emerged.

The focus groups identified adaptation problems that had been commonly encountered in the classroom, the school, and the community. The MEG team worked closely with the TTIs and Provincial Education Teams to plan a program to help new teachers better adjust to their first assignments. Because of resource constraints at the TTIs, the program had to be

low cost and avoid administrative difficulties. Nonetheless, it was considered essential that future teachers gain some first-hand experience in the types of schools to which they would be assigned. To make the most out of such brief experiences in rural areas, efforts were made to orient students in advance and debrief them upon their return. A module was developed to guide the training.

**Results:** Follow up with the new teachers trained using the module to adapt to their first assignments confirmed the effectiveness of the orientation they had received. New teachers found that the training had alerted them to many of the problems they actually encountered and helped them to cope. Both training content and active, participatory methods proved effective.

In May 2003, the Ministry and MEG cooperated in organizing a meeting of the inspectors responsible for introducing MEG-supported modules at the TTIs to review the module and results achieved through its use. The meeting strongly recommended that future teachers should receive systematic preparation to help orient them to the social and geographical environments of their first assignments. Based on this recommendation, the MNE adopted the Manual to Integrate New Teachers into Rural Areas module for use in training all Morocco's future teachers and school directors.

At the request of the Ministry, MEG printed this module and introduced it into all 34 TTIs for the 2003-4 school year. This attention to the difficulties new teachers encounter also resulted in increased MNE

<sup>6</sup>The Unit for the Coordination of Staff Training or Unité de coordination de la formation des cadres.

efforts to improve the situation. For example, in some provinces, transportation is now provided to new teachers to enable them to reach their assigned schools and

directors are now giving more attention to orienting new recruits and integrating them into the school and community.

## **MEG TRAINING OF TRAINERS MODULES TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY (PRODUCED IN ARABIC)**

### **Student-centered Teaching Methods with Applications to Arabic and Mathematics**

This first MEG module, the development of which established the content and process for the development of the entire series, consists of five documents: "Learner-centered Instruction: Principles and Applications;" "Support Document for Improved Arabic Learning in Primary School;" "Support Document for Improved Mathematics Learning in Primary School;" "Manual on How to Conduct Reading and Writing Workshops;" and "Learner-centered Instruction Training Manual."

### **Equity in the School Environment**

This module highlights equity, which is a broader and more inclusive concept than gender while addressing issues of gender equality. Content focuses on the educational environment and more particularly, on those conditions and practices that adversely impact the full and equal participation of girls.

### **School Management from a Partnership Perspective**

Inspired by observed disparities in the performance of rural schools over urban schools and the school directors of each entity, this module outlines the role of the director as an instructional manager and his/her responsibilities as a community leader. Building partnerships with outside entities was an important part of this training.

### **Methods Guide for the Implementation of Activities under Regional and Local Curricula**

This module is intended to help local leaders adapting education content to the regional and local specificities of Morocco as called for in Morocco's National Charter for Education and Training. The module consists of two documents: a methodological guide of procedures for collecting and analyzing information at the village, provincial, and regional levels; and a training guide to use in introducing the methodology into teacher training institutions and schools.

### **Manual for Integrating New Teachers in Rural Areas**

This module was designed to help newly graduated teachers, predominately from and trained in urban areas, to serve in some of the most remote and rural areas in Morocco, where teachers are most needed. The module includes training activities related to social integration, professional integration, pedagogical integration, and self-management.



## INCREASING ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

**Challenge:** Bringing modern information and communication technologies into classrooms remained a challenge. Prior to MEG, the USAID-funded Computer-assisted Teacher Training, or CATT-PILOTE,<sup>7</sup> one of several LearnLink initiatives, had begun introducing multimedia centers to TTIs. But CATT-PILOTE was a huge task limited to only two years of technical assistance. Although Moroccan teacher training professors and teachers were enthusiastic, MEG discovered that there had been serious delays in establishing, in the target province TTIs, the internet connections that the MNE had agreed to ensure. Consequently, when the initial two-year CATT-PILOTE contract expired, the work needed to establish multi-media centers in the TTIs was still incomplete. In November 2001, USAID requested MEG to carry on the work of CATT-PILOTE until September 2003.

The main challenge for both faculty and students was to learn how to use multimedia labs as effective pedagogical tools and not merely as institutional showcases. Another major issue that had not been addressed was the funding of the salaries of trained media lab supervisors who would keep the equipment up and running and provide more access to the labs than previous schedules had permitted. An important lesson learned was that a good supervisor is worth investing in, and the sustainability of a project often depends on the availability of continuing salaries for key personnel

**Approach:** Multimedia Centers & Computer-assisted Teacher Training. MEG and partners were able to exploit the multimedia labs for optimum use by working with the TTIs to allow the labs to remain open beyond normal working hours. Providing salaries for the lab supervisors contributed to their motivation to work extra hours so that teachers in outlying areas could take advantage of this new resource. By expanding access to these fledgling TTI multimedia centers, MEG helped put educational institutions at the service of the wider education community. Other teachers and teacher trainees from the surrounding region were allowed to use the labs for research and education purposes. This was an innovative practice in Morocco, but so was the presence of the multimedia centers in the TTIs. Now the multimedia centers were doing all within their power to adapt themselves to the expectations and demands of students and faculty. By stretching to the maximum the services these multi-media centers could provide, MEG made it possible to begin to reach out beyond the teacher training professors and students and offer instruction to MNE officials and serve teachers and a wide variety of other education personnel. With the help of resident CATT-PILOTE advisers, most centers had established relatively smooth and effective operations.

When the seven multimedia centers were established at seven TTIs, MEG and partners set up the Ibtikar website ([www.ibtikar.ac.ma](http://www.ibtikar.ac.ma)) to link them so they could share their experiences more widely with teachers all over the country and eventually with Arabic teachers all over the world. As the individual centers developed their capacities, a vast array of multimedia

<sup>7</sup> CATT-PILOTE stands for Computer-assisted Teacher Training – Programme d'Innovation Locale par la Technologie Educative.

and other materials, including the MEG modules, were shared via this website. When MEG ended, the MNE linked the Ibtikar website to its own website.

**Results:** The development and application of these new technologies began to take root and held the promise of gradually transforming traditional teaching and learning practices within the TTIs. New ways of thinking were beginning to emerge, although the transition from learning to use computers and the Internet to using computers as instruments for teaching and learning was gradual and uneven. The Forum on New Information and Communication Technologies in Education sponsored by USAID in January 2003 provided an opportunity and incentive for teams from the seven pilot centers, made up of the most advanced users, to present their multimedia productions. MEG staff and consultants worked closely with teams from all institutions to develop their productions. The teams, made up mainly of professors, began to share their knowledge and skills with colleagues and students. Such extended, interactive learning proved to be an important spin-off from the multimedia centers. The hundreds of individuals trained under CATT-PILOTE are now a valuable resource serving MNE efforts to introduce new information and communication technologies into schools throughout Morocco.

TTIs and a wide variety of other settings were using MEG modules in Multi-Media & Information Technology for Learning by the end of MEG. The learner-centered, self-teaching approach promotes lifelong learning and step-by-step guidance. MEG packaged these CATT-Pilote experiences into

modules that could be used to expand training activities to other institutions, particularly all 34 primary TTIs across Morocco. Five modules were produced in Arabic:

- Initiation to ICTs (information and communication technologies) in Education;
- Virtual Knowledge Networks;
- Educational Multimedia Evaluation;
- Web Quests;
- Project-based Learning and Technology.

## IMPROVING TEACHING: A SUMMARY

Over the life of the project, girls' enrollments increased over 80 percent, and boys' enrollments also increased in MEG pilot schools, which indicated the effectiveness of MEG's approach to improving schools so that they would attract more students in rural areas. Morocco's education system, specifically the MNE's TTIs, are now equipped with the learning materials and a cadre of trained personnel needed at multiple levels to transform this situation, improve quality, and reduce inequities. Overall, the MNE decided to adopt 16 MEG modules and planned to integrate them into the core national teacher training program. MEG modules now make up six of the nine required pre-service training modules that all 34 of Morocco's TTIs actually use to train current and future primary teachers across the Kingdom.

## IV. INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

*The new Moroccan national school is (...) seeking to become a school open to its environment, thanks to a pedagogical approach based on welcoming the surrounding society within the school and the turning outward of the school toward the society.*

*National Charter for Education and Training, 1999, p 11.*

Improving school environments and educational quality also required increased community support for girls' education. The MEG team paid particular attention to building trust as an essential element for improving overall school environment and transforming the nature of the school/community relationships. Several challenges loomed.

### IMPROVING HOW THE COMMUNITY VIEWS THE SCHOOL AND BUILDING TRUST

**Challenge:** Unlike the community-supported mosque schools, the national public education system has experienced weak, if not worse, school/community relationships since the establishment of the national public education system in Morocco following independence in 1956. Although government policies had changed significantly in the last decade, the notion that the school belonged to the community was an unfamiliar one when MEG began. The National



Charter proclaimed the need for schools to “welcome” the surrounding community, but in practice, the community did not feel welcome in the schools. In MEG pilot communities, very few villagers, and almost no women, had ever set foot inside the school.

The lack of trust in schools and teachers deepened the community/school divide. The cost of schooling was too high with few certain benefits. Parents did not reject the idea of schooling outright, but wanted something more and better than what the existing schools were offering. The usual rundown, dirty, and neglected state of the rural school itself suggested that nothing worthwhile was going on inside. Parents were sharply aware that even youth who had completed school were often unable to find paying jobs, and after five or six years of primary school, many children were unable even to read a newspaper. Parents also knew that teacher truancy was as great a problem as student truancy.

Some teachers had developed the habit of taking long weekends in their family homes or in a nearby city, and the school week contracted to accommodate this habit. In this no trust environment, motivating community members to participate in sharing responsibility for their children's schools was a challenge.

**Approach:** After interviewing scores of community leaders, school directors, teachers, parents, and students, MEG and their partners demonstrated respect by accepting the community's analysis of their situation. The problems of educating girls were mainly practical, not cultural or ideological. The strategy was to respond in a practical way to the issues the community raised, rather than to use advocacy to persuade parents of the value of education. This process contributed to building trust between school personnel and community members, an indispensable part of improving school environments. Community members and project staff then acted to address the practical problems identified. The dilapidated state of the schools was a symptom of the underlying problem: a lack of community support for education. MEG focused on measures designed to increase the appeal and drawing power of schools: improving facilities, training the staff, and, above all, organizing PTAs.<sup>8</sup> The training of staff, especially school directors, proved to be strategic. Such training was not limited to pedagogy, but focused on how to work with communities and elicit their cooperation and support.

**Results:** Addressing the problems and constraints of schooling and the school environment, as the community perceived

and described them, was an important step in building school/community partnerships. The practical approach that MEG adopted led immediately to action and partnership with the communities. The concrete results helped gain the trust of pilot school communities. This, in turn, set in motion a dynamic that resulted in significant improvements in how schools looked and operated. Moreover, participation in initiatives to improve school and education quality was motivational and provided learning opportunities and capacity-building for a broader base of community, school, and education system partners, including women.

## UNDERSTANDING SOURCES OF INEQUITIES IN ATTAINING BASIC EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS

**Challenge:** Although the deplorable state of most rural schools was an important factor, several other contextual, economic, family, and community factors seriously limited basic education for rural children, particularly girls. Low girls' enrollments and the gender gap in primary education completion indicated inequities in access to basic education, particularly in rural areas of Morocco. Baseline statistics for the MEG pilot schools showed that in 1994/95, fewer girls than boys entered schools and far fewer progressed to higher grades. Girls made up only 16 percent of sixth grade enrollments, which indicated that girls' retention was a greater challenge than girls' enrollment.

<sup>8</sup> PTA (Parent Teacher Association) is the American term that best describes the Moroccan APTE or Association de parents et tuteurs d'élèves. As noted above, there is a fundamental difference between a PTA and an APTE in that the latter does not include teachers as members. However, many pilot schools are according a growing role to teachers in the work of the APTE.

Poverty and the isolation of these rural communities partly explained why girls lagged behind. Traditionally, girls have been responsible for multiple chores at home, including child care for younger siblings, for which girls were deemed more suitable and reliable than boys. As girls approach adolescence, while tradition calls for secluding girls, the value of their work at home increases, so poor families are more reluctant to forego girls' labor. Moreover, "free education" has many indirect costs: e.g., books, clothing, and transportation. For families living in poverty, these costs represented and still represent a real obstacle to their children's schooling. Finally, there is the distance—sometimes several kilometers from home to school—and concerns for safety in getting back and forth. Parents perceive greater risk for daughters than for sons.

**Approach:** Consultation with community members was the first of many steps the MEG team took to mobilize the pilot communities to more clearly understand their constraints and expectations for quality education. The MEG team consulted directly with the community to find out why so few girls were attending school, and why they dropped out early. The team then carefully documented this process. MEG focused research efforts in the pilot zone of the Al Hoceima Province, in the Rif Mountains of northern Morocco, an exceptionally conservative region. The majority of parents, nearly all illiterate, were aware that life in the 21st century would require that their children, girls as well as boys, gain at least a basic education. Their objection to sending their children to school, especially

their daughters but also their sons, was not cultural or religious but pragmatic.

**Results:** Trainers, teachers, parents, and community members in the participating provinces became much more aware of the inequities in attaining basic education in their particular areas. Over a thousand master teachers and student teachers received information about disparities in education using the Equity in the Classroom module. In addition, TTI faculty members, inspectors, and school directors were trained to raise awareness about inequities in education and mobilize communities to send their daughters to school.

## UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS OF EQUITY

**Challenge:** The pilot communities did not view project activities perceived to favor girls at the expense of boys as equitable or just. As the project progressed, the concept of gender became a concept to be grappled with, because gender equity came across as a narrow, specialized idea whose benefits to the entire community were unclear.

**Approach:** As discussed above in regard to quality education and student-centered learning, the principle of equity rather than the concept of gender provided a broader, more effective basis for reflection and action to advance understanding and garner public and private support for the education of particularly girls. MEG and partners took pains to initiate actions that would benefit boys as well as girls. For example, in response to a need expressed by girls'



parents to provide greater privacy, MEG provided grants to PTAs, who constructed latrines. Latrines benefited boys as well as girls and, in addition, improved the schools' overall environmental hygiene. In rural Moroccan communities, MEG found it more respectful and effective to present education as a means of learning and reinforcing, not contradicting, time-honored and religiously-sanctioned values. Efforts were made to attract pious women and men to the PTAs and the schools. The teaching of the Holy Quran, "Read! And your Lord is most bountiful, who taught by the pen,"<sup>9</sup> and those sayings attributed to the Prophet<sup>10</sup> on the value of knowledge for all were often prominently displayed in classrooms.

Participation in initiatives to improve school and education quality helped empower local beneficiaries, including women. Applying the principle of more equitable participation, MEG experimented with a holistic approach to integrate equity concerns and increase women's participation. As the community came to view the school as a shared local institution, collective efforts focused on improving the school environment began demonstrating that increased participation, which includes women, can result in mutual benefits that accrue to the whole community. The MEG team insisted that this process include all community members equitably, in order that all express their viewpoints and needs, and contribute to solving problems. As the community came to trust this process, they became more motivated to participate.

Increasing the presence of adult women in schools and classrooms proved to be one

of the most effective measures for increasing girls' participation in the education system. The Ministry had already taken measures to increase the training of women in the TTIs. In addition, the Government of Morocco has launched an intensive literacy campaign, mainly aimed at rural women. In the 1990s, women made up only about 10 percent of the teacher training classes, but by 2003, almost 60 percent of teachers-in-training were women.

Preschool initiatives, which were popular community micro-projects, brought the collateral benefits of increasing the presence of women at the school. It was especially important that the women who participated in teaching and organizing preschools came from the community. Their participation in the school setting also earned broader benefits, such as employment. Through a grant agreement, MEG funded the Alliance de Travail dans la Formation et l'Action pour l'Enfance (ATFALE), an NGO specialized in early childhood education, to provide short-term, specialized training that equipped village women with the skills they needed to work effectively in preschools with children.

**Results:** All measures that increased the presence of women in schools directly contributed to increasing the enrollment and retention of girls while, at the same time, benefiting boys and the wider community in general. This demonstrated to the community the benefits of inviting more equitable participation and collaboration to share responsibility and decision-making for local initiatives.

<sup>9</sup> Sura 96, 3-5.

<sup>10</sup> The teachings or traditions of the Prophet, Hadith, instruct the faithful "to seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" and "to seek knowledge even in China," then considered to be at the edge of the earth.

## GARNERING LOCAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION INITIATIVES

**Challenge:** Because of constrained Central Ministry resources, the education system increasingly had to seek new and unconventional resources. But very low-income, rural communities have scarce financial resources. MEG's challenge was to drum up support, tap into the community's human resources, and motivate resourcefulness. The USAID contract did not allow MEG to finance capital expenditures, but allowed modest support for self-help micro-projects.

**Approach:** The cost of carrying out micro-projects with community support and contributions amounted to about one-quarter of what the Ministry would have had to pay to accomplish the same work. During the lifetime of the MEG project, each community was given a series of small grants, usually about \$1,000 each, for carrying out school improvements that the PTA and the community had collectively decided upon. Communities matched, and in many cases exceeded, the MEG grant by providing labor, materials, and other inputs. While the emphasis was usually on improving infrastructure, some PTAs chose to address educational needs, for example, preschools. Other PTAs took actions designed to enable girls to continue their education at middle schools, by building a nearby middle school annex to accommodate girls, in one exemplary case, and by working to improve transportation arrangements in another case.

The MEG team encouraged increased rural pilot school community participation and increased community control over the schools and other institutions to tap into some unconventional and human resources, particularly through micro-projects. Micro-projects combined training with practice to achieve agreed-upon goals.

Training alone, without the incentive and practical experience that the micro-projects provided, could not have achieved as much in so short a time. The micro-projects themselves often produced impressive results: communities built latrines, safe water supplies, additional classrooms, and walls around the school yard. Many communities carried out two or more micro-projects to upgrade school facilities. Some mini-projects included women's literacy activities, which sprang up in pilot schools, extracurricular activities for children, such as sports and excursions, as well as preschools often set up in existing schools.

Stimulating local financing had a motivating effect that incited individual as well as collective initiatives. For example, an inspector in Errachidia recalled the story of the primary school caretaker who served the community by creating one of the most active preschools in the area. The caretaker from the Ait Innou douar had always worked at the school. In 1997, the Ait Innou school was suffering from overcrowding and lack of classrooms. But the school had two unused rooms falling into disrepair. The caretaker, like the majority of the douar inhabitants, was very involved in the school's activities and improvements. He decided to repair the rooms by himself and create a classroom and a preschool.

The school director, the inspector, and some parents collaborated as well to cover 40 percent of the cost, while the janitor, with the lowest salary, contributed 60 percent of the costs. Thanks to this initiative, a caretaker/night guard helped his school gain an additional classroom and a preschool.

While all pilot communities were poor by almost any standard, some of the poorest communities were proving to be more effective in supporting their schools than other communities that were materially better off. An exchange trip by bus to other pilot communities proved effective in motivating richer communities to do better. PTA members from pilot schools in Al Hoceima were, for example, taken on an exchange trip to visit the pilot schools of Errachidia, a virtual desert, which, despite extremely difficult living conditions, had achieved impressive results in mobilizing the community and in improving both the infrastructures and the operation of their schools. Up to this point, the PTAs of Al Hoceima had explained their relative ineffectiveness as the consequence of their poverty. Following the visit to Errachidia, poverty no longer seemed an adequate excuse. Important changes ensued: PTAs became more effective, school facilities were significantly improved, and school/community relations became stronger.

Likewise, MEG also made an effort to involve local government (rural commune) officials in these exchange trips. Traveling together with the PTA members was intended to forge links between these two groups and provide an opportunity to discuss joint projects.

**Results:** Although these relationships, in most cases, were slow to develop, in more than half of the pilot schools, local government began to play a modest but significant role, mainly by contributing to the improvement of school facilities. In the provinces of Sidi Kacem, Al Hoceima, Errachidia, Ouarzazate, and Essaouira, 20 of the 33 pilot schools, or 61 percent, all had agreements with their rural communes. This opened the door to local governments playing a modest but significant role in their local schools, mainly by contributing to the improvement of school facilities. In Al Hoceima, for example, the rural commune assisted the school in building a protective wall around the schoolyard. In Essaouira, the commune came to the rescue of the pilot schools in an even more important way, by delivering water throughout the school year to offset the impact of a severe drought. Otherwise, water shortages would have caused serious problems, possibly even requiring the school to close down.

## **BUILDING EFFECTIVE PTA CAPACITIES TO LAUNCH AND SUSTAIN COMMUNITY INITIATIVES**

**Challenge:** Although PTAs are formally established institutions authorized by the MNE, many PTAs existed only on paper. Often they had not met for months or years, and frequently, it was unclear who their officers and members were. In satellite schools, smaller institutions with a head teacher working under the director of a larger mother school, no efforts had been



made until MEG to even establish PTAs on paper. Indeed, because regulations did not provide for PTAs at these smaller institutions, MEG often had to begin work with the pilot school PTAs from scratch. Until recently, officers and members of the PTA were, in fact, if not in law, often named by the school director following consultation with a Ministry of Interior representative responsible for law enforcement in the area. Consequently, both teachers and community members often perceived the PTA as an oppressive force that they could not trust.

Once the Ministry's regulations were changed to allow PTAs in satellite schools, MEG and partners in the provinces worked to establish a separate PTA in each of its pilot schools. But it was not practical to have the larger mother school PTA also serve satellite schools because they were often several kilometers apart. Mother school PTAs had little knowledge of and little concern for satellite schools that neither their children nor anyone in their community attended.

**Approach:** Major efforts were made to mobilize and train PTAs as local institutions. With NGO partners, MEG community mobilization involved providing the PTA, school directors, teachers, and community members with an opportunity to work together. Treating PTA members—many of whom were illiterate and had never traveled far from their home villages—as competent decision-makers had a positive impact and conveyed to PTA members that they were capable of playing an important role in their communities. PTAs often provided teachers with housing and host fami-

lies. In the pilot communities, both the community and teachers came to view PTAs as their institutions for facilitating and improving the quality of education offered by their school.

MEG workshops introduced community members to different learning methods. In addition, informal discussions played a larger role in capacity-building, particularly when the MEG team followed up with school and site visits. Follow up always supported PTAs school improvement micro-project implementation. By observing the micro-project progress and implementation problems encountered, the MEG team identified the types of further training needed by most of the PTAs.

An initial training effort undertaken with the support of a Moroccan NGO specialized in working with rural communities, AMSED (Association Marocaine de Solidarité et de Développement), trained PTA members in the basic skills of working in associations and clarified member rights and responsibilities. More important and effective than formal training, however, was the opportunity for PTA members to work together and with the community to pursue agreed-upon goals, plan their own micro-projects, and gain practical experience.

In the later stages of MEG, PTAs paid more attention to improving educational processes and no longer limited themselves to the school's physical condition. MEG's approach to capacity-building for the PTAs and communities also evolved. Rather than trying to analyze and counteract the problems that continued to emerge, MEG sought to train

and empower community members to do their own needs assessment and analysis, and then collaborate to plan and solve their own problems.

**Results:** The process that MEG facilitated and tested in cooperation with both the MNE and the NGO community broke new ground in building partnerships between government schools and civil society. MEG produced two modules designed to strengthen school/community relations: Social Mobilization and PTA Training. These modules are tools available to a wide range of key partners in education and school improvement for tapping into the community- and school-level human resources. The first module, Social Mobilization, is intended for the MNE, particularly for school director training. The PTA Training Module was designed to address the needs of NGOs and associations. These two training modules encapsulate the experience MEG gained during nearly six years of intensive work with 33 pilot communities. The Social Mobilization Module seeks to enable school personnel to reach out to the community. The PTA Training module focuses on enabling the community to serve its school.

## **BUILDING PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PTAS**

**Challenge:** How could a project dedicated to the education of girls and equity accept PTAs and committees where no women were present? The participation of women in PTAs and other community functions was critical. Although the situation varied from province to province and com-

munity to community, women usually did not participate in public activities. Traditionally the man, considered the sovereign of the home, represented and spoke for his family in all encounters with the outside world. The father as the family decision-maker and spokesman had to be honored, or he would lose face in public. Nevertheless, behind the scenes, the women handled many family decisions.

**Approach:** The MEG team respected the community traditions, but at the same time, learning from the positive experiences of the participatory, consultative processes of micro-projects, gradually transformed community views and practices. When possible, the women community members were increasingly invited to express their views and contribute their ideas to micro-project implementation. In the more conservative regions, for example, Al Hoceima, the PTA was composed entirely of men. The views of women were represented, if at all, through their heads of household. In the relatively more socially open region of Errachidia, the PTA was composed predominantly of men, with only one woman member, but women's associations were established to support the work of the PTAs. Over the life of the project, women were active behind the scenes and increasingly demonstrated their influence on their daughters' education. The strict segregation of sexes broke down somewhat as MEG team members and their partners became better known and trusted by the communities. After six years in the pilot communities, the participation of women increased, but traditional community practices were not radically transformed.

## PILOT SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITY MODULES

### Social Mobilization Training

This module presents the overall process that school directors can use in working with their communities. It includes a general introduction to social mobilization, including discussions on team building and techniques for facilitation and communication, project cycle ideas, and the establishment and enhancement of PTAs, their work in the community, and ways to build partnerships.

### PTA Training

This module provides lessons in establishing PTA and making them effective instruments for supporting and improving the condition and operation of the local schools. To encourage independence from the MNE establishment, modules were disseminated through NGOs and associations.

**Results:** Overall, training aimed to help the mainly male PTA members more clearly understand the importance of equity. In this regard, the MEG experience may have begun to change the discourse, but only made a dent in community life.

Nevertheless, the pilot schools pioneered efforts to practice equity and treat girls and boys with equal respect. In discussions about improving the quality of school and classroom environments, equity was becoming a guiding principle.

## IMPROVING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: A SUMMARY

MEG used a participatory process that included and enabled all community members to assess their own needs collectively, decide how to prioritize, plan, and pursue their own objectives. Participants learned from the experience of doing for them-

selves. The MEG team recognized that empowerment and capacity building are essential for sustainability. Through this participatory capacity-building process, as one provincial-level Education Officer noted, the project staff “faded into the sidelines to become resources.”

Two modules resulted: the social mobilization training module; and the PTA training module (see textbox). These modules reflected the strategy whereby approaches and materials were piloted at the local level and then moved “upstream” to the provincial, regional, and national levels.

The pilot school communities progressively took the lead on collective actions. Several Moroccan interviewees observed what they called a mindset shift to a more proactive, service-oriented spirit, eager to participate. Moroccans gradually initiated and sustained more efforts to implement the reform and improve school environments beyond the project's life, for all children, not just girls.



## V. IMPROVING EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

*By working directly in the field with those who manage education, who can assess impact, MEG introduced and operationalized the notion of a model school.*

**M. Salah Benyamna**  
**Ministry Level Officer**

The MEG team knew that improved management alone would be less effective without improved teaching and learning environments in schools and greater community support for education. But without more effective management practices, these reforms could not be generalized throughout the education system. Improving education management involved decentralized responsibilities, targeting the most effective points of intervention to achieve a significant national impact, and creating a working team. Each aspect presented its own challenges.

The school director emerged as key to achieving all these results, serving not only as a leader in improving instructional quality (as mentioned briefly in Chapter III), but also as the on-the-ground manager of the different elements that contribute to education quality and improved school environments.

### DECENTRALIZING RESPONSIBILITIES

**Challenge:** Decentralization is one of Morocco's most critical educational challenges, referred to in the Charter as the



déconcentration of the decision-making authority. Devolving authority in most operational matters from the central Ministry in Rabat to 16 newly-created regional academies, often referred to as “mini-ministries,” involves a significant change in the locus of power and new roles and responsibilities throughout the Ministry. As the decentralization process advances and regional administrations increase their involvement, the central administration, as senior government institutions, will increasingly need to step back to focus on responsibilities most befitting the national level, for example, policy-making, within the national framework for development. At the same time, as roles shift in this process, allowing more decentralization, Ministry staff need to gain a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities they can play to be most effective.

Given the critical importance of new organizational structures in the reform to

strengthen the effectiveness of the Moroccan education system, the Ministry asked MEG for support through training and the production of training materials. In response, the MEG team initially assumed incorrectly that lots of training would be beneficial. In the first years, however, training was becoming a substitute, not a preparation for, their on-the-job duties. Moreover, too much attention to training for a few partners built up resentments and rivalries.

**Approach:** The MEG team combined training with technical assistance. The training consisted of practical assignments that trainees were introduced to in the workshops and then completed on the job when they returned home, in an experimental process of learning and application. The management training activities provided technical support and practice to help the system's human resources learn how to be more effective in new roles, taking on new responsibilities in educational management at more decentralized school and community levels as well as at central Ministry and Regional Académie levels.

MEG Education Management Training allowed a range of participants to test, assess, and consult on the practical implications of the workshop concepts and experiment on the job. In this regard, the follow-up process provided a test track to develop, test, and revise modules that the Ministry could adopt and use. Following workshops, MEG teams regularly visited participants to observe and assist them in completing their assignments. MEG training material revisions systematically incorporated the insights gained from follow-up visits.

Every MEG Educational Management training activity was part of a process aimed at producing a product. The trainees worked in teams that focused on more effectively monitoring classroom instruction.

Participants not only studied strategic objectives or performance indicators, but also worked to develop real strategies and indicators that responded to their work needs and could be used as practical tools to improve the performance of Provincial Education Teams. Usually, technical assistance would not be offered until the team had completed its assignment. For example, once the team had worked out its strategy and identified performance indicators, the MEG Educational Management Team would then visit the province and review the team's work with them.

**Results:** The training team itself was testing a training product and tools for the Ministry to serve future needs. These efforts produced four management modules (see textbox), each of which was published in a single booklet designed for ease of use. MEG printed sufficient copies to meet anticipated needs at the provincial, regional, and national levels. Exceptionally, the management modules were made available in French as well as Arabic, at the request of COPE (The Center for Orientation and Planning of Education), the Ministry unit expected to conduct future management training. Two training modules emphasize the processes and principles of working together to implement an agreed-upon strategic plan and form partnerships; two other modules focus on key steps in strategic planning and managing for results.

## MEG MANAGEMENT MODULES

### Building Effective Teams

Human resources need the capacity to work collaboratively as a harmonious team, not as an ad hoc committee, in order to move forward with these scientific procedures for strategic planning and monitoring. This MEG module was designed to train a team to collaborate in decision-making, delegation of authority, active listening, the definition of roles and responsibilities, concise and cogent communication, and conflict avoidance or resolution..

### Public-Private Partnerships

Improving schooling in Morocco usually implies finding sources of financing and support in addition to the very limited resources received through the Ministry. This module was developed with that need in mind in response to requests from communities and provincial education teams with high aspirations, but modest budgets. MEG completed and tested this module in the three provinces of the Souss-Massa-Draa Region. The training was in two parts. In part one, the teams identified their objectives and possible partners that might help them achieve them. The teams then worked for a period of months at forging a partnership and developing a common project with their selected partners. They then met again, to draw the lessons of their experience and to critique their own actions. In two provinces, partners were identified and useful work accomplished within a few months. In the third province, Zagora, most of the personnel trained by MEG were unexpectedly transferred out of the province before their proposed projects got underway.

### Developing Results Frameworks

The provincial education teams found that in developing their results frameworks they were forced to ask hard questions and think in more focused, concise, and purposeful ways. Many participants noted that managing for results required common sense applied with the rigor of the scientific approach. A results framework begins with knowledge and information on what is and a vision of what might be, establishes an agreed-upon goal, and asks, "How do we get from here to there?" To answer that question, managers have to identify potential problems and obstacles that could obstruct progress, suggest possible alternative courses of action, and allocate resources, time, and money to achieve the objective.

### Identifying Performance Indicators

This module was closely related to the first. Performance indicators are measures based on reliable data that map the route between the prevailing and the desired situation. If the Strategic Objective was "increased attainment of basic education among girls in the pilot schools," then reliable data showing the changing enrollment of girls was an essential performance indicator and a vital part of the monitoring system.



Using the module developed for the Training of Trainers, MEG trained 907 directors in 12 workshops during the final two years of the project.

## TARGETING INTERVENTIONS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

**Challenge:** Early in the MEG project, a PEO requested that MEG work with the school directors in the pilot provinces to develop training materials that would help upgrade director performance. Other PEOs then requested that MEG offer similar training in their provinces. Finally, the MNE requested that MEG launch a process that would train every primary school director in the Kingdom using MEG training materials over a three-year period.

The MNE had long recognized the key role that school directors could play in improving education quality, and this was made clear in the Charter. In the shift towards more decentralized management, the school director can play a pivotal role in all three of MEG's main components: improving the school environment, community participation, and local management. An effective director can have a direct effect on quality by influencing teacher behaviors and encouraging teachers' professional growth and commitment to the school as well as increasing community involvement. The school director is a permanent presence<sup>11</sup> who oversees the school, helps and encourages teachers, works with the community, and as a local leader can leverage assistance from local governments and

other sources. But with 6,746<sup>12</sup> primary school directors in Morocco, how could a project of a modest scale possibly reach out to all of them?

**Approach:** When it was decided to scale up director training, the MEG Education Management Team (EMT) assumed this task in order to combine the director training with the training of COPE trainers who would be able to take over director training following MEG. Over 1,000 school directors were trained in partnership-building. In doing this, MEG helped the education system make more effective use of human resources and leverage improved education quality directly in the schools, at the points of service. Trained directors were better prepared to liaise across levels of the education system hierarchy, between PTAs, local communities at large, the inspectorate, Provincial Education Teams, and the Provincial Education Officers of the MNE. The MEG modules were tested and validated during the training of this first cohort of school directors. Then, through the MNE, MEG extended this strategy beyond simply creating and validating training modules by having the MNE institutionalize the modules' use for school directors at all TTIs across Morocco.

In addition to school directors, the MEG Educational Management Team worked in partnership with the eight pilot provinces to build cohesive Provincial Education Teams, establish strategies, and set up databases to monitor the implementation of their strategies. Provincial Education Teams tended to focus on common issues: increasing enrollment, reducing absenteeism, reaching parity between girls and

<sup>11</sup> There are presently few women directors, but their numbers are growing as is their reputation for effectiveness.

<sup>12</sup> Statistiques de l'éducation, 2002-2003, Royaume du Maroc, Ministère de l'éducation nationale et de la jeunesse, July 2003, p. 27.



boys, increasing access to education in remote communities, improving the training of teachers and directors, making preschools more widely available, and setting up public-private partnerships. In the final project year, MEG extended strategy development to nine additional provinces and three Regional Académies.

**Results:** MEG helped institutionalize capacity-building efforts at more decentralized levels to transform and make more effective use of existing human resources by focusing on the potential of the school director to lead and manage change and by strengthening Provincial Education Teams. MEG worked with the eight pilot provinces to implement Provincial Action Plans (PAPs). By financing one or two provincial plan activities, MEG sought to illustrate how participatory approaches could be put into action. Acting on a problem raised practical issues: e.g., the division of roles and responsibilities, timing, funding, and communication with the communities as well as with other services of the Ministry, which promoted effective learning from experience.

## IMPROVED EDUCATION MANAGEMENT: A SUMMARY

Decentralization, one of the most critical challenges in Morocco's reform charter, required a shifting of responsibility for instructional quality from the central Ministry to regional and local staff. The school director and the Provincial Education Team were identified as the staff levels best suited for assuming those responsibilities. MEG's management training provided opportunities both to prepare school directors and to test and refine training modules that were later translated and produced for use at the provincial, regional, and national levels. The training thus resulted in directors ready to usher in the new strategies for improving quality as well as tools that would support the training of new and practicing staff for years to come.



## VI. ELEMENTS OF A DYNAMIC PROCESS

*Even independent of the MEG project for girls' education [in Morocco], there has been a revolution in the approach to school management, in the approach to contact or relationships with communities, inside school environments, with the students, the teachers. The teacher is no longer closed off and left to herself.*

**Hoummad**  
**Ministry Inspector**

As previously indicated, the success of the MEG project was as much due to the implementation process as it was to the technical skills and content that were conveyed. In addition to improving classroom instruction, community involvement, and management practices, Moroccans had an opportunity to experiment with the processes of reflection and action envisioned in Morocco's National Charter. Experimentation with these processes demonstrated that schools can become dynamic, quality educational institutions when they open up to their surrounding community. Lessons learned from the MEG process hold promise for improving school environments for the more than 3,800,000 primary school students in Morocco and for achieving Education for All throughout the developing world.

An analysis of the project outcomes, together with end-of-project interviews and focus groups with 325 Provincial education team members from eight provinces, revealed that three elements—participation, collaboration, and experimentation—were critical to their successful, dynamic process. A number of lessons that reflect those elements are highlighted below.



### PARTICIPATION

*For participation in broader partnerships to take hold and be sustained, the beneficiaries [of education services] have to participate.*

**Ministry Official**

### **PARTICIPATION IS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION.**

**Discussion:** With the challenges of defining quality, promoting girls' education, and overcoming long-established attitudes and practices, local buy-in and acceptance of any interventions were critical for success. Meaningful participation helped to achieve that sense of buy-in and acceptance.

Stakeholder participation, a standard in development, was an integral part of the MEG experience. MEG's participation went

further; however, in its promotion of “collaborative participation” — the contractor, the funder (USAID), and the Ministry of Education working collaboratively with stakeholders at various levels in decision making, planning, and implementation. For example, to improve teacher quality, the MEG team first engaged the MNE and USAID to discuss the national curriculum, textbooks, and other instructional materials. The players decided that training in a core set of topics, with an accompanying set of teacher training modules, would be the response. The MEG team then organized workshops where the MNE’s central office staff and Provincial Education Officers actively participated in developing the modules, analyzing the problems, exploring different approaches, and developing, testing, and refining the documents. MEG used a similar approach to develop guides for adapting regional and local curricula, involving the faculty and students of the TTIs and education inspectors in all phases of the work.

To combat the weak relationships between the community and school, community participation was a big component of the MEG project. Community participation began with interviews with scores of community leaders, school directors, teachers, parents, and students to obtain their input concerning the needs of the education program. The analysis of their responses fed action plans that reflected the practical problems identified by the community. PTAs were organized or revived at the regional and satellite school levels. School directors were trained to work with communities and elicit their cooperation and support. MEG and Ministry staff consulted with

community members to find out why so few girls were attending school or why they dropped out early. During the various exchanges, the team learned more about how to respond respectfully and effectively within the established culture and values.

The local community also was involved with MEG-funded micro-projects, where groups received small grants to complete a school improvement that the PTA and the community had collectively decided upon. Communities matched or sometimes exceeded the MEG grant, providing materials, supplies, and other inputs. Bus trips to successful pilot communities proved effective in motivating other communities to even greater participation.

MEG was also committed to building participation by women, a difficult challenge since Moroccan women generally did not participate in public activities. Maintaining respect for the traditional culture and practices, the MEG team nevertheless encouraged women to participate by expressing their views and contributing their ideas, and involved them in teaching and organizing preschools for the community.

The commitment to collaborative participation led to materials that reflected the needs and concerns of central, regional, and local stakeholders, and community members, including women, who voiced their concerns and contributed time and resources. As stated in Chapter II, the participation “was motivational and provided learning opportunities and capacity building for a broader base of community, school, and education system partners, including women.”

## **SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS AND PARTICIPATION BUILD TRUST AND IMPROVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS.**

**Discussion:** A PEO explained what he viewed as a most significant achievement: MEG showed that the school alone or the State alone cannot do everything; they need to trust other partners.

The schools' degraded state was symptom of the underlying problem: a lack of community trust in schools. The process of building trust began by consulting community members to assess their needs and understand their constraints. This consultation demonstrated respect for their views and built trust, an indispensable part of building participation and improving school environments. After interviewing scores of community leaders, school directors, teachers, parents, and students, the MEG team listened and responded in practical, concrete ways to issues the communities raised.

School/community partnerships require trust. School/community partnerships motivate participation that can garner additional resources for PTAs or public/private partnerships. But the civil society and the government schools need to trust each other: MEG provided an opportunity for partners to realize their need to trust each other and collaborate, recognizing that the school, its local community, particularly the PTAs, NGOs in civil society, and the government, or State, bring complementary expertise and resources.

Moreover, trust in the school had a motivating effect that stimulated financial participation — local financing and individual as well as collective initiatives. With the grant money that was offered through MEG, PTAs and communities felt more comfortable in investing their own resources. Training PTAs and communities without the incentives and practical experience provided by the MEG micro-projects could not have achieved as much in so short a time. The micro-projects themselves often produced impressive results: communities built latrines, safe water supplies, additional classrooms, and preschools. Low-cost micro-projects with community support and contributions amounted to a fraction of what the MNE would have to pay to accomplish the same work.

**Implications for EFA:** Building trust, not only infrastructure, is crucial to improving school environments through increased community involvement and a growing degree of community control over schools and other local institutions. These acts can bring alternative resources to supplement Central Ministry resources when they are scarce or no longer adequate.

## COLLABORATION

**MEG broke with the past. Before the MEG project, there was little to no collaboration between levels— Provincial Education Officers, Inspectors, School Directors. MEG brought collaboration; now there is collaboration.**

**Ministry Official**

### PROJECTS WITH OUTSIDE FUNDERS SHOULD REINFORCE MINISTRY VISION, POLICIES, AND GOALS.

**Discussion:** The Ministry acknowledged that the MEG project became a dynamic force at the center of the Reform because the project strove to collaborate by reinforcing the will of the Ministry.

The MEG project-implementing partners, USAID/Morocco and the contractor, respected national sovereignty and priorities. Morocco's MNE had a National Charter for Education and Training, endorsed by the King, which provided a far-reaching vision and orientation. The National Charter provided a blueprint, but the MNE needed to mobilize teams and resources to actually build and put policies into effect. Once the donor and its contractor gained the trust of Ministry partners, the partnership between the two cooperating governments was on an equal footing. Then the MEG team, USAID/Morocco, and the MNE worked hand in hand to bring the project to the center of the reform.

Both USAID officials and MNE partners highlighted the effectiveness of managing the project to ensure that project and Ministry objectives were mutually reinforcing. Through the training workshops, MEG helped Moroccan educators build practical tools to put Morocco's vision and policies into action while reinforcing the implementation capacities of the Ministry.

Two particular policies provide evidence of this reinforcing collaboration: increased female teacher recruitment and broadened school director selection criteria. Both policy measures had implications for girls, improved management of quality education, and EFA.

### INCREASED FEMALE TEACHER RECRUITMENT

The Ministry changed admissions criteria and practices, which led to an increased enrollment of women in the TTIs in the early 1990s. This policy action had an enormous impact on increasing girls' enrollments because female teachers give parents greater confidence in sending their daughters to school and provide village girls with professional women as role models. In addition, recruiting more female teachers not only helped mitigate the problems of transplanting new teachers to unfamiliar rural milieux but also opened up economic opportunities for rural women. To reinforce this policy, the MEG project worked closely with the TTIs to better prepare future teachers, especially women, to meet the challenges of rural education. This single, cost-free policy change did more to increase educational opportunities for rural girls than all externally-funded assistance projects combined.

## **SCHOOL DIRECTOR SELECTION CRITERIA AND TRAINING**

MEG sponsored school director training that prepared directors to work with teachers and communities to promote better practices and girls' participation. This school director training, which was very successful, would not have been possible without the Ministry's policy shift to select school directors on the basis of education, leadership, and demonstrated dynamic, entrepreneurial qualities instead of seniority, which had made school directorships an antechamber to retirement. This training began to transform both how school directors, teachers, and their communities viewed the director's role as well as how these human resources should be trained. From a partnership perspective, MEG's school director training reinforced the Minister of Education's broader initiative.

**Implications for EFA:** To receive better cooperation, outside donors should be seen as collaborators with Ministries in reviewing, acknowledging, and where possible, adhering to existing national priorities and policies. Where change is needed, workshops and other sessions to introduce the Ministry to change will allow Ministry staff to consider and embrace the new vision and buy into its success.

## **OUTSIDE EXPERTS NEED INTERNAL COLLABORATION.**

The MEG Team modeled the team work required to build a coherent, effective project team, which is the first step in carrying through a complex development project. A consortium of three non-governmental organizations — a prime contractor and

two subcontractors — implemented MEG: Creative Associates International, Inc., which had experience in education, particularly girls' education and educational system reforms; Management Systems International, which had expertise in management; and Save the Children, which had extensive experience in community work around the world. Although this consortium brought a wide range of expertise, building a unified team from this diversity and managing the contract became more complex and challenging because team members were recruited by three different organizations. Team members owed loyalty to different employers as well as to the project as a whole. Each organization in the MEG consortium had its own procedures, systems, and organizational culture. Moreover, given the nature of the international development business, partners from one organization may be bedfellows in one particular project, but rivals competing for different contracts in other countries.

Despite these tensions, the MEG Project leadership focused on building team unity and achieving results that would improve basic education. Weekly meetings, which included all staff members and were characterized by open communication and continuous informal discussions and briefings, were clearly indispensable in forging the unity of the MEG team. The different organizations offered different content expertise, language skills, perceptions, and familiarity with rural milieux. The MEG team leadership was able to build a strong sense of common purpose that left considerable scope for each partner organization to contribute its own particular expertise and strengths.



*In our relations with the MNE, through our first formal agreements with partners, we had to learn how to work inside the Ministry. This is a different animal. As outsiders, we at first didn't have agreement. As we learned the hard way, it's important to have personal relationships with the Ministry....One of the strengths of the MEG project was that we dealt with the Ministry's sectors but also dealt with the people, in personal relationships.*

**USAID/Morocco Official**

Despite a relatively complex organizational structure, the MEG implementation team worked effectively together in conducting the management training and developing the training materials. This teamwork contributed to the successful completion of Project tasks and served as a model for the Ministry staff.

### **TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION.**

**Discussion.** The quality of relationships emerged as central to effective cooperation at all levels, starting with donor/Ministry relationships.

Morocco was exemplary in that the Ministry and the National Charter vision for reform recognized the need to transform the education system. As soon as some level of trust was established and more personal relationships with the Ministry began to develop, MEG was able to work within the system—with PEOs, Teacher Training Institute staff, inspectors, and school directors—to promote and reinforce collaboration.

The host country Ministry is an indispensable partner for the cooperating donor. Donor respect for the host country sovereignty builds trust, fosters the development of a partnership of equals, based on

agreed-upon understandings of mutually beneficial project objectives, and ensures wider, national impact. Donor technical assistance can be effective when it supports the cooperating Ministry to more effectively promote human capacity-building as well as meet educational goals and enrollment targets. Moreover, respecting Ministry sovereignty over the curriculum, for example, pushed MEG into a direction that proved far more effective in the long run. Ministry cooperation proved essential for sustainability of project products and processes and ensured a broader, nationwide impact of the project.

MEG's emphasis on collaboration helped transform administrative relationships into dynamic partnerships and thereby make more effective use of human resources as partners learned to communicate and work together across the bureaucratic and hierarchical divides. Several Moroccan partners reflecting on MEG shared this view, referring to the dynamic nature of their MEG experience as organic because of more personalized, collaborative, and less formal relationships that can grow and develop. They also spoke of how the training and workshops energized and "jump-started" some of the impersonal, hierarchical aspects of the education system, which conveyed the notion of change as a result of learning and gaining sharper awareness of the importance of collaboration and participation in the project.

**Implications for EFA:** Project partners learned through the MEG experience that hierarchical and bureaucratic conditions in the Ministry's education system could be changed to accommodate innovations if they viewed partners as collaborators, not just implementers. Ministries can support the growth and development of capacities to transform the existing system's bureaucracy into more of a learning organization, because all can learn and make more effective use of human resources in the Ministry's education system at all levels. In this regard, the MEG model challenges common critiques of centrally-managed systems.

To achieve EFA, ministries can transform education systems, through developing relationships, the dynamics of working collaboratively over time. As circumstances evolve, learning takes place. Jump-starting a dead battery reinfuses it with energy, and brings to life a process that transforms the static, hierarchical, bureaucratic administration into organic, dynamic partnerships. Introducing a set of discrete policy measures, or strategies is not enough.

While reinforcing ministry priorities and policies, those working to achieve EFA should promote more dynamic, collaborative relationships across the system, particularly *sur le terrain* (in the field) close to schools and communities, at provincial and local levels. In under-financed and overburdened systems trying to decentralize, the MEG experience demonstrated the importance of working at both levels, top-down and bottom-up, to capitalize on demand-driven reforms and institutionalize project initiatives, be they products that

result from partnerships and participatory processes, community participation, or strengthened relationships and communication between central, regional, provincial-level officials and school directors.

### **COLLABORATION ACROSS AND AMONG ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS ACHIEVES WIDE PROJECT IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY.**

**Discussion:** The MEG project provides numerous examples of collaboration across and among established institutions. MEG brought together for training and collaboration the professors at the teaching training colleges, who were responsible for pre-service training, and the inspectors, who conducted in-service training. MEG worked with the MNE and UNICEF, an outside donor, in adjusting the curriculum for the 30 percent of the school time that was to be devoted to regional and local curricula. The training methods that MEG introduced at the school director workshops were dynamic and innovative and brought the various players together to work. Parents worked collaboratively with MEG to plan and implement mini-projects that would benefit the schools and communities. This collaboration across established institutions — the MNE and its provincial Ministry offices, the provincial education teams, TTIs, and PTAs — gave project activities legitimacy and a wider, national impact, and capitalized on existing human resources on the education system payroll, which consumes over 90 percent of the education budget. Working with Morocco's established institu-

*MEG consisted of a labor of collaboration and listening, in touch with the field. MEG embodied the notion of a project that diversified, involved PEOs (Délégués), and adapted specifics to context. Participants and partners had the impression that they were creating their own project. Their own. This represented a rupture with the traditional, hands-out attitude of, “Just give us the money.”*

#### **Ministry Official**

tions or with teams that can be trained to work together more effectively did not make additional demands on the budget. MEG gave particular attention to the TTIs where MEG-developed modules enabled the training institutes to use existing resources more effectively and gain skills with more active, student-centered practices to improve learning. Inspectors on the Provincial Education Teams were already on the Ministry payroll. Training them to work together and use new methods incurred few additional costs but yielded a far higher return by increasing the capacity and performance of the Provincial Education Teams.

Beyond technical assistance, MEG support created conditions for opening the education system to the wider community. For example, the TTI multimedia centers that MEG supported broke the bureaucratic constraints of limited hours. When longer open hours made the centers more accessible to the wider community, these institutes served as real examples of how the Ministry can move from rigid and impersonal bureaucratic control over learning resources to provide wider access to new technologies and new ways of learning, with the use of computers and the Internet as instruments for teaching and learning.

**Implications for EFA:** EFA should reinforce implementation capacities of education Ministries and established institutions. In exchange, implementing partners gain trust and cooperation from the host country, and project initiatives can take on legiti-

macy and have a wider, national scope. The successes of MEG demonstrated that cooperation is more effective when the project reforms can be implemented within the cooperating country's development framework. Donor-funded projects can promote education reform by working with the Ministry's institutions and willing counterparts. Additionally, donor support can achieve gains in efficiency by helping the Ministry put policies into practice, reinforce political commitment to envisioned changes, and ensure that the Ministry gains credibility, but at same time, promote more dynamic, collaborative relationships across the system.

#### **JOINT TRAINING PROMOTES COLLABORATION TO MANAGE EDUCATION QUALITY.**

**Discussion:** MEG organized and conducted workshops, during which MEG insisted on training together the triad of educators — education professors (at TTIs), provincial officers, and inspectors — both to promote collaboration and synergy, as well as to extend training throughout the system and make more effective use of training time. These three categories of education system personnel had not previously had the opportunity to exchange and learn from their complementary knowledge.

But the MEG training program went beyond the collaborative workshops. Integrating pre-service and in-service training tapped into the complementary expertise of inspectors, familiar with rural environ-

*We have become more demanding of our human resources: inspectors and new teacher trainers and those at the top of the pyramid at the CFIs....MEG insisted on this triad, having representatives from all three levels participate: CFIs, Délégués and Inspectors.....We learned to remember to include everyone and invite representatives from the triad, to work as a team. The inspectors depend on the [Provincial Education Officers] délégués, and vice versa; they learn from each other.*

*Ministry Official*

ments, professors, and PEOs and school directors. In addition, the results from collaboration, experimentation, and exchanges with other colleagues transformed centralized thinking, which proved to be an important element in creating conditions for initiating innovations to improve school environments.

In Morocco's education system, where over 90 percent of education funding goes mainly to staff salaries, benefits, and related costs, enhancing those human resources through training and requiring that they collaborate more, offers a cost-effective solution. Increasingly, the system will have to garner new resources to provide adequate education services to more and more children. Transforming the organizational culture of the system into more of a learning organization open to partnerships offers a way of enhancing human resources and synergy.

**Implications for EFA:** The synergies of training several groups simultaneously and working together can increase a system's efficiency. Building the capacities of existing institutions to collaborate offers an effective option for financially-strapped Ministries to invest in the longer-term development of the education system.

Training that reinforces the dynamic, collaborative partnership approach of hands-on, participatory methods and practical group exercises changes the way key agents, inspectors and school directors, trainers, and teachers view their work, and how they support each other.

## **PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION LEAD TO OWNERSHIP AND QUALITY.**

**Discussion.** Moroccan interviewees, based on what they learned from the MEG experience, offered a broader understanding of quality linked to the school environment as a whole. Quality and equity need to be understood more broadly, in terms of the relationships and the ethics governing school life. These are not costly measures, but emerged as essential to improving school environment conditions that can promote EFA.

Sustained quality education depends on the relationships and collaboration of inspectors and School Directors who know the local context and can garner social capital and infrastructure, exchange knowledge, and work as a team to manage school improvements and support teachers. In addition to transforming the quality of relationships and participation, the MEG experience transformed the ethics of the school. This had implications for increasing family and community support for improving the school environment. Motivation and clearer awareness of the importance of the school and the community's responsibility began to bring in additional resources through increased local financing.

The learning from participation created a different, more pro-active community service ethic in the minds of school/community members eager to contribute to improving the school environment, which began to

*One of the most successful aspects of MEG was to create more awareness of the importance of the school within its social environment. We have shifted away from a categorical rejection of the school, to an appreciation of the importance of the school, the importance of team spirit with diverse but complementary participants –teachers, school directors, students, parents, local government representatives; [and] understanding what it means for all stakeholders to belong to the school.*

**Provincial Education Officer**

replace a dependency attitude of passively waiting for a hand-out from the central education system.

Stimulating local financing had a motivating effect that incited individual as well as collective initiatives. Community members became more aware that despite scarce material resources, they were capable of tapping into their own resources. Scarce resources or poverty were no longer acceptable excuses. What mattered were motivation and mobilizing the collective will to serve children to improve educational opportunities with other resources they had capacity to muster. For example, the PTAs of Al Hoceima had explained their relative ineffectiveness as the consequence of their poverty. But after they had visited Errachidia, poverty was no longer a valid excuse. Important changes ensued: their PTAs became more effective, school facilities were significantly improved and school/community relations became stronger.

This opened the door to local government playing a modest but significant role, mainly by contributing to the improvement of school facilities. MEG efforts made considerable headway in involving local government (rural commune) officials. Since the end of the MEG project, a few dynamic MEG pilot school directors and PTA members have been elected as commune presidents.

The practical approach that MEG adopted led immediately to action and partnership with the communities. This, in turn, set in motion a dynamic that resulted in significant improvements in how schools looked and operated. Moreover, participation in initiatives to improve school and education quality provided learning opportunities and capacity-building for a broader base of community, school and education system partners, including women.

**Implications for EFA:** Increased participation taps into a range of local resources. Poverty is no longer an excuse for non-participation. Transforming the ethics and relationships of the school can help increase participation which garners ownership, family and community support for improving the school environment. A more service-oriented ethic of cooperation can motivate communities to participate in collective and individual initiatives to improve their lives and the schools of their children, which can improve quality at little cost. Education quality cannot be dissociated from the “relationships and ethics of the school.” For example, when children are enthusiastic enough about what they are doing in school to discuss what they are learning at home, school/family relationships develop and extend learning to homes. These patterns of learning that pivot around the relationships and ethics of the school and link school life with families are dynamic.

## EXPERIMENTATION

*One of the main advantages of a project is the ability to experiment...MEG used the right dose, the perfect dose of all the actors, to balance all activities with training and promote strong interactions... The reform cannot be managed without a flexible, elastic, and scientific approach that can anticipate and respond to evolving issues....The MEG method, or approach, was scientific, involved all partners, and was always oriented towards the grassroots (le terrain).*

### **FLEXIBILITY TO EXPERIMENT ALLOWS LEARNING AND INNOVATION BEYOND BUREAUCRATIC CONSTRAINTS.**

**Discussion:** Across all project activities, MEG systematically put into practice the principle of learning from experience and provided opportunities for experimentation, which is crucial for innovation. As one Ministry official noted, “MEG was always an evolving work-in-progress. The MEG project consisted of gestion de proximité (“management proximity” par excellence, a participatory approach with the Ministry and at the heart of the community surrounding the school.

Two examples provide evidence of this experimentation. When the training of pilot school teachers proved costly and ineffective in reaching large numbers of people, MEG staff and Ministry officials

brainstormed to come up with another solution. The idea of providing training through the TTIs evolved from that willingness to veer from the original plan and experiment with new options. MEG also used experimentation to close the divide and create more synergy between the two quality control agents — the teacher training institute professors and the primary school inspectors. Training the two professional groups together differed from standard procedures, but resulted in more cooperation and synergy among them.

The MEG project orientation aligned with the Ministry, but partners at the Ministry level observed that the “experimental” and “scientific” nature of the process gave MEG a capacity to be responsive to the demands of the Ministry and partners at provincial and local school levels and to be able to adapt to evolving conditions and needs. In addition, the flexibility of USAID and the MNE as well as their openness to trying new ideas was instrumental to the success of such an approach.

Beyond the project, however, practice with this experimentation contributed to changing the mindset that fears bureaucratic constraints would “weigh down” initiatives. A Provincial Education Officer noted that, people were reassured because they could afford to make mistakes, they did not feel the weight of bureaucratic institutions when they implemented activities, and this helped them evolve.

**Implications for EFA:** Achieving EFA is more likely if the education system has more flexibility to allow local experimentation to better adapt to context-specific



*Some of the obstacles that training modules helped overcome are the top-down bureaucratic centralism....School directors now realize they can take on more responsibilities and say, "I myself can create a school canteen for 70 kids."*

**Provincial Education Officer**

conditions and ensure improved quality and relevance. In addition, such local experimentation allows participation and ownership and provides more opportunities for learning. Ultimately, this process changes the culture of the way the education system manages education, from rigid bureaucratic conditions that require conformity to one standard, to conditions that allow experimentation and continued learning from the inevitable mistakes.

### **DECENTRALIZED LEADERSHIP IS KEY TO INSTITUTIONAL REFORM.**

**Discussion:** The MEG school director workshops introduced a range of participants from the national, regional, provincial, and local levels to interactive processes. This introduction had a far-reaching impact on how directors viewed their role to change conditions in the school environment.

The MEG training approach framework was centered on School Management from a Partnership Perspective. Training in the education system at regional and local levels was not limited to pedagogy, but focused on how to work with communities, garner their cooperation and support, and lead local initiatives.

By promoting partnerships between levels in the education system and between schools and their communities, MEG also illustrated how additional support need not come from outside the existing system or from above, but can be garnered from the communities and people that schools and development projects serve, and across the education system.

As a result of the MEG training workshops and modules, school directors realized that they did not have to wait for a top-down command from higher, central levels, before they could initiate and lead a school-level project themselves.

From the vantage point of one inspector, the most successful achievement of MEG was this "revolutionary" training approach that not only improved school environments by equipping directors with more pro-active, effective management skills, but introduced all participants in school improvement efforts to interactive processes that transformed school director attitudes, in particular, and "jump-started institutional reform," in general.

This transformed mindset brought to life a different, more dynamic role for directors. By training over 1,000 school directors in partnership-building, MEG not only helped improve education quality but also energized institutional reform.

If decentralization was to take effect, directors had to more clearly understand how to lead and manage school/community partnerships. This is an element of dynamic education: transforming how directors see their role, building consensus towards collaboration, experimentation and empowerment to take local initiatives. School directors as education managers can promote more dynamic working relationships that capitalize on alternative resources in contexts of funding constraints, particularly where the most underserved children live.

MEG helped institutionalize capacity-building efforts at more decentralized levels to transform and make more effective use of existing human resources by focusing on



the potential of the school director to lead and manage change and strengthening Provincial Education Teams.

**Implications for EFA:** School directors or head masters have to more clearly understand how to lead and manage school/community partnerships. This is an element of dynamic education: transforming how directors see their role, and building consensus towards collaboration, experimentation, and empowerment to take local initiatives. School directors as education managers can promote more dynamic working relationships that capitalize on alternative resources in contexts of funding constraints, particularly where the most underserved children live.

### **INNOVATION SHOULD ADDRESS CONTEXT-SPECIFIC NEEDS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES.**

**Discussion.** MEG had anticipated the need to adapt the curriculum to make it more relevant for diverse, local contexts and Morocco's MNE took unprecedented action in 1999. The National Charter allowed that 30 percent of school time be devoted to regional and local curricula. This provided MEG with an opportunity to introduce needed methods of adapting and innovating curriculum to make content more relevant. The new emphasis on regional and local curricula provided a means to anchor teaching and learning in the realities, information needs and local economic opportunities of rural Moroccan communities. This innovation signaled an official recognition of Morocco's vast diversity and allowed the curriculum to adapt and incorporate regional and local specificities of Morocco, and had an enormous

impact on meeting the specific learning needs of underserved and rural children, particularly girls.

MEG translated an abstract notion into a practical approach that empowered teachers and communities. The Guide to Adapting Regional and Local Curricula (RLC) enables teachers to explore the rural milieu and identify local and regional needs and resources that they can incorporate into teaching and learning activities and materials. MEG drew upon its base in the pilot schools and communities to find ways to improve teacher education, then documented innovative activities in the pilot schools that could be included in the training Guide as examples. By working at the school and community levels, MEG developed a method aimed at identifying the local needs and resources that could be used as the basis of teaching and learning activities.

Developing regional and local curricula provided another opportunity to involve local people in the life of the school and tapped into the human, cultural and social capital of community members, local resources and artisan skills in remote rural areas. Craftsmen and craftswomen were invited to share their specialized skills with teachers and students, which provided additional opportunities to strengthen school/community partnerships and economic opportunities for earning a livelihood, for both women and men.

The processes of collaboration and listening at the grassroots level resulted in creating relevant, context-specific learning experiences and information, and also motivated and empowered participants because, as a Ministry official noted, "Participants and partners had the impression that they were

*No one considers lectures or unilateral exposés as valid methods any more. We took on these methods where participants or trainees interact, discuss, walk away with a sense of having built consensus, and consulted together. Once you train a director to implement the new approaches, it is as if the old director died; you have before you a new director. In this way, MEG contributed to jump-starting institutional reform.*

### **Inspector**

creating their own project.” Such ownership reinforced learning and motivated pilot school, teachers and workshop participants to continue to actively listen and collaborate to sustain project efforts.

**Implications for EFA:** Achieving EFA requires Ministries to be more sensitive to rural needs, to trust innovations that tap into available local resources, such as cultural, human and social capital, and provide new teachers with the skills and flexibility they need to create and adapt more relevant curriculum, especially for the most underserved, rural children and girls. Adapting curriculum to regional and local learning and skill needs, working from the grassroots rather than top-down to gather resource materials and involves teachers in process, promotes ownership and involves local community members in learning processes and in the life of the school.

### **EQUITY IS MORE THAN GIRLS' EDUCATION.**

MEG's different components mobilized the school environment with girls' education a priority, but actions undertaken were more global and all-encompassing. MEG progressively became more collective.

**Discussion.** The MEG project experimented with the introduction of a broader focus on equity issues beyond the educational environment to examine conditions and

practices in communities and families that exclude the full and equal participation of girls, women and other marginalized groups in public affairs. They reinforced discussions with quotes from the Holy Quran on the virtues of knowledge and learning for everyone. The MEG team designed the training process to provide all participants with a clearer understanding of attitudes, behaviors, and practices that could promote more equitable access to basic education. Training provided opportunities for reflection and action, so participants could collaborate to create practical solutions. Advancing girls' education is inextricably linked to other elements in school, family and community environments, not only equity in the classroom.

In addition, MEG demonstrated respect by allowing the community to identify their issues and challenges, and then accepting that analysis of the situation. Their particular problems with educating girls were mainly practical, not cultural or ideological. MEG focused on measures designed to improve the school environment: improving facilities, training the staff, and strengthening PTAs.<sup>13</sup> Through the MEG focus on a participatory capacity-building process, as another provincial-level Education Officer noted, the project staff gradually the [project team] actors faded into the sidelines to become resources.

This process reinforced the sustainability as Moroccan partners at central, provincial

and local levels progressively took the lead on collective actions. Several Moroccan partners observed the mindset shift to a more proactive spirit, eager to contribute to local initiatives, demonstrated a change in the ethics and view of the schools as their own, local institution, not an impersonal appendage of a remote government bureaucracy somewhere. Moroccans gradually initiated and sustained more “global and all-encompassing” efforts to implement the reform and improve school environments beyond the project’s purview.

**Implications for EFA:** MEG was one of several projects focused on advancing girls’ education, which had come center stage in USAID’s basic education efforts in the mid-1990s. Morocco’s MNE, although it recognized the severity of the situation of rural girls, did not view a focus on girls as being equitable. This pushed the MEG project

implementation team to reflect and move in the direction of a process that dovetailed with Morocco’s 1999 Charter Orientation. The MEG team and partners addressed equity and put it into practice as a more general principle—not only gender-related activities—in a more holistic, integrated approach, for example, through more equitable participation.

The principle of equity rather than the concept of gender provides a broader, more effective basis for reflection on the mutual benefits of equity and more equitable participation. The increased presence of community women at the schools, through their participation in micro-projects, demonstrated to the community that the additional resources, wisdom, and experience women can contribute to community and school initiatives are very valuable.

<sup>13</sup> PTA (Parent Teacher Association) is the American term that best describes the Moroccan APTE or Association de parents et tuteurs d’élèves



*MEG operationalized the concept of a dynamic school. MEG was dynamic, operational, characterized by efficacy, conviviality, and hope...*

**M. Abderrahman Rami**  
**Ministry-Level Officer**

If current education systems expect to be effective in achieving EFA, then their expansion must be transformative to reach all children with quality education. Principles and practices of the MEG project that brought schools to life hold promise for achieving universal primary education in other contexts and promoting learning for all. Elements of this dynamic process, the principles that guided the MEG approach, can transform schools into learning environments for growth and community development and motivate community participation and PTA initiatives to improve school environments that better serve underserved children. The lessons learned from the MEG experience about participation, collaboration, and experimentation provide examples that can help centralized education systems evolve from bureaucratic delivery systems into learning organizations, particularly in contexts of scarce material resources.

The MEG story illustrates how the situation of rural girls was symptomatic of the larger challenges Morocco faced: the rural/urban divide; community distrust of and non-involvement in schools; irrelevant curriculum, teaching, and learning methods that reinforced passive, dependent mindset, centralized thinking, and a system structured by



a bureaucracy that spends the lion's share of national education budget on staff salaries; the absence of dynamic partnerships at decentralized levels between quality control agents—inspectors, school directors, communities; and the lack of access to information and technology.

The dynamic process of participation and consultation guided by principles such as equity, respect, cooperation, and a more pro-active community service orientation demonstrated the power of these ethics to motivate all partners in education, including parents, to build trust as well as infrastructure improvements and transform school environments. The MEG project demonstrated the positive effects of transforming relationships between education system agents and between schools and their communities, a process that requires transforming attitudes. The principles are general, and the dynamic processes are replicable in

centralized systems, in rural communities, or with Islamic populations. MEG partners demonstrated the power of motivation and the collective will to take responsibility for improvements. Even in the poorest MEG school communities, economic constraints did not hold back active community involvement in school life. This proves how improved school environments also depend

on the quality of relationships and the ethics of the school, as well as training that promotes partnerships and collaboration so as to best use existing human and institutional resources. The successful elements, rather than the expansion of a system that leaves little room for experimentation, make the MEG model promising.

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