



USAID | **EL SALVADOR**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

INCREASING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN EL SALVADOR

Latin American and Caribbean Education Profiles 1999–2004



PROFILES OF USAID EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS: INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

This publication is one in a series profiling the recent work of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the education sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It is intended for all who are interested in learning more about USAID, international development, and education activities in the LAC region. While USAID currently has offices or development activities in 17 countries throughout the region, its education development efforts are concentrated in eight: the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Peru.

The purpose of the series is to provide information on how the U.S. government is responding to diverse education needs in these countries through a variety of initiatives—ranging from innovative projects that increase educational access for underserved populations to efforts to foster policy dialogue and better decision-making in the sector. Bringing these initiatives to life typically requires coordination with and participation from a variety of international, national, and local partners.

The publications highlight USAID efforts in these countries during a five year period, 1999–2004. Each profile treats one country and includes a succinct analysis of key problems that limit access to quality education there, defining those challenges within historical, political, and social contexts. The publication outlines USAID's strategies for targeting its education investments, describes specific projects for addressing key issues, and shares lessons learned/best practices to improve future programming.

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Kindergarten teacher practicing interactive storybook reading with children.

COVER: Combined class putting story pieces together in pairs.

All images courtesy of U.S. Agency for International Development.

EL SALVADOR AT A GLANCE



GEOGRAPHY

Total Population: 6,587,541 (July 2004 estimate)
Land Area: 21,040 sq. km (about the size of Massachusetts)
Capital: San Salvador (metropolitan area population: 1.7 million)

GOVERNMENT

Government Type: Republic
Current President: Elias Antonio Saca, elected to a five-year term in March 2004, assumed office June 2004

ECONOMY

Total Gross Domestic Product (GDP): US\$15 billion (2003)
Per Capita Gross National Income: US\$2,258
Population Living on Less Than \$2 a Day: 48 percent (1999 estimate)
Human Development Index: .720 (compared with .777 LAC regional average—2002)
Overall Donor Assistance: \$143 million (bilateral and multilateral donations—2003)

HEALTH AND CULTURE

Median Age: 21.4 years
Life Expectancy at Birth: 70.9 years
Annual Population Growth Rate: 1.78 percent (2004 estimate)
Chronic Malnutrition: 18.9 percent (urban 11.0 percent / rural 25.6 percent) Fesal (National Family Health Survey) 2002–2003
Languages: Spanish, Nahua (among some Amerindians)
Official Language: Spanish
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo 90 percent, white 9 percent, Amerindian 1 percent

EDUCATION

Compulsory Education: nine years (grades 1–9)
Literacy Rate (age 10 and over): 80.3 percent (male: 82.8 percent/female: 77.7 percent—2003 estimate)
Primary Net Enrollment (grades 1–6): 90.0 percent (2004)
Fifth Grade Completion Rate: 75 percent (2004)
Secondary Net Enrollment (grades 10–12): 44.8 percent (2004)
Twelfth Grade Completion Rate: 27.1 percent (2004)
Tertiary Net Enrollment: 16.6 percent (2001)
Public Expenditures on Education Sector: 3 percent of GDP (2004)

EL SALVADOR AT A GLANCE

SALVADORAN PRESIDENT ELIAS ANTONIO SACA, ELECTED IN 2004, HAS IDENTIFIED EDUCATION AS A NATIONAL PRIORITY. THIS IS EVIDENT IN THE NEW 2021 EDUCATION PLAN THAT BUILDS ON DECENTRALIZATION PROGRESS BEGUN UNDER THE 1995–2005 EDUCATION AGENDA.

Though El Salvador is a small country geographically, recent national events and progress have been grand. After 12 years of civil war, the nation has experienced significant (though uneven) recovery and improvements since the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords. Rural areas continue to lack basic quality education services compared with those of urban populations. Economic stress and high adult illiteracy threaten to perpetuate the cycle of low achievement and poverty. For Salvadorans to compete globally, access to services, infrastructure, and economic opportunities must be increased. To this end, the government is decentralizing and has incorporated new testing and education standards. The current administration vows to concentrate on and improve both educational access and quality by 2021.

USAID/El Salvador, now in its third decade of support, is the largest bilateral donor supporting education in the country. The Mission has supported the government in access, decentralization, quality, and school rehabilitation (during emergencies). In line with the Central America and Mexico Regional Strategy, the mission has shifted its activities to improve the quality, efficiency, and equity of primary education. This includes training teachers, providing appropriate teaching materials, developing school principal and teacher networks, and enhancing community participation in schooling. Higher level activities include establishing private sector alliances and improving research, decision-making, and policy-making.

Through 2009, the Country Plan Strategic Objective 3, “Investing in People: Healthier, Better Educated People,” has two intermediate results targeted to intervene in the education sector by achieving:

- 1) Increased and improved social sector investments and transparency.
 - 1.1. Increased and more efficient expenditures by Ministries of Health and Education
 - 1.2. Increased and more effective decentralized investments in health and education
 - 1.3. Private Sector Alliances Established
- 2) Increased and improved basic education opportunities.
 - 2.1. Improved access, quality, and efficiency of basic education
 - 2.2. Innovative approaches applied to increase and improve educational

USAID/EL SALVADOR HAS BUILT ON PREVIOUS STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR DECENTRALIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY BY PROVIDING INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS THAT INCITE CRITICAL THINKING AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION.

“The quality and relevance of primary and secondary schooling in LAC countries continue to cause concern, as the majority of students attend weak and underfunded schools and fail to acquire basic skills in mathematics, language, and science. Fewer than 30 percent of students in the region complete secondary school, and many of those who do finish lack the skills to compete in the workplace—let alone in an increasingly competitive global economy. USAID programs are improving educational systems by developing innovative pilots and more effective service delivery models, many of which are being expanded by host governments and multilateral development banks.”

**—Senate Testimony of Adolfo Franco,
USAID Assistant Administrator for
the LAC Bureau, March 2004**

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF USAID/EL SALVADOR

“When the peace accords were signed in 1992, both access to and quality of basic education services in El Salvador had greatly deteriorated, especially in rural areas. Throughout the past decade, USAID/El Salvador has focused its support to the education sector on improving the quality of basic education, especially for children in poor, rural areas, as well as improving the quality of early childhood and preschool education so that children are better prepared for primary school. Improving the quality of primary education is key for El Salvador to continue to strengthen its democracy as well as for it to become a more competitive country. Our goal is to contribute to ensuring that all children in El Salvador receive quality basic education so that they can continue on to secondary education and effectively participate in a democracy and contribute to the economic growth of the country.”

—Mark Silverman

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PART I

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

EDUCATION CONDITIONS IN EL SALVADOR

Since the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords,¹ the government of El Salvador has made clear progress in extending education to the nation's poorest communities. President Elias Antonio Saca, who took office in June 2004, has also identified education as a key priority. Action under way during his administration includes the following:

- Design and implementation of a new National Education Plan, "Plan 2021."
- Development of alternative education programs, such as distance education and multi-grade classrooms, to expand coverage.
- Creation of an accreditation system to allow children to be reinserted into the formal education system.

- Development of school networks or clusters in rural areas to strengthen professional development opportunities and resource sharing for teachers.
- Application of national testing to ensure excellence in education.
- Emphasis on classroom practices through in-service teacher training.
- Creation of a system of academic credits to formally recognize training for school principals and teachers.

This political commitment is essential to future advances in strengthening the education sector, particularly since the system still faces challenges related to insufficient coverage, poor quality, low student achievement, and urban-rural inequities.²

Net primary school enrollment has risen considerably—from 81 percent of school-aged children in 1992 to 90 percent in 2004. However, high repeti-

¹ The governing National Republican Alliance (or ARENA) party and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (or FMLN) rebels signed peace accords requiring the demobilization of the FMLN and its incorporation into the political process, in return for democratic reforms by state institutions.

² For an excellent overview in Spanish of educational progress in El Salvador, see the Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas 2002 national "report card" at www.preal.cl/prog_educativo/RCESalv.pdf.



A 4-year-old child using learning tools and curriculum provided under EDIFAM.

tion and dropout rates preclude roughly 40 percent of students from completing sixth grade, and basic competencies are limited in math, writing, and reading comprehension. Net enrollment was much lower at the preschool (37 percent) and upper secondary (23 percent) levels in 2000, and about 420,000 children (ages 4–18) currently do not attend school.

As in other Central American countries, the rural poor have limited access to services, infrastructure, and economic opportunities—a serious impediment to educational advancement and employment. One of six rural children, ages 7–10, does not attend school, and less than one third of the poorest group completes primary school. Nearly 43 percent of the heads of rural families cannot read or write—more than double the national illiteracy rate of 20 percent. In 2000 the percentage of adults (ages 25–59) with 13 or more years of schooling was 17.8 percent in urban areas, compared with only 1.5 percent in rural areas. Unless educational levels increase substantially, the Salvadoran workforce will be unable to compete in the global economy.

The Salvadoran government designates a relatively small share of its gross domestic product (GDP) for education investment—only 3 percent, in contrast to the Latin American average of 4 percent.³ The level of public spending

per student is low (\$224), and scarce resources are not well utilized owing to inadequate and inefficient planning, distribution, and management.

Any presentation of the current education sector must be rooted in recent Salvadoran history.⁴ After the 1992 Peace Accords, the Ministry of Education (MINED) identified the expansion of basic education access and quality as a central policy objective. Notwithstanding this government commitment, the formal education system was incapable of incorporating nearly one million out-of-school youths and redressing years of past neglect. MINED thus decided to pilot a new decentralized model of service provision—the EDUCO (Educación con Participación de la Comunidad) community-managed schools program—to delegate management of new rural preschools and primary schools to parents and community organizations. The Ministry declared 1995 as the “Year of Consultation on the Reform Process” to launch a national dialog about education.

These efforts culminated in a 10-Year Education Reform Plan (1995–2005) that developed from four objectives: 1) increasing access to education and improving literacy, 2) improving the quality of education, 3) promoting the formation of values, and 4) enhancing institutional modernization. Despite the 10-Year Plan, studies show that quality

³To meet the Millennium Development Goals, at least 5 percent of GDP needs to be invested in education by 2015.

⁴Much information in this section is drawn from Reform of Basic Education in El Salvador: World Bank. www.worldbank.org/participation/web/webfiles/eseducation.htm.

has not markedly improved since 1995, and equity continues to escape the grasp of poor, rural children—fewer than 10 percent of whom attend secondary school.

Nonetheless, the past decade has provided a strong base from which to build for the future. MINED has continued to decentralize services, giving more authority to regional and local actors. New education standards and testing mechanisms have been developed, and programs to improve access and quality are in place. With the new administration's concentration on educational equity and quality, the work of the past 10 years should now begin to bear more fruit.

USAID REGIONAL STRATEGY

In response to dramatically reduced region-wide funding levels—from \$190 million in 1990 to \$52.7 million in 2004—USAID education programming in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has shifted from large national programs to smaller, targeted geographic areas and an emphasis on policy dialog. Bilateral mission education activities are based on four overarching objectives: *improved access, equity, efficiency, and quality*. The LAC Regional Education Program, based in USAID/Washington, supports initiatives under the Summit of the Americas,⁵

the promotion of education reform in the region, and the Intermediate Results of 1) improved environment for education reform, 2) improved skills of teachers and administrators, and 3) improved relevance and skills of workforce.

The four education programs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua operate under the framework of the Central America and Mexico (CAM) Regional Strategy. The CAM Strategy directs bilateral and regional USAID investment toward three performance arenas—just and democratic governance, economic freedom, and investment in people—closely aligned with Millennium Challenge Account⁶ goals. As a result, USAID education activities in Central America are now centered on achieving:

- Improved access, quality, and efficiency of basic education.
- Increased and more effective decentralized investments in education.
- Increased and more efficient expenditures by ministries of education.
- The establishment of private sector alliances.
- Greater community involvement in education.
- Innovative approaches to increasing and improving educational opportunities.



Girl talking with a parent about how to support literacy development in children.

⁵ For background information on the Summit of the Americas, see usinfo.state.gov/wh/americas/summit_of_americas.html and www.americasnet.net.

⁶ The Millennium Challenge Account is a Bush administration initiative to increase assistance to those developing countries whose governments rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom. For more on this initiative, see www.mca.gov/, www.usaid.gov/mca/, and www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/developingnations/millennium.html.



Multi-grade class in a rural primary school learns about addition and subtraction through music

USAID/EL SALVADOR: HISTORY AND STRATEGIES IN EDUCATION

The U.S. government has been active in El Salvador's education sector since the early 1980s. USAID is currently the largest bilateral education donor. Two USAID Country Strategies have guided activities over the past five years. The first, in place from 1997 to 2002, was extended to 2004 in response to devastation resulting from the 2001 earthquake. The current El Salvador Country Plan covers the period through 2009.⁷

The previous strategy supported sustainable development and democracy in El Salvador, with education activities under the Strategic Objective (SO) "Expanded Access and Economic Opportunity for Rural Families in Poverty." To better educate rural residents, activities emphasized three areas: 1) improved quality of basic education for rural poor families, 2) increased community and non-governmental participation in basic education reform, and 3) greater access to basic education and productive skills training to meet market needs.

During fiscal years 2004–2005, USAID will transition from its ongoing programs to activities under the new Country Plan, which responds to the CAM Regional Strategy. The CAM

Strategy calls on USAID missions to move from service delivery to policy reform efforts, and to prioritize investments that will have national and regional level impact.

Under the SO "Investing in People: Healthier, Better Educated People,"⁸ education assistance in El Salvador will concentrate on implementing policies and programs that result in improvements in primary school educational attainment. Activities are designed to achieve increased and improved social sector investments and transparency, as well as basic education opportunities.

To maximize the Salvadoran government's social sector investments, USAID will 1) leverage funds, form alliances, demonstrate the socioeconomic returns to increased social investments, and improve efficiency through better planning and management of budgeted resources, 2) promote effective decentralization of public social services, and 3) improve accountability and transparency of education services.

To improve the quality, efficiency, and equity of primary education, USAID support will emphasize the following:

- Providing in-service teacher training to strengthen active teaching methods, curriculum planning, and evaluation of student performance.
- Modernizing school curricula and providing more appropriate class-

⁷ The full Country Plan for El Salvador may be found at www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDACA298.pdf.

⁸ The other SOs in El Salvador are "Economic Freedom" and "Ruling Justly."

room teaching materials for reading, writing, and math.

- Improving skills of school principals to better guide teachers and broadening teacher-principal professional development networks.
- Increasing parent and community participation in student learning.
- Improving the capacity of MINED and education think tanks to use research and information for decision-making and policy refinement.
- Establishing alliances with the private sector and donors to leverage additional assistance.

The overall resources available for education have remained fairly constant since 1999, averaging between \$3.0 million and 3.5 million annually.

OVERVIEW

Part 2 of this report profiles 11 of USAID/El Salvador's past and current projects. A list of suggested reading about the featured projects appears at the end of this publication.

The *EDIFAM* project is designed to improve the care and education of Salvadoran children under 6, particularly those from poor and rural areas, by strengthening early childhood care and education. The *Social Sector Reform* activity brings public and private stakeholders together to develop institutional capacity to formulate and implement policy. Training is targeted to MINED personnel and teacher training institu-

tions. Complementary *Excellence in Classroom Education at the Local Level* activities strengthen MINED capacity, with special attention to building school principal and mid-level manager capacity while expanding research for informed decision-making and policy dialog. *ALCANCE* is a one-year pilot to provide mini-scholarships supported by remittances from Salvadoran immigrant communities in the United States and the private sector to help keep poor, rural children in primary school. *The Human Capacity Development* activity aimed to improve institutional performance that contributed to achieving the mission's SOs and its overall strategy across sectors, including education. The Earthquake Recovery Program responded to two consecutive earthquakes in early 2001 by rebuilding more than 50 schools and 30 childcare centers, benefiting more than 21,000 students. The Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education project used a multi-sectoral strategy to increase Salvadoran girls' school enrollment and put enhancing girls' education on the national agenda. *Participatory Assessments and Research for Policy Dialogue* assessed the education system, focusing on primary education, to better expand access and improve quality of education.

With regard to regional projects, *Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT)*—El Salvador is part of a larger Latin American teacher training and materials development program. It works specifically to identify private



USAID/EI Salvador Education Team

support to improve teacher training, as well as best practices and techniques for teaching reading in grades 1–3. The *Civic Engagement in Education Reform* in El Salvador model uses proactive community participation at the school level as a strategy to improve the efficiency and quality of education in Central America. The *Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships* is designed to improve the human capacity and potential for sustainable development in the region by enabling socioeconomically disadvantaged groups to study in the United States.

Part 3 spells out the impact of USAID education activities in El Salvador over the past five years, such as the development of an

early childhood and preschool curriculum, training of teachers, and support to education reforms. It lists 23 lessons learned from the various USAID/EI Salvador activities, explaining, among many other things, that participatory project design and ongoing communications with all Ministry levels can greatly improve the impact of mission investments, and that thorough and participatory needs assessments can positively affect the quality of a training design. The section concludes with an overview of what the mission plans to achieve in El Salvador by 2009 by concentrating on both policy and institutional changes to improve system-wide education quality and student learning in rural schools.

MESSAGE FROM THE USAID/EL SALVADOR EDUCATION OFFICER

“El Salvador has made progress over the past 10 years in expanding access to education and modernizing the system. However, only about 60 percent of Salvadoran children finish primary school, and this is true for only 30 percent of the country's poorest children. Roughly half of the country's third graders cannot read and comprehend a four-sentence paragraph. The Salvadoran government continues to advance in improving the education system, and USAID/EI Salvador is complementing this effort by supporting the improvement of learning opportunities of rural primary school children. The goal is that these children not only will complete primary school but also strengthen their reading, writing and thinking skills and become motivated to continue learning. We are working toward this already by helping school principals and teachers improve teaching skills and by enriching family support to children's learning. At a policy level, USAID seeks to support policy dialog with stakeholder participation and to bring policy reforms to the classroom in order to improve schools—especially those that serve the poorest children.”

—Kristin Rosekrans

PART 2

ACTIVITY PROFILES

EDIFAM

EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION ACTIVITY

SSR

SOCIAL SECTOR REFORM

EXCELL

EXCELLENCE IN CLASSROOM EDUCATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

ALCANCE

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE IN SUPPORT OF CHILDHOOD AND ITS CONTINUATION IN EDUCATION

HCD

HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

ERP

EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY PROGRAM

SAGE

STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCING GIRLS' EDUCATION

PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENTS AND RESEARCH FOR POLICY DIALOG

REGIONAL PROJECTS

CETT: CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING

CERCA: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR EDUCATION REFORM IN
CENTRAL AMERICA

CASS: COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION OF STATES FOR
SCHOLARSHIPS



One of the early childhood campaign materials to promote family support to children's integral development.

EDIFAM

EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Implemented by Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo Integral de la Niñez y la Adolescencia, Ministries of Education and Health, UNICEF, American Institutes for Research, Education Development Center, Save the Children, and Sesame Workshop
 Dates: September 1998 to June 2005
 Funding: \$8,487,000

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Children who are neglected developmentally in the first years of life—as many rural, economically deprived children tend to be—bear the intellectual and emotional scars of that neglect throughout their lives. Education programs for Salvadoran children have been directed mainly at the formal school sector, and particularly at children 7 and older. Few programs have concentrated on children ages 4 to 6, and even fewer on children 3 and younger. Scarcely 20 percent of rural children under 6 currently receive either formal or non-formal preschool education. Moreover, research shows a link between the lack of access to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) and learning problems (including dropout and repetition) in the early grades of primary school.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

USAID chose to invest in early childhood and family education to help primarily poor, rural, and at-risk families more effectively promote stimulating developmental experiences for infants and young children in their homes and communities. Considering ECCE programs as a key investment in human and economic development, USAID

began supporting the Salvadoran Institute for the Protection of Minors (later known as ISNA) to ensure greater participation by local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and municipal governments in early childhood development.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The goal of this multifaceted activity is to implement a strategy targeting five distinct audiences: educators and caregivers, government institutions, the general public, children and their learning environments, and parent/community caregivers and untrained school-teachers. EDIFAM (Early Childhood Family Education Activity) is designed to improve the care and education of Salvadoran children, particularly poor and rural children, from birth through age 6.

The four integrated components of the project aim to do the following:

- Improve the technical skills of formal and non-formal caregivers and educators.
- Increase the cognitive, affective, physical, emotional, and psychomotor skills of at-risk children.
- Strengthen the ability of public and private sector institutions to provide early childhood care

and education services with improved quality.

- Increase the general awareness of the importance of child rearing skills.

Another component was subsequently added to rebuild and rehabilitate child-care centers damaged by the 2001 earthquakes.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

EDIFAM is providing training and technical assistance in the following areas:

- Early childhood family education outreach programs for teachers

and mothers through the Ministry of Education (MINED) Preschool Education Program.

- ECCE methodologies and messages for mothers, caregivers, health care workers, local authorities, and NGOs.
- Application of newly designed curriculum for formal and non-formal education.
- Effective policy implementation, advocacy, and strategic planning for ISNA.
- Increased national awareness and understanding of ECCE through nationally transmitted media messages.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

EDIFAM trained 450 preschool and 50 pedagogical advisers in ECCE theory and classroom methodologies—benefiting 13,000 children through improved preschool teaching practices. It also organized an International Early Childhood and Preschool Conference for 600 preschool teachers and 170 non-formal educators with innovative approaches for teaching practices.

A new ECCE curriculum for formal preschools and non-formal childcare centers, as well as a training manual for pedagogical advisers and teachers, was completed. EDIFAM also provided more than 16,000 culturally relevant books to 450 preschools, kindergartens, and day care centers.

EDIFAM trained 1,000 non-formal educators at ISNA and the Ministry of Health, thus benefiting 10,000 children through improved ECCE practices.

A multimedia social mobilization campaign—featuring Lola and Elmo of Sesame Street in posters, short books, and televised announcements—addresses issues relating to literacy, science, and the importance of play.

EDIFAM developed an improved parents' education module for 1,000 teachers and educators who have learned how to discuss better discipline practices with parents.



Training Ministry of Education personnel on improving policy implementation.

SSR

SOCIAL SECTOR REFORM

Implemented by Fundación Empresarial para el Desarrollo Educativo during phase 1 (through February 2002); American Institutes for Research and Academy for Educational Development during phase 2

Dates: September 1995 to June 2005

Funding: \$8,000,000

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

El Salvador's civil war of 1980–1992 left the country's education system with tremendous deficiencies in both access and quality. Many communities and schools were abandoned, and education funding levels were minimal.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

During the first phase of the Social Sector Reform (SSR) project, USAID provided training, equipment, materials, and technical assistance to the government, NGOs, and other private sector institutions through the Business Foundation for Educational Development (FEPADE). The program centered on training key groups of teachers and administrators to train other education sector leaders in support of education reform, and helped FEPADE assess the quality, coverage, and equity of education programs. SSR provided assistance to develop research capacity in local education organizations and MINED, thereby helping identify specific weaknesses in education quality. SSR also helped guide the development of national policy and promoted broad education reforms and investments in national policy debates.

During phase 2, USAID support concentrated on policy implementation, on

school governance issues, and on strengthening MINED's capacity to decentralize school management and carry out educational reforms. USAID has also helped school principals improve learning environments and student achievement in 250 rural schools.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

Through SSR, USAID has provided technical assistance to develop and strengthen basic education for the duration of the 10-Year Education Reform Plan. The goal has been to convene stakeholders from the private and public sectors, from non-governmental institutions, and from different cultural and economic backgrounds to come to consensus on actions that will improve quality with equity in education. A primary goal is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in three components:

- 1) national capacity to conduct educational research essential to the design and implementation of education reform,
- 2) training "agents of change" from the public and private sectors in social sector reform, and
- 3) national policy dialog in support of education reform.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

FEPADE's activities under SSR included development of a national education capacity study and training program for education researchers (called PROFINE), development and coordination of conferences on education topics and research, and publication of research studies, technical documents, and magazines. The founda-

tion also provided training and support to teacher training institutes, school advisory committees, and certificate/degree programs for MINED personnel. FEPADE assessed the quality, coverage, and equity of education programs; evaluated and guided the development of national policy; and promoted broad education reforms and investments in national policy debates.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

FEPADE was instrumental in the creation of a national certificate program, to guide change agents under SSR. The foundation also assisted in the development of school resource centers, strengthened national systems (including teacher certification and decentralization), and provided the foundation for greater private sector participation in education. It also increased youth participation in school advisory councils and developed youth leader modules.

FEPADE trained a network of 15 institutions in education research, developed an education research norms and procedures manual, and financed various research projects and studies (e.g., an analysis of early childhood education).

To promote policy dialog, FEPADE guided the development and definition of strategies, methodologies, and mechanisms to promote citizen participation and information sharing. It organized various events to promote interactive dialog on specific education themes and topics, published and distributed a pedagogical magazine and “Youth Identity” magazine series, and produced a collection of publications on the history of education in El Salvador. FEPADE also produced 12 national research publications and three series of educational materials (distributed to 35,000 people).

To see the results achieved under the second phase of SSR, please see the next section on EXCELL.



Facilitator working school principals in a reflection circle aimed at strengthening pedagogical leadership.

EXCELL

EXCELLENCE IN CLASSROOM EDUCATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Implemented⁹ by American Institutes for Research and Academy for Educational Development with the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation
Dates: July 2003 to June 2005
Funding: \$4,743,000

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Over the last decade, MINED has made progress in improving access to education, developing modern curricula, instituting new teaching strategies and testing systems, and decentralizing the national education system. Despite these reforms, the quality of education in the classroom is not improving rapidly. The capacity of MINED to implement reforms that reach the classroom and improve children's performance thus requires additional strengthening.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?¹⁰

Through EXCELL, USAID is assisting MINED in the following:

- Developing and improving its ability to implement effective educational reforms and policy.
- Improving the effectiveness of school principals in managing schools and improving pedagogical practices.
- Enhancing its analytical capacity in educational research.

Based on international literature documenting the pivotal role principals play

⁹ Under the USAID/Washington EQUIPI Project.

¹⁰ EXCELL, which constitutes phase 2 of SSR, was a project agreement between USAID and the Salvadoran government to continue to work on education quality.

in school effectiveness, EXCELL's strategy is to bring about excellence in rural schools primarily by strengthening the pedagogical leadership of school principals. The expectation is that better prepared principals will exercise improved instructional leadership vis-à-vis teachers, parents, and children—leading to improved classroom quality and educational policy.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

Following from SSR's emphasis on policy reform, EXCELL aims to bring the reforms to the classroom by addressing educational needs and priorities to improve student performance in at least 250 rural primary schools in six states. The three major project components are 1) strengthening MINED's capacity to improve decentralized school management, 2) improving learning conditions for student achievement (grades K–6) by improving school principals' leadership abilities, and 3) extending educational policy research for informed decision-making.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

One EXCELL component fosters MINED support for educational reform and student learning processes by strengthening its mid-level management. Roughly 150 managers receive training in planning and strategic management practices in order to implement education reform at the school level. Specifically, they are strengthening their capacity to transfer MINED policies and strategies into useful guidelines for principals as well as to process and analyze data for research, monitoring, and evaluation.

EXCELL's second component (and highest priority) strengthens principals' leadership skills and management competencies to ensure that administrative, organizational, and community activities serve to improve classroom learning conditions. The aim is to

strengthen the capacity of principals to be pedagogical leaders, and thus better support teachers in improving student learning. To do this, a professional development process is carried out in three phases:

1) Developing new knowledge through training sessions, 2) holding regular "reflection circles" with peers, or other principals, to reflect on applying theory to practice, and 3) applying new practices through innovative projects in the classroom.

The third component seeks to expand the knowledge base of MINED and the research community with regard to educational quality. Action research approaches involve stakeholders in critical and constructive reflection pertaining to educational reform. Policy and research forums are held to discuss pertinent topics, such as problems facing the education sector and effective strategies to improve quality.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

EXCELL achieved the following during its first year of implementation:

Numerous studies were completed for use in planning and decision-making at various management levels. These include profiles of 250 principals, diagnostic characteristics of schools, professional development needs of MINED mid-level managers, a baseline study measuring student learning improvements, and a quantitative profile of more than 50,000 teachers.

A diagnostic report on special education needs was prepared to better understand relevant legislation, coverage and quality issues, placement of services within the education system, and public investment in special education. The study results have been integrated into USAID's education sector assessment.

EXCELL sponsored a National Education Policy Forum in December 2003 to bring together national and international experts to analyze results from 10 years of educational reform, as well as proposed next steps for the coming decade. The results were disseminated through a professional-grade publication.

School principals, teachers, parents, and children from the 250 participating schools provided feedback on their respective expectations and visions of the principal's role in school. A total of 164 mid-level MINED managers participated in workshops and school visits highlighting priority management needs and effective school communication and support.

Through Quality Reflection Circles, "Pedagogical Innovation Projects" were prepared by principals and teachers to both improve learning in language and math and measure achievements. Results show greater motivation among students to learn math.



Festival generating teacher, parent, and community support for children's school attendance and learning.

ALCANCE

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE IN SUPPORT OF CHILDHOOD AND ITS CONTINUATION IN EDUCATION

Implemented by Pan American Development Foundation, World Vision, and Fundación Empresarial para el Desarrollo Educativo

Dates: June 2004 to June 2005

Funding: \$463,000

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Access to primary education has increased over the past decade, with about 80 percent of rural children now attending school. However, about 15 percent of these children are over-age, and many children frequently repeat grades and drop out before graduating. Among commonly cited reasons for not attending or dropping out of school are 1) the need to work and generate income and 2) the high costs involved (e.g., for supplies and uniforms). Since parental education is one of the strongest indicators for intergenerational education inequality, it is critical for—at a minimum—the poorest sectors to complete primary school to break future cycles of poverty.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

Salvadorans residing in the United States could make a significant contribution to this situation. The Diaspora population has shown tremendous solidarity with its home country in times of natural disaster and other moments of need. What often is lacking is the established institutional relationships and mechanisms to channel financial contributions into a program that can have a strong and lasting impact on

poor, rural populations.

USAID's innovative ALCANCE (for *Alianza de Comunidades Apoyando la Niñez y Su Continuación en la Educación*) pilot is the largest transnational alliance (i.e., direct programmatic/financial involvement of a constituency outside the target country in a program inside that country) funded by a Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Mission. It links a broad coalition of public and private sector groups in a unified development effort to support the Salvadoran education sector; targeting the participation of 21 Salvadoran hometown associations (HTAs) in the United States.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

ALCANCE addresses three broad objectives: 1) improving access to primary education and retention of poor, rural Salvadoran schoolchildren; 2) leveraging and channeling support of the private sector and U.S.-based Salvadoran groups for educational programs in their communities of origin; and 3) developing a sustainable implementation model that could involve transnational support to improve overall educational attainment in El Salvador beyond the one-year time frame.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

ALCANCE employs the following activities:

- A needs assessment and viability study to identify the causes of children dropping out of school, the most effective ways to create and sustain a mechanism to channel remittances-for-scholarships, and the support that HTAs are willing to provide to the program.
- Small scholarships—covering basic school supplies, uniforms, shoes, food, and transportation costs—to children in grades 1–3 in rural primary schools. Participating children also receive savings accounts in which \$2 per month accumulates based on their attendance throughout the school year.
- Educational interventions including needs-based school assistance packages concentrating on the neediest children in rural schools. ALCANCE is linking these interventions to community remittance flows and Salvadoran HTA contributions.
- Support for rural schools to improve teachers' skills in language and math as well as the overall classroom learning environment.
- Training and capacity-building sessions for HTAs to increase their organizational development and provide longer term capacity to participate in and manage future development activities.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

ALCANCE is testing two intervention models. Model A consists of a “mini-scholarship” of school materials, teacher training, parent-student workshops, and some small infrastructure support. However, this is feasible only within World Vision's operational areas, restricting potential HTA involvement. Model B establishes a \$25,000, one-to-one matching fund, wherein one dollar invested in the program by the HTA is matched with an ALCANCE dollar from the private sector (up to \$1,000 per school). The interventions vary between schools and are designed and implemented directly by HTAs in conjunction with their local counterparts, school directors, teachers, and parent-teacher associations. Employing these two models allows ALCANCE to maximize HTA participation in the initiative, target the broadest range of schools, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the respective pilot approaches.

ALCANCE has achieved the following results through the combination of Models A and B:

- More than 12,000 children have received benefits, and 77 schools have been involved in the program.
- A total of 1,429 children, 1,122 parents, and 98 teachers have participated in workshops to improve skills and further the education of children.
- Twenty-one Salvadoran migrant groups have actively participated.
- Nearly \$220,000 has been leveraged in HTA counterpart funds, volunteer time, and in-kind donations. And \$30,000 in corporate sponsorship has been raised, with an additional \$10,000 leveraged through another program.
- A total of 150 training and outreach sessions have been provided to Salvadoran HTAs.



Practice with preschoolers during the Ludotecas NAVES Diploma course.

HCD

HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Implemented by Development Associates, Inc.

Dates: October 1998 to December 2004

Funding: \$4,251,355

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS WERE ADDRESSED?

A major constraint to achieving USAID's objectives was that institutions—public and private, local and national—needed to be more efficient and productive. Although several USAID activities provided technical and management training for leaders in their corresponding sectors, the Human Capacity Development (HCD) Activity offered a Mission-wide mechanism to strengthen human resource capacity more consistently across sectors. HCD aimed to improve institutional performance in support of achievement of the Mission's Strategic Objectives (SOs) and overall strategy, including education. It also helped strengthen Salvadoran government and NGO commitment to actively participate and contribute to the sustainability of development goals.

WHAT DID USAID DO TO RESPOND?

The primary goal of HCD was “Improved transfer of technical and management skills.” The activity worked with counterpart organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) and other mission contractors to improve their skills—leading to greater impact at the SO level. HCD training

was implemented mostly through two indefinite quantity contracts¹¹ with USAID/Washington's Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade. Training included areas ranging from “Leadership and Best Practices for Training” to specific, technical subjects of high interest to the Mission.

WHAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The purpose of the activity was to improve the efficiency and productivity of public/private institutions and community leaders—particularly those contributing to democracy and development—by offering short- and long-term technical training opportunities for key Salvadoran personnel.

WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE INVOLVED?

HCD provided planning, implementation, monitoring, and follow-on services to all USAID technical offices and was designed to incorporate best training practices into all Mission training activities. The activity provided a variety of training-related services for Salvadoran government institutions and NGOs (e.g., workshops, conferences, seminars, technical assistance, on-the-job experience, training needs assessments, advisory/coordination services).

¹¹ The first mechanism was Global Training for Development (from October 1998 to August 2002). The second was Strategic Technical Assistance for Results with Training (known as START, beginning in December 2002).

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

Institutions benefiting from HCD training activities include the Ministries of Education, Economy, Finance, Labor, Public Health, Public Works, Governance, Agriculture, and Environment as well as the General Directorate of Energy and Telecommunications. Beneficiary NGOs included Fundación Salvadoreña de Salud y Desarrollo Social (FUSAL) (The Salvadoran Foundation for Health and Social Development) and Fundación para el Desarrollo Económico y Social (FUSADES) (The Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development) and microfinance institutions.

Based on the results of a training needs assessment, USAID developed a workshop to help build MINED capacity in curriculum development. To support the SABE Project¹² objective of improving the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of primary education, the activity included updating curricula in seven basic subject areas, printing new textbooks, and training teachers across the country.

HCD designed and implemented a training intervention in support of EDI-FAM titled Ludotecas NAVES diploma course. This course built technical capacity among library staff, university instructors, and members of educational organizations in the development, implementation, management, and evaluation of toy-lending libraries (ludotecas). These libraries encourage children to learn through educational play. The training also provided guidance in establishing a national plan to create ludotecas throughout El Salvador to reach the rural poor.

One of the largest series of training events featured 10 congresses for public school kindergarten teachers in August 1999. A total of 5,365 participants attended the congresses. The technical content included gender equity, crosscutting themes in kindergarten education, and teachers' roles in generating a participatory and equitable learning environment.

The National Congress on the Education of Girls convened educators and community and business leaders to explore the links between the commitment to girls' education and El Salvador's economic development. Regional conferences for kindergarten and early childhood teachers were held in October 2000. More than 4,400 educators participated in the Third National Congress on Preschool and Early Childhood Education.

HCD supported community leaders and the Ministries of Education and Environment in developing and implementing strategies for disaster mitigation and prevention. The results of these collaborative efforts were the production and large-scale distribution (35,000 copies) of a disaster prevention manual for use in schools and a series of community-centered disaster mitigation workshops for 550 participants throughout the country. Participants trained in those workshops then replicated the training nationally.

Training on "Teaching for Understanding," in support of USAID's EXCELL project, was provided to 420 participants.

In conjunction with the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, MINED adapted the module "Teaching Children with Mild to Moderate Retardation" to El Salvador's reality. More than 100 teachers were trained, and 6,000 copies of the module were delivered to MINED to be distributed to all schools in the country.

¹²The USAID-funded SABE (Strengthening Achievement in Basic Education) project was implemented by the Academy for Educational Development from 1990 to 1998.



A childcare center destroyed by the 2001 earthquake.

ERP

EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY PROGRAM

Implemented by Fondo de Inversión Social para el Desarrollo Local, Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social, and Fundación de Apoyo a Municipios de El Salvador¹³

Dates: June 2001 to November 2004

Funding: \$10,000,000

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS WERE ADDRESSED?

A devastating earthquake, measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale, ravaged El Salvador on January 13, 2001. A second earthquake, measuring 6.6, struck one month later. In the wake of these two disasters, there were more than 4,000 aftershocks. The human toll was devastating—1,159 dead and more than 8,100 wounded. In all, one fourth of the country's population was affected. There also was damage to 277,000 houses, more than 2,300 kilometers of roads, 2,647 public schools, and 40 percent of childcare centers, with total economic damages estimated to exceed \$2 billion.

WHAT DID USAID DO TO RESPOND?

U.S. government support for reconstruction activities totaled \$170 million¹⁴ under USAID's Earthquake Recovery Program. The ERP zeroed in on four principal areas, one of which restored basic community infrastructure for the rural poor (including schools, houses, health facilities, water systems). Every attempt was made to “build back better” to ensure that USAID investments withstand future

earthquakes to the maximum extent possible, with explicit concentration on the rural poor and areas most severely affected by the earthquakes.

WHAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

After the earthquakes, restoring school buildings became a major MINED objective. USAID thus allocated about \$10 million for school reconstruction and repair. The Mission also supported education in rural schools through policy changes that improved service delivery so that more students complete basic education on time and with adequate skills.

WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE INVOLVED?

ERP education activities were designed to 1) reconstruct and re-equip 53 damaged or destroyed schools and 2) reconstruct and repair at least 30 rural childcare centers.

USDA implemented a \$3.2 million food distribution program as part of the overall U.S. government-funded assistance.

¹³ For the reconstruction program, USAID has used different implementing mechanisms such as host country contracting and local and international NGOs.

¹⁴ This included \$10.8 million of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

As of October 2004, 47 schools were completed and 6 more were under construction—benefiting more than 20,000 students. A total of 29 rural childcare centers were also completed and equipped, a 30th under construction. The centers benefit more than 1,500 children under 6 and their families.

A series of community-centered disaster mitigation workshops were held throughout the country. Under its ERP program, USAID worked to build capacity for preventive maintenance and disaster mitigation in case of future earthquakes or other natural disasters. The mission supported the Ministries of Education and Environment, as well as community leaders, in developing and implementing strategies to meet this objective. This collaboration resulted in the production and large-scale distribution of a disaster prevention manual for use in schools. Ninety schools participated in the disaster prevention plan.

USDA completed a one-year food distribution program for a total of 152,000 children and elderly, as well as a targeted primary school feeding program benefiting 43,000 rural children.



Young girl who has benefited from the SAGE project.

SAGE

STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCING GIRLS' EDUCATION

Implemented in El Salvador by the Academy for Educational Development

Dates: September 2001 to July 2002

Funding: \$600,000¹⁵

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS WERE ADDRESSED?

El Salvador presented a unique set of circumstances. At first glance, girls' primary school enrollment rates were nearly equal to those of boys, but this picture masked (note that I took out the reference to rural and urban differences since there are no statistics on those differences) gender gaps in school retention, achievement, and completion. For example, according to the 1998 Household Survey, male school attendance was 34.2 percent while female school attendance was 30.7 percent. Average years of schooling was 5.1 for men but 4.8 for women. The illiteracy level was 17 percent for men and 22 percent for women. In addition, it is important to note that there are qualitative differences that are not reflected in statistics, such as stereotyping girls into traditional roles and having girls responsible for cooking and cleaning chores in the schools.

WHAT DID USAID DO TO RESPOND?

Girls' school attendance depends on many factors, including community norms, school accommodations, and

parents' expectations for their daughters. The Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE) project addressed all these factors in its multi-sectoral, top-down, and bottom-up strategy for increasing girls' enrollment in five countries: Congo, El Salvador, Ghana, Guinea, and Mali.

WHAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The primary objectives of SAGE were to 1) strengthen public and private sector institutions to promote girls' education, 2) improve the knowledge base of girls' education in order to better implement related policies, strategies, and programs, 3) mobilize leadership to promote girls' education, and 4) broaden and support local community participation. In El Salvador, the most important objective was to bring the importance of girls' education to socioeconomic development to the national agenda.

WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE INVOLVED?

The SAGE approach was characterized by its emphasis on engaging traditional and nontraditional partners across sectors in support of girls' education. Each country developed a unique program

¹⁵ Funded by USAID/Washington's Office of Women in Development.

based on the conditions that prevailed at the time of design. In El Salvador, the project worked to improve girls' educational achievement through a coordinated approach with a multisectoral alliance—including MINED and the National Secretariat of the Family—by doing the following:

- Organizing consciousness-raising and mobilization activities at the national level.
- Organizing roundtables for representatives of the media, businesses, NGOs, and religious leaders and organizations.
- Working with MINED on improving girl-friendly aspects of materials, textbooks, teacher training, and classroom management.
- Promoting activities outside the formal educational sphere that reach communities and students where they live and where local leaders can mobilize action to support girls' education.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

SAGE facilitated four gender workshops to train some 250 educational counselors. With their participation, gender-sensitive teacher manuals were developed. SAGE also implemented a gender-oriented workshop to teach 100 Juvenile Brigade volunteers to integrate girls' education issues into their community work.

For SAGE to successfully bring girls' education to the national agenda in El Salvador, three highly publicized roundtables were undertaken—one with the business and media sectors, the second with the religious community, and the third with NGOs and civil society organizations. Each roundtable was chaired by El Salvador's First Lady, who also participated in many other project activities.

SAGE developed three important partnerships with the business community. The first was with Pollo Campero, one of the country's largest restaurant chains, which produced 50,000 placemats with a positive message for girls' education. A fictional character was used to motivate girls to stay in school through the message: "You can also be a Camperonix girl—if you go to school, perform well in school, and if you are interested in your own and your country's development." A second business partnership was with Arrocería San Francisco, a Salvadoran rice distributor, which put a "Support Girls' Education!" message on 20,000 bags of rice and beans. Textbook publisher Educational Services Editors also placed a motto on the back cover of every book it published: "Girls' Education: A door to development."

Several media partnerships were developed, including one with a radio broadcasting company that agreed to air 10 girls' education spots featuring local celebrities. La Prensa Gráfica, the leading Salvadoran newspaper, donated space to publish SAGE messages nationwide in 15 issues of its insert devoted to children's issues. SAGE contributions normally took the form of photo essays on outstanding local girls/teenagers in academics, sports, arts, and technology. In honor of International Women's Day, SAGE published an article about the importance of girls' education for the country's development. The final issues were dedicated to a contest in which young children sent in drawings and older children sent in essays about girls' education.

No Photo

PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENTS AND RESEARCH FOR POLICY DIALOGUE

Implemented by: (Kristin, please provide)

Dates: 2002 to 2006

Funding: (Kristin, please provide)

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?



Countries around the world are being challenged to respond to changes in economic power and the means to attain this power. To participate actively in a global economy, new capacities and competencies such as the ability to think complexly, resolve problems, and communicate and work with other people, are being demanded of people. These skills, or the “new basic skills” (Murnane, R. and Levy, F., 1996) can be built upon the foundation of traditional basic reading, writing, and math skills. While the challenge of countries is improving their education systems to assure that children acquire the traditional basic skills, others are also actively seeking to implement changes in order to develop these new competencies for competing in a global market.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

From 2002–2005, the USAID/El Salvador worked with the Ministry of Education (MINED) and various other key stakeholders in supporting a series of participatory assessments and studies that led to education policy change.

This was carried out in the context of political change and the shaping of a new national education agenda. To inform the policy formulation process, different approaches were used, ranging from international researchers persuading policy makers to analyze new policy options to researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders working together to construct new knowledge.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The objective of the program was to conduct an assessment of El Salvador's education system, focusing on primary education (preschool through 9th grade). With around 20 percent of the country's children out of school due to the twelve-year conflict (1980–1992), severely deteriorated school conditions, and a shortage of qualified teachers, the analysis focused on issues related to expanding access and improving quality. Assessment findings were to contribute to the development of a 2005–2009 comprehensive strategy, which includes an education plan designed to bring about improvements in the education sector in El Salvador.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

USAID/EI Salvador orchestrated a process of analyzing what areas of the education system to support as part of the 2005–2009 strategy. This process involved a variety of education policy dialogue activities during 2003 and 2004. The analysis/assessment process used several participatory assessment strategies—dialogue and communication with key stakeholders, joint research teams, focus groups and roundtable discussions—that had proven successful in a previous 10-year assessment. The team to carry out this assessment was a combination of international and local education experts, several of which were also part of the participatory assessment team of 1993.

By a thorough review of relevant evaluations, studies, and policy documents and in-depth interviews and focus groups with stakeholders from the government, non-government organizations, think tanks, school and community members, teachers, administrators, school principals, and others, the research team produced a preliminary assessment, which consisted of eight chapters, identifying issues related to pre-school, basic education, inequalities in education, teacher education, decentralization,

standards and testing, education finance, and donor coordination. Using these preliminary findings as a basis, USAID then convened a three-day forum consisting of a main forum and a series of roundtable sessions to discuss each of these topics. The objective of each roundtable session was to reach a consensus on priorities, or goals, for the education sector through exchange of knowledge and experience about the most effective strategies to achieve these goals. Approximately 200 people attended, including decision-makers and stakeholder from MINED, Salvadoran public and private universities, local NGOs and think tanks, donor organizations, teachers, principals, students, and parents. Through extensive dialogue, the different groups were able to build upon the findings in the assessment, enriching the analysis and providing viable interventions to improve policies and programs.

In addition to the roundtable sessions, a questionnaire was distributed to each participant to gather their opinions about policy priorities. Participants rated interventions (on a scale from 1–100) in terms of their probable effect in improving education quality (or more specifically, student learning) as well as the viability of this intervention being implemented.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

While it is not possible to attribute the government's new policy and program priorities to this process, it is very likely that it contributed to both informing the policy analysis process and generating stakeholder buy-in. At least two issues that were highlighted in the assessments findings and discussed in the education policy dialogue were included as priorities in the new education plan: effective. In addition, this process generated increased awareness among the various stakeholders and facilitated a dialogue in which people could exchange views. Finally, perhaps one of the most important outcomes of this participatory assessment was that it led to a wider, more encompassing assessment of the entire sector, from early childhood to higher education, involving the major donors and various local think tanks and NGOs.



Children look at books that were donated by Scholastic as part of the CETT program.

REGIONAL PROJECTS

CETT: CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING

Implemented in El Salvador by Fundación Empresarial para el Desarrollo Educativo
 Dates: October 2002 to September 2008¹⁶
 Funding: \$8,497,683

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Educational achievement indicators for the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) compare poorly with much of the world's other regions. In some LAC countries, fewer than 60 percent of children who start school reach the fifth grade, and illiteracy remains high. These educational gaps limit the personal, economic, and civic potentials of children and the communities in which they live. On a regional level, the economic competitiveness of Latin America and the Caribbean is severely constrained.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

In view of these regional challenges, President Bush announced a White House initiative at the Summit of the Americas in 2001 to establish three teacher training centers (in Central America and the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean, and the Andean region of South America) to improve reading instruction in the early primary grades. The Central American and the Dominican Republic (CADR) CETT is led by a consortium of partners in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador,

Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua. It is estimated that 15,000 teachers and 500,000 students in 1,000 primary schools region-wide will have benefited by 2006.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The goal of the initiative is to reduce the high rates of illiteracy and school underachievement in the region by improving reading instruction in grades 1-3. CETT activities are intended to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers and administrators in the region and to enrich early classroom instruction so that students gain competence in reading and writing. To address equity concerns, special emphasis is placed on disadvantaged communities and rural areas.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

There are five major CETT program components: 1) teacher training, 2) creation of teaching and learning materials, 3) production of assessment and diagnostic tools, 4) applied research, and 5) information and communication technology. Partner institutions in each country (except

¹⁶ Anticipated completion date.

Nicaragua) are responsible for developing a specific program component with materials, methodologies, and best practices shared across the consortium within the Central American context.

FEPADE is leading the social marketing area for the Central American CETT to produce a marketing plan and establish future CETT funding.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

In collaboration with other CETT countries, FEPADE has compiled a database of private enterprises as a resource for future CETT activity support. It has also produced a plan and a model of promotional social marketing materials for the region.

FEPADE is currently collaborating with CETT implementing partner INMED on the production of CNN television spots to advertise the program (with USAID financing). These accomplishments benefit all five countries that have worked closely together to improve reading instruction under the CETT program.

Participating CETT members in El Salvador contributed to the development and application of instructional materials, a published teacher training model design, and the “Diagnostic and Evaluation Model” for target schools in the country. As a result of these and other combined efforts, the Salvadoran CETT team has reached 262 schools. It has trained 410 first grade teachers in Chalatenango, in addition to 88 second grade and 80 third grade teachers. Training and follow-up have been provided to primary school principals and counselors.

While no official test score comparisons will be available until the end of 2005, CETT program evaluations have demonstrated that teachers and children are engaging with reading and writing in new and interactive ways that are conducive to improving learning.



A group of students and teachers analyzing information about their school that was collected for the School Report Card.

REGIONAL PROJECTS

CERCA: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR EDUCATION REFORM IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Implemented by the Academy for Educational Development

Dates: October 2002 to January 2006

Funding: \$3,500,000 overall funding; \$2,700,000 country-specific amount

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

In working to improve the quality of their education sectors, most Central American countries target activities within their national borders rather than engage in regional problem-solving. This is also the case with regard to community participation. Despite evidence that it can improve educational quality, little has been done on a regional basis to actively engage local communities and potential stakeholders in supporting education, nor in holding schools and policy-makers accountable for the quality of education being provided.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

CERCA (*Compromiso Cívico Para la Reforma de la Educación en Centroamérica*) is designed to address this gap by creating a knowledge base within the region that allows stakeholders at the local level to take steps toward educational improvements. The model is geared toward proactive community participation at the school level in five countries (the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua) as a strategy to improve educational efficiency and quality in Central America. The

support of local education communities in collecting and analyzing information more directly reflects and informs the condition of schools in relation to equity, coverage, service quality, and educational goals.

The resulting information is referred to as the School Report Card (SRC). The objectives of the report card system are to define a process that motivates the local education community to become involved in activities to improve quality; validate indicators and school report formats to guide future implementation; identify local stakeholders' information needs that will generate actions to improve school conditions and performance; and consolidate a defined model on which to base a pilot in 2005.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

CERCA aspires to strengthen the forces for improving education quality in the five participating countries by doing the following:

- Creating a shared vision among key national and community level stakeholders, including those within the education profession, regarding how local civic engagement contributes to

- improving educational quality.
- Facilitating collaborative action among public sector and civil society stakeholders within each country to achieve changes in policies and practices that promote greater participation by parents, communities, and teachers themselves.
- Creating broad, well-informed, and well-articulated constituencies in each of the countries to ensure the sustainability of reform efforts over time.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INVOLVED?

CERCA generates information on local education conditions that reaches parents and local communities in a way that motivates them to proactively improve basic education in their localities and throughout Central America. Activities include a case study in each of the five target countries (in conjunction with the EXCELL Project), the design and testing of a School Report Card, and a regional workshop for stakeholders to define strategic opportunities.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

In November 2004, CERCA brought together at a regional workshop key national and community-level education stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. These stakeholders committed to a shared vision of improving education quality through local civic engagement, and established country-based “stakeholder groups.” Meeting monthly and with a rotating leadership, the El Salvador education stakeholder group includes Ministry officials, a municipal mayor, an elementary school teacher, a private bank executive, a member of the National Assembly, education experts, and a representative from USAID. Although coming from diverse sectors that are sometimes in conflict, they have actively built upon the body of knowledge that CERCA has developed about citizen participation that improves education quality.

The El Salvador stakeholder group has planned and carried out activities ranging from broadcasting educational television programs featuring topics related to parents' and community support for improved schools, to collecting and disseminating examples of teacher innovation, to making an inventory of municipal-level efforts to monitor and support education quality.

CERCA's 2004 research, which included two El Salvador case studies, contributed policy-relevant knowledge about the kinds of local participation that most help education quality and the factors that promote or impede the engagement of local constituencies.¹⁷

CERCA has developed the school-level report cards as a tool for parents and communities to assess the quality of education in their schools. It has been testing the SRC model in 15 schools in El Salvador as well as in schools in four neighboring countries. School-level report cards are a useful and effective tool for engaging school personnel, parents, students, and community members in improving school quality. The stakeholder group is actively visiting schools to promote and monitor the SRC approach. The MINED has decided to take the SRCs nationally by incorporating them into the school planning, monitoring, and (self) evaluation process.

¹⁷The synthesis report of 13 case studies in five countries is available in Spanish and English on CERCANET.org.



CASS rural indigenous teachers provide young adults and learners from rural communities with technical education, job training, and leadership skills development.

REGIONAL PROJECTS

CASS: COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION OF STATES FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Implemented by the Center for Intercultural Education and Development of Georgetown University with 18 currently participating U.S. academic institutions
Date: May 2003 to April 2008
Funding: \$50,000,000

WHAT EDUCATION PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED?

Despite evidence of progress in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, much of the region's population still lives in poverty, natural resources are endangered, and the future stability of these countries is threatened by the re-emergence of serious infectious diseases and substandard primary education systems. The CASS program empowers people to address these urgent needs by investing in the region's human resources through technical training.

CASS training and follow-on efforts address USAID's development strategy of *"expanding democracy and free markets while improving the lives of the citizens of the developing world."* Furthermore, CASS programs are directed toward achieving the EGAT Bureau's strategic objectives, which are:

- **Private Sector Development:** CASS prepares a cadre of technically trained young professionals for entry-level employment. They are trained to support businesses in the private sector with technical know-how and management skills that will make a significant difference. CASS graduates strengthen the local

economy, which in turn attracts domestic and foreign investment.

- **Trade Development:** CASS graduates are equipped with skills that increase the ability of the industries that hire them to export and sell products outside of their countries. In addition to the technical training in fields such as biomedical technology, computer information technology, electromechanical technology, quality control, quality management, and telecommunications, each graduate is conversant in English, has had experience in a professional internship in a related business, and has important and relevant contacts in the U.S.
- **Agricultural Development:** As agriculture is still a major component of the region's economic base, CASS training provides participants the skills necessary to promote agricultural development and food security by expanding production, access to markets and trade and investment in agriculture.
- **Micro-enterprise Development and Poverty Alleviation:** Entrepreneurship is a central part of many CASS programs. CASS targets poor people and

gives them the skills necessary to increase their income and assets, thereby gaining the means to improve their personal welfare and that of their families. Many start their own businesses, increase the skill and productivity base of the economy, and enhance its capacity to grow.

In summary, the primary goal of CASS training is to improve the region's human capacity by educating disadvantaged people and providing them with useful, technical skills that enable productive and meaningful lives.

WHAT IS USAID DOING TO RESPOND?

The Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships (CASS) is an international scholarship program that has been administered for USAID by Georgetown University's Center for Intercultural Education and Development (CIED) over the past two decades. The program, which provides two years of technical training and short-term professional training, is designed to improve the human capacity and potential for sustainable development in Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic). The program focuses on high school graduates and rural professionals from socio-economically disadvantaged populations (e.g., rural, women, persons with disabilities, low-income).

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM?

The primary objective of the program is to provide young adults and leaders from rural communities in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean technical education, job training and leadership skills development. Beyond training individuals, the ultimate objective of CASS is to foster the development of people who will become agents of change—assuming the responsibility of sharing their knowledge and skills to produce a positive social and economic impact within their communities. Participants return home with personal, academic and technical skills that will enable them to continue growing professionally, share the benefits of their training with others and make positive contributions to the development of their democratic countries.

In addition to academic training, CASS students typically receive English instruction, complete internships with U.S. businesses, perform volunteer work, and participate in events that expose them to U.S. political, economic and social systems.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE/WERE INVOLVED?

CASS students are trained in U.S. community colleges and universities so that they are able to obtain a job upon return to their home countries. Study areas are determined by a comprehensive annual study of country development needs and employment trends. One-year (and sometimes six-month) scholarships are granted for

professional training in microfinance, rural health management, prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission among high risk populations, agricultural cooperative strengthening and strengthening of rural primary education.

Two-year CASS scholarships focus on technical training for high school graduates. Current CASS technical fields of study for Cycle 2006 include: Quality

Control, Industrial Management/Electronics Technology, Integrated Natural Resources Technology, Agribusiness for Export, Small and Medium Enterprise Management and Marketing, and Water Management and Reclamation.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

The CASS program has a proven success record and has trained over 5,000 participants in the region. The program has a 99 percent returnee rate of all trained scholars and has successfully met the objectives of incorporating women, rural, indigenous, and disabled people into training programs. Ninety-five percent (95 percent) of participants successfully complete their training programs. Employment is the truest measure of success and 92 percent of alumni are employed in their home countries (more than 75 percent are working in a field of study directly related to their CASS training).

CASS two-year alumni have become top level managers in local industries and many hold key positions in local community organizations, and the NGO sector. CASS Professional Program alumni are strengthening local community schools, many holding posts as school directors or rural department educational resource specialists. CASS alumni are now managers of rural agricultural cooperatives, administer rural health care systems and operate key positions in the fight against HIV/AIDS transmission with the most at-risk populations throughout the region.

PART 3

IMPACTS, LESSONS, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

IMPACT OF USAID EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

USAID has made a significant impact on the education sector over the past five years, particularly in the geographic areas where activities are centered. Overall, the number of children in schools affected by USAID basic education programs (an Agency-wide performance indicator) was roughly 150,000 in 2003. Major achievements and results are summarized below.

- By June 2005, USAID expects that 250,000 rural children under age 6 will be receiving better early childhood care and education services, and the academic performance of 43,500 children in 250 rural schools will have improved.
- More than 1,500 non-formal educators and preschool teachers have been trained in improved education and childcare methodologies, resulting in nearly 25,000 children receiving better childcare.
- USAID assistance in improving early childhood education resulted in a new early childhood and kindergarten curriculum (formal and non-formal) for children under 3, which will be used in public schools and childcare centers nationally in 2005.
- USAID support to the Ministry of Education (MINED) to conduct policy research and dialog with a variety of education stakeholders about national education priorities has contributed to shaping the new national education agenda.
- USAID made a significant contribution to the administration of public schools when its partner FEPADE (the Business Foundation for Educational Development) recommended, and MINED implemented, a new policy requiring schools to go from a two-principal to a one-principal system. The new system has streamlined decision-making and improved school management.

Principals and teachers reading theory and sharing experiences about improving learning opportunities in schools.





A group of CASS students who have benefited from technical training and short-term professional training.

- The Social Sector Reform program played an important role in strengthening training institutions that provide services to MINED, school advisory councils, and teacher training and quality control mechanisms. It also helped foster the use of new learning resources and innovations in schools.
- Over the course of the Human Capacity Development (HCD) activity, 522 training activities were implemented for nearly 25,000 participants across all mission Strategic Objectives (SOs), representing diverse sectors. More than 90 percent of these activities took place in El Salvador, reflecting the priority given to in-country training.
- USAID has recently supported several participatory assessments and studies, including 1) an assessment of basic education based on stakeholder feedback to define priorities for the education sector and 2) a study on educational equity challenges that analyzed the distribution of resources to different socioeconomic groups. These processes have helped shape education policy, as reflected in the government's current priority on improving basic reading, writing, and math skills and ensuring equitable education spending.
- Civic Engagement in Education Reform in Central America's program of research and strategic engagement of key stakeholders has created new knowl-

edge about how local participation improves quality, as well as the factors that promote or impede such participation. The program has also demonstrated the use of School Report Cards as an approach for constructively engaging schools and communities in improving education quality. This has enabled national and school-level stakeholders in the five countries to commit to work together to create conditions for local participation to improve quality.

- Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE) succeeded in putting the issue of girls' education on the national agenda. Through its partnerships with the media, including the leading newspaper and radio broadcasting company, SAGE brought the nation's attention to this topic and garnered considerable private sector support.

LESSONS LEARNED/ BEST PRACTICES

I USAID and other donors should support innovations for longer than 4–8 years, the traditional project timeframe, to allow sufficient time for implementation, sustainability, and institutionalization to take place. This is particularly true in complex interventions depending on the interaction of large numbers of people, which may take 1 to 1 ½ years to develop. Such interventions should allow time for a complete project cycle.

2. Continuous and detailed communications should be fostered with each level of the Ministry of Education and information shared widely. Experience has shown that MINED is a multi-faceted entity with a variety of political, policy, and technical needs and interests. In communicating with the Ministry, projects should not assume that information and agreements shared with one counterpart department necessarily reflect either the institution's overall position or that of other MINED offices.

3. Participatory project design can add great value. EXCELL promotional activities proved very useful in obtaining stakeholder feedback on the project's design. Presenting EXCELL to staff at various levels of the Ministry improved its strategic and operational design and garnered goodwill for the project. While it is important to empower participants by involving them in the design, it is also important to respect existing levels of authority and communication channels. Open, regular communication, clear roles and responsibilities, and consensus building among all levels of authority minimize conflicts and misunderstandings.

4. Involving community stakeholders can add great value as well. Involving community members in critical and constructive reflection to identify both the problems in their school and in the education sector can generate momentum towards taking actions to improve education at the school and national levels.

5. Management structures should be streamlined. The EXCELL management structure was designed to maximize the opportunities for various partner organizations to contribute their institutional experience and expertise. However, this made project management quite cumbersome. Project design must ensure clear lines of management, responsibility, and resource allocation across the board for each of its tasks and activities that take into consideration the individual practices and strengths of each institution.

6. Professional development “reflection circles” should be considered as one possible mechanism for strengthening principals' work, and thus the reading, writing, and thinking skills of rural students. In EXCELL, these reflection circles consisted of regular meeting of small groups of school principals that allowed them to share experiences and reflect on applying new knowledge and theory in practice in their schools. These circles were recognized as key opportunities for interaction between principals. Despite occasional problems in carrying out these circles, results were positive, and in some cases the circles continued to operate after the project ended. The Ministry of Education is contemplating using these circles as a professional and institutional development strategy.

7. Direct involvement of teachers and pedagogical advisors strengthens the quality of instructional interventions at the school level. One of the primary lessons from EXCELL is that training, as



Mission Director, Mark Silverman , giving a speech in front of the table of honor including the Ambassador, First Lady, Minister of Education, and Minister of Health (from left to right).

an institutional intervention strategy, must proceed through a multi-level and coordinated intervention. An alternative to a cascade training model, where information is passed through various levels before reaching the classroom teacher; this process integrates various levels (teachers, principals, supervisors, and advisors) in the same training exercises. This direct involvement helps to ensure that all receive the same information and creates synergy, cooperation, and a sense of team.

8. Appropriate timing for training is an important element of any successful professional development program. Again from EXCELL, experiences suggest that defining an appropriate time for professional development should be addressed both by the Ministry and USAID. Conducting training during the regular work day can interrupt work assignments and time in school. Conducting training on Saturdays takes away from a professional's personal time. Given the need for teacher professional development, future technical support to the MOE should consider plans for distributing time throughout the school year for teacher professional development so that neither instructional time nor personal time are severely compromised.

9. School-level technical assistance is an effective follow-up training mechanism. While effective, however, this aspect is also challenging to implement. Having technical assistance at each school is costly to implement and presents great challenges in terms of sustainability.

10. Conducting participatory assessments and research on education and using these findings to generate informed public dialogue is a useful strategy for influencing education policy and interventions. There are different approaches to use—from researchers defining problems and leading interpretation of results, to policy-makers defining the problems and working collectively with stakeholders to brainstorm solutions. Timing and context should be taken into account in determining the most effective approach.

11. Strengthening local capacity to contribute to sustained impact of interventions can be used as a strategy in different types of interventions. In EXCELL, for example, local researchers in the government and non-government sectors were trained to conduct qualitative research as part of the research process. Capacity to conduct this type of research was strengthened. It is important to reach an agreement with the governmental counterparts to allow their staff to dedicate sufficient time for these processes.

12. Development training should be designed to ensure personal and institutional performance improvements and subsequent achievement of impact-oriented results. The program in El Salvador was one in a series of training and HCD programs that pioneered many concepts that are now invoked as best practices by USAID. Concepts such as intensive sector needs assessments, training for a critical mass of participants, and focus on

training transfer from the initial stages of training design were recognized in the El Salvador training programs throughout the late 1980s and 1990s.

13. The success of training largely depends on the institutions' and participants' commitment to create change.

Training design, selection of participants, and follow-up support must be developed by training providers in coordination with participants, their immediate supervisors, and USAID in order to ensure applicability at the institutional level. Actions to be undertaken by the participants as a result of their training program will be more successful if supported by their supervisors and the institution. All interested parties should participate in all phases of the process.

14. Support from prominent leaders helps to promote a program's success.

One of the important lessons from SAGE is that the involvement of prominent political leaders—in this case, the First Lady of El Salvador—brings immediate national attention to the project. The fact that the First Lady hosted each of the roundtables given, spoke at each session, and spoke at the awards ceremony lent great credibility to the issue.

15. Participant training programs should regularly be reviewed and modified or refined based on evaluation outcomes.

According to a 2002 program evaluation, CASS has introduced key changes to adapt to changing

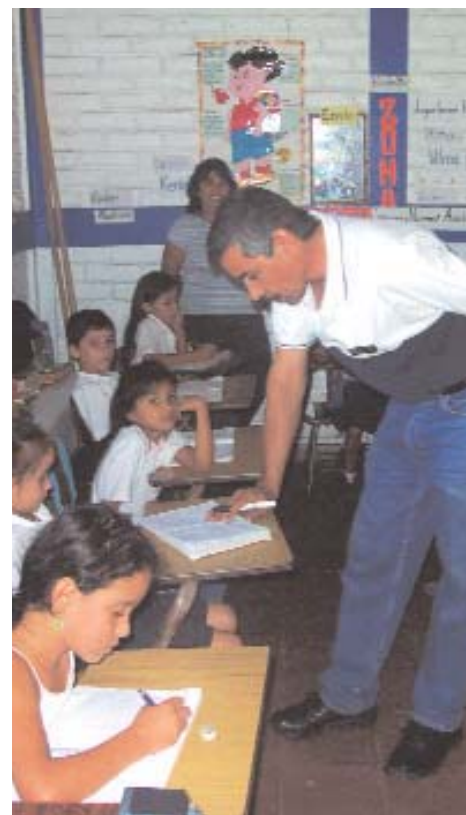
circumstances and incorporate lessons learned, including 1) a reduction in the number of countries served to reflect evolving USAID priorities and economic conditions in the LAC region, 2) improvements in pre-departure orientation and re-entry workshops to address students' needs, 3) an internship requirement for all trainees, 4) the addition of new community colleges and fields of study, and 5) an increase in the number of scholarships awarded to disadvantaged groups.

16. The processes being developed under the ALCANCE pilot project for working transnationally with a diaspora population on development objectives represent an important contribution—not only to education in El Salvador, but also to policymakers seeking viable mechanisms for how to increase the levels and the impact of community remittances on development.

17. Participation of the private sector in development initiatives can be important for both leveraging resources and political support.

Private sector support contributed to the success of many of the projects (ALCANCE, SAGE, EXCELL, EDIFAM, CETT). The donation of story books, materials, air time for the campaigns, as well as cash made it possible for the interventions to have even greater impact. Also, the involvement of the private sector has helped to forge new relationships and generate more private sector support for development.

First and second grade class writing experience based stories.



18. Team building can be a key factor for success in large, complex projects in order to build trust and empowerment. At the beginning of the EDIFAM activity, there was a lack of communication and coordination between public and private sector organizations working in the field of early childhood care and education (ECCE). The first phase of the project put a strong emphasis on team building and developing a shared vision, which built the foundation for a successful program, resulting in improvements in the quality and coverage of national ECCE services.

19. The use of an advisory committee has been a successful strategy for maintaining high-level political support and a feedback loop for project interventions. Under EXCELL, a committee of national education and development experts met regularly to discuss the theory and practice of the approaches implemented in the schools. Their feedback helped to enrich the interventions and link them to the national education policy dialogue.

20. Establishing alliances between the national and local governments, NGOs, key community actors, media, and the private sector can be a successful strategy for developing awareness and placing traditionally neglected issues on the policy agenda. Under EDIFAM, two national ECCE campaigns were carried out, with the involvement of the First Lady's office, NGOs, Sesame Street, UNICEF, the Ministries

of Health and Education, and local actors. The development of the new preschool and kindergarten curriculum was also produced with the involvement of these and other stakeholders. The alliances established through these processes helped to generate a political and social commitment to ECCE.

21. It is important to maintain a balance between drawing upon both local capacity and international technical assistance in order to strengthen local capacity while also introducing new practices. Throughout the different projects, an ongoing issue was how to respect and strengthen national education plans and interventions and hire local experts, while also bringing in international expertise and implement ideas and approaches that have been successful in other contexts. Maintaining ongoing dialogue with the national counterparts and reaching consensus were key in achieving this balance, as was developing teams of international and local experts that worked closely together. This has led to the introduction of new practices while also strengthening local capacity.

22. The role of the external researcher should be carefully determined based on timing and contextual factors. While it is important to have local input and leadership in developing new education policy, an external researcher/technical consultant can play an important role—whether it is to introduce new concepts or constructs, participate in shaping research designs, helping to use specialized research methods to

process information and interpret results, contributing to developing national capacity, or exchanging points of view based on his/her experience. The role that this/these researchers should play should be carefully analyzed and defined at the outset.

23. Paradigms change slowly, and often, for this to happen, it is necessary to stimulate a process in which people critically reflect on their existing assumptions (Boggino, N. and Rosekrans, K. 2004). This can be done incrementally or through stimulated experiences that cause people to put into question their existing assumptions. It is helpful to have divergent perspectives represented in order to cause one to put into question deeply held assumptions, which implies opening spaces for divergent perspectives. While political and contextual factors may limit this, it is best to strive for this when possible (while also using tactics to steer away from ideological discussions and center on common views). Time should be allowed for a reiterative process of dialogue and collective construction of knowledge, systematization of decisions, and more collective construction.

EDUCATION SECTOR PROSPECTS IN EL SALVADOR

Presidential candidate Antonio Saca won the national election in March 2004 with 58 percent of the vote. Saca

subsequently appointed a new Minister of Education who intends to initiate a long-term National Education Plan (“Plan 2021”) to allow sufficient time to achieve results, preserve momentum through changes in government, and set goals that coincide with the country’s 200th year of independence. With the previous 10-Year Education Reform Plan coming to an end in 2005, the new Minister has already brought a multitude of stakeholders together to set national goals beyond those of Education for All, which is the global vehicle by which education and literacy issues are being addressed.

As a first step toward the ambitious Plan 2021, MINED devised a five-year plan to follow through on the previous Ministry’s concern with Educational Quality and Equity as a Responsibility of All.¹⁸ The 2004–2009 plan intends to bring change to all levels of education. This will be achieved in the early grades, for example, through an integrated series of reading and writing learning models, including the teaching of English as a second language in public schools. Technology is also seen as a fundamental pillar of the education process for El Salvador to compete in the global economy.

A nationwide research effort has already been launched to encourage participation and ownership by all Salvadorans, including those living overseas. A report of the findings will be submitted to a Presidential

¹⁸This effort concentrated on improving education policies and donor coordination with programs to raise the average educational level of the population and reduce gaps between regions and socioeconomic groups, as well as between public and private sector schools. Efforts continue to empower citizens to participate in modern society and incorporate parents and communities in the education process for girls and boys.

Commission over a three-month period. The commission will design the 17-year plan based on this information. Implementation and follow-up of the plan will be coordinated by MINED through a network of institutions consisting of non-governmental organizations, universities, businesses, and other stakeholders.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR USAID/EL SALVADOR

Education is the key to El Salvador's future economic success. The age of globalization and increased competitiveness means that El Salvador needs to strengthen its basic education system so that all children complete primary education with the basic competencies necessary to continue to secondary education and to work in a service sector and light industry-based economy. Improved academic competencies, higher order thinking, teamwork, and exposure to information technology are all necessary to prepare citizens to compete in a global economy and live in a democratic society.

USAID's education program will be implemented within the framework of the government's Plan 2021. Based on a national consultation, assessments, and the Millennium Goals, the Plan aims to improve education completion rates and increase the competitiveness of the workforce. USAID assistance will center on preschool and primary education policies, the development of rural school networks, teacher training,

material development, and computer-based teaching technologies.

The basic education component will concentrate both on policy and institutional changes to improve system-wide education quality and student learning in some 500 rural primary schools, many of which are in the poorest regions of the country. To ensure sustainability, USAID will work through and strengthen the new policies and programs of MINED, including the two programs COMPRENDO and REDES.

COMPRENDO is designed to improve language and math skills in children up to grade 6 and will be implemented in 110 schools in 2005, with an emphasis on first grade. The program will expand to second grade in 2006, with a possible national expansion depending on its success. REDES organizes rural schools in "clusters" of four to nine schools to improve efficiency in resource distribution, including access to higher grade levels and resources for quality improvement for small schools. REDES will be implemented in 180 of the poorest schools in 2005, and expanded to roughly 800 schools by 2009. The USAID component will work in 60 networks and cover at least 480 schools.

Through 2008, program performance will be measured at the SO level through the Central America and Mexico Regional Strategy performance indicators (currently under development). USAID/El Salvador anticipates achieving results in the following areas under its new Country Plan:

- Increased and more efficient MINED expenditures.
- Private sector alliances established.
- Improved access, quality, and efficiency of basic education.
- Innovative approaches applied to increase and improve educational opportunities.

SUGGESTED READING

For more on EDIFAM (the Early Childhood Family Education Activity), see the following reports/Web sites:

- *EDIFAM: Early Education Through the Family—Final Report. 2002.* (Available online at www.mccneb.edu/elsalvador/EDIFAM%20Final%20Rpt%20Barb.doc).
- EDIFAM home page (www.mccneb.edu/elsalvador).
- EQUIPI/EDIFAM home page (www.equip123.net/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=293&z=16).
- "Early Childhood Family Education Activity (EDIFAM)—El Salvador." (International Education Systems. N.d. EDIFAM fact sheet. Available at ies.edc.org/projects/elsalvador.htm).
- (www.equip123.net/equip1/edifam/default.htm).

For more on Excellence in Classroom Education at the Local Level, see the following reports/Web sites:

- *Equidad Calidad Educativa y Desarrollo en El Salvador.* (EQUIPI Project. Available at www.equip123.net/equip1/excell/docs/Equidad.zip).
- EXCELL. 2003. (Brochure in Spanish. Available at www.equip123.net/equip1/excell/docs/exc_brochure.pdf).
- EXCELL home page and newsletter (www.equip123.net/equip1/excell/default.htm).

For more on ALCANCE (Community Alliance in Support of Childhood and Its Continuation in Education), see the following reports/Web sites:

- *Program ALCANCE: A Study Analysis of the Diaspora Community's Interest.* (Gammage, Sarah, and Corrie Drummond. 2004. Washington, D.C.: Pan-American Development Foundation. Available at www.panamericancommunities.org/_Rainbow/Images/UploadedImages/Viability%20Study%20nov%202004.doc).
- *Increasing the Impact of Community Remittances on Education in El Salvador.* (Pan American Development Foundation. 2005. Available at www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNADE002.pdf).

For a complete list of the training activities implemented under the Human Capacity Development activity, see the following report/Web site:

- *Final Report: Human Capacity Development/El Salvador, October 1998 Through August 2002 and December 2002 through February 2004.* (Development Associates, Inc. 2002. Available at www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABZ623.pdf).

For more on the Earthquake Recovery Program, see the following report/Web site:

- "Earthquake Reconstruction: Overview of Damages." (USAID/El Salvador. N.d. Available at www.usaid.gov/sv/er/index.htm).

For more on Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education, see the following reports/Web sites:

- *Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE): SAGE Final Activities Report.* (Academy for Educational Development. 2002. Available at www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABX585.pdf).
- *Strategies That Succeed, Stories From the SAGE Project.* (A series of 10 articles, Nos. 9 and 10 on El Salvador. 2002. Available at www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACS003.pdf and <http://www.aed.org/ToolsandPublications/upload/009%20SAGE%20Success%20EI%20Salvador.pdf>).

For more on the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training, see the following reports/Web sites:

- *Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT): A Summit of the Americas Initiative Information Packet.* (Creative Associates International, Inc. 2003. Available at www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACY696.pdf).
- *FEPADE, or Business Foundation for Educational Development, home page* (www.fepade.org.sv).

For more on Civic Engagement for Education Reform in Central America, see the following Web site:

- Academy for Educational Development CERCA home page (www.aed.org/Projects/cerca.cfm).

For more on the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarship, see the following reports/Web sites:

- *An Evaluation of the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships Program (1994-2001).* (Aguirre International. 2002. Available at www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABZ325.pdf).
- Georgetown University CASS home page (www.georgetown.edu/CIED/cass.html).

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