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MIDEH PROJECT

HONDURAS

QUARTERLY REPORT
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I. Acronyms

AIR	American Institutes for Research
AMHON	Honduran National Association of Municipalities
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
ASONOG	Association of NGOs
CETT	Centers for Excellence for Training Teachers
COMDE	Consejo Municipal de Desarrollo Educativo (Municipal Committee for Educational Development)
COP	Chief of Party
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCNB	Diseño Curricular Nacional Básico (National Basic Curriculum)
DIGECE	Dirección General de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación
EFA	Education for All
EFA-FTI	Education for All-Fast Track Initiative
EQUIP	Educational Quality Improvement Program
FEREMA	Fundación para la Educación Ricardo Ernesto Maduro Andreu
GOH	Government of Honduras
GSC	Grupo de Sociedad Civil
IDP	American Institutes for Research's International Development Program
INICE	Instituto de Investigación y Capacitación Educativa
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIDEH	Mejorando el Impacto al Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras (Honduras Improving Student Achievement Project)
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SE	Secretaría de Educación
SBE	Standards-Based Education
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
TCPP	Teacher-Citizen Participation Project - EducAcción
TH	Transformemos Honduras
UMCE	Unidad de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación
UNAH	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras
UPN/UPNFM	La Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

II. Executive Summary

This report describes the progress made from April through June 2012 in the Honduras Improving Student Performance Project (known by its Spanish acronym, MIDEH) implemented by the American Institutes for Research. It serves to update USAID/Honduras on project accomplishments and inform of any outstanding issues during this period.

The major accomplishments of MIDEH during April through June 2012 were:

- Accelerated pace of training, including training of trainers to replicate workshops for in-service and pre-service teachers in the use of the DCNB school package and of test results;
- Intensive development of end-of-grade tests for census application in 2012 with SE/DIGECE leadership and participation of local governments, and a national sample to be applied externally for reliable reporting on EFA goals;
- Rapid progress in engaging local government authorities and civil society organizations to collaborate in monitoring educational statistics and quality of education services, with a focus on socializing education evaluation systems to increase municipal support for decentralized end-of-grade census tests;
- Launching of the sub-grants and sub-contracts component with publication of an APS on May 29 and publication on June 11 of a local RFP for short-term teacher training, both of which will diversify assistance flowing to local partners;
- Cumulative accrued expenses through June 30, 2012 total an estimated \$1,080,707

Objective: Project activities from this quarter contributed to helping Honduras to consolidate and sustain education reforms based on national standards with the objective of improving the quality of education in Honduras and achieving EFA goals. The MIDEH project activities are aligned with the USAID Honduras Development Objective for Education and with Goal 1 of the Agency's global education strategy published in February 2011.

III. Program Context and Objective

National Context

Public insecurity. The national context has not changed since the last report. In recent years, Honduras has become an important transshipment point for US-bound cocaine. Honduras has also seen an increase in cocaine processing, which is believed to be operated by Mexican cartels. It struggles with several violent gangs, including Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18, and currently has one of the highest murder rates in the world. Once again Honduras was unable to guarantee citizen security when leading national radio journalist Alfredo Villatoro was kidnapped and assassinated in early June. Shortly after being sworn into office in mid-June, in a highly controversial move, the newly minted chief of Honduras' national police force, Juan Carlos Bonilla Valladares, announced that 4,000 police officers would be discharged from the force in an attempt to purge it of endemic corruption.

Political Year. As the calendar advances to the November internal (primary) elections, political propaganda and campaign activities are already displacing government efforts to implement needed reforms in the education system. Teachers and teacher unions are a powerful group that can influence the national agenda and election outcomes. During this period, political parties and politicians are loath to lose the teacher vote, so the governance problems in the sector are exacerbated during campaign periods. The excessive bureaucracy and lack of dynamism of government ministries seems difficult to remedy since government leaders are highly focused on maneuvering to position themselves for the next administration.

Project Context

Implementation Regulations for the Fundamental Law for Education. No progress was made on drafting the numerous implementing regulations and complementary legislation for the Fundamental Law for Education, which entered into force in February 2012 after nearly 25 years of public debate and proposals to change the basic law for the education sector. Articles 64 and 65 of the Law call for the creation of a national system for evaluation, certification and accreditation of the quality of education, and for the establishment of an institutional framework for the operation of the system. As of the end of the reporting period the Fundamental Law was no more than “*un adorno*,” as one newspaper editorial put it.

The national congress established an Ad Hoc commission for educational reform on June 21 and charged it with preparing the implementing regulations for the Fundamental Law, since the Ministry of Education failed to complete the regulations within the mandated 90 days after the law’s passage. In the previous reporting period, congressional technical staff requested assistance from the MIDEH Project to complete the draft law to establish an independent evaluation institute. But the congressional staff soon backed off when it was evident that the new Minister of Education was not supportive of the Fundamental Law and teacher unions were seeking to overturn it. The establishment of the Ad Hoc commission revives the need for technical assistance from the MIDEH Project for the draft law for the evaluation institute.

Corruption and Inefficiency. The Minister of Education admits that disorder in the education system allows corruption to thrive in the hiring of teachers, transfers, and assignment of multiple salaries for teachers who only teach in one school. The Minister has promised to remedy this by ensuring public access to a website with a comprehensive, up-to-date, transparent data base on teacher assignments and salaries. The Interior Ministry counted more than 4,600 cases of “ghost” teachers on the payroll in 2011. Local watchdog groups and teacher victims of corrupt practices continue to denounce incidents of trafficking in positions and falsification of documents by MOE officials, union leaders, politicians and other individuals. A recent newspaper article cited an estimate that up to \$250 million dollars are siphoned off from the education budget annually (about 20% of the budget) through corruption related to teacher positions and salaries.

Parents and students also face illicit charges at the school level including fees for recovery classes, awarding of “points” for extra-curricular activities involving monetary or in-kind contributions, and over-priced uniforms and supplies.

As of May 22, the Ministry reports officially that 5 days of classes had been lost at the national level and that the days will be recovered in order to complete 200 days of classes in 2012. The official accounting greatly understates the real number of days lost due to teacher work stoppages, takeover of schools by students, and political maneuvers of the “Resistencia” movement sustained by the teachers in its ranks and now organized as the Partido de Libertad y Refundacion.

Progress in Decentralization. Implementation of the "Law to Strengthen Public Education and Community Participation in Honduras" passed by Congress in 2011 has been slow and few real impacts have been seen in the reform of the education system. The law is unpopular with teacher unions and the Ministry of Education lacks the ability to properly administer and manage the decentralization process. COMDEs have been formed but these local committees are not operational in many cases and need assistance in strategic planning and management of education services. Local authorities and community groups need reliable data on student academic performance as a basic input to analyzing needs and making decisions. As of June, the MOE had not secured financing to implement census end-of-grade tests but the prospects for viable options for decentralized administration of standardized tests in 2012 were strengthened by Project activities in socializing education assessment with local governments.

Project Objective

In this national and sector context the MIDEH Project seeks to improve student learning outcomes through the consolidation of the DCNB materials developed under the previous EQUIP1-MIDEH/AIR project and assurance that the materials will be used effectively in the classroom. In addition, the MIDEH Project aims to strengthen a national educational evaluation system through the design of end-of-grade tests which serve both for sample-based external testing and for school-administered census-based tests. In absence of a permanent independent institute for educational evaluation, the Project provides capacity-building to SE/DIGECE and seeks to form alliances with universities and other organizations to promote additional local capacity in educational assessment and measurement.

A major objective of the MIDEH Project is to strengthen the use of the school package of materials and to ensure access and use of educational assessment data and information at the local level. Thus the MIDEH Project seeks to engage civil society to take a lead role in strategic planning, implementation of improvements, and monitoring the quality of education services in their communities.

IV. Intermediate Program Results and Activities

This section of the quarterly report serves to inform USAID/Honduras of the program advances achieved from April through June 2012, and to report on specific activities. The results are presented by Program Result and Activity, according to the 2012 Work Plan approved by USAID.

Program Result 1: Technical Capacity to Reach EFA Goals under SE Leadership Strengthened

Activity 1.1 DCNB, Aligned Educational Materials, and School Administered Tests

During this quarter the MIDEH Project accelerated the pace of training, including training of trainers to replicate workshops for in-service and pre-service teachers in the use of the DCNB school package and of standardized test results. Teachers are trained in the use of diagnostic and monthly formative tests which are administered in the classroom by the teachers themselves. In addition, the Project continued intensive development of end-of-grade tests for school administered census application in 2012 by SE/DIGECE with participation of municipal governments and oversight by the MIDEH Project. The work on end-of-grade tests is described in detail under Activity 1.2.

A first round of training for 85 school directors and teachers who form municipal training teams in target municipalities in the Departments of El Paraiso, Olancho, Lempira, and Choluteca was completed this quarter. School directors replicate the training with their staff to increase effective teaching through use of DCNB materials and the application and analysis of monthly formative tests. During the training, the school directors also receive guidance and practice in how to develop plans to improve education quality in their schools. MIDEH Project strategy is to train all school directors of selected municipalities that display critical levels in education, human development, and security indicators. The MIDEH Project revised its list of priority municipalities and presented it to USAID on May 8 in a meeting with the Director and Deputy Director. In small municipalities with less than 30 schools where most are single or two-teacher schools, the Project aims to train all teachers.

Once the municipal training teams were ready, they replicated the training on DCNB materials use in sessions of 8 hours of training on Saturdays for more than 1080 in-service teachers in three departments. A second day of training on formative tests will be provided to the same teachers before the end of the school year, to complete the required 16 hour minimum for reporting against MIDEH Project PMP targets and the USAID standard indicator. This method of training will be replicated in five more departments in the next quarter. It should be noted that the municipal training teams are all volunteers.

During this quarter, the MIDEH Project designed its training curriculum for Spanish and Mathematics faculty of Normal Schools. The topics included are the use of DCNB materials, use and analysis of monthly formative tests, and the interpretation of education indicators. This will better equip the Normal School faculty to instruct students in these areas before the students begin the practice teaching segment of their studies. The MIDEH Project trained 23 Normal School faculty members in Danli and organized additional July training sessions for Normal Schools in Juticalpa, Tegucigalpa and Choluteca.

Activity 1.2 System-Wide External Summative Tests

The MIDEH Project is assisting the MOE to develop and administer summative tests with two options: application of end-of-grade tests to a national sample to be applied externally for high security and reliable reporting on EFA goals; and census-based tests which would provide the performance data and information needed by school directors, teachers, COMDEs and local groups to design strategies to increase the overall quality of education services and to monitor education transparency and efficiency. Census tests have never before been administered in the Honduran public education system.

In the course of exchanging information with the German and Canadian cooperation beginning in April, it became apparent that other donors had a strong interest in obtaining trusted data on progress toward the EFA indicators on student academic achievement. Though the MIDEH Project had provided the technical and financial analysis for census based tests to the Vice Minister as early as October 2011, the MOE had not formally included end-of-grade tests in the 2012 POA for Common Fund approval. The omission from the POA was a setback; however, spurred by the discussions with MIDEH Project, the Canadian representative took the initiative directly to his Common Fund colleagues. Near the end of June, members of the broader donor group MERECE were convinced of the merit of funding the 2012 census-based tests and national sample-based external tests. Subsequently, as will be reported in detail in the next quarter, preparations for the end-of-grade test administration advanced both in technical and administrative terms.

Although funding for 2012 tests was not yet certain at the beginning of the reporting period, MIDEH Project staff continued to develop test items and test maps, diagram and edit forms, and analyze item statistics in order to prepare for end-of-grade tests. Intense work from early May through the end of June saw the completion of 54 test forms which were piloted in over 15,500 tests applied to students in 43 schools in the Department of Francisco Morazán. The pilot testing served to validate items for the final version of the end-of grade Spanish and Math tests for grades 1-9.

SE/DIGECE personnel were involved in the entire pilot process, which provided practical training to prepare DIGECE to coordinate the end-of-grade census test administration in October with MIDEH Project assistance. The Ministry lent space in INICE and vehicles for the teams working on the packing, distribution, and application of tests, and later for the collection and data entry of test results. Directors of the schools where the pilot tests were to be administered received an orientation before the test application. In general, there was good cooperation from the schools selected for the pilot testing.

Once the test items were validated, the MIDEH Project technical staff continued in the process to ready the final 35 test forms for printing early in the next quarter. Work began on a draft test administrator handbook which suggests ways to improve the security of school-administered tests. Though the calendar is tight for implementing end-of-grade tests, once funding arrangements are confirmed in the next quarter, there should be no technical or financial obstacle to administering the summative tests in 2012.

Program Result 2: Institutionalizing Educational Quality Inputs

Activity 2.1 Transferring Technical Capacity to National Institutions

Though the Fundamental Law for Education was passed earlier this year, no progress has been made in drafting implementing regulations and complementary legislation to establish a national education evaluation system with an independent institute as the operating arm. MIDEH Project has continued to work towards forming a cadre of Honduran professionals in the area of education assessment and measurement who will serve the country's need regardless of their institutional affiliation. Honduran professionals rotate among the MOE, UPN, UNAH, advisory positions in other government ministries, staff positions with international donor programs, and similar positions. A veteran Project staff member who received his psychometric and evaluation training in the EQUIP1-MIDEH/AIR and MIDEH 2011-2016 projects was named the head of the UPN/UMCE evaluation unit in May, a notable contribution to national capacity.

This quarter, the MIDEH Project began to see a change in the attitude of the Vice Minister for Technical and Pedagogical Matters and the Director of DIGECE, who are beginning to accept the imperative for the MOE to take a more active lead in implementing the standards-based reforms which promise to improve the quality of education. It is a message that needs continual reinforcement not only from the MIDEH Project but from USAID and other donors.

MIDEH Project collaborated with the MOE by providing a workshop for 34 Spanish and Mathematics teacher-trainers on the use of the DCNB materials, interpretation and dissemination of education indicators, use and analysis of formative tests, and guidance on preparing education improvement plans. In May, more than 30 persons including MOE staff, UPN/UMCE personnel, and other educators were trained by the MIDEH Project in test construction. Each time AIR's senior psychometrician comes to Honduras, he shares

knowledge and best practices with Honduran professionals in a variety of venues, including formal training sessions and meetings with MOE staff and officers, the technical support group of the National Education Council, UNAH, and other stakeholders with interests in education assessment and measurement. By working side-by-side with MIDEH project in the test item validation pilot, MOE staff and management are better prepared to coordinate the 2012 end-of-grade tests with Project assistance and oversight.

In other capacity-building activities, the Project trained 18 Spanish and Mathematics faculty from UPN in the DCNB materials and assessment tools. As result of this initial training, the head of the UPN Spanish department has requested that the Project provide workshops for in-service and pre-service teachers as part of UPN's annual congress for Spanish teachers during the next quarter. In addition, the MIDEH Project and MOE co-sponsored a one day conference on improving academic performance in schools in conditions of poverty which drew on the expertise of a Honduran professional who worked many years in the Boston school system and the experience of the Director of DIGECE, among others.

Activity 2.2 Financial and Technical Sustainability

During this reporting period, MIDEH prepared revised analysis of the costs of options for administering end-of-grade census tests and/or national sample-based tests. The efforts of the MIDEH Project were key to opening the door to implementing summative assessments in 2012 with the support of the Common Fund. The cost analysis included resources which are required from the MOE, including staff, materials and logistical support, to successfully carry out the census and sample-based tests. Local government participation in the census tests is still an important factor for the long-term sustainability of the assessments.

With a few exceptions, Honduras does not yet have a cadre of professionals capable of continuing the standards based reforms, especially in education assessment and measurement. The most promising avenue identified is to build the capacity of local universities to train professionals in this field. The MIDEH Project continued its discussions and work sessions with the UNAH on the design of academic certificate and diploma programs to ensure national technical capacity for evaluation. Earlier the University had expected to have a new Masters in evaluation approved to begin in June 2012 but the Masters is still being reviewed by the Higher Education Council. The process for approving short diploma or certificate programs is within the control of department chairs and thus in the interim offers a more rapid route for training professionals in the technical areas required for a national education evaluation system. The MIDEH Project will bring two AIR experts next quarter to assist the UNAH Psychology and Pedagogy departments to design a certificate program(s) in psychometrics, education evaluation, or related fields.

Program Result 3: Strengthening Civil Society Participation in Supporting Education

The MIDEH Project stepped up engagement with local government authorities and civil society organizations to collaborate in monitoring educational statistics and quality of education services with a focus on socializing education evaluation systems to increase municipal support for decentralized end-of-grade census tests. On May 29, the Project launched its sub-grants component with publication of an APS to support community participation in actions to improve the quality of education. The evaluation criteria for selecting recipients give preference to Honduran organizations over international NGOs to diversify and increase the flow of resources to local partners. Information and orientation sessions were held for potential applicants in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, and Santa Rosa de Copan. The initial response yielded a dozen

concept papers of which five were approved to submit full applications. As of this writing, the TEC has been formed and will review three applications in August.

MIDEH Project continued to support individual activities with civil society organizations including a second module of the Civil Society Group's "*Escuela de Incidencia Política*" with a focus on issues in the education sector. Events to socialize standards based education reforms and a more effective use of assessment results for decision-making and strategic planning were held with mayors, COMDEs and district directors of El Paraiso and Olancho. Topics covered in the day long work sessions included analysis of the 2010 end-of-grade tests results for each municipality and the department, use of the DCNB materials, plans for census-based tests 2012, teacher training, and development of municipal action plans for monitoring materials and academic performance.

During the reporting period, MIDEH Project joined FEREMA, TH, SE, EducAcción, USAID and COHEP in preparing a new communications strategy following on from the "La Educación Nos Cambia la Vida" media campaign under previous USAID-funded projects. MIDEH Project contributions will be technical inputs on analysis of student academic performance and accessible information for the public on themes of standards-based education reforms.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

MIDEH submitted its revised performance monitoring plan to USAID on May 4 complete with PIRS and survey instruments. The assessment tool for the indicator on parents' participation was improved to better capture gender differences in female and male participation so to meet the requirements for a qualitative gender sensitive indicator. After the reporting period, other revisions and clarifications were provided to the AOR on July 16, 2012 and the project moved ahead to prepare DQAs assuming the PMP will be approved shortly.

The MIDEH Project presents its second quarter and cumulative results for CY 2012 for three indicators on number of persons trained (minimum 2 days equivalent) which are measured quarterly. Data on other indicators will be collected and reported annually.

Indicator 9 Number of administrators and officials successfully trained with USG support (F Standard Indicator)					
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CY 2012 Target	275				
1Q Total	<u>254</u>	2Q Total	<u>39</u>	Cum. Total	<u>293</u>
1Q Female	124	2Q Female	24	Female	148
1Q Male	130	2Q Male	15	Male	145

Indicator 10	Number of teachers/educators/teaching assistants who successfully complete in-service training or received intensive coaching or mentoring with USG support (F Standard Indicator)				
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CY 2012 Target	650				
1Q Total	<u>84</u>	2Q Total	<u>110</u>	Cum Total	<u>194</u>
1Q Female	50	2Q Female	55	Female	105
1Q Male	34	2Q Male	55	Male	89

Indicator 11	Number of teachers/educators/teaching assistants who successfully complete pre-service training or received intensive coaching or mentoring with USG support (F Standard Indicator)				
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CY 2012 Target	400				
1Q Total	<u>0</u>	2Q Total	0 * first training of pre-service teachers will begin next quarter		
1Q Female	0				
1Q Male	0				

During the previous quarter the Project trained 44 faculty members from normal schools to be trainers in the school package of materials and use of assessment data. This quarter another 23 Normal School faculty were trained, along with 18 Spanish and Mathematics faculty from UPN. These new trainers and a contractor will begin training of UPN students and normal school students (pre-service teachers) in the next quarter. In-service teacher training is accomplished in two separate periods and will be reported when the 16 hour minimum is reached. The MIDEH Project expects to exceed the target for all three indicators in CY 2012.

VI. Outstanding Issues, Constraints, Delays and Actions Taken

The failure to move rapidly on the implementing regulations for the new Fundamental Law for Education and complementary legislation on the establishment of a national education evaluation system and independent evaluation institute continues to constrain the MIDEH Project's progress in Result 2. Project capacity-building activities could more efficiently be directed to one institute once Articles 64-65 of the Law are implemented. For now, the MOE is the main focus of capacity-building activities, since no other entity has a legal mandate to assess the quality of education. However, other stakeholders, including UPN and UNAH, potentially have an important role as well.

During the reporting period, the MIDEH Project completed the design of the Subgrants component and USAID approved the Subgrants Management Manual which allows an agile process for rolling review and award of subgrants. Also during the quarter, USAID gave final approval for the Project's revised 2012 Annual Work Plan and the Branding and Marking Strategy.

As reported last quarter, there has been a problem of insufficient printed DCNB materials for training workshops. A low cost source for reproducing the monthly pacing guides and the formative tests was found; though participants do not have the full set of DCNB materials, they do have the most essential documents for training. The Vice Minister promised in March to

order an inventory of all DCNB materials in the departments and districts; MIDEH Project offered to assign a person to accompany the MOE staff taking the inventory. Despite MIDEH project follow-up, to date the MOE has not taken action on this.

The Project planned to promote the subgrants program to COMDEs given their responsibilities under the Law to Strengthen Public Education and Community Participation and the prospect that all COMDEs would upon establishment automatically acquire “*Personeria Juridica*.” To date the COMDEs have not received legal status, and the MIDEH Project therefore is working closely with associations of municipalities, which are eligible to receive funding.

VII. Financial Summary

April through June 2012

Pipeline at the beginning of quarter	1,498,954
New funds Obligation	0
Expenses during the reporting period	580,715
Pipeline at the end of the quarter	918,239
Estimated expense burn rate for next quarter	575,000
Estimated quarters of pipeline	1.6

The MIDEH Project plans to request an incremental funding of approximately \$3 million in the next quarter.

VIII. Lessons Learned

The MIDEH Project has continued to encourage the MOE to take a more proactive role in the implementation of the standards-based reforms, especially in the area of evaluation. The MIDEH project holds the position that the 2012 tests are the responsibility of the GOH, although the Project does provide technical assistance and accompanies the MOE in this work. The Ministry has responded by assigning staff, office space, and vehicles to the test validation pilot carried out from early May through June, which represents a small advance in the MOE’s position. To further efforts to obtain official confirmation that physical space in the MOE will be made available to house the MIDEH Project, project leadership met with the Vice Minister for Administration, who promised to respond to the matter by August 15.

MIDEH Project alliances with municipal associations and NGOs are an important implementation mechanism for building Honduran ownership of the agenda of education reforms and monitoring academic performance. The MIDEH Project will continue to cede the lead to local partners given the effectiveness of this approach.

IX. Coordination with Other Actors

Coordination with other education stakeholders during the quarter is described throughout this report. Given the relationship and intersect of program objectives with EducAcción, MIDEH’s most frequent coordination efforts are with AIR’s companion project and with our main counterpart, the Ministry of Education. During the reporting period, the MIDEH Project engaged

with UPN, UNAH and Normal Schools, with GIZ's PROEFA project in western Honduras, and with the USAID-funded NEXOS project. We continue our coordination with AMHON and departmental municipal associations in Olancho and El Paraiso in the socialization of education reforms among local governments. MIDEH Project staff opened dialogue with the SE unit for COMDEs, consulting with its staff on methodologies for training and comparing proposed calendars of training events.

X. Gender Considerations

MIDEH proposed several possible complementary studies of gender impact as part of its PMP. For the revised indicator to measure parent participation in monitoring student and school performance, we have specific questions in the survey tool to identify differences in female and male participation patterns. If significant gender differences are evident in the baseline measurement for the indicator, the MIDEH Project will modify project activities to address those differences.

XI. Summary of Key Conclusions

It is early in project implementation to draw key conclusions; however, in section VIII above we have reported lessons learned from project activities in this quarter.