

PD-ABN-297
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A.I.D. EVALUATION SUMMARY - PART I

IDENTIFICATION DATA					
A. Reporting A.I.D. Unit: USAID/NICARAGUA Evaluation Number: 96/2		B. Was Evaluation Scheduled in Current FY Annual Evaluation Plan? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Slipped <input type="checkbox"/> Ad Hoc <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation Plan Submission Date: FY: 95 Q:2		C. Evaluation Timing Interim <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final <input type="checkbox"/> Ex Post <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
D. Activity or Activities Evaluated (List the following information for project(s) or program(s); if not applicable list title and date of the evaluation report.)					
Project No.	Project/Program Title	First PROAG or Equivalent (FY)	Most Recent PACD (mo/yr)	Planned LOP Cost (000)	Amount Obligated to date (000)
524-0318	Development Training	09/91	08/98	20,000	10,320
ACTIONS*					
E. Action Decisions Approved by Mission Director - Actions Required: <p style="text-align: center;">See Attachment "A"</p>			Name of Officer Responsible for Action	Date to be Completed	
APPROVALS					
F. Date of Mission Review of Evaluation: July 2, 1996					
G. Approvals of Evaluation Summary and Action Decisions:					
Name (Typed)	Project Officer or Program Officer	Evaluation Officer	Representative of Borrower/Grantee	Mission Director	
	Tony Vollbrecht	Paul Greenough		George Carner	
Signature	<i>Tony Vollbrecht</i>			<i>George Carner</i>	
Date	Sept 18 1996		9/18/96	10/7/96	

ABSTRACT

H. Evaluation Abstract: The Development Training Project (DTP) helps assure that Nicaraguans in both the public and private sectors have the critical skills necessary to improve managerial and technical performance. This is to be accomplished by providing training opportunities on managerial and technical skills to public and private services' staff. The project is being implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) as the primary contractor. The methodology used for this evaluation consisted of review of project documentation and written and oral interviews with persons involved in the design, monitoring and implementation of DTP Project-funded components. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the continued validity of the original project design, recommend modifications in the design or mix of inputs and evaluate project strengths and weaknesses as well as progress to date.

The major findings and conclusions are:

- Strategic Objective-related performance/impact indicators have been developed since the DTP project began implementation.
- Economies of scale and opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration can be more effectively exploited. Mission should expand DTP scope and make it an umbrella technical assistance and training for results project.
- Ministries such as MED and MINSA should be prioritized to receive institutional strengthening training.
- USAID should broaden fields of study for long-term training and consider placements throughout LA.
- Design process does not uniformly include provisions for post-formal training follow-on activities.
- A greater selection consistency will be achieved if all candidates of a given group are interviewed by the same Committee members.
- COP presence beyond June 1996 will be necessary to assure continuity in project implementation.

COSTS

I. Evaluation Costs

1. Evaluation Team		Contract Number OR TDY Person Days	Contract Cost OR TDY Cost (U.S. \$000)	Source of Funds
Name	Affiliation			
Ethel Brooks		524-0318	\$	G/HCD
Mada McGill				
2. Mission/Office Professional Staff Person-Days (estimate):		3. Borrower/Grantee Professional Staff Person-Days (Estimate):		
N/A		N/A		

SUMMARY

J. Summary of Evaluation Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations (Try not to exceed three (3) pages)

Address the following items:

- Purpose of Evaluation and methodology used
- Purpose of activity(ies) evaluated
- Findings and conclusions (relate to questions)
- Principal Recommendations
- Lessons Learned

Mission or Office:

USAID/Nicaragua

Date This Summary Prepared:

September 4, 1996

Title and Date of Full Evaluation Report:

Development Training Project
Mid-Term Evaluation (11/95)

During the previous government administration many of Nicaragua's professionals left the country and training activities were largely undertaken in Cuba and other Soviet block countries. The country currently experiences a critical lack of trained leadership, especially at the managerial level. Many officials have limited experience working in the public sector and have minimal formal academic and technical training.

The Development Training Project (DTP) helps assure that Nicaraguans in both the public and private sectors have the critical skills necessary to improve managerial and technical performance. Training under the project directly supports attainment of all three of USAID/Nicaragua's Strategic Objectives.

The core objectives of the DTP Project are to be accomplished by providing managerial and technical skills to public and private services' staff. To accomplish the objectives, two components were designed into the DTP Project, which focuses on priority training needs as determined by a needs assessment:

1) **Central and Latin America Scholarship Program (CLASP) II:** All training under this component takes place in the United States and includes orientation to democratic institutions and process in the U.S. An estimated total of 337 Nicaraguans will be trained under this program, of which 260 will attend short-term programs and 77 will pursue long-term technical and academic degrees.

2) **Development Training:** Nearly 3,600 Nicaraguans will be trained under this component, of which 34 will receive academic training in the U.S. and 61 in third countries. The rest 3,000 will receive technical and managerial training related to institutional strengthening of government ministries and organizations in Nicaragua, and 180 will attend conferences and seminars in the U.S. and other countries. The training will be provided by U.S. universities, Nicaraguan and third country training institutions, and technical experts in specialized areas, administered under a contract with the Academy for Educational Development (AED).

The purpose of the evaluation was to review progress, management procedures, training effectiveness, and overall contractor performance to date; and assess the appropriateness of the present DTP project training plan given the modifications to the CLASP II project by USAID/Washington and overall implementation progress, based on project resources available to the project through its PACD. This process examined recruitment, selection, training program design issues, the extent to which training corresponds with project objectives, effectiveness and application of the training and the contractor's management procedures. Information in the report was obtained from written and oral interviews with a sample of trainees, selected supervisors, Government of Nicaragua Ministries and representatives; discussion with USAID/Nicaragua staff; and, a review of the DTP project paper, contractor files, quarterly reports, and other related documents.

FINDINGS:

The Team concludes that overall the project is being managed in a very effective and commendable manner. The contractor has developed well-defined implementation procedures and guidelines to meet stated project objectives.

- From the beginning of the contract through August 31, 1995 a total of 1,624 persons have been trained out of the original target of 3,426 in the approved training plan. Of these, 295 received training in the U.S., 257 in a third country, and 1,329 participated in short-term programs in Nicaragua.

By the end of the 1995 calendar year, 433 additional persons will have completed U.S., third country or in-country training, with 563 others planned for the first 6 months of the 1996 contract. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that DTP can meet adjusted numerical targets in the approved training plan by the end of the contract assuming required funding levels are available in 1996 and 1997.

- The contractor has developed criteria to ensure that the recruitment and selection process is clear and transparent. The important elements in the training design are being addressed, although more rigorous efforts should be made to ensure that the follow-on component is uniformly included in all training activities.
- Trainees attributed much of their program success to the fact that they had an opportunity to be active partners in the needs assessment and design stages of their training program. They and their supervisors perceive training as useful and relevant to the needs of their institutions and communities.
- Including training activities planned through December 1995, the contractor expects to narrow the gap between: 1) planned and actual numerical goals for female participation; b) the balance between short and long-term placements for CLASP programs; and, c) actual and Agency-mandated percentages for HBCU placements.
- Greater linkage between training, project goals, and USAID's higher level strategic objectives is needed.
- There is a strong rationale for DTP and other international agencies to collaborate in their institutional strengthening initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Implementation is consistent with the goals and objectives that were operative when the project was conceptualized and designed. However, the Agency's current re-engineered concepts for training emphasize the integration of training with other mainstream activities that the Mission plans to use in achieving strategic objectives. Therefore, while building on DTP's past successes in this area, even great efforts will be required of USAID and the contractor to ensure that all DTP training not only supports the Mission's strategic objectives/technical program outcomes, but also that training linkage is specific and results are identifiable and measurable.

- Greater effort should be made to ensure that all training evolves from needs assessments that are periodically updated based on an analysis of institutional changes.
- DTP should include specific, strategic objective-related performance and impact indicators in the training design which is agreed to beforehand by trainees, their supervisors, USAID and other partners. Developing training agreements and measuring impact are now central to all USAID training activities. Further delineation and refinements should be required to consistently show clear and identifiable linkage to a specific strategic objective/program outcome.
- USAID should expand the scope of DTP and make it an umbrella technical assistance and "training for results" project that incorporates all of the Mission's programs. A single contractor will be accountable for implementing the Mission's full technical assistance and training portfolio including that which supports technical projects.

- The project should consider institutional strengthening activities with new GON ministries and institutions especially in key social sectors that are compatible with the focus of the new strategic objectives.
- In the next phase, the (expanded) project should consider broadening the fields of study and the number of training institutions in the U.S. and third countries, thereby ensuring adequate response to current strategic objectives and technical project goals.
- The contractor should give further attention to follow-on by including it as an integral part of the original training program.
- The recruitment and selection process should be reviewed and appropriate provisions should be made to have all nominees of a particular group interviewed and evaluated by the same committee members to the extent feasible.
- USAID should keep channels of communication open and build on the collaborative approach that already exists between DTP and the World Bank-financed restructuring project at the time the Bank initiates institutional strengthening and training projects.
- The AED contractor's in-country presence should be extended to ensure appropriate coordination with technical project managers and strategic objective teams, and in order to maintain continuity and build upon the successful base of outreach and important program contacts that have been established.

ATTACHMENTS

K. Attachments (List attachments submitted with this Evaluation Summary; always attach a copy of the full report.)

The full evaluation report is attached: *Evaluation of the Development Training Project*

COMMENTS

L. Comments by Mission and Borrower/Grantee on Full Report

ATTACHMENT "A"

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	MISSION ACTION
S.O.-related performance/impact indicators have been developed since the DTP project began implementation	DTP should include specific S.O.-related performance/impact indicators, P.3, No. 2	Mission will direct the contractor to include S.O.-related performance/impact indicators in future training programs
Economies of scale and opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration can be more effectively exploited	Expand DTP scope and make it an umbrella TA and training for results project, P. 4, No. 3	<p>The decision made not to extend the DTP beyond PACD. Within the existing PACD, the decision was made to expand the scope of the project to add staff of selected entities as eligible for training under DTP.</p> <p>The Education Results Team will explore alternative ways to meet Mission training needs -- and present its formal recommendations to the Mission by February 28, 1997.</p>
Ministries such as MED and MINSA should be prioritized to receive institutional strengthening training (P.8)	Add new GON ministries and institutions for institutional strengthening component, P.4, No. 4	Steering Committee approved FONIF, Comptroller General's Office, and NGO inclusion on August 21, 1996. Given the World Bank efforts in public sector strengthening, the Mission will reduce public sector institution strengthening efforts to a minimum.
USAID should broaden fields of study for long term training and consider placements throughout LA (P.7 & 12)	Broaden fields of study and number of training institutions in U.S. and third countries, P.4, No. 5	With the existing PACD of the DTP project, no new long term training will be possible.
Design process does not uniformly include provisions for post-formal training follow-on activities (P.9)	Increase contractor attention to follow-on by including it as integral part of training design, P.4, No. 6	Contractor to assure discrete follow-on activities included in training program designs

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<p>Greater selection consistency achieved if all candidates of given group interviewed by same committee members (P.6)</p>	<p>Review recruitment and selection process, P. 4, No. 7</p>	<p>Training officer and contractor assure that all nominees for specific group are interviewed and evaluated by same committee members to the extent possible.</p>
<p>COP presence beyond June 1996 will be necessary to assure continuity in project implementation</p>	<p>Extend AED COP contract beyond June 30, 1996, P. 5, No. 9</p>	<p>Contract extended by CO to June 4, 1998</p>

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October 1, 1996

XD-ARN-297-6
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USAID Nicaragua
EVALUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROJECT

PURPOSE

This is a mid-course evaluation of the Development Training Project (DTP) which is intended to provide the Mission with information on the implementation of the project, including both administrative and programmatic operations. The primary objectives of the evaluation are to: 1) review progress, management procedures, training effectiveness, and overall contractor performance to date in implementing the DTP project; and, 2) assess the appropriateness of the present DTP project Training Plan given the modifications to the CLASP II project by USAID/Washington and overall implementation progress to date, based on projected resources available to the project through its PACD.

METHODOLOGY

This is primarily a process evaluation that examines recruitment, selection, training program design issues, the extent to which training corresponds with project objectives, effectiveness and application of the training and the contractor's management procedures. Information in the report was obtained from written and oral interviews with a sample of trainees, selected supervisors, Government of Nicaragua Ministries and representatives; discussions with USAID staff; and a review of the DTP project paper, contractor files, quarterly reports, and other related documents.

The sample group of trainees included persons who are currently enrolled in or have completed CLASP long-term and short-term programs as well as those who have participated in U.S., in-country and third country training programs under the institutional strengthening components of the Development Training component of the DTP. Members of the evaluation team administered questionnaires and conducted interviews with participants and supervisors in individual or small group meetings, most of which were held at AED or at the Ministry of Education office. We visited four sites outside of Managua and met with trainees who are applying skills acquired during their CLASP training.

The report is divided into three sections: a) summary of findings; b) recommendations and, c) body of findings. Interview questionnaires and appointment schedules are appended. We have also attached a few observations and suggestions at the end of the document that are beyond the immediate scope of the evaluation but are somewhat related.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

>> The Team concludes that overall the project is being managed in a very effective and commendable manner. The contractor has developed well-defined implementation procedures and guidelines to meet stated project objectives.

>> From the beginning of the contract through August 31, 1995 a total of 1624 persons have been trained out of the original target of 3426 in the approved training plan. Of these, 295 received training in the U.S., 257 in a third country, and 1329 participated in short-term programs in Nicaragua.

By the end of the 1995 calendar year 433 additional persons will have completed U.S., third country or in-country training, with 563 others planned for the first six months of the 1996 contract. Therefore, based on experience to date, it is reasonable to conclude that DTP-II can meet adjusted numerical targets in the approved training plan by the end of the contract (6/4/97), assuming required funding levels are available in 1996 and 1997.

>> The contractor has developed criteria to ensure that the recruitment and selection process is clear and transparent. The important elements in the training design are being addressed, although more rigorous efforts should be made to ensure that the follow-on component is uniformly included in all training activities.

>> Trainees attributed much of their program successes to the fact that they had an opportunity to be active partners in the needs assessment and design stages of their training program. They and their supervisors perceive training as useful and relevant to the needs of their institutions and communities.

>> Including training activities planned through December 1995, the contractor expects to narrow the gap between: a) planned and actual numerical goals for female participation; b) the balance between long and short-term placements for CLASP programs; and, c) actual and Agency-mandated percentages for HBCU placements.

>> Greater linkage between training, project goals and USAID's higher level strategic objectives can be achieved by expanding DTP's scope to include management and implementation of training for all of the technical projects under a single technical assistance/training structure, thereby resulting in uniform quality and standards for all of the mission's human capacity development investment. This step will bring the mission more in line with and facilitate application of new ADS, Chapter 253 Training for Results Policies and Essential Procedures, particularly the requirements that: a) missions establish a single management system [for all training] to assure comparable appropriate support at every stage (ADS 253.5.2a) and, b) that training results be defined, tracked,

analyzed and reported as part of the operating unit's performance measurement, evaluation, and reporting plan (ADS 253.253.5.1d). In addition to the program quality factor, a single structure will eliminate duplicated efforts and expenditures and overall, will be more cost effective for the mission, both in management time and financial resources.

>> There is a strong rationale for DTP and other international agencies to collaborate in their institutional strengthening initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Reiterating an aforementioned conclusion, overall the DTP is being managed effectively and efficiently. Implementation is consistent with the goals and objectives that were operative when the project was conceptualized and designed. However, the Agency's current re-engineered concepts for training emphasize the integration of training with other mainstream activities that missions plan to use in achieving strategic objectives. Therefore, while building on DTP's past successes in this area, even greater efforts will be required of USAID and the contractor in the future to ensure that all DTP training not only supports the mission's strategic objectives/technical program outcomes but that training linkage is specific and results are identifiable and measurable.

Within this context, and drawing upon best practices and lessons learned from other missions' experiences, we offer several recommendations that we believe can further strengthen what is an already effective DTP training management plan.

1) That greater effort be made to ensure that all training evolves from needs assessments that are periodically updated based on an analysis of institutional changes.

2) That DTP include specific, strategic objective-related performance and impact indicators in the training design which is agreed to beforehand by trainees, their supervisors, USAID and other partners. At the time the project was conceptualized and designed, developing training agreements and measuring impact were not primary driving forces in the management process. However, these are now central to all USAID training/hcd activities. There is good evidence to show that DTP training is perceived by the sample group of participants and supervisors as very useful, and participants are applying their acquired skills in various capacities within their institutions and communities. Moreover, as discussed under evaluation item # 4, training supports the mission's broad development strategy and objectives. However, further delineation and refinements may be required to consistently show clear and identifiable linkage to a specific strategic objective/program outcome.

3) That USAID expand the scope of DTP and make it an umbrella technical assistance and "training for results" project that incorporates all of the mission's programs. In practical terms, this means a single contractor will be accountable for implementing the mission's full technical assistance and training portfolio including that which supports technical projects, much of which is generic in nature and is similar to general institutional strengthening training that is already being successfully implemented under the DTP. Thus, under the single management structure, all training will be of the same high quality that characterizes the current DTP institutional strengthening and training activities.

Operationally, the DTP core activities would be directly funded by the mission over the life of the project and each technical project would execute buy-ins for project-specific training services. Under this arrangement it is envisioned that the contractor will be a key partner with USAID in conducting institutional analyses and assessments of skill gaps in attaining strategic/project objectives. The contractor would be expected to apply uniform standards in training design and implementation consistent with ADS253 policy guidance, including provisions for the three integrated program components of: 1) pre-training or pre-departure orientation and goal setting; b) the training event; and, c) adding follow-on activities (Section 253.5.1g). Meanwhile, the technical/project offices may choose to exercise prerogatives in the technical content of the program.

4) That the project consider institutional strengthening activities with new GON ministries and institutes especially in key social sectors that are compatible with the focus of the new strategic objectives.

5) That, in the next phase, the (expanded) project consider broadening the fields of study and the number of training institutions in the United States and third-countries, thereby ensuring adequate response to current strategic objectives and technical project goals.

6) That the contractor give further attention to follow-on by including it as an integral part of the original training program design. Increasingly, "best practices" and other studies on effective training for results are positioning follow-on as a key component in the overall program and in assessing the impact of training in meeting strategic objectives.

7) That the recruitment and selection process be reviewed and appropriate provisions be made to have all nominees of a particular group interviewed and evaluated by the same committee members to the extent feasible.

8) That USAID keep channels of communication open and build on

the collaborative approach that already exists between DTP and the World Bank financed restructuring project at the time the Bank initiates institutional strengthening and training projects.

9) That the AED contractor's in-country presence be extended. The AED Chief-of-Party's contract will expire on June 30, 1996. AED will need to continue its in-country presence to ensure appropriate coordination with technical project managers and strategic objective teams, and in order to maintain continuity and build upon the successful base of outreach and important program contacts that have been established. This will be particularly critical for implementing a restructured DTP and sustaining project achievements within potentially shifting priorities that may occur in the course of GON's upcoming elections.

BODY OF FINDINGS:

1. Appropriateness and transparency of the procedures of recruiting and selecting trainees as stated in the DTP project paper and the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection system implemented by USAID and the contractor.

The evaluation team concluded that the DTP project contractor has developed clear, systematic written recruitment and selection practices to identify the best candidates in a fair and transparent manner. The Contractor's written recruitment and selection criteria specifically outline the process for recruiting and selecting participants and defines the different criteria for selection for CLASP and development training. Clear procedures are in place for each sub-component of the project.

CLASP

In the case of the CLASP component, the contractor identifies intermediary organizations and associations in the targeted fields of training who play a major role in the promotion, recruitment, and nomination of candidates for short-term and long-term technical training. In order to ensure that the nomination process is fair and open, the contractor requests that each nominating institution propose three candidates for every one slot. The Team interviewed and administered questionnaires to three intermediary organizations for the short and long-term training institutions. Their responses indicate that the nomination process is open and transparent. The program is advertised widely, more candidates applied than spaces available, and all candidates are pre-selected and interviewed by a committee comprised of AED, USAID and the intermediary organization(s).

The contractor consistently identifies a sufficient pool of qualified candidates for short-term training, however, this has not always been the case for long-term CLASP programs. Recruiting

trainees for academic and nine-month technical training programs in the U.S. has been difficult, primarily for the following reason:

According to the project paper, the CLASP master's degree scholarships were targeted for university professors. Although the contractor contacted universities directly and advertised the program broadly, the number of applicants was not sufficient to fill scholarship quotas. A needs assessment conducted by the contractor concluded that priority requirements of the universities and work schedules of the faculty are so demanding that professors are unable to leave their positions for two years. Current CLASP guidelines, revised April 1995, allow for 50% of the training to be conducted in-country and 50% or a minimum four and half months to be conducted in the U.S. While this is not perceived as an overall panacea, it is anticipated that this flexibility in guidelines will make long-term technical programs more attractive to some candidates who may be able to divide time between work and study.

For all CLASP II scholarships, the contractor receives nominations and pre-selects candidates based on the established selection criteria for CLASP II. Selection committees are set-up for each program. Committee members are USAID staff, AED staff, and experts in the particular field of training. The committees interview all the participants, after which interview scores are tabulated and averaged for each candidate. The contractor presents the results of the interviews along with recommendations to USAID who makes the final selection. The evaluation team reviewed participant files and noted that all files contain program applications, interview questions, the results of interviews and recommendations, and decision letters to the applicants.

The Team did note that interview/selection committee members for a given group change from day to day which means that no single interviewer gets to evaluate all of the candidates of a particular group. While acknowledging that this may be a practical procedure, we believe that a greater degree of consistency and fairness would be achieved if all of the candidates who are invited to interview for a group program are evaluated by the same committee members.

DTP

The development training component of the project has two branches for long-term academic study, one for U.S.-based programs and the other for study in a third country, each of which follows a different recruitment and selection procedure. Information about the long-term U.S. program opportunities is advertised broadly in newspapers, through ministries, institutes, and former participants. Interested candidates apply and are pre-screened by the contractor. A committee interviews candidates and final selection is made by USAID based on the committee's recommendations. By contrast, the pool of candidates for

third-country academic scholarship programs is drawn exclusively from referrals by three third-country training institutions that currently receive USAID-funded DTP scholars. These institutions send the contractor a list of applicants who have already been accepted into the program but have financial needs. The contractor reviews this list and pre-selects applicants based on selection criteria for development training. A selection committee interviews and ranks the pre-selected candidates and USAID makes the final selection.

Clearly the current procedures for recruiting and selecting third-country participants is expedient, and we understand the DTP procedures are also consistent with procedures used by other donors and funding organizations. However, the evaluation questions whether the recruiting efforts of the three institutions is as broad-based and transparent as required in the DTP project paper.

A more detailed review of the institutions' recruiting process is recommended to determine whether all of the transparency considerations are being met and whether there are viable ways to broaden the applicant pool. On a somewhat related point, we believe the program will be better served if USAID/Nicaragua opens up third-country training scholarships for study outside of Central America, and we recommend that consideration be given to this action. A broader range of institutions will provide more options for study, specifically in areas that match the mission's current strategic objectives. Further, it can result in expanded training options for females. (Currently, 27% of the third-country participants are females, 13% below the required 40%.)

The Institutional Strengthening component of the development training program, the largest component of the project in terms of participants and funds, is designed to respond to technical and management training needs for specific government of Nicaragua ministries and institutions. The project paper specified the GON institutions that were to be selected for institutional strengthening under the DTP. However, because of the two year lag between the project design and implementation, the Steering Committee proposed an institutional strengthening needs analysis to determine which among the designated institutions were still interested and able to participate in the program. As a result of the analysis and supported by an annual review of the institutional strategic plans, the Steering Committee originally approved nine, but later increased the number to twelve institutions that were to receive technical assistance or training under the project. Subsequently, one institution (ENEL) was dropped from the list; five were prioritized to receive the total institutional strengthening program and six participate only in the general training programs.

The contractor, in consultation with the five currently prioritized

institutions, develops an annual training plan which stipulates the areas and levels of training needed to meet institutional objectives and identifies persons who are eligible for the training. The institutions select trainee candidates based on the training plan. The evaluation team interviewed and administered questionnaires to key contacts and Training Officers in five GON institutions. Respondents unanimously confirmed that training plans provide the institutions with clear guidance about eligibility to attend the training courses. As a result of this guidance, all the institutions stated that the procedures for nominating participants from their institutions are clear and transparent.

As of March 1995, the institutional strengthening component has trained 1068 people, 363 or 34% of the total were females. Although to-date the percentage is less than the 40% requirement of female participation as stated in the project paper, the contractor expects to narrow the gap with the next training groups. Since the institutions and occupations targeted for training under the sub-component are traditionally male-dominated, some of the interview contacts recommended that USAID offer a general management program for female managers and consider offering training programs for secretaries or computer operators, where more females are employed. Prioritizing a social institution such as MINSA or the MED where more of the managers are females would also help achieve numerical targets for women.

2. Effectiveness of specific training course designs given the trainees selected to participate in the courses/programs, i.e., perceived quality and relevancy by the returned trainee of the training provided, and the extent to which the returned trainees are able to apply the training in their workplaces.

The evaluation team reviewed training implementation plans for most of the long-term and short-term programs conducted in the U.S. and training outlines for in-country and third country training. We concluded that generally training courses and programs are appropriate to meet intended objectives. Whereas we did not extensively examine copies of actual program designs, we reviewed the process by which training programs are designed. We found this to be a two part process that builds on the institutional or individual needs assessment. First, the contractor, with organizational or individual trainee input, develops goals, expected outcomes, general areas and activities for the training program. Next, building on this broad and somewhat general outline and on familiarity gained through in-country meetings with participants and supervisors, either the selected training institution (for group training) or AED (for individual training) designs specific activities, performance objectives and training and evaluation methodologies for the course/program. At several

intervals participants have input in the training design, for example, their post-training action plans are reflective of training objectives. Also, before the training begins, participants have an opportunity to review the training design outline to see if it matches their needs and expectations. This sequenced and participatory approach to training course design provides for quality safeguards to ensure that the training experience meets intended objectives.

We found that most of the important elements of the training program are addressed in the design process, with one (easily rectifiable) exception. The process does not uniformly include provisions for follow-on.

While follow-on activities are consistently built into the design of CLASP short-term training programs, this is not the case for general institutional strengthening programs offered in country or for long-term technical and academic programs conducted in the U.S. and in third countries. We draw this conclusion based on a review of Training Implementation Plans for long-term and academic programs, and discussions with the contractor. Since follow-on is a significant component of the overall program, it should be consistently planned at the beginning of all training, whether short or long-term, U.S., in-country or third country. We recommend that further attention be given to expanding the concept of training so that follow-on is viewed as part of the seamless process for meeting program and performance objectives. A general outline for follow-on can be included in the training design with the understanding that further elaboration and refinement will evolve during and after the formal part of the program.

Participants and their employers perceive training to be effective and useful. Ninety-eight percent of the trainees who responded to oral and written interview questions stated that the training content was relevant; the instructors were well prepared; and, the training format was appropriate. Both trainees and supervisors cited specific examples of how the training is being applied and shared with others. Notable among these are:

a) The Ministry of Education trainers who, after completing programs in the U.S., have conducted in-country training seminars and workshops on active learning methodologies for 12,000 primary school teachers.

b) INAA's Vice Minister who reported that he saved \$800,000 for INAA by applying what he had learned in the Negotiating Techniques program which was an institutional strengthening training activity.

c) Mayors and council members who are applying training skills to rally citizens' support, consensus and volunteerism for

the development of community projects. These far reaching projects include supplying potable water, increasing electrification, constructing roads, building parks in rural communities, initiating re-cycling and clean up activities, and developing reforestation and environmental programs, etc.

d) Former in-country trainees in the Customs Office have instituted more efficient management systems and procedures resulting in a dramatic increase in revenue collections over the past two years to become not only a self sustaining institute but also a major contributor to the government's operational budget. This is a reversal of long standing trends of Customs deficit operations.

3. Returned trainees pre-departure and post-training experiences, especially the utility to the trainee of follow-on activities conducted by the Mission and the contractor.

Information examined by the evaluators shows that clearly defined pre-training objectives are integrated in designs of group training programs. However, we found these objectives to be more detailed and more consistently built into CLASP training than in institutional strengthening programs under the development training component of the project.

Pre-departure training for CLASP is generally conducted in three stages and is scheduled over a period of weeks. It includes English language preparation and, if appropriate, computer literacy in addition to a general program overview, orientation on the U.S. higher education system, socio-cultural issues, problem solving techniques, group dynamics, team development, an introduction to democratic leadership and administrative matters.

Two of the students currently enrolled in U.S. master's degree programs suggested that refresher mathematics also be included in pre-departure preparation.

Information in files and evaluation reports, supported by information obtained during oral and written interviews show that participants attribute much of the success of their program to the pre-departure training. In describing the usefulness of pre-departure preparation, trainees stated that they: were better organized to take on the rigors of academic life; are able to analyze information and do critical reading; are better able to set objectives, establish priorities and manage time; are better organized; are more open-minded and can appreciate values in other cultures; have gained insights about their own culture and values; have improved relationships with family; developed confidence in interacting with other university students and with faculty, as well as with professional colleagues.

Post-training activities focus primarily on re-entry, reviewing implementation of the participants' Action Plan, documenting information on multiplier effect and networking among returned trainees. Our study found that these activities, which generally can be characterized as follow-up, are monitored by AED or other contractor staff. To a much lesser extent, technical follow-on workshops and seminars or continuing education courses are included in follow-on. During the course of interviews several of the trainees cited a specific need for follow on training especially in the area of evaluation. We suggest that consideration be given to increasing the number of technical workshops and broadening access to larger numbers of returned trainees. One means of accomplishing this is by engaging services of representatives from U.S. training institutions while they are already in-country to conduct training needs assessments and design programs for future groups.

Although academic and long-term technical programs follow the university's / training institution's prescribed course and degree objectives, our findings indicate that the programs incorporate management, leadership and enrichment components in the training to meet project objectives.

4. Implementation achievements against the outputs and project purpose and contributions by the project to the meeting of the Mission's strategic objectives. While this is primarily a process evaluation, the extent to which project achievements to date are demonstrably contributing to USAID's strategic objectives should be documented.

The DTP is meeting target numbers of trainees projected for June 30, 1996 in the CLASP component except for long-term technical training, and will meet targets for the development training component with the exception of a reduction in the number of third-country scholarships. Although DTP is meeting numbers of participants, participant months are fewer than contracted for at this time.

An amendment to the scope of work in September 1994 reduced the number of CLASP, long-term academics from 35 to 6 scholars and increased long-term technical training from 42 to 70 trainees after a needs assessment recommended that the target group for long-term, academic training, i.e., University professors, were unable to leave their jobs for two years. The universities believed they had more immediate human resources development needs that could be met through an institutional strengthening component. Numbers were shifted from long-term, academic training to long-term technical training to maintain the minimum 20% balance between CLASP long-term and short-term training. The savings realized from the shift in numbers was added to the institutional strengthening

sub-component of the project.

The CLASP II Project Paper amendment effective April 1, 1995, modified the percentage of split between long and short-term training to a minimum of 10%. Even with the reduction in the percentage, the current contract will not meet this requirement unless additional 1996 and 1997 funds are available for another group of long-term technical trainees. To date, 47% of the short-term trainees have been women, which exceeds the 40% CLASP II requirement. All CLASP II participants selected to date meet the socially and economically disadvantaged criteria for selection. All but the first group of trainees meet the requirement that training in the U.S. be no less than 28 days. At present, neither CLASP nor the development training component of the project has met the requirement that 10% of all U.S. scholars in terms of participant months are trained in Historically Black Universities and Colleges (HBCU's).

Under the development training component of the project and stipulated in the 1996 training plan, 2255 trainees will receive training in 1996. The contractor foresees no difficulty in meeting this target number. However, the institutional strengthening subcomponent planned for 800 university recipients has been reduced and is on hold for 1996 pending further needs assessment.

As required in the project paper, no members of the socially or economically elite have been awarded scholarships, and leadership is considered a key criteria for selection. A minimum of 40% female must be selected for training in each sub-component of the development training component. In the third-country training sub-component 27% of the trainees are female, and in the institutional strengthening sub-component, 34% of the trainees are female.

The Team proposes following recommendations to meet the requirements set forth in the project paper:

>> USAID should make all efforts to send another group of long-term technical trainees to the United States in 1996 in order to fulfill the 10% required split between CLASP long-term and short-term programs.

>> USAID and the contractor should encourage this year's scholars to seriously consider selecting master's degree programs at HBCU's or should consider offering a few scholarships to selected HBCUs. This will increase the number of months participants are trained at HBCU's.

>> USAID should broaden the fields of study for long-term training and consider placements at third-country training institutions throughout Latin America. More females may apply for

master's degree scholarships if additional fields of study are available.

Although the project design preceded the development of the Missions's current strategic objectives, DTP training still makes an important contribution to the three objectives.

The following paragraphs list strategic objective with corresponding training activities. The institutional strengthening technical assistance and training sub-component is listed under strategic objective number 1. This sub-component no doubt cuts across more than one strategic objective and deserves further analysis. For example, MINSA is included in the Total Quality Management program in 1995. One could argue that management training at MINSA contributes to strategic objective number 3, better educated, healthier and smaller families.

1. More political participation, compromise and transparency

Through the CLASP short-term training program 3 groups for a total of 64 Mayors and city council members have trained in the United States. The training objectives were to increase skills of municipal and regional leaders in democratic leadership, administration of decentralized government, and project development and management. A group of 30 female municipal leaders is planned for later this year.

Three master's degree scholars are studying public administration in the United States. Additional scholars will begin studies in this field later in the year.

An estimated 1068 individuals employed in 11 GON ministries and institutes have received training under the sub-component, institutional strengthening. This activity provides technical and management training and technical assistance directed towards improving the functioning of 12 ministries and institutes.

2. Sustainable growth, employment and income

Through the CLASP short-term training program, a group of 25 cooperative promoters and extension agents and a group of rural loan managers have attended training programs in the United States. The purpose of these program is to increase the skills of promoters, loan managers, and others in the development and management of cooperatives and cooperative services.

Four participants are in the United States studying for master's in business degrees.

Three participants completed master in business programs at INCAE in Costa Rica. Five candidates completed the post-graduate PAF program at INCAE Nicaragua.

Five participants are in the United States studying for masters degrees in agribusiness, agricultural economics and other related field. Twenty-two participants are at Zamorano studying agricultural engineering or agronomy.

Nine scholars are studying for a bachelor's degree in Agriculture with an emphasis in protection of the environment.

3. Better educated, healthier, and smaller families

Through the CLASP short-term training program, two groups of 30 "tecnicos" (in-service trainers and supervisors), and a long-term technical group of 20 normal school teachers and methodology training have attended training programs in the United States. The training objectives were to prepare trainers and normal school teachers who are responsible for preparing and upgrading the skills of both existing and future primary school teachers in the technical area of active learning methodologies and creating learning materials from locally available materials.

One participant has completed a master's degree in Public health in the United States.

5. Impact of the World Bank's Reform of the State Program as it relates to GON institutions with which the Institutional Strengthening component is working to determine the appropriateness of continuing these types of activities or the need to modify them. The Team should also consider the utility of the Institutional component given the IBRD sponsored program.

The Evaluation Team met with Luis Villalta, Coordinator of the Governmental Reform Program/World Bank-Ministry of Finance, and received a briefing about the project. The Project is an ambitious effort to begin reconstructing fifteen Nicaraguan ministries and institutes over the next four years. At Present, the Ministry of Construction and Transportation (MCT) is the only one of the 15 government institutions to have signed a memorandum of understanding with CERAP, the coordinating body to initiate the World Bank financed reconstruction effort. According to Mr. Villalta, other agreements are in various stages of development. The World Bank project has set-aside 2 million dollars for training. Although there is no training plan in place for the funds, Mr. Villalta was emphatic in his assessment that 2 million dollars is far short of the resources required to support all the training needed to effectively transform the 15 institutions.

The DTP currently provides institutional strengthening technical assistance and training to three of the same ministries that the Bank project plans to work with: MCT, MARENA, MIFIN, INAP, and MINSA. Fortunately, the Bank Project Coordinator, Luis Villatla,

is also a member of the DTP Steering Committee which facilitates coordination between the two projects.

With the exception of MCT which already has signed an agreement with CERAP, it is difficult to predict when the other ministries and institutions will sign agreements and begin the World Bank financed restructuring activities.

The Team recommends that USAID/Nicaragua continue the collaborative approach that already exists between the DTP and World Bank-financed restructuring project. USAID, the Steering Committee and the contractor should consider each technical assistance and training intervention so there is no overlap between the projects.

6. Based on interviews with project officers and contractors, assess training needs in sectors such as : environment, population/ health, and democracy, which support mission efforts. Assess the extent to which DTP can be re-oriented to better complement the mission's existing projects in these sectors.

Our discussions with project officers and review of relevant documents show that a substantial amount of training is projected over the next two to three years. Considering the volume of need and expected numbers of beneficiaries; cost effectiveness; language barriers; and overall program appropriateness, the bulk of training for most of the projects will be conducted in country.

Environment - USAID/Nicaragua environment and natural resources activities are focused on three program outputs, i.e., resource use policies and regulations, strengthened institutional capacity to manage resources and protect the environment, and improved environmental and natural conservation technology transfer. In support of these activities, the Natural Resource Management Project is concentrating on institutional strengthening through policy and constitutional reform, particularly as relates to protected area buffer zones and integrated pest management. The project officer anticipates an on-going need for general institutional strengthening and technical training throughout the life of the project (2001).

Natural resource management, project management, communication, administrative and information management systems and skills enhancement for technical staff are primary areas for training. Although most of this training is expected to be short-term workshops and courses conducted in-country, there will be a few U.S. degree programs in forest management or a related area, and possibly a small amount of third country training. There will also be a continued need for environmental awareness and education programs.

Health - USAID's Decentralized Health Services and PVO Co-Financing projects are directly oriented toward alleviating many of the most serious health consequences of poverty. Project activities are currently focused in five geographical areas of particular need which is home for fifty per cent of the Nicaraguan population. Health services within these areas are targeted for low-income groups most at risk.

A moderately high volume of training is planned to occur between 1995 and 1998 to meet project objectives. Priority training areas include: basic management skills to support an existing model for integrated health services and replicate it in other regions; monitoring and analytical skills to assess effectiveness of health service interventions; and overall organization and planning skills.

Doctors and other health service providers need training in case management, interventions for cholera, maternal and child care, communication and training the trainer skills. Training will also be required in computer skills, information management, strategic planning, cost assessment, accounting, bookkeeping and related areas to plan, develop and implement systems for decentralized financial management of health services. Although the majority of this training will be done in-country, approximately thirty Nicaraguans are expected to attend programs at institutions in the U.S.

Democracy - The Strengthening Democratic Institutions Umbrella Project consists of a series of activities to gear up, nurture and support the free press, key interest groups, human rights groups, national and municipal government entities and civic education programs. Over the next three years in-country training will be required for increased numbers of civic education teachers, policy analysts, and broad based strategic planning for decentralized governance. The project officer also anticipates a need to train journalists and labor union leaders in the U.S.

Based on discussions with project officers and contractor staff, review of documents and familiarity with trends and training policy developments, the evaluation team sees a clear rationale for, and recommends re-orienting the DTP to become the umbrella under which all training and technical assistance are implemented, as discussed in an earlier section of this document. We cite and reiterate the following as a basis for our recommendation:

a) Common elements and cross cutting institutional strengthening themes transcend much of the project training discussed above, i.e., administration, information management, communication, project management and analytical, monitoring and assessment skills, training the trainer, and other skills required to promote and manage decentralization. These are similar to general institutional strengthening training that is already

being successfully implemented under the DTP. Further, economies of scale can be recognized and opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration can be more effectively exploited under a single training project. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, centering all training under the DTP will minimize duplication efforts and result in more efficient management as well as cost savings to the mission.

b) Implementing all training under a single project has proven to be a sound program strategy. Several other USAID missions that are implementing an all-inclusive development training project have found that it enhances the design and monitoring of standardized procedures for performance-based training in which core activities are integrated with pre-departure preparation and follow-on. This unification of training components into a seamless, holistic system provides an opportunity for the mission to develop performance indicators for measuring and more clearly linking training to identifiable strategic objectives. Further, it is consistent with new ADS 253 policies and essential procedures.

c) The Mission can more effectively assess the cross cutting impact of all training (U.S., in-country and regional) if it resides under an umbrella Development Training Project managed by a single contractor.

Other related observations and suggestions:

We offer several additional observations and suggestions that are peripherally related to the requested evaluation task. We believe

the implications and results of these activities will have cross-cutting benefits for the Mission's programs and we recommend that they be considered in the work plan for 1996.

1) An impact evaluation of institutional strengthening technical assistance and training. We believe the findings from this study can provide a more objective basis for designing general institutional strengthening training programs.

2) More coordination among contractors and between contractors and USAID. Strengthening partnerships is becoming increasingly important within the reengineered USAID. As each partner becomes familiar with and feels connected to "the big picture" more opportunities will surface for them to reinforce each others efforts. Thus, we are suggesting periodic USAID-contractor brown bags, roundtable discussions on mission-wide issues.

3) Resolution of contract bottlenecks and delays in the AED Washington office. From a review of files and in discussions with staff, it was evident that the contracting process between the AED home and field office is cumbersome and delays important

~~Program~~ implementation decisions.